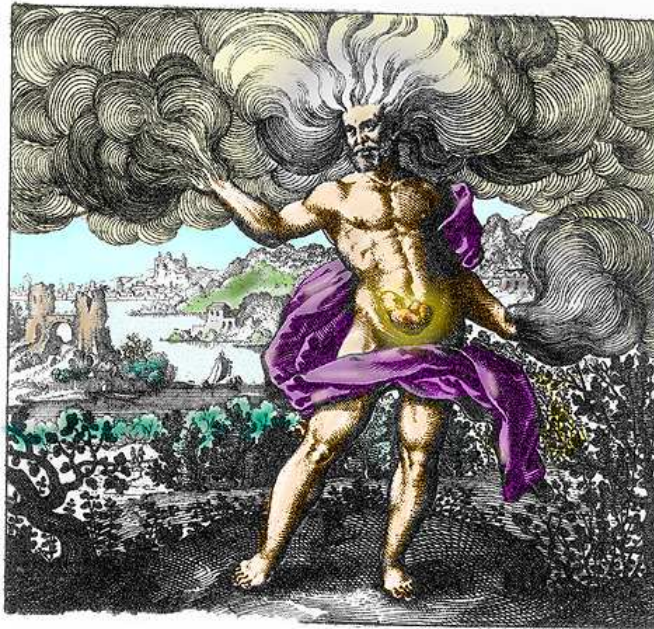


# THE BIRTH OF THE SELF

EGO DEVELOPMENT

AND

SPIRITUAL UNFOLDMENT



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“A human being is a part of the whole, called by us ‘Universe’, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts, and feelings as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”

– Albert Einstein

“He not busy being born is busy dying.”

– Bob Dylan, “*It’s Alright, Ma (I’m Only Bleeding)*”



# Contents

<b>Preface</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter One: Giving Birth, Being Born</b>	<b>1</b>
Individual Ego: A Means Not An End . . . . .	3
The Transpersonal Self . . . . .	6
<b>Chapter Two: Conception</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Chapter Three: First Trimester – The Creation of the Three Bodies</b>	<b>19</b>
Introduction . . . . .	19
Physical Body . . . . .	21
Exercises: Life Review . . . . .	23
Bridging with the Transpersonal Self . . . . .	24
Emotional Body . . . . .	24
Exercises: Life Review . . . . .	30
Bridging with the Transpersonal Self . . . . .	31
Mental Body . . . . .	31
Exercises: Life Review . . . . .	34
Bridging with the Transpersonal Self . . . . .	35
<b>Chapter Four: Second Trimester – Differentiation into Subpersonalities</b>	<b>37</b>
Exercises: Life Review . . . . .	43
Bridging with the Transpersonal Self . . . . .	44
<b>Chapter Five: Third Trimester – Integration</b>	<b>45</b>
Exercises: Self-Identification Exercise . . . . .	56
<b>Chapter Six: The Full-Term Personality: Spiritual Awakening</b>	<b>59</b>
Exercises: Life Review . . . . .	68
Bridging with the Transpersonal Self . . . . .	69
<b>Chapter Seven: Labor and Delivery — The Soul-Infused Personality</b>	<b>71</b>
First Stage Labor . . . . .	75
Transition . . . . .	77
Second Stage . . . . .	77
Third Stage . . . . .	78

Labor and the Personality . . . . .	78
Evoking and Developing Desired Qualities . . . . .	81
<b>Chapter Eight: Principles of Transpersonal Evolution</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Chapter Nine: Complications of the Psychological Birth Process</b>	<b>89</b>
Archetypal Experiences . . . . .	89
Systems of Condensed Experience (COEX's) . . . . .	91
Birth Complications . . . . .	93
<b>Chapter Ten: Worldview and Choice</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Chapter Eleven: Working with Subpersonalities</b>	<b>107</b>
A Subpersonality Example . . . . .	111
Exercise . . . . .	112
<b>Chapter Twelve: Inner and Outer Guidance</b>	<b>115</b>
Inner Guidance . . . . .	116
Outer Guidance . . . . .	120
Exercise: Letter to the Higher Self . . . . .	123
<b>Chapter Thirteen: The Development of Powers</b>	<b>125</b>
What are Powers? . . . . .	127
Higher and Lower Powers . . . . .	130
Responding to the Awakening of Powers . . . . .	131
<b>Chapter Fourteen: Heart</b>	<b>135</b>
Exercises: Love and Forgiveness I . . . . .	138
Exercises: Love and Forgiveness II . . . . .	139
<b>Chapter Fifteen: Creativity, Will and Grounding</b>	<b>141</b>
Will and Purpose . . . . .	143
Creativity . . . . .	144
Grounding . . . . .	146
Blocks to Our Creative Willing . . . . .	147
Exercise: Clarifying Purpose (part I) . . . . .	150
Exercise: Clarifying Purpose (part II) . . . . .	151
<b>The End/The Beginning</b>	<b>153</b>

# Preface

I THINK I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A PSYCHOLOGIST. Even as a child, like many children, I wanted to know “why.” But beyond that natural childish curiosity, I was known to ask adults why they did what they did. I wanted to know what was hidden, what was underneath, what were the motives that drove people to behave the way they did. My first exposure in college to introductory psychology, particularly abnormal psychology, awakened a sense of purpose and a hunger to know.

Enthused to finally find something in my lengthy education that promised discovery, insight, and answers to my early questions, I switched my major from mathematics to psychology. This naturally led to great disappointment when my curriculum as a psych major turned out to have *absolutely no meaning, no insight, no answers*. It was all so shallow, so superficial, everything about the surface. Galvanic skin response, personality assessment tests, laboratory rats, and lots of statistics.

I realized this was not what I expected, but hoped that in graduate school I'd get to the “real” psychology. Once in a doctoral program, it became quickly apparent that this was all about “advanced rats,” not what goes on inside you and me. The questions from childhood still burned: where did we come from? Why are we here? Why do we behave the ways we do? Could we change voluntarily? If so, what would we want to change into, and why?

I lasted one semester, feeling discouraged, the excitement of those first courses as a sophomore long gone. If I could not find answers in the higher levels of academic psychology, where were they to be found? Did they exist at all?

Eventually, I found my way (or it found me) to strange and culturally taboo subjects like astrology, meditation, eastern philosophy, and something called “esoteric psychology.” I discovered something called psychosynthesis, the lifework of an Italian psychiatrist, Roberto Assagioli. I realized that what was missing up till then was a psychology that included “spirit.” Of course, I could not explain what that word meant, or “soul,” but that's what I realize had been missing. Why were spirit and soul not to be found – at all – in official academic psychology? And what did this mean for the actual practice of psychotherapy?

In 1933, Alice Bailey predicted in a pamphlet entitled “The Next Three Years” :

The outstanding achievement of the coming cycle will be the growth of psychology and the emergence of a new understanding as to the nature of man as a result of its work. The mechanistic school of psychologists has served a valuable purpose; its find-

ings are sound even if, from the standpoint of reality, its conclusions are temporarily erroneous. Its exponents serve as a needed brake upon the speculative and mystical school. From the adjustment of relationship between these two school . . . a third school will emerge. This will lay emphasis upon the soul and the mechanism it uses .

..

This book was written in 1985, intended to be a text that would cover human growth, except this presentation portrays the natural development of the personality not as the end of psychological unfoldment, but as the means for a further stage of human evolution. The human personality with its ego are not the end, but the *means* for something more. That is what I was always looking for – that something more.

Thanks to the inspiring work of Stanislav Grof and his penetration into the mystery of birth, I have drawn upon the known stages of biological prenatal development and the birth process to articulate a parallel model for the birth of the self, or soul, with its higher-than-ego purpose as a participant in the larger picture, the leading edge of human evolution.

Thus, where the fetus develops its biological mechanism during the three trimesters of growth in the womb, each with its own sequential emphasis, the personality, as a future vehicle for mysterious yet purposeful spirit, can be shown in a similar three-part process:

#### First Trimester

Human being: rapid and expansive multiplication of cells, as they begin to form the basis for the complex human body

Human personality: development of the physical body after birth, and the significance of this earliest stage in later periods of life

#### Second Trimester

Human being: differentiation of the many cells into their varying organs, systems, and purposes, ie., brain cells, eyeballs, limbs, genitals, etc.

Human personality: development of the emotional and feeling nature of the personality

#### Third Trimester

Human being: maturing and refining of the various systems and organs in readiness for separate and eventually independent living

Human personality: development of the mind and mental nature of the personality

At this point, with the more or less successful conclusion of these three vital stages, the physical human being is ready to emerge through the birth process and begin its separate life in the world and in relation to other humans. Similarly, the human personality, developing since physical birth, now has the equipment which will allow it to function in the world of other personalities, and which, in our model, provides the vehicle for the birth of the soul, and the means for the mysterious soul to express itself through the personality in the world.

After these stages, it is time for the actual birth, which involves labor in most cases.



# Introduction

*Behold, I make all things new.*

– Revelation 21:5

**I**N THIS MOMENT ALL THINGS CAN BECOME NEW. In any moment we have the possibility to continue our birth, bringing to life what has been potential for us. When we stop actualizing our potential we are dead, no longer birthing, whether we breathe or not.

It might have been helpful if, when we were born, we were each given a map or a guidebook to help us make our way through life, to help us to understand transformation and to cooperate with our own natural unfoldment. Instead, when lacking this guidance, we often find ourselves floundering or holding on tightly during times of change, resisting change out of fear of the unknown.

The truth is we were each given such a map. That map is simply the birth process itself. The same route that we followed at the beginning of our individual physical lives reveals, when studied, a structured and organized path which can provide us with assistance as we find our unique way through life, whether we are dealing with personality growth (need for belonging, self-esteem, identity, expression, intimacy) or our spiritual unfoldment (higher purpose, service, universal consciousness).

It is the purpose of this book to re-acquaint us with that map which was given to us – which is in us – giving us access to a meaningful and organized process of unfoldment. We may then be better equipped in our travels through life's outer transitions and our own transformations. We may not have a complete picture of all the details of our journey, but we can know the layout. Most importantly, with such a map our experiences of meaningless or terrifying chaos can be re-framed and understood to be a meaningful process which we can trust. Even during the darkest times, we will not be without hope.

We will explore how the stages of conception, gestation and childbirth provide us with an example of a universal method by which potentiality becomes actualized. At any age during our lives we are co-participating in this process. Whether through artistic expression, ego development as a child, the discovery and fulfillment of our life purpose, or a solitary inner transformative work, our life is the constant emergence of the particular out of the universal, the manifestation of our potential.

This book is about psychology: the extension of western psychology into realms which were previously considered as unworthy of investigation. The East has led the way in exploring the psyche and its relationship to the universal whole in which we live. And in particular it has developed techniques for fostering this birthing process – a birth which we are describing here as the birth of the Self. The study of the Self, a spiritual center of awareness and influence which appears to exist both within and without, is now carried on as “transpersonal psychology.” The intention here is to provide an interpretation of this psychology and its relationship with our more traditional Western approaches.

At this time we are experiencing a critical phase of a birthing on a global scale. It would appear that life on the planet Earth is reorganizing itself and a new potential is emerging and becoming actualized. This happens at least in part by means of our individual lives and spiritual growth. Thus it is imperative that each of us, if we are conscious of this transition, do all that we can to guide it, to serve as midwives for the birth of Spirit (greater Wholeness or Oneness). If the reader is serving as a catalyst, guiding and supporting others through their own psychological birth process, it is hoped that this book will make that work a little easier and even more meaningful.

Transition means change, and change is less secure than order and stability. But there can be order even in change, as in the movement of the seasons. It is this type of structured change that our births can reveal. Transition can also be exciting and can provide openings through which the creative Breath can blow away the dust of the familiar and breathe new life into old forms. We have these opportunities every time new potential intrudes upon our established identity or life patterns. Let us embrace and welcome them. Let us learn to let go and die that we may be born.

Because the mind seeks to grasp and to crystallize the flow of thought and intuition, we will start from an abstract and perhaps somewhat elusive perspective. The first chapter is intended to nurture what one Eastern teacher referred to as “the flower of the intuition in the heart.” It is not so much to be apprehended as to be taken in and played with. It is even recommended that the reader return from time to time to that chapter in order to keep awake the intuitive flower, which can be overwhelmed by the intellect’s need for certainty and structures.

The physical birth process is an excellent model of the structure of initiation or creation on many levels. Here we will be using it as a framework with which to try to understand and become more sensitive to the birth of the Self in the human being. It is an arbitrary lens which can serve to focus and arrange what we know from personal experience and psychological theory. That is all that any psychological model, no matter how technical or sophisticated, can be. Whether one talks of libido, individuation, will, shadow, repression, defense mechanisms, or voodoo incantations, all we really have is a map, an interpretation, a model from our own imaginations, which – if it is effective – guides us through the mysterious terrain which we are. This book is intended to be a simple, non-technical means for uncovering that place within us which knows more than the sum of what has been put into our heads since birth, which is secure in the realization of belonging and participating in the whole of life in which we find ourselves. In addition to the methods described here for practice, ideas are also presented “as if” the presence and emergence of a deeper Self were a fact, to see how life problems and crises appear when viewed in that light.

In **Section One** the model is organized into four major phases: **Conception**, in which we acknowledge and appreciate the mystery which is the seed of the Self-realizing human being; **Gestation**, including the three trimesters, which traces the development of the vehicle or body of the Self – the individualized personality; **Labor**, exploring the struggle, crises, and effort involved in

bringing to birth the Self within the individual person; and **Birth**, the arrival and presence of the Self, its implications and signs as manifested by the Self-infused personality.

**Section Two** offers **Applications** of the transpersonal model to common human problems. Most chapters include exercises designed to be practically useful and simple. This is a guidebook for exploration of the Self, our true Identity, something which is always accessible to us though often forgotten or lost by distraction. We can explore this individually but in the end, since the Self is both individual and universal, we will be unable to separate the emergence of Self in each of us from Its emergence in Human-ity at large and Its implications for the planet. This process allows us to perceive not only our individual crises in a new and positive light, but also our global crises, as Humanity discovers its Soul and Identity.



# Chapter One

## Giving Birth, Being Born

*I have found that individuals tend to repeat the pattern of their own actual birth every time life requires them to move onto a new level of awareness. As they entered the world, so they continue to re-enter at each new spiral of growth.<sup>1</sup>*

**I**MAGINE RIGHT NOW being able to take yourself back to that moment in time when you were born. Imagine being able to experience that instant of pure potential, of newness, a threshold between potential and actualization. It hasn't just "happened," you have arrived at the climax of a process that has likely involved struggle, perhaps threatening your very existence, and with the end of that struggle comes initiation.

To create is to give birth. Birth is beginning, initiation, the seed. In the beginning is the seed. But when was the seed born? When the fruit or flower died? Or when that fruit or flower was born? But wasn't that when the previous seed came into being? In one sense, all birth must originate in the original SEED. Yet where did that SEED come from? So we arrive at the realization that birth and creation must be examined as a relative phenomenon. Rather than questing for THE BEGINNING, we must narrow our search and concentrate upon that phase of the process of becoming which heralds the arrival of anything new which has previously not been present on a given level of existence.

This concept of levels is important, because if we do not limit ourselves to a certain level of perception we become lost in the consideration, for example, of whether that which has newly appeared in material form had a prior existence as a desire, a thought, or as Spirit. And we again find ourselves tracing the path back to an original Source. It is probably practical to restrict our search for the birth of our sense of self to those levels of experience with which we are most familiar: our thoughts, feelings, actions, and senses.

Our first experience of creation in this world is our physical birth. All of my life, my choices, even this writing stem from that moment. There was a physical fetus, and even before that a sperm cell and egg in existence prior to that actual birth. But that fetus could not write and never would. So birth signifies the crossing of a line, the emergence of a potential, the arrival of one who can cause effects, who can influence others, who can spread love or hatred. "Suddenly, at that moment, a whole new domain of possibility for evolution appears. . . the space of possibility in

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<sup>1</sup> Marion Woodman, *The Pregnant Virgin* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1985), p. 23.

which evolution occurs is entirely new; what is possible through evolution is completely altered.” (Erhard, p.32)

Being born means first a bringing together of the two halves of the whole – the sperm and the egg, masculine and feminine, intense pursuit and quiet receptivity. Attraction and meeting – these are the conditions from which birth arises. Then multiplication by division. What was whole divides, loses its integrity and yet maintains it in the multiple parts being created, both in the individual cellular identities which are constantly increasing in number and in the mysterious presence of an overall singular identity which organizes the parts, the identity which will later be experienced as “self.”

First an explosion of growth of material, then differentiation and specialization, and finally a refinement of detail in function and feature. Then a “hardening” or setting, like the firing of a pot. These are the stages of the process of creation that bring us to the portal of birth, of emergence into a new level of being. The actual passage is initiated by the disturbance of peace and equilibrium and by increasing pressure. Discomfort mobilizes our survival sense and heightens our readiness for stress and challenge. We must want to be. We must will to be. We experience tightness, constriction, perhaps suffocation; pain and the need to adapt to that which is being forced upon us. Our world as we know it is ending. And in its place we have struggle, pain, threat, darkness.

Can we make it? Can we adapt and not be completely overwhelmed? Do we need help through outside intervention or can we trust the natural process? Why should we trust something as disturbing and threatening as what we are experiencing? What in us knows that there is purpose in all this? That it will come out all right? That it will end? These questions which we can fantasize asking at our birth are the same ones we face in any act of creation and they are the questions we want answered during crises of personality development or spiritual awakening. The recurrence of these same questions (and even the same sensations – pressure, constriction, pain) points to an identical underlying structure for both physical birth and psychological transformation.

Birth is an end as well as a beginning. All births are both. Fetal development ends and independent life begins. Does our initial experience of life outside the mother imprint upon us that the struggle was worth it or do we seem instead to have been thrust into a world of pain and cruelty? Are we welcomed in love or with cold rough handling? Most importantly, would we be willing to go through that again? Are we willing to create and be created again and again and again? Can we give birth to our ideas, our dreams, our life purpose and our expanding sense of self, even though it means going through the same process, awakening vague memories of our first passage from potential to actuality?

The roots of this life we live are multiple. They lie partly in the family past – the traditions, cultures, languages, and personalities of those to whom we are born. They are in the dreams, failures, hurts, tragedies and fears and triumphs of our ancestors, including our parents. Deeper than that, they lie in the origins of humankind – the struggle to survive, the world of Nature, and our unity as a planetary species. Again we find ourselves on the never-ending road to the Source: our roots reach back to the creation of the Earth from dust and gas, to the coming-into-being of our solar system, of the star we call “our sun,” and of the family of stars which know our sun by a different name. And on and on. Along with these cosmic roots (our taproot?) there is an important rootlet originating from our birth in this life as the unique person we are becoming. Roots provide the means for nurturance and for stability. That appears to be their natural function. Have we in our times allowed our roots, great and small, personal and transpersonal, to dry up?

Or have we perhaps stopped being able to receive and to assimilate the nourishment which they provide? Without its roots, the plant dies. And when the plant dies the seed is no more.

Does going back to our roots mean something more than tracing family trees or worshipping the religious and political ideologies of our ancestors? What about our taproot; what can help us to re-open the channel connecting with our human, earthly, solar and cosmic origins? Imagine what kind of sustenance would be provided by such an opening. And how can we also keep open the important rootlet stemming from our birth experience, the beginning of this individual life?

Living to the fullest our human being means not only remembering our rootedness in the past, but also being connected to the potential our unfoldment fulfills. At our birth we are potential – some inherent in our collective humanness and some unique to our individuality. Like a magnet, this potential draws us ever on through dreams and vision, colored by hope and desire. Not fixed but ever evolving, this potential invites us to fulfill our fate, the need of the greater Whole of Humanity for which we have been created. When our link with this potential is cut off – by ourselves out of fear or by our environment – we may lose the will to live or turn violent and destructive. We lose our psychic nourishment. Our deepest roots are both our source and our goal. And finding meaning is our innate way of staying with these roots.

At each moment of our existence we are the interface between our roots in the past and our roots in the future – our dreams and hopes. Try for a moment to be quiet and to allow yourself to experience that interface, that this present moment is simply the meeting of what has been and that which is coming into being, through you . . .

## **Individual Ego: A Means Not An End**

Only extreme narrowness of vision prevents us from knowing our roots and gaining the perspective they provide. Realizing our true Identity means pushing back the boundaries of our awareness in time and space and becoming aware of our relationships to it all. Like a child huddled in a blanket, part of us insecurely tries to shut out the immensity of our being with blinders or myopic vision. Fearing being swallowed by the Infinite, we indulge in what Einstein called “an optical delusion of consciousness,” concerning ourselves with immediate needs, trivial pursuits, and those closest to our affections. But this does not give us the security we seek. Fear builds defenses and defenses reinforce the fear that builds them. The smaller we try to make ourselves the more powerless we feel. This loss of relatedness with the roots of our past and our potential, with the infinite variety of colors and tastes and views of the world around us (physically and psychically) only makes us feel isolated and at risk, without any protection, support, or greater identification with the Universe which sustains us.

For those not desensitized by technology or repetition the event of human birth produces awe, reverence, a sense of the miraculous. For that matter so can natural death. Because the newborn has not yet an individualized identity, we are able to experience the presence of some grand and mysterious life process at work. Each of us was such a miracle; when did we stop being miraculous? What is it in us which wants to retreat into the mundane and the trivial, which cannot bear the constant presence of the Miraculous? As children the Magical and Miraculous is our natural environment. Christ said we must become as little children. What is it that we see as children that we lose in later life? Isn't it the world-in-creation each moment, the magical

connectedness and interrelatedness of all that is, because we have not learned yet to sever those connections and to withdraw ourselves into isolated ego-individuality?

Some separating and isolating are necessary for the construction of an ego, a particular identity. But given the often painful alienation and insecurity that the ego must live with as a consequence, it would seem that in an organic Universe the development of an ego, of a sense of being an individual, is not an end in itself but a means to some greater end. When considered the final stage of development it only leads to a dead-end of empty achievement without meaning. But if the goal of our evolution necessitates the creation of a network of selves, a web rather than isolated points, then pushing back our boundaries (once they are established) of relationship in time and space becomes necessary if we are not to collapse into ourselves like the black holes in space which astronomers speculate may be dead stars. Pushing back these boundaries means we realize our direct participation or connection with all of time past and the future to come, with all forms of life.

Returning to our description of the birth process, perhaps the creation of the individual ego progresses in similar fashion to the creation of the newborn infant. Through a process of first bringing together two halves – the psyche and body, the child and society – a phase of multiplication ensues. First an explosive growth of material – in this case the experiences of self and others, of mine and yours, of language and emotion, of ritual and consensus reality. Then a differentiation and specialization – “Who am I as others see me? What is different about me?” – where identity is formed through the eyes of those around us. We become the Pleaser, the Achiever, the Good Girl or Boy, the Victim, or the Performer. Finally a refinement, a sharpening or honing, and we arrive at the birth of the ego. What this birth represents now is the process by which we pass from an identity formed by our relationships with others – a persona – to a more authentic sense of self. As in birth, this passage can be long and testing, through pain and constriction, and again we must will to be. It is no wonder that many choose to remain within the externally built identity they have inherited, especially if that identity has given them a sense of security and serenity. But we can no more inhibit this process without serious consequence than we can inhibit birth. Ultimately breakdown may be necessary and the individual may experience his or her sense of identity being destroyed. Again the same questions: Why should we trust something as disturbing and threatening as what we are experiencing? What in us knows that there is purpose and meaning in all this? That it will come out all right? That it will end?

It is particularly difficult to find affirmation and support of this process if those around us have not yet passed through this stage. Attempts to define the truer self apart from custom, family role, and adaptive strategies are seen as threatening, rebellious, heretical or insane by those whose security still rests in preservation of the external system of self-definition. But somewhere in us we know it is all right, that we must proceed, because we have passed through such a process before when we were physically born. If we were drugged or if we needed outside intervention at that time it may be difficult to reach that inner knowing. Once again outside intervention may be necessary or we may resort instead to the anesthesia of drugs, alcohol, television, sleep or schizophrenia. At any such time of birth or transition the best intervention is that which guides us back to the knowing within us (if that is possible), not the provision of an outside authority which reinforces dependence and lack of self-trust.

In our world there are many who – in this process of ego-formation – have aborted, been still-born, or who are painfully struggling alone to be born, unsupported by those close to them. For decades psychology and psychotherapy have been aiding this process. Western society has

fostered the belief that this process is the end-point of evolution, that a successful birth of the individual ego, free from blind obedience to custom and tradition, no longer dependent upon approval from others and upon external authority, means psychological health. But there are also other levels of birth occurring besides physical birth and ego birth. Defending the security of ego knowledge and of a system which places healthy egos at the top of the pyramid, conventional psychology has been unwilling, especially in the university and training center, to acknowledge the presence of these other transpersonal levels. As a result, many individuals experiencing a birthing process beyond ego are mistaken for cases where development of individual ego identity is the goal. Their symptoms (like disorientation, depression, emptiness, or insomnia) may appear as similar because they can occur at any threshold. These people receive no real help and in many cases they are aborted in their process of emergence. Symptoms become the objective of treatment rather than a cooperation with what is trying to happen. It is as if a mother in labor were treated for her pains rather than being assisted to give birth.

Mainstream psychology will always be running behind human development. It is unfortunate that many in the field seem unconcerned with catching up. Rather than realizing that human development is open-ended, much of academic psychology is content (and even adamant) to protect its knowledge, forcing human beings to fit their experiences into the neat cubby-holes of pathological labels, most of which were derived in mental hospitals. So institutionalized psychology, in the hospital, university, research institute, or professional training program, follows the behavior of most institutions – preserving the status quo, arrogant in its certainty, refusing to consider views which threaten its complacency. Meanwhile the psychological birthing process goes on, people suffer, are unable to understand what is happening to them, and look to the experts for the authoritative word. In one sense it is fortunate that so many are disappointed in the results, for that experience can help force one to realize that the answer comes from within, not from the treatment of “experts.” Or it may lead to turning to unconventional sources of help, thus bringing the person into contact with alternative ideas and the realization that there are other systems of thought and healing than the ones most of us were brought up to follow. This failure to find satisfaction in the “system” can serve as a catalyst for movement beyond the socially and externally defined persona, the identity created in the mirror of others’ eyes and throw the individual back upon themselves for answers.

The less fortunate side of this confusion, however, is that suffering may go on unabated, despair may replace hope (“If they can’t help me, who can?”), and the higher or deeper Self remains unborn, sometimes permanently. Transpersonal psychology fosters a vision of hope based upon the experience garnered through personal growth. Since one of the main factors within the mass unfoldment now occurring has to do with moving beyond blind reliance upon authority so that self-empowerment and a sense of inner responsibility can emerge, we don’t need a new hierarchical official structure to replace the old. The seed of intuition lies in the heart of each of us and as we learn to sensitize ourselves to its response and to trust that knowing, our dependence upon authority and experts is diminished. There is still room for consultation and for receiving assistance, but no longer in the outdated model of powerless victim/expert authority. We no longer have to find someone to give us the answer but instead at times may realize we could use some help in finding our own answers. In this way we remain responsible for ourselves and so feel a sense of empowerment and choice in how we wish to live.

Because there are many, many people now passing into the transpersonal terrain of psychological development which remains a mystery to official psychology, with millions more to follow, and because there are countless teachers, counselors, psychiatrists and therapists who recognize

this situation and who have not been prepared by their training to handle this progressive growth beyond ego-normality, this book is offered as one of many, as one more grain of sand upon the balance which, when it shifts, will find official recognition and support of the liberation of the human spirit. Education and healing, economics and government, religion and science will no longer share the role of burying the essential Self in each of us behind a facade of polite hypocrisy, powerless worship of external authority, or lack of self-knowledge and self-trusting. The power to be freed from within the human soul will be no less in its impact upon the world than that of the atom. In fact, it is only when this inner capacity of Humanity is freed that we will be able to trust ourselves with the power within the atom and nature.

## The Transpersonal Self

The recognition or the assumption of the presence of another Self or Soul within the human being, one which is qualitatively different from and beyond the officially recognized ego, throws illumination on many individual and collective human problems. The proof of the existence of such a Self is for each of us to determine. We cannot wait for an official governmental proclamation that a university research team has finally proven that each of us has a Soul. There is a steady stream of witnesses who have proclaimed this Reality throughout history, not as dogma but as their experience.

The birthing of a new and more inclusive sense of identity or of Self will continue to happen on a greater scale whether we acknowledge it or not. But if unrecognized or misunderstood, much needless suffering and fear will arise. The hidden face of the approaching loving Self can evoke the projection of our worst fears. As much as we seek transcendence and to suckle at the bosom of the Cosmic Mother, we fear losing our independence. Going beyond the individual self may feel like death to that self. Our unconscious may color our perceptions of the Self with masks like the Punisher, the Judgmental Parent, or the Devourer. (see Wilber, 1980)

In that center of inner knowing called here the Self or Soul, we know our next step and trust it and ourselves to make it. All that can keep us from that knowing is fear, whether that fear is in the guise of certainty, inertia, conservatism, or self-interest. The recognition of such a Self is not new. We have the testimony of many through the ages to Its Reality. Unfortunately these visionaries have been labeled “mystics” and mysticism has been degraded by scientific rationality as primitive and unreliable. What is different this time is that the recognition and experience of this deeper Self is coming on a greater collective scale. The trickle of voices in physics, economics, religion, education and politics is becoming a steady stream. The winter of our discontent is ending, and the flood of self-knowledge is growing. This is not a New Age vision, but a plea to honor that in each of us which wants to know – which must know – Who We Are.

There are many ways to describe the emergence of the Self, mainly religious ones. Terms like Christ within, Kingdom of God, Buddhahood, Soul, Atman, Tao or Spirit have been used at times, often in confusing ways, to point our attention toward the presence within us of Something divine, Something beyond the perspective of the personality. Transpersonal psychology, exploring the farther reaches of human nature which were previously under the jurisdiction of religion, has used terms like transpersonal Self, Higher Self, Deeper Self, or simply Self. Now science is alluding to Its presence by defining terms like implicate order or morphogenetic field. Perhaps it is this Self which the Tao-Te-Ching speaks of when it says, “The Tao that can be named is not the

real Tao.” Fortunately we neither have to be able to name or accurately define the Self in order to experience It, and experiencing the Self is what matters.

The Self has appeared in myth, dream and fairy tale in many forms: the “pearl of great price,” the alchemist’s “philosopher’s stone,” the great treasure beneath the sea, the grail or the kingdom. Let us give up the fantasy of being able to capture the essence of the Self in words. The images, words and metaphors used here in no way claim to do that, but are meant to serve as what Buddhists have called “a finger pointing at the moon.”

What will we mean here by the term “Self”? There are apparently infinite angles from which to observe the Self. Each provides a definition, though not the definition. Our chosen perspective will lead us to certain conclusions, like the blind men seeking to define what “elephant” is. The one who grabs the tail says elephant is like rope; the one who hugs the leg says elephant is like a tree trunk; a third who grabs an ear claims elephant is like a large thick leaf flapping in the wind. The Self has often been described by paradox, as wet and dry, dark and light, and so on. In India disciples were taught to seek the Self by saying “Neti, neti” (“Not that, not that”) to all manifestations, implying that to take any single thing or class as the Self destroyed the integrity of the Self by making partial that which is Whole. Let us acknowledge the presence of paradox and the limits of our own minds as we seek to understand this concept.

The Self can be considered as an organizing Center, a directing, integrating force. We are already familiar with similar organizing centers, both in ourselves and in the world around us. For example, in the womb something served the purpose of integrating and organizing our growth. We have come to refer to this as “DNA,” as a coded program within the cells of the embryo which direct its unfoldment and specialization. Within any definable whole there must be some such principle by which that whole is organized and held together and which seems to carry the purpose behind the creation of that whole. In a universe of wholes within wholes within wholes each entity is both a whole with its own organizing center and boundaries and a part of a larger whole, being organized with other parts by a more comprehensive center. The organizing center of a particular entity we call “self,” and that of the greater whole in which that entity participates, “Self.”

The ego or sense of personal identity is an organizing center within the psyche around which our conscious thoughts, feelings, and behaviors become integrated. When the ego is well-developed our thoughts, feelings, and actions are directed by and carried out in reference to our sense of “I”, the individual self. When we were young children we did not have this developed sense of ego and we may have thought “I” referred to our physical body, because that appeared to be what others were referring to by our name. This lack of a sense of “I” is reflected in the way children refer to themselves: “David wants a cracker” or “Tina doesn’t feel well.” Our evolution as a personality occurs by means of these progressive identifications with body, feelings, and thought until we know we are an individual self, apart from these different contents of our consciousness. The Swiss psychiatrist C.G. Jung felt that the higher Self is a higher-order center of organization which integrates both the conscious and unconscious aspects of the person.

Imagine being a newly formed brain cell within the womb. At first your unfoldment is directed toward becoming a stable, well-defined brain cell among many others. The emphasis is upon maintenance of your boundaries, and your “self” is the DNA-programmed purpose within you which allows you to form into the pattern “brain cell,” with a certain chemical composition, structure, function and purpose. When enough brain cells have been created they become organized into the fetal brain. This does not destroy your singular self, but includes it. In some sense

the brain as a whole has an organizing center which to you, the individual cell, is a higher Self. From this perspective we can see that the self of the individual cell establishes its individuality not as an end in itself, but as part of the purpose of the brain as a whole, which needs such cells to perform its functions.

The brain is also brought into relationship with other aspects of the newly forming being creating a system, the nervous system. So you (the individual cell) are now organized and influenced by another higher level, though we can fantasize that you may not even be “aware” of that level, the nervous system. There are still higher (because more inclusive and complex) levels influencing the cell, probably indirectly by way of the brain: the human individual as a whole, societal language, diet and habits; climate; the Earth as a whole; and on and on. In some way these are all “roots” of the cell, the reason for your existence, the cause of your birth. The point here is that even though as a brain cell you may not “know” about the existence or influence of these higher levels of organization, you still are functioning as a participant within those higher systems and so have a relationship to all that those higher systems contain, i.e., the Universe. And the “Self” in each case is whatever higher integrating center is directing the cell’s activity. When dealing with the creation and maintenance of the single cell, your functions are directed by the “self” of your own level of individual existence. When a brain activity is involved in which the cell is a participant, you are under the influence of a higher Self, that which integrates the functioning of the brain as a whole. And when the cell is activated because of an image seen by the person or a stubbed toe, you are organized (via the brain) by the self or integrating center of the nervous system, which coordinates that system as a whole.

This imaginary situation as a brain cell may be closer to the truth than we realize. Scientist James Lovelock hypothesizes that the Earth may be a living organism composed of various systems similar to those in a human which maintain a relatively steady state of dynamic equilibrium – respiratory (atmosphere, volcanos), circulatory (weather systems, animal migrations), skin (earth crust, upper atmosphere) and so on (Lovelock, 1979). Perhaps its seasons are similar to our breaths and the days and nights are like the Earth’s heartbeats. As the ancients and native Americans believed, the Earth may be alive and purposeful. This “Gaia Hypothesis,” as it is called, has led some to speculate on the role of Humanity as a whole within the organism of Gaia, perhaps acting as its global brain. In addition, we may now have reached the time when there is a large enough number of human beings, or planetary brain cells, to allow for the ordering of those cells into an integrated functioning planetary brain (Russell, 1983). If that were so, we would as individuals now be coming under the influence of a higher-order organizing center, that of Humanity as a whole or even of the planet Earth. This influence is what we are suggesting we experience as the Higher or transpersonal Self.

As we said before, each higher level does not eliminate a lower level but includes it. The Universe can be seen as a hierarchy of increasingly inclusive wholes, a “holarchy” (Rudhyar, 1983). We cannot assume that the units of a lower level will automatically submit to the direction of a higher level. Cancer is an example of how the cell may pursue its own growth at the eventual expense of the whole in which it is found – be it an organ or the entire organism. To ignore the influence of the Higher Self carries the threat of one’s own extinction as a healthy and evolving being. Perhaps the appearance of cancer as a leading cause of death in our century is making a statement about our relationship as individuals to the whole which contains us – Humanity and also the Earth. This question of levels and of which should take precedence over another is extremely important and comes into play in the birth of the Higher Self in each of us. We are endowed with the capacity and responsibility to choose which purpose we wish to serve. We can also see this

in the emergence of an authentic personal identity, when the individual must choose between doing what people expect or following his or her own conscience. The acceptance of the possibility that there is a Higher Self in each of us can help us to clarify such conflicting situations, though it will not offer any black-and-white authoritative answers. It may, however, help us take the responsibility for our decisions.

The Self described here, the Self which is emerging within Humanity in increasing numbers in our time, is that in us which belongs to higher levels of organization which include us. We can see ourselves at the leading edge of an evolutionary process which has been bringing simple units together into more complex wholes since the Earth began. The human being is a complex organization of atoms, molecules, cells, organs, systems – each level having taken millions of years to develop. We observe the continuation of this process in the organization of human beings into more and more complex wholes – tribes, villages, cities, states, nations, and alliances. These are all physical examples of this process of synthesis. This book is about the same synthesis as it operates in our consciousness, the main focus of evolution today. There is, and always has been, something within us which knows itself to be related to and at-one with Humanity as a whole. This Self is not to be confused with a purely biological link we have with each other by way of our having a common physical organism. It is an organizing Center which has more to do with our minds and our sense of conscious identity than with our blood, breath, and tissue alone, though again, It includes them.

The same phenomenon can be seen in the world of nature in the activities of a beehive, an ant colony, a school of fish or flock of birds. There is some overriding mechanism which compels the individual members to act together as a unit. That mechanism, which remains mysterious to us, is analogous to the Self of the whole which obviously must be present in each of its members in order to influence them. As humans, we are not so much compelled like animals as we are faced with a choice. Our purpose here is not to speculate on the origin of the Self, Its ultimate purpose or spiritual significance. We are interested in the Self as an experienced Reality, in how to recognize Its presence even in the midst of what appear to be destructive crises for the ego, so that we can cooperate with Its unfoldment as an aspect of the evolutionary progression of human being. We will use the terms “Self”, “Soul”, or “transpersonal Self” to refer to this organizing Center within us which belongs to a higher order of organization than the individual but which includes the individual. It is likely that this Self is really a multi-level series of centers, a hierarchy of increasingly inclusive and comprehensive and complex wholes, such as Humanity, Earth, solar system, galaxy, etc. But from our perspective as flesh-and-blood human beings and egos, all that matters for the conscious emergence of the Self in the personality is that we acknowledge the possibility of higher levels of experience and of identity and courageously explore them with the intention of fulfilling our potentials. It would be a tragic illusion to think that we are in some way able to direct or control our latent transpersonal powers from the throne of the personal ego, much like trying to control and direct the power of the atom without, as Einstein said, “changing our way of thinking.”

The terms “ego” and “personal self” or “personal identity” refer to the potential center of integration within a human being capable of organizing and directing the aspects of the personality (desires, actions, feelings, thoughts) toward a personally chosen purpose. The personality itself can be seen to consist of a physical or “moving and instinctual self” which senses and acts, an “emotional self” which attributes certain feeling-qualities to objects of inner or outer perception, and a mental or “thinking self” which can produce and order symbolic forms like words or concepts. As we shall see, the first goal of human development as portrayed here is the sequential

emergence and unfoldment of the three elemental selves (physical, emotional, and mental), and their gradual interrelation, coordination, and integration, the direction of which is eventually undertaken by the ego or personal self. This is congruent with Western psychological developmental theory. But then the ego is called upon (not without resistance) to hand over the reins of the personality to the transpersonal Self. This is necessary so that the personality can fulfill its role within the larger context of Humanity as a whole within our planet Earth. It is this latter development which we are calling the birthing of the Self. It is not meant in any way as a closed system but as an arbitrary slice taken out of the indivisible process of potential becoming actuality. Its significance to the Universe remains a mystery, worthy of our reverence, but its significance to each of us as it impacts upon our lives, our loves and goals, is worthy of all the attention we can give to it, because it is us. We are the Earth learning about Itself, the Universe learning about Itself. And here might just lie the key to free us from our seemingly global impasse, allowing us to get out of our own way.

The old models of the Universe are falling away, leaving us in limbo, arousing suspicion lest we find ourselves fooled again by naive belief systems. But this doesn't have to mean that the Universe cannot be trusted. The fact that we can disclaim that God is an Old Man on a throne, or the gods and goddesses are not really on Olympus, or our religious authorities are indeed fallible, or technology seems more like our executioner than our salvation as we once believed, does not disprove the assumption underlying these outdated models, only the models themselves as interpretations. We are coming to know that models and maps are just that and that the Reality they try to interpret remains as yet unknowable, perhaps for always. It is simply time for newer models, more palatable to the 20th-century (and 21st) mind – or we should say, to our hearts and minds. The underlying assumption which in many cases has been treated like the proverbial baby in the bath water, but which remains open, is that this Universe in which we live and participate, from which we have never been removed though we have been told we have been banished, is an integral Whole.

This Whole is held together materially by forces which science calls “gravity”, “magnetism”, or “nuclear forces” and psychically by what we experience as a mysterious something called “love”, and it endows us each with a purpose in living and provides the support and guidance necessary for the fulfillment of that purpose. Our particular choice of limiting terms like “God”, “energy fields”, “synchronicity”, or “Divine Will”, as they have come and gone, have in no way diminished the possibility of its truth.

Please take a few moments now to close your eyes, quiet your breathing, and imagine what your life and life on Earth would be like if it were true that the Universe lives as an integral Whole and we knew that and trusted it. . . . And now see if you can guide your awareness through the silence to that place within you, perhaps in your heart, that does know its unity with this purposeful, mysterious, compassionate All That Is, this Whole which breathes through us now .

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# Chapter Two

## Conception

*Having pervaded the Universe with a fragment of my Self, I remain.*<sup>2</sup>

*This work is beautiful when you see why it exists and what it means. It is about liberation. It is as beautiful as if, locked for years in a prison, you see a stranger entering who offers you a key. But you may refuse it because you have acquired prison-habits and have forgotten your origin, which is from the stars.*<sup>3</sup>

THE HINDU UPANISHADS HAD A SAYING “*Tat twam asi*(That thou art)”, that *Atman* (the Self within the human being) is the same as *Brahman* (the supreme Self of the Universe). Since the Self is a part of, yet identical with, the Whole in which we live and move and have our being, to talk about Its conception as having occurred at a specific time or through a single event is impossible. People through the ages who claim to have experienced the Self speak of It as timeless, eternal, infinite. So while the conception of the Self remains a mystery shrouded in phrases like “A thought arose in the Mind of god,” the “Big Bang,” or “In the beginning was the Word,” we can at least hypothesize a beginning for the potential for the Self to be consciously and willingly expressed by a human being. Esoteric teachings have long debated the time when the Soul (or Self) becomes “attached” to the physical person, saying in various writings that it occurs before conception, at conception, in the prenatal state, at birth, or at different ages. This is like a similar debate over where in the person the Soul resides (in the head, heart, liver, breath, etc.), distracting us from a direct experience of the Self with thoughts about the Self.

A combination of masculine and feminine is necessary for any conception. Physical conception occurs when two opposite or complementary factors meet: the sperm and egg. Even an Immaculate Conception represents the fecundation of the ovum by Spirit. There is nothing more fundamental than this eternal dance of the opposites, and even our life can be seen as a mating dance between the personality (i.e., the egg or receptacle) and the pursuing and impregnating energies of the Self. In our model conception refers to the “fragment” of Itself which the Self has symbolically implanted in the personality. This Seed may or may not be conscious. If it is registered and assimilated by the personality, no matter at what age, we can cooperate with Its magic and Its will. C.G. Jung was three years old when he had a dream in which the Self in its feminine/earth/biological aspect appeared as a giant phallus on an underground throne. This dream had a profound effect on the course of his life.

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<sup>2</sup> –, *Bhagavad Gita*

<sup>3</sup> Maurice Nicoll, *Psychological Commentaries on the Teachings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky, vol 1* (London: Robinson & Watkins, 1973).

*Who spoke to me then? Who talked of problems far beyond my knowledge? Who brought the Above and Below together, and laid the foundation for everything that was to fill the second half of my life with stormiest passion? Who but that alien guest who came both from above and from below?*<sup>4</sup>

The actual type and depth of experience can differ, ranging from the classically religious to sensing the miraculousness of the mundane. The main qualities of an experience of Self seem to be a sense of being at-one with Life or with some greater Whole such as Humanity, Earth or Universe, and loss of the normal sense of individual boundaries which keep us feeling separate. The experience could be physical, as in love-making or digging a ditch; emotional, as impersonal love, compassion or suffering; mental, as an insight or flash of understanding; a vision, an ecstasy, or a glimpse into the jaws of Death. There is also a level of this at-one-ment and transcendence of personal identity which really has no content, but has to do with simply experiencing BEING. Before we need concern ourselves with mapping and differentiating the subtle regions of the Self, we first have to make contact and practice becoming grounded in this transpersonal realm. What matters is our growing self-knowledge as an individual until we “cross over” into the awareness of a higher level of participation, relationship and organization (Humanity, Earth, Universe) which includes us, realizing our identity with that greater Whole (“a whole new domain of possibility for evolution”). This identity may not dawn upon us until much later, after we have fled or pursued the fascinating dream or vision of Wholeness. There is a quality of “coming home” often associated with this realization of our transpersonal identity.

Ideally – in childhood or at any age – the first conscious impression of the Wholeness of the Universe and of our connectedness with It changes (or confirms) our perspective. It anchors for us the Reality of the transpersonal dimension, even if we let it slip below the threshold of awareness for a time, and provides an opening in the psyche through which later self-transcending experiences can be admitted. It is a Seed like the zygote, except it may sprout immediately or lie dormant for years. Who can really say what the effects of such experiences are when they grace the very young? There is much less mental sediment to reach through, but at the same time there is a minimum of personal history which might provide contrast and perspective. In some cases (like Jung’s) an early experience of the transpersonal is disturbing like the irritating grain of sand around which a pearl forms and compels the fulfillment of a destiny at any cost.

Could it be that such cases are simply more extreme examples of what operates potentially in each of us, only more subtly? There is often the sense in retrospect of seeing how we have perhaps been “led” by circumstance, by whim and “coincidence” to fulfill a calling which has always been our goal. One modern depth psychologist refers to the influence of our “Seed” in this way:

*Here we have the key to the pattern by which personality develops. The process of growth begins with an image of its goal, though this image does not consciously direct itself. It simply appears. Even when it is not in the visual form of a specific image, it is present; and it expresses itself then as a nonconscious knowing of what is true . . . The entire pattern discloses itself as it acts itself out; and often it is only in the course of this enactment that the person discovers the nature of the goal he is truly seeking.*<sup>5</sup>

What is it that could have guided us even though we were unaware? Isn’t that the conceptual Seed, the originating point of the Self/personality interface? Is that what the Hindu refers to by

<sup>4</sup> C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Ira Progoff, *The Symbolic and the Real* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), p. 76.

the term dharma, translated as “truth in being,” the particular life expression for which we have been created by the needs of the greater Whole? “Better to do one’s own dharma poorly than to do that of another well,” says the Bhagavad Gita. Even if we cannot remember a specific transpersonal experience, we can see evidence of the conception, just as the physiological changes in the woman’s body give evidence of a hidden event.

It is not possible to classify this influence by the nature of its appearance, even when it is consciously registered. Nor do we necessarily embrace its presence willingly. Jung at age 12 underwent a psychological crisis, having fainting spells and struggling to understand what God wanted of him. He felt threatened by some dark overwhelming thought:

*I gathered all my courage, as though I were about to leap forthwith into hell-fire, and let the thought come. I saw before me the cathedral, the blue sky. God sits on His golden throne, high above the world – and from under the throne an enormous turd falls upon the sparkling new roof, shatters it, and breaks the walls of the cathedral asunder.<sup>6</sup>*

This experience was followed by relief, bliss, and gratitude. There is somehow a “fit” between the experience and the individual which reveals a unique meaning. Some people seem to be guided consciously or unconsciously by a sense of responsibility and purpose to serve others or to create. Others have powerful awakenings in which the presence of this inner Seed is revealed as a shocking insight, dream or vision, like that of St. Paul on the road to Damascus. In these cases we see a conversion, a metanoia or reversal in life orientation. These may occur in a prison cell, a brush with death, depression, anywhere and anytime – perhaps even now, in the space between your breaths.... And for others there may be a slow and gradual dawning of a more inclusive context for one’s life. Many sense this Seed without any mental maps with which to understand what is happening or support from their environment. Such was the case for Jung, who was the son of a Protestant minister living in late 19th century Switzerland. Rather than believe (or be told) that they are “going crazy,” they can learn to appreciate and cooperate with this gift without excessive fear or confusion. Teaching this is part of the dharma of transpersonal psychology.

The first conscious experience of the transpersonal – a manifestation of the Seed – can occur at any age. Many report such experiences as young children. Others may forget and then in later life feel a sense of *deja vu* or recognition when similar experiences occur. We have no way of knowing exactly when or how often these occur because of their subjective nature. Suffice that in our present Western society such experiences are virtually taboo, especially for open discussion, like sex and death, and many children quickly learn this by the confusion or embarrassment with which their accounts are met. So quite often these early experiences are repressed or simply forgotten and if the defenses are strong enough they may prevent any repetition, rendering the person spiritually sterile, deaf to the whisperings (or explosions) of the Self. More important than knowing when our first transpersonal experience took place is the recognition of its impact and our present attitudes toward the superconscious, the unconscious source of our inspirations and intuitions, of genius, higher psychic functions and spiritual energies.

We can assume that every human being has been or will be subject to this impregnation. The desolation of poverty or abuse or the lazy ease of wealth may render the result a miscarriage, or provide a stunning contrast – who can say? Even if unconscious, we see the evidence of the presence of the transpersonal Seed in the arising of hopes and dreams and in the vision of a better qual-

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<sup>6</sup> C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), p. 15.

ity of livingness, drawing us forward, leading us to actualize our potentials. The forms by which this unfolds are secondary to the qualities which we develop. Childhood hobbies, obsessions with learning all we can about Norse mythology, mastering the piano or climbing the corporate ladder are the forms by which we develop inner qualities like concentration, assertiveness, will, spontaneity, or imagination. Somewhere within the defended boundaries of personal selfhood with which the ego fortifies its rulership may be an infiltrator, a subversive element which bides its time, acting as a magnet attracting other transpersonal influences until its strength can turn the personality toward goals which transcend self-interest. But until the personality is ready, self-interest may be Self-interest as well. If the pursuit of self-centered goals fosters qualities within the personality which will eventually serve the purposes of the Higher Self, then there is a moral value in self-interest, though there is the danger of losing our way and cutting ourselves off from the guidance of our inner Seed-knowing.

Our educational system is sadly lacking constructive references to these Seed experiences and as a result it forces many of us at first to deny them or to carry them shamefully or in confusion as a threat to our identity. They should be celebrated, understood and integrated into our lives for the promises they are, as has been done by “primitive” cultures. In environments where they are accepted, as in certain religious groups, their vitality and promise can be lost in dogmatic interpretations which serve the purpose of binding the group more closely together. Rather than recognizing the Source and Goal of these experiences as the Self within, they are taken as testimonials to the righteousness and authority of the group or its teachings. Instead of empowering the individual with greater self-trust and responsibility, the group is nourished at the expense of the individual (and thus of all of us). We can observe this not only in cults and fundamentalist sects but also in the established religious traditions.

Traditional psychology (another church) has confused these experiences with regressive ones in which the individual retreats from personal ego-building and emergence from the psychological womb of childhood and seeks instead the infantile security of non-differentiation. This is sometimes referred to as difficulty in separating from the mother, either the personal-physical one or the “Great Mother” of the entire environment. This confusion, mainly stemming from psychoanalytic theory, has recently been labeled by transpersonal psychologists as the “pre/trans fallacy” (see Wilber, 1980) in which the phenomena of transpersonal experience, which are beyond (trans-) the purely individual or personal and which seem to have to do with a bonding or connectedness to a greater Whole, are mistaken for pre-personal nostalgia (return to the womb and unconsciousness), which also has a bonding and connectedness which can obliterate the sense of being a separate self. The line between pre- and trans- is not always distinct, but in transpersonal events the sense of the personal is not destroyed but temporarily suspended. It may even be maintained simultaneously with the transcendent identification: “I and my Father are one.”

The tragedy is that an individual can be undergoing a progressive breakthrough to transpersonal consciousness which becomes interpreted as regressive and treated as such. In such cases, in addition to the use of medication to suppress symptoms (anxiety, euphoria, disorientation) which can also suppress the experience, the goal of treatment would be to restore the person to their “normal” state, that of a healthy separative ego, but which in actuality would be regressive itself since this individual is transcending ego as their only source of identity. The person entering the transpersonal phase of development (which is not the same as one having an isolated transpersonal experience which augments personality growth) is not leaving behind the stage of individuality but taking that stage with them into a new expanded sense of self in which “I am the part

and the Whole.” In the Old Testament the name of God, Jehovah, has often been translated as “I am that I am” which, if spoken with emphasis on the word “that,” expresses the same idea.

The subject of this chapter is not the birth of the Self in a human personality (a “full-term personality” – see Chapter 6) but conception, the Seed which is fulfilled in the Self-realizing personality. The Self is by definition related to All That Is and so It is always present. All that really ever changes is our relationship to It, our interpretation of It, or our willingness to align our life with Its purposes. As young children we are completely open to It, but with our weak sense of boundaries we are very limited in our capacity to interpret or implement It. In our Western society as the child develops greater ability to interpret experience through assimilation of language and culture, the structure of our language and the underlying assumptions of our culture (scientific, materialistic, rational) make it increasingly difficult to find ways to fit transpersonal experience in a meaningful way into the context we are given. It doesn’t have to be this way, as other cultures demonstrate, but presently in the great majority of cases, it is.

If we are carrying within us a repressed or unintegrated early transpersonal experience which has taken place during the time which developmentally revolves around relationship with Mother, it is no wonder that when such experiences or our yearning for them awaken in adulthood they are colored strongly by infant/Mother associations and imagery. But given time and understanding acceptance, there is no reason why our perception of the transpersonal cannot evolve to more sophisticated forms. The artist and scientist provide examples of interpretation of the transpersonal which engage the concrete mind or the aesthetic sense. These “mature” forms are not qualitatively better than the infantile ones, but reveal other facets or views of the transpersonal. By experiencing a variety of masks for the transpersonal we can realize that they are masks, forms for recognizing and interpreting the presence of Something which has no form. Thus we can understand the traditional insistence by organized religions upon avoiding too much exposure to other religions, because with greater understanding might come the undermining of the power and authority of that particular church – a purely ego-stance.

*When through intuitive understanding, you are able to cross the network of illusion, then you will be indifferent to both dogma and tradition.<sup>7</sup>*

This realization of the Reality behind the mask undoes the fallacy of taking literally for Reality that which has provided a way for It to reveal Itself, and makes religious warfare obsolete. God has masks, like those called religion, science, culture, myth, God or Atman, but is not confined to them. Historically we have been like the baby who keeps looking at our pointing finger when we excitedly try to point out something of interest. In adolescence and adulthood there is often a reawakening or revival of this Seed, pointing us toward the presence of the Higher Self. It is in the early stages of reawakening that we tend to identify the Self with the form in which we have found It. Then we become attached to the teacher, cult, drugs or rituals which worked for us. Spiritual maturity is in the recognition and correction of this error (see Trungpa, 1972).

The question is: if the Self is present in us as babies, then why is all the rest of this dance necessary? If it is the objective of the Self to be fused with the human personality which It spins into existence like the spider spinning its web, why do we seem to have to lose our way and our relationship with the Self, to mistake ourselves for something small and partial, to imprison ourselves, only hopefully to reawaken later to Its presence and our True Identity? We are like the Prince or Princess in fairy tales who is sent at an early age to be brought up by peasants unaware

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<sup>7</sup> – *Bhagavad Gita*(), 2:52.

of his or her royal identity and inheritance, only later to be recalled to fulfill his or her destiny. Why do we seem to need to live out the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke, 15:11-32)?

Whether the Seed is recognized early in life or in adulthood or works its will outside of our awareness, it requires a personality capable of self-expression in order to be fulfilled. It is in the development of that personality that we also can develop amnesia, like the souls described by Plato who are bathed in the river of forgetfulness before reincarnation on Earth so that their origins are erased from memory. The development of the effective and expressive personality is symbolized by the gestation stage, in which the drive for separation and individuality assumes precedence over unity and relationship to the greater Whole. Before exploring the gestation stage, let us see if we can make the ideas presented in this chapter of personal (and transpersonal) relevance and thus build a deeper relationship and more attentive receptivity to That in us which is ready to emerge as Self. These exercises in the first three chapters consist of a "Life Review," in which we apply the ideas in each chapter to our own life, and "Bridging with the Transpersonal Self" which uses the imagination to foster an impersonal transpersonal perspective.

### **Exercises**

#### **Life Review**

Can you remember an early experience of the Self, of a unitive connectedness, or an identification with God, Nature, Life or some such Whole?

What was your reaction and interpretation (if any) of that experience? Did you tell anyone about it? If so, how did they respond? If not, why not?

How do you feel about that experience now? How receptive do you feel you are to similar experiences? Do you have any fears about having such experiences?

Reflect upon any other significant transpersonal experiences you've had in some depth, especially upon what was occurring in your life at the same time and how you or others reacted to the experience. Have you assimilated them?

#### **Bridging with the Transpersonal Self**

Take some time to relax, to quiet and observe your breath, to relax your body and be comfortable, and be aware of your feelings and thoughts. Know that you have thoughts and feelings, but that you are not those thoughts or feelings. You are the Observer, the One Who is aware.

Imagine yourself to be the Higher Self which is trying to prepare the ground within your personality for some kind of effective rapport. Imagine being above your own head, looking down upon yourself, able to perceive not only the physical body but also inner states. How do you see yourself?

Is this person you observe open to or responsive to Your Presence in his/her life? Why do You want to influence their life?

What in them seems to be slowing or preventing a greater impact of Your Presence – is it perhaps an attitude, a conceptual framework, fear?

How do You feel toward that person with whom You are trying to establish a firm relationship? What do You want from them? What do You have to offer them?

Now go back to being the individual person you know yourself to be in your normal daily life. Also be aware of the Presence trying to enter into your life Who was just observing you.

How do you sense Its Presence? Can you feel It, or see It? What would you need in order to be more open and receptive to Its influence? What would you need to let go of to help that to happen?

Now imagine the gap between the two of you disappears and you become as one – you are the transpersonal Self and the personal self; they are one and the same. You know all that this Higher Self knows, yet can function within your daily world while maintaining an awareness of the Whole, seeing your relationship to the world around you as simply an aspect of that organic Whole, a piece of something larger and more comprehensive. Stay with that, simply breathing, without holding on to thoughts . . .



# Chapter Three

## Gestation: The First Trimester

### The Creation of the Three Bodies

*One of the main functions of the unconscious, and at the same time one of the most important stages in the educational process, is the elaboration of experiences which one has made, the vital assimilation of what has been perceived and learned. This elaboration can be regarded as a real “psychic gestation” having strict analogies with physical gestation. Both occur in the depths, in the mystery, one in the mother’s womb, the other in the intimate recesses of the unconscious; both are spontaneous and autonomous functions, but so sensitive and delicate that they can be easily disturbed by external influences; both finally climax in the crisis and the miracle of “birth,” of the manifestation of a new life.<sup>8</sup>*

*Three souls which make up one soul: first, to wit,  
A soul of each and all the bodily parts,  
Seated therein, which works, and is what Does,  
And has the use of earth, and ends the man  
Downwards . . .<sup>9</sup>*

## Introduction

**T**HOUGH THERE ARE EXCEPTIONS, it usually takes a lifetime for the conceptual Seed to flower and produce a mature personality which can effectively fulfill his or her role in the overall spiritual or planetary function of Humanity. This is the Self-infused personality. The immature personality has come into being unconsciously identified with the Self as the Mother and World-as-a-Whole within which he or she is embedded, with no real sense of being yet a distinct individual. We could call this the embryonic personality, ready to engage in a natural course

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<sup>8</sup> Roberto Assagioli, M.D., (), p. .

<sup>9</sup> Robert Browning, “Death in the Desert” (), .

of development and integration in order eventually to provide a healthy vehicle for the birth of the Self, a higher-order center of integration/organization. It is with this process of personality gestation that conventional psychology is most familiar, without for the most part realizing the broader implications of its stages and problems. The formation of a healthy ego and individual personality is seen by official psychology as the end of the process, rather than as a transitional stage preceding transpersonal unfoldment. It is as if obstetricians believed that the goal of pregnancy were the creation of a healthy fetus, not the ultimate delivery of that fetus from the mother into the world.

The gestation of the human fetus is usually described as consisting of three trimesters. In the sequence of conception-gestation-labor-birth, this phase is by far the longest, taking up 99.9% of the duration. In our parallel model of the symbolic birth of the transpersonal Self within the personality, this phase covers the development of an individual autonomous personality, aware of itself and responsible for its choices. The three trimesters in physical birth can be loosely described as:

first trimester (3 months) - creation of most of the components of the physical body, development of structure and material;

second trimester (3 months) - organization, differentiation and refinement, as in creation of hair, eyes where there had been slits, fingers, etc.;

third trimester (3 months) - weight gain, establishment of brain as director of physical organism.

The same method of synthesis in evolution takes place here as was described on pages 13-14. First elements (cells) multiply, then are organized into complex wholes (organs, then systems) which finally come under the direction of some unifying higher-order principle (the brain-directed organism).

We can represent the development of the personality in parallel terms:

first trimester (symbolic) - development of structure and material through growth of the physical body, emotional body and mental body, indicating "mechanisms" which register feelings and thoughts, as well as sensations;

second trimester - differentiation, definition and refinement of these three vehicles through lived experience, forging a sense of distinctness;

third trimester - finding one's inner center of gravity and development of the ego as a means of coordination and direction for the personality (like the brain in the physical body).

These stages overlap but for the sake of discussion we can hypothesize the first trimester as symbolizing childhood and adolescent development, the second trimester adolescence and early adulthood, and the third maturing adulthood. The birth of the Self within the personality can be considered to begin generally around mid-life, sometime during the 30's or 40's (with exceptions). We will later consider the idea of the premature (and therefore riskier) birth of the Self. It is also possible to misinterpret temporary peak or transpersonal experiences as the full-fledged birth, instead of recognizing them as a kind of "false labor," which prepares the personality for the real thing.

If the work of gestation has not been completed and the personality is not mature or well-integrated, then spiritual birth can have tragic consequences in some cases or at least result in "birth de-

fects”: a personality incapable of expressing the Self in a healthy well-rounded way, though there may be some very specialized gifts. In spite of the very real and exciting (or terrifying) impact of transpersonal experience, we must not let ourselves become distracted from the gestation process of personality development. Experiences of a transpersonal nature might best be interpreted during childhood, adolescence and young adulthood as assisting personality integration, as well as reminding us of the ultimate purpose for becoming an individual – to serve the Higher Self – and not as a sign we have permanently transcended routine needs or responsibilities.

## Physical Body

There is a wide variety of ways to portray the early development of the personality. We are not necessarily disagreeing with them but are trying to provide an overview from the perspective of the Self. It could be said that during the first few years of life emphasis is on the development of the physical body. Almost all of the physical growth occurring in a person’s life takes place during the first 12 years or so. In addition to the main emphasis on physical size, coordination, mastery, strength and self-control, this period is characterized by an almost complete identification with the body: “I am my body. My body is me.” The body-image created at this time, whether one experiences themselves as attractive, ugly, awkward, graceful, large, small, weak, strong, similar or different, will usually deeply affect the later self-image, even when the body has drastically changed. So an adult who is of average size or weight but who was oversized as a child has difficulty in seeing themselves as other than large. Such images may in time lose their potency, freeing the individual to discover a deeper sense of identity than that which was originally formed with reference to body-image.

Much of our pain could be interpreted as a result of the Self wishing us to liberate ourselves from a limiting self-image (whether negative or positive) in order to be open to knowing ourselves in a deeper way. Our physical appearance is the shallowest identity we have, but also the first. A transpersonal or peak experience can also awaken or remind us that we are indeed more than the physical body. Many deformed or handicapped people have recognized this as a result of the need to transcend physically imposed limitations. While identified with their physical body and unable to realize a more comprehensive sense of themselves, the accompanying pain of that limiting and false identification will motivate them to move on, to search for a deeper source of identity. The same case could be made in a different way for someone who has an extremely beautiful body. There can be an ego-feeding sense of pride or specialness which makes it difficult to move on from the natural early stage of physical body-identification. What was healthy food for the ego at one stage of development can become an addiction. If this identification persists the result would be the realization of the impermanence of the body and the loss of youthful attractiveness (or athletic prowess). The person would be forced to realize that they cannot remain indefinitely in the state of specialness with which they began. Ageing as a natural process confronts us with the fact that identity based on the body (or any identification for that matter) must change.

In the transpersonal model pain is accepted as a guide, as a means by which we receive feedback telling us when we are attached or addicted, resisting or blocking the natural gestation process (or we will see later, the birthing process). Pain is not punishment but a warning that we are holding on to something which is keeping us from moving on and growing. It does not indicate a mistake or sin for which we are being punished, only that out of ignorance or fear we are “missing

the mark,” which is what the word “sin” originally meant. This implies that if pain is a signal which is trying to keep us aligned with our growth and deeper purpose, then we must be open to feeling our pain and acknowledging others’ pain and not indulge in numbing through denial or escape. Our social taboo which expects us to avoid pain invites us to be like a pregnant woman who takes drugs to anesthetize pain during pregnancy and who thus jeopardizes her baby and herself because the pain may be a warning sign of trouble and is being ignored or numbed. Pain is an ally and usually accompanies growth. “There is no coming to consciousness without pain,” said Jung. This does not imply, however, that all pain is growthful or that the more we hurt the better it is for us, only that pain can teach us if we don’t run away from it.

Freud recognized the importance of certain body zones at different times of childhood in the development of the personality. He theorized a sequence emphasizing the mouth during infancy because of the importance of feeding and its associations with security, then the anal area and its issues of toilet training, cleanliness and self-control, and the sexual-genital area experience. We can generalize from this to assume that any area of the body can assume importance for the individual for either positive or negative reasons at different times, i.e., foot deformities, big ears, attractive breasts. A childhood illness or physical abnormality may create the foundation of later self-image.

We can ask “What does this particular emphasized aspect of the body mean?” for an individual. Rather than referring to hereditary, biological, or medical interpretations, we can take an illness, symptom, deformity or unusual interest in a particular body part or function as a symbolic statement about the person. Though we know diseases are caused by viruses, bacteria or germs or that there is a simple physiological explanation for being born with certain problems, that does not negate the possibility that these physical differences are also meaningful statements or metaphors. We cannot presume to compile a list of what different illnesses or body parts mean here but can look to the individual person for their meaning. The same symptom may hold different meanings for different people.

As an example, as a child Jim was skinny, had an unusual facial appearance, and was put on a special sugar-free diet to prevent his developing diabetes. These attributes created a sense of being different, weak, unable to measure up to his peers, or to participate in events like birthday parties in the same way as other children. This drew attention to his differentness in uncomfortable ways and years later in adulthood, even though his weight was average and he could eat a normal diet, his unconscious self-image was still one of being noticeably and painfully different from and weaker than others. As a result of this he avoided attention and hid his gifts or talents. Being asked what it meant that he was born with a predisposition to diabetes, he imagined that this was a statement by his body that he could not tolerate sweets. When we looked at his emotional attitude during childhood and adolescence he could see that it was serious, judgmental, bitter and rarely light, loving, or happy (or “sweet”). This helped him recognize the unconscious self-image he had been carrying (and finding ways to reinforce), which was the first necessary step in changing that image to a more accurate one conducive to growth and Self-realization. The fact that he had crooked teeth and large lips also drew attention to his mouth and had made him self-conscious, resulting in a reluctance to smile, another inhibition of “sweetness.”

The Self needs the physical body to manifest Its vision upon the physical plane and to bring to the Self the realm of sensate experience. Without that body we can have no concrete effect upon the world of the senses, nor can we supposedly perceive it. Our instincts reside in the body and offer us a connectedness with our natural environment. Some pathways to Self-realization have

placed great emphasis upon the physical body, like hatha yoga, even to the exclusion of other aspects of the personality. These may have been appropriate at earlier stages of human evolution but what we need now is a yoga of synthesis, of the whole person. The body is the most concrete facet of the personality and the earliest to develop, and so it is often central in an unconscious way, in part because it is pre-verbal. Its memories exist in sensations and in the nervous, skeletal and muscular systems and underlie our self-image.

Eventually we must realize that we are not our bodies, but that we have a body. To do that we need to be at peace with our physical body and to accept it as it is. This does not mean that we cannot then undertake to change our bodies if that is possible, like losing weight. Childhood and adolescent experiences can delay this acceptance through either painful associations with the body or parts of it, which lead to disowning or repressing awareness of these sensitive areas, or positive associations to which we become attached (i.e., beauty, strength). Normal sexual development, if not understood or if earlier than most peers, can also be a source of alienation from the body. Accepting our body as a part of us does not necessarily concern physical health and conditioning as an end in itself (another modern confusion of end and means) but simply as a means to provide a suitable vehicle for the personal self and ultimately for the Higher Self. The body by itself is not likely to lead to realization of our identity as the Self. It must be seen in relation to the personality as a whole, along with our feelings and mental activity.

If we discover blocks to our development because of early physical experiences, it may be useful to seek help which concentrates on this area, like massage, aerobics, rolfing, rebirthing, acupuncture, diet, chiropractic, movement, or bioenergetics. But the physical body is only one aspect of the whole person and needs to be seen in relation with that whole or we may expect too much from a body-based approach. We can trust the natural process of gestation and know that it will tell us if we need to give the physical dimension of our personality our attention, perhaps through our dreams, symptoms, or instinctive inclinations. It is likely, however, that the majority of our physical symptoms are the outcome of problems on the next higher level of personality – the feelings and emotions.

## Exercises

Think back to your childhood. If possible, find a picture of yourself as a child (before seven if possible) and study it. Imagine being that child now. Try to be aware of how your body felt to you then, of how you experienced it, and of the kinds of remarks or attitudes toward your body you remember coming from family or peers.

How did you feel about your body? Was it fat, thin, athletic, awkward, attractive, unusual? Did you have any specific problems with it, in walking or speaking, an injury, birth defect, embarrassing types of clothing, etc.? Did you like your face? What about it did you like? What didn't you like?

Did you have any serious illness, hospitalization, special needs? Did you have to wear glasses?

How were you at sports or games? As you reached adolescence did the opposite sex seem attracted, repulsed or indifferent to you?

Was there an illness or any reason why a particular body part or function was a special focus of your (or others') attention? Let yourself imagine now that you are that body part or function,

make some statements about yourself and what you were saying by manifesting those symptoms or problems.

Bring your awareness now to the present and to the person you know yourself to be, and be aware of how you feel toward your body now.

Look back over what you have written in response to the earlier questions in this section. Can you see aspects of your present self-image reflected in how you saw yourself physically in childhood? How? What do you see now as the effect of childhood?

### **Bridging with the Transpersonal Self**

Take some time to relax, to quiet and observe your breath, to relax your body and be comfortable, and be aware of your feelings and thoughts. Know that you are the Observer, the One Who is aware.

Imagine yourself to be the transpersonal Self, the One Who has initiated the development of your particular personality as a means of experiencing or expression. Be aware of the physical body which this personality was born with, with its unique strengths and weaknesses, gifts and problems. Be aware of the illnesses, accidents, above average or seemingly weaker aspects of that body, especially as they were experienced in childhood, but including anything significant from post-childhood as well. What benefit or asset has been offered to the developing personality in having to deal with these?

What is there left from early body experience which seems to be having an effect now on the personality which is impeding Your ability to reach or to use that personality? What does that personality need at this time in order to make its self-image and physical body a suitable vehicle for Your expression? How would You suggest the personality begin to meet that need?

Allow Yourself to feel love and compassion for that personality as it grows and learns, and offer Your support.

### **Emotional Body**

We are generally not used to the idea expressed in the East that we have a “body” of feelings, emotions and desires. Whether or not we take this literally it provides a useful concept by which to refer to our inner experience of evaluation, attraction and repulsion. It is the emotional body which we experience when we feel drawn toward or pushed away from people, objects or situations. Some teachings suggest that our whole range of feelings is really the many shades of two polar opposites – love and fear (see Das, 1900; Foundation for Inner Peace, 1975; or Jampolsky, 1979).

The emotional body is especially active in our relationships. We are drawn to others whom we like and avoid those we don't like (or is it the other way around?). Our feelings provide the bridge by which we commune with others. Sharing a feeling experience with another person seems to create a bond between us, even if the experience is negative. It's as if a shared experience creates a kind of resonance between the two emotional bodies because they now have something in

common. Even knowing that two of us have had a similar experience in our past, at different times and places, seems to offer such a bond. So just as the physical body offers a vehicle by which we can affect the sensory world and interact with it, the emotional body allows us to form bonds with each other, to evaluate experience, and to create a range of values by which we are more or less motivated. That which we feel to be most valued or which attracts us the most will be the object of our desires and we will make choices and take actions which have as their end the fulfilling of those desires. We may desire money, love, approval, sex, recognition, or anything which makes us “feel good.” Our desires may be rooted in the physical level of our being, as for food, touch or security, or be of a more abstract nature – for truth, freedom, or transcendence. Often we experience confusion and disturbance in the emotional body when there is a conflict of desires, i.e., part of me wants food but another part wants me to stay thin.

Our time for essential development of the emotional body seems to overlap and to follow that of the physical body. During later childhood and adolescence we become sensitive to a wider range of feelings, relationships become increasingly important, and gradually we become capable of learning to handle emotions (implying a greater objectivity toward them). At this time our self-image is strongly influenced by the sense of worth we find reflected in the value others seem to place on us. The degree to which we experience approval, love, acceptance, and attraction from others fosters for us a sense of our self-worth. It is in this area of development that most of psychology and therapy tends to focus, for good reason. As much as physical weaknesses or strengths tend to be hereditary, most emotional wounds, strengths, and weaknesses are also passed on from parent to child.

This phase of development offers little security or certainty to most of us. We are “at sea” in the waters of the emotions, usually far from any center of stability. As a result we may try to suppress or deny the intensity of our feelings or certain types of feeling that evoke insecurity. The emotional body often develops with blind spots, many created by the same deficiencies in our parents. If one or both parents is unable to tolerate anger, for example, then we never learn how to experience or express it and instead may deny it, turn it upon ourselves as guilt, depression or withdrawal, or even develop physical symptoms. If we are brought up in an environment in which only positive feelings are allowed we become alienated from and afraid of our own darker side, i.e., hate, envy, suspicion, anger. If our parents have never learned how to express unconditional love or warmth or affection, we learn indirect ways of finding substitutes like praise for our achievements, attention for our illnesses, or disapproval and punishment for our acting out and rebelliousness. Or we may experience an emptiness in our inability to experience and express love. Our education is sadly lacking in this area, instead filling our heads with facts and “how-to’s” rather than helping us to become emotionally secure by teaching us how to explore and accept ourselves. As a result many of us reach adulthood with gaping wounds, ignorance about ourselves, and an inability to communicate our inner experience to each other. We are then isolated in our own inner world, looking for someone to understand us, someone who can reach inside of us and see what we cannot, or at least someone who will allow us to stay as we are without putting pressure on us to “open up.”

The tasks of emotional development have to do with learning a broad range of sensitivity to a variety of feelings, both positive and negative, pleasant and unpleasant. Our instinctive urge toward wholeness will provide ways to become aware of places in our emotional body where we are either undeveloped or wounded. For example, we appear to draw to us the kinds of people and experiences which offer us a mirror in which to see these “flaws” in the emotional body. We can attune ourselves to the signals which try to show us what needs attention. They appear to

develop progressively, at first as a subtle sensing that something is “off,” not right. If we are insensitive or unresponsive to these inner signals they may escalate to chronic worry, anger, fear or some such unpleasant emotion. If we persist in our ignorance we may need to have our attention grabbed by insomnia, headaches, or other debilitating symptoms.

Intense emotional reactions to people or objects, such as extreme dislike or compulsive attraction, are often a sign that we are meeting (or projecting upon) another that which we must learn to see in ourselves. If I cannot stand (not just “prefer,” but feel agitated and upset) to be around people who call attention to themselves then I must be willing to recognize this reaction and honestly to ask myself, “Is it possible that I do that? That I try to call attention to myself? Or that I thwart the part of me that wants that attention? Why would I do that? Do I have some unrecognized and denied feelings of wanting approval or recognition?” The same applies to people or objects we feel a powerful compulsion to be with or to possess. This can be a sign that they are showing us a denied positive aspect of ourselves, like being attracted to persons who are powerful, sensitive or creative, or objects which are fragile, beautiful or solid.

Another helpful signal we have already mentioned is pain. Painful experiences or situations which we seem to repeat, like always trying to form intimate relationships with partners who treat us badly or leave us, or being unable to say “no” or to tell others when we are angry can be signs of feelings needing healing and our attention. There are times when we may need help in doing this. It is difficult to see our blind spots through our own blind spots. This is the dominant focus of psychotherapy mainly because it is in the emotional area that the majority of problems presently lie. But we need to maintain that larger perspective which can appreciate that our feelings are only part of the whole personality and in addition, that the personality is a means and not an end. Besides developing sensitive response to and expression of the whole range of feelings, later stages of gestation call for coming into right relationship with our feelings, having them and not identifying with them to the degree that we are controlled by them. Just as we tend at first to identify with our physical bodies we naturally progress to identifying with our feelings. “I am sad, I am happy, I am angry” are statements which limit us and our range of responses. “I have sadness” or “I am experiencing anger” allow us to have the feelings but also to remember that we are more at any time than the feeling itself. This allows us to ask ourselves how we want to choose to be in relation to a given feeling. We learn some of this in our childhood training if, for example, we are taught we shouldn’t allow our anger to cause us to hit another child. But usually what we learn is what we are not to do physically and not how we can constructively re-channel that aggressive energy; as a result we don’t know how to act when angry. This is not the same as learning how to recognize and accept all feelings as they arise and developing the means to neutralize, harmonize, sublimate or simply discharge those energies as we see fit.

One reason we need emotional training and healing is the social taboo on feeling or expressing pain. Except for a few limited situations, i.e., funerals, losses or physical pain (sometimes), we are not supported in experiencing pain. Since pain is one of the chief signals that can tell us where we need to give attention to our feelings and where we are missing the mark of our own growth, we are deprived of the benefits of this teaching aid. How rarely do we hear others or ourselves communicate our pain about people starving in Africa, or an arms race that we don’t seem to be able to control? Workshops in the 1980’s have called attention to the fact that out of a sharing of despair and pain comes empowerment and the capacity to act to try to improve the painful situation (Macy, 1983). In families of the dying it is often impossible for the patient or their loved ones to talk about the pain of separation and loss, thus depriving them of the opportunity to

find a closeness through emotional bonding which will sustain the living when the other is gone. Instead the survivors are left with guilt over things unsaid.

Negative feelings, when denied or repressed, obstruct the fuller integration of the personality, thus limiting the readiness of that personality to serve as a vehicle for birth of the transpersonal Self. As a result, as the time for this birth approaches previously buried negative feelings are often pushed to the surface into the person's awareness. The feelings that arise are not signs of weakness or badness. The understanding that this is constructive, like physical toxins brought to the surface in order to be removed so that healing can occur, encourages acceptance and cooperation. The problems of emotional development are not limited to negative feelings. Many people evidence as great a block to positive feelings of joy, passion, playfulness or self-love. This also is a potential obstacle to the birth of the Self.

There is no simple formula for handling negative feelings. A distinction may need to be made between those feelings which arise in the present and those which stem from previous experiences which have been denied or repressed. It is still important how we handle negative feelings when they do arise, even though our goal may be not to contaminate ourselves or our environment with them. To pretend they don't exist or to punish ourselves for not being "good" or "spiritual" causes division within us and impedes the integration of the personality. We must be willing to accept our experience, whatever it may be. Undesirable feelings must be dealt with after we have accepted their presence, not by denying them. Rather than devoting our full attention to these feelings as if they were some kind of enemy, which serves to energize them, we might consider giving attention to developing their opposite within us. If we can remember that feelings are something we have, something which happens to us, rather than identifying with them, we have more freedom in deciding how we want to approach them.

The perspective of the Self suggests that in truth we are all related as parts of a Whole. This means that we are all connected with each other and the environment. When we experience this connectedness we usually call it "love." Negative feelings arise from the illusionary separateness engendered by the ego or some specific aspect of the personality, when this unity or connectedness is forgotten. Negative feelings not only arise from this separateness, they reinforce it. Feelings like envy, anger, suspicion, hatred, and jealousy perceive the other as a threat and they are our defense system intended to protect us from that threat. Therefore all of these feelings arise out of fear which can only develop when we feel separate. It is natural then that these feelings come up because at one level, for our bodies and senses, we are separate from each other. But at a higher (more inclusive) level, the spiritual or transpersonal, we are united and no threat. This difference can be experienced in loving when we love someone conditionally, from the personality level, which means we support and care for them if they don't do anything which threatens us. On a transpersonal level we experience unconditional love which can still feel connected with and supportive of another even when their actions don't harmonize with our desires.

It is not a question of calling some feelings "real" and others "illusionary" because to some part of us, they are all real. But we can choose which ones we want to trust or believe and which ones we know come from a place in us which is simply immature or limited in its vision. We would not allow a young child to interpret the environment for us through their reactions. We know better because we know there isn't really a "bogyman" in the closet. But to the child there is and we can accept that as their reality without making it our own. In the same way, we can accept that a part of us feels angry or scared, without denying it and yet also without acting from that perception. In the same way that we would comfort the child and reassure her, we can do the same to the part

of us which is reacting. We see this sometimes when we reassure ourselves before a challenging event, telling ourselves, "It will be all right; you'll do fine." In offering this kind of support to a child, either a real one or the one inside of us, we are not negating their experiences. To say "No there isn't a bogeyman, there isn't really anything there" tells the child that they cannot trust their perceptions. Or to be told "Don't be afraid" asks them to deny their experience. This can have repercussions in adulthood. It would seem better to support them, to report that we do not have the same perception, and to try to convey to them that while this perception is real to them on some level that it is not true physically. Telling them it is an imaginary creature and exists in their mind may be helpful as long as we don't devalue or belittle the imagination, i.e., not "It's only your imagination" as if the imagination were worthless, but "This is in your imagination and we can also use your imagination to send it away, to replace it with an angel, or to create protection." Then the child learns that imagination can be used creatively, that it is a resource they have and that it cannot hurt them physically.

The imagination and the feelings are both part of the emotional body. Our feelings create images which attract or repel us and likewise we can create images which affect our feelings. Visualizing a warrior can awaken strength, or a quiet reflection pool can evoke serenity. So the imagination and the ability to visualize provide a valuable tool for working with our feelings. As mentioned earlier, our efforts can be better spent developing the opposites of undesirable feelings rather than doing battle with them. And in the most simplistic sense all of our feelings, because they occur as pairs of opposites, can be seen as belonging to either the family of feelings headed by "Love" (affirming) or the one headed by "Fear" (negating). We can always choose to focus upon the opposite feeling to a negative one by asking ourselves how Love would perceive the same situation. When we can observe through Love we are ready to forgive, and when we forgive the bonds of unity again can be seen. It may be an impossibility to eliminate the existence of negative feelings, since they are simply one pole of a duality. Giving up the defenses of negativity does not mean that we have to be unprotected, because we can still develop self-protection without severing ourselves psychically from our fellow humans or our planet. To do so only reinforces the illusion of separateness. We can be afraid of snakes and hate them or we can understand that they share this planet with us, fulfill a worthy function, and that some need to be avoided because they are dangerous. We can prefer not to be around them. Recalling our earlier discussion of intense negative reactions, it may even be fruitful to examine whether snakes somehow reflect an aspect of our instinctive nature we have been unwilling to accept.

When we are aware of feeling separate from others and especially of negative feelings, we can begin to work with them by asking ourselves, "What is the threat which is generating these feelings of attack?" We only feel negative feelings which attack others and defend ourselves if some part of us feels threatened. It is like a sophisticated computerized "launch-on-warning" defense system where missiles are launched as soon as radar senses what appears to it to be an attack. Just as the human mind with the power of decision has been eliminated from such a defense system, our own minds have given up choice and attack thoughts and feelings are launched whenever some part of us feels an attack is imminent or underway. So we must start with what we are aware of, our negative thoughts and feelings. By assuming they have been created by a perception of attack or threat, we begin to track down the place in us which has been threatened and when we find it, we can uncover its "radar system," the belief system through which it is perceiving the environment. We often find that this belief system is not compatible with our conscious world-view, but instead seems like that of a young child, helpless and dependent upon others for feelings of self-worth and survival. Once we have found this source in us we can take responsibility for reassuring it. Quite often, we have internalized in childhood not only the scared child

but also the attacker, like a critical or rejecting parent or a hostile environment. As a result we may carry within us unconsciously an inner child being abused by someone. We take turns being identified unconsciously with the inner child, feeling scared and vulnerable, and then shift to the seemingly more powerful and protected place in us of the one who judges, criticizes, hates, or rejects.

This leaves us caught in a drama in which we are both giver and receiver of these feelings. We are constantly under attack and attacking. When we can uncover this behind the negative feelings in us, we are then able to take charge of rescuing the little child, taking care of it and protecting it, while at the same time also determining what sense of insecurity or fear has been the cause of the attacking behavior. We may find we have rejected because we fear rejection, or judged because we fear being judged. When we start giving these parts of us acceptance instead of rejection or judging, we find that they have much to offer us and inner peace can begin to replace war. What would happen if we all did this? (See Walsh, 1984)

While this process of inner healing goes on, the question remains of what to do with the negative feelings which arise. Rather than deny them, we accept them. We try to give the parts of ourselves the reassurance, love and acceptance which can eventually counteract the attacking feelings. This is most effective if we make this effort when things are relatively peaceful. Negotiations seem to be most effective when there is a cease-fire rather than when full-scale war is underway. Meanwhile we can find harmless outlets for our negative energies. We can write letters we never mail, or we can pour our feelings into screaming, cutting wood or washing floors. We can focus on giving to others instead of giving too much attention to ourselves, and we can choose to use our criticalness as attention to detail in some task we need to do with much care. We can ask ourselves what does this negative feeling want and where might that be appropriate. These can serve as temporary means of discharge or redirection to keep the negativity from building up and interfering with our deeper work of inner healing.

In addition to uncovering and accepting our subjective experience, we can benefit from giving attention to the quality of our environment. We are all psychically sensitive to some degree and are subject to influences from the people and energies surrounding us. Friends, relatives, television, music or movies can fill us with negativity without our being aware of it. Words of doubt or of encouragement from others tend to feed or stimulate the same qualities in ourselves. To continually share your dreams with someone who responds with discouragement or negativity makes no sense. At the same time, we can use our environment to foster the positive qualities we are seeking. Appropriate music, art, or the initiating of a support network of friends can make our desired changes much easier. If, for example, we are seeking to develop courage in order to commit ourselves to being more expressive, reading biographies of others who have had to manifest similar qualities can be inspiring, which literally means that they can breathe the qualities into us.

During the time of life when emotional development is paramount we are also very impressionable. Emotions and feelings are responsive, sensitive, and arise in reaction to some stimulus. As a result, when we are most influenced by our feelings we may tend to experience ourselves as relatively powerless, as a victim, needy or dependent upon others. Adolescence has been recognized as a time of searching for identity, of confusion, and of hunger for ideals and models. The inner world of newly emerging sexual and emotional energies does not provide a very stable center of identity, and the tendency at this stage to identify with the feelings, which can be unstable and not under our control, leads us to search for an outside point of reference which can

provide security. Many people never outgrow this stage of development and remain emotionally adolescent, looking to outside authority figures for direction. Then what was originally a natural and normal stage of human development becomes a painful and limiting identification and the capacity to relate to others and to direct one's own life never reaches maturity.

We will return to the emotional body later in our discussion of personality integration. Our concern in this section is with the development within the child and adolescent (or in the adult, if these earlier periods were unable to support the emergence of a healthy emotional body) of the capacity to respond to feelings, to register a broad range of different qualities of emotion, to be able to accept the presence within oneself of all feelings while developing the ability to manage those feelings, first based upon externally imposed expectations and later because of intrinsic purpose and values. Our best teachers for this development are emotionally secure and healthy parents. Where this is not the case we start with a deficiency. Not only then do we lack the models and support for experiencing the whole range of our feelings, but we inherit the repressions, blind spots and unhealthy tendencies in our parents, leaving it up to us to find the needed healing and re-education later in life. We can still make up for parental weaknesses from the examples of others, like teachers, grandparents, or other relatives. Nature and music, fantasy and literature can feed our feelings also, teaching us sensitivity and appreciation of subtle shades of color and warmth.

## Exercises

Relax, and think back to later childhood and adolescence. If possible, find a picture of yourself at that age and take some time to study it and to place yourself in that picture. Remember what was important to you during that time.

Who were your friends, and how did you treat each other? How comfortable did you feel around the opposite sex? Around your own?

What were the most common feelings expressed within your home? Which positive feelings? Which negative ones? Did you ever see your parents angry? How did they act? Did they disagree? How? Did you ever see them cry?

Did you feel wanted? Appreciated? What was your basic sense of self-worth? Has that changed much since then? If so, how?

Have close intimate relationships been a rewarding or troublesome area in your life? If a problem, what seems to happen?

What kind of person can you not stand to be around? What about them disturbs you the most? Can you say, "I [do whatever it is that I cannot stand in others]?" Watch your reactions as you do this.

Are there negative feelings that seem to be present to a fair degree in your life now? Which one seems most prevalent? Can you imagine those feelings as a form of attack, designed to defend some part of you? Who in you are they defending, and what are they defending against? Take your time with this, and remember you are working with a defense system, so it may take some patience and effort to see through it. Ask the part of you who has been defended by attack (even if this attack seemed to take the form of some kind of withdrawal) what it needs. See if you want

to try to give that part of you what it needs, i.e., if it is acceptance, then tell it you want to learn to accept it.

Do you accept the presence of negativity in yourself? Are there positive feelings that it would help to nurture and develop? How can you begin to do this? Is there a place in Nature or kinds of music which foster these positive feelings for you? Are there places or people or activities presently in your life which you can see are feeding the wrong kind of feelings, compared to how you want to be? What do you want to do about that? (Allow your imagination and inner voice to tell you answers to these questions that your first conscious responses may be overlooking.)

If it appeals to you, see if you would like to say each day an affirmation of your own choice which expresses your willingness to love and accept all parts of yourself.

### **Bridging with the Transpersonal Self**

Relax your body, and watch your breath for a few moments. Let any thoughts or feelings simply pass through your awareness, returning each time to your breath. Know yourself to be the Self, the One Who watches everything that occurs in your life, Who supports and guides your growth, and Who is waiting for you to become more open, receptive and expressive of Its vision and love.

Be aware of the quality of the emotional body of this personality at this time. Are there any places that You can see where healing is needed? Are there feelings which the personality is blocking or unable to accept, and are there others which s/he seems to be addicted to? Send your love, healing, and acceptance to this person. Take your time. . .

What is it that You, the Self, want to use that body of feelings and emotions for? Is it adequate, or do You see the need for further development? What specifically would you like to see developed? How can this personality begin to do that? Are there any particular pieces of music, places in Nature, or other activities that You feel would help this personality to develop in that way?

Remind the personality that there is time, that development is a natural process which takes as long as it takes. And tell the personality that You will be there to guide and advise, as the personality continues with its work of emotional development and purification. All s/he has to do is to offer to you the places of emotional need or negativity and You will provide guidance and healing.

### **Mental Body**

Though we have been learning how to think since very early in life the development of a mental body seems to be the focus of growth during later adolescence into young adulthood. This means the capacity to think for ourselves, not just to memorize data or to be able to read or do math. The physical body provides the personality the means of expression and experience in the sense world of objects, and the emotional body gives us the ability to evaluate, to qualify and color, and to build relationships. The mental body has the potential to give forms to ideas, ideas which seem to arise from some formless creative state, called by one ancient yoga teacher “the rain-cloud of knowable things.” The mind is also the interpreter of our experience and only insofar as

the mind contains thoughts, models and images is it capable of receiving and interpreting ideas and experience. In addition it gives us the capacity to discriminate and thus to choose between differing values or actions without being reactive or automatic. The logical or concrete mind is temporarily able to take over direction of the personality, a necessary stage in the developmental process. But if allowed to go on too long as it is encouraged to do today it becomes an obstacle to the birth of the Self. Our society has confused a strong mind with personality integration.

The development of a mature and coordinated mental body follows the same stages as the birth process described for the transpersonal Self within the personality. Initially the mind needs to accumulate material. Learning the names of things and systems of classification provides the primary data and substance out of which the mind can eventually construct its own ideas and interpretations. It is here that what we presently know as education is appropriate. Culturally unable to recognize that this is only the initial stage of mental development, we consider those who can produce new ideas as special and creative. But they are in truth people who have not had their natural human ability destroyed by the education process and are in fact often the ones who never seemed able to fit in or to adapt to education as it is presently practiced. Our education process seems concerned only with what we think rather than with how we think. The mind is to be filled and then brought out for display, like a computer, impressing people with how much it can hold. Quantity rather than quality is the goal, as in many other areas of 20th-century life.

We can distinguish between two (or possibly three) levels of mind. What we typically call mind is but one level, which we could describe as “concrete” mind, concerned with specifics, facts, data and logic. But there is another level of mind, “abstract” mind, which generalizes and abstracts, which is concerned with the meaning of the facts and data, their patterns of relationship with each other and with the larger whole. This aspect of mind is less specific and less certain. It is open and boundless, while the concrete mind tries to remain closed and sure. Feeding the concrete mind is the present role of education, but developing the abstract mind and using it in conjunction with the concrete mind is also the task of education and it is here that little is offered. Plato said that underlying the concrete manifestations we observe in life are abstract archetypal form-giving qualities, like Goodness, Truth, and Beauty. The abstract mind is capable of arranging facts and data into different patterns of relationship, revealing the presence of an invisible but powerful organizing field. This field appears to be a direct means by which the transpersonal Self organizes thought and thus influences the physical world.

The history of human evolution can be seen as the progressive revelation of meaningful relationships between what has been observed and experienced. Whether such a model or pattern emerges from science or religion, it is welcomed because it provides a way of ordering otherwise chaotic or random experience and therefore furnishes a sense of security and meets a human need. The problem historically has been that the concrete mind forgets that this is only a model of an unknown Reality and tries to rigidify and concretize it. Out of the desire for certainty, a particular model becomes “true” or “right” and others “false” or “wrong.” As a result the openness and flexibility of the abstract mind is replaced in our thoughts by the need for certainty and rigidity and ideological warfare develops. Early education is designed to provide the child with an opportunity to learn language, names of objects and symbolic manipulation like mathematics. But they are rarely encouraged to venture into the unknown with uncertainty where there is enough freedom to allow the influence of abstract thought. That realm is terrifying to anyone identified with their concrete mind.

Without a developed mental capacity, the personality is mainly determined by the physical need to survive and the feelings' desires for pleasure and the avoidance of pain. The concrete mind provides data which allows for interpretation of experience and the basis for "logical" choices. This is a progressive step in evolution but needs to be followed by the development of the capacity for abstract thought, for the openness and uncertainty which allow for reorganization of data and the improvement of mental models which can ever more closely approximate the "truth" without ever believing that "truth" has been arrived at, finally, ultimately, once and for all.

It is within the developed mental body that the third level of mind can emerge: the "I", personal self or identity. We will explore this third aspect in chapter 5. For many, problems that originated during physical and/or emotional development impede mental maturation, such as a lack of confidence or low self-esteem giving one the sense that they are "dumb" and therefore preventing motivated efforts to learn. But in other cases mental development is stimulated by earlier setbacks as a form of compensation. The mind may seem a safer and more orderly basis for identity than the feelings. Nothing is that clear in the feelings because they can change suddenly or be ambivalent. But the mind offers (or seems to offer) a black-and-white opportunity: you're either right or you're wrong. Gray areas are avoided. Science is mainly interested in studying whatever can be clearly and definitively resolved by "objective" measurement, not areas that may remain cloudy.

In addition, other developmental problems can occur because of the educational system's obsession with only a certain type of mind. Intuitive, abstract, artistic or even creative thought is rarely rewarded or even recognized and instead is often labeled in terms which imply impairment. Instead of being appreciated as different, nonlinear or creative thought are often seen as inferior. When internalized this sense of mental inferiority can lead the individual to banish thinking to the same dusty bin of untried resources that others have thrown their feelings into because of early hurts. So the individual who has avoided mental development finds himself without the tools to develop his autonomy and has to rely upon the thoughts and words of others for guidance. Questioning authority is a threat to his own security and they defend the ideological slogans and institutionalized structures already in place, turning a blind eye to contradiction or doubt.

On the other hand, the person who has turned toward mental activity as a compensation for weaknesses in other areas tends to become identified with the concrete mind and to substitute logic and black-and-white thinking for feelings. This individual often is experienced by others as insensitive and unfeeling and also can become quite heavily defended from further growth by a sense of pride in knowing the "answers," living by a belief system that places "being right" at the top of the hierarchy. As a result, areas of uncertainty are avoided, thinking becomes increasingly repetitious and sterile, and other forms of interpretation (i.e., feelings, intuition) are denied any validity because they would undermine the authority of the logical mind. Our educational system has helped this type of person to develop because it tends to ignore emotional development and rewards individuals for being "right." Even higher education supports this, with research funding usually going to those who are trying to prove the official theories, rather than to those looking for new answers. Only when something is so obviously lacking an answer, like cancer research, is there any openness, but then again, it remains confined to the official medical models, rarely encouraging alternative solutions.

The development of the mental body should provide an initial foundation for a process which leads from 1) identifying ourselves with our thoughts to 2) believing we are the thinking process,

and eventually 3) the realization of being the One Who is aware of both thinking process and of thoughts but not identified with them. Just as it was natural earlier to identify with the physical body and later with the feelings, there should follow a phase in which emphasis is on thoughts, while in no way negating the usefulness of the earlier developments. There seems to be a tendency in evolution for an emerging stage to devalue or even to try to eliminate an earlier stage, because for the newly developing stage the earlier one is regressive and seen as an obstacle. So the arrival of mind and thought as the source of identity tends to support viewing body, instinct and feelings as something to be outgrown, not to be trusted, weaker, and definitely not our self: the instincts and feelings must be controlled. We can see this and its effects culturally over the past three centuries, since logical thought has become the foundation of what is “right” and to be believed, partly in reaction to our irrational and emotional history of believing the most fantastic stories simply because they have been taught by religious authority. Many still place that kind of blind faith in science or religion, but we are witnessing now many people responding to the need to think for themselves as the old forms lose their power.

So we reach the close of the first trimester of gestation, and we have an individual ideally with a physical, emotional and mental body – someone who can act, express, feel and think. But it remains for the last two trimesters to bring about the realization of an actual “I”, an identity who can function within and use, but not necessarily become limited by its identification with these three vehicles. The first trimester of spiritual/personal development takes us through childhood and adolescence and gives us elementary tools with which we can take our place as an individual in the world. But overlapping this process and extending beyond it we have the mysterious stage of the definition of one’s identity and of what some call “finding one’s center.” From the perspective of transpersonal development all the experiences during early life are primarily food for creating the substance of these three bodies. Though we are personally involved, it can be liberating to consider that the various situations, however traumatic or wonderful, which we went through during the first 18 to 20 years of our life were mainly nourishment, teaching us something or at least offering us the opportunity to learn. For example, a critical father, a childhood illness, or any kind of suffering can be seen not only from a “why me?” or victim perspective, or from anger or paranoia, but instead as having taught us to feel pain, to feel rejection, to feel things that most of us would prefer not to but which when learned and experienced give depth and a potential for compassion and for healing we might otherwise lack. The same can be said for our positive and happy experiences.

This transpersonal view promotes a Buddha-like detachment toward our life. Detachment not in the sense of non-involvement, but as an acceptance of the rightness of all that happens. Just because our feelings prefer only experiences that feel good, that does not mean that those are better for us or the only ones that are right for us. Such a detached view invites us to retrieve experiences we had thought were best forgotten and which may still be skewing our life choices or perceptions so as to avoid a repetition, and to harvest the benefits we had not recognized. In the same way, examining the peaks of our earlier life to find what they taught us or what substance they provided for us can help us to let them go if we are attached to them and then to move on.

## Exercises

Relax, and again think back to childhood and adolescence. If you have a picture of yourself, you may use it to help. What did you like to think about then? What subjects did you enjoy studying?

Which did you not like, or even fear? What was the attitude of your parents, teachers, and peers to your intelligence? Can you remember thinking creatively, or being able to formulate your own thinking, and what support you had for doing that?

How important was it to be right? What happened at home or in class when you were mistaken or didn't know the answer? How did you feel then?

Do you feel you can put together information and see it in new or different ways from others? Do you tend to spend most of your thinking time thinking about facts and details, or about meaning and patterns?

What are you most sure of? What ideas that others hold are you most certain are wrong? How do you know? Try for a moment to imagine that you know that you really do not know anything for sure, and for that matter, neither does anyone else; all anyone has is their best guess or an interpretation, but the truth remains unknown. What is that like? Do you like it, or is it unpleasant? Would you live your life any differently if you had this awareness constantly in mind? How?

### **Bridging with the Transpersonal Self**

Relax, be aware of your breathing for a few moments, and imagine yourself to be the Higher Self, seeking to use this personality for experience and expression. How do You view the mind that has been developed for Your use? What are its strengths and how can they be used? What are its weaknesses and how do they impair Your Plan?

Would this mind benefit from studying something concrete in order to develop its logical thinking, like physics, math, or some kind of practical skill, or would it perhaps be more useful to practice the study of symbols and their interpretation, in order to develop abstract thought? Or do both of these seem fairly well developed and need practice in combining them? Would silent meditation be helpful? Meditation upon a given idea or symbol, or silent contemplation of the breath?

Take two or three of the events or situations that stand out from childhood or adolescence in their impact. For each one, ask: Did this mainly have to do with physical, emotional, or mental development, or some combination of these? How can I see it affected each level? What actually happened? As the Self, how do You see the personality as having interpreted this? How did the experience fit into Your Plan for the personality? What was potentially to be learned or developed from it? What would the personality not have been able to develop without an experience like this? Is there some kind of healing or better understanding that You, the Self, can see would benefit the personality being able to harvest nurturance from this earlier experience, something which has left an open wound or prevented integration of the experience in a positive way?

On balance as You, the Self, observe this personality, how would You evaluate the physical, emotional and mental development up to now? Where is attention needed because of under-development, and where has there perhaps been some over-development as a compensation for weakness in other areas? What would You suggest for a patient, long-range program to restore balance, without devaluing or undermining existing strengths? How might this begin?



# Chapter Four

## Gestation: The Second Trimester

### Differentiation into Subpersonalities

*A person is an assembly. . .where discussion never ceases. . . . Often several members of the assembly rise at the same time and propose different things. . . . It may happen that these differences of opinion will provoke a quarrel. . . . Fellow members may even come to blows.<sup>10</sup>*

*Each fundamental personality tendency is actually an autonomous entity, and their combination, conditions and transmutations produce . . . an inner fauna, an animal kingdom the richness of which is comparable to the external one. It can truly be said that in each of us can be found, developed and active in various proportions, all instincts, passions, all vices and virtues, all tendencies and aspirations, all faculties and endowments of mankind.<sup>11</sup>*

**R**ECOGNIZING THE OVERLAPPING TENDENCY of these trimesters and that this is an arbitrary system for organizing these ideas rather than to be taken literally, we can proceed to describe the second phase of the gestation process. Gestation as a whole has to do with the development of an integrating personality which can serve as the means for bringing to birth the Higher or transpersonal Self. The first requirement for this is the creation of the three bodies or vehicles described as the first trimester: a physical body, a body of feelings, emotion and desire, and one of thought and intellect. During early life as each of these three aspects of the personality is developing, there is the natural tendency to take them one at a time as one's identity: "I am my body; I am my feelings; I am my thoughts." These are the basic elements or building blocks of personality. Later we will explore their inter-relationships and how these change during personality integration and from the influence of the Self. This section, the second trimester, has to do with the organizing of body, feelings and mind into subpersonalities, which are partial integrations, parts of the whole which we call personality. These are at first simple and one-dimensional approximations of what later matures into a complex and rich collective of subpersonalities, an identity with many dimensions.

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<sup>10</sup> Alexandra David-Neil, *Buddhism*, (London: Lane Publishers, 1939)

<sup>11</sup> Roberto Assagioli, M.D., *Psychosynthesis*, (New York: Viking, 1965)

A subpersonality naturally arises from a need and consists of a physical aspect (certain postures, facial expressions, voice range, ways of dressing), a feelings aspect (typical feelings), and a mental aspect (way of thinking, belief system) which have become organized “around” the need which led to its creation. For example, a child with a need for acceptance and love living in a family in which this need is not directly met (perhaps too many brothers and sisters, a father who is rarely home, or parents who simply do not know how to express these feelings) can learn through experimentation and conditioning that a certain way of acting and presenting herself at least gains her attention, which is taken as a substitute for the love and acceptance which is lacking. Perhaps this child has been learning that through performance and achievement that she can gain attention. A natural identification develops unconsciously with this Achiever subpersonality and she then acts, feels and thinks like an Achiever. In this natural process the formation of such subpersonalities fosters an early form of partial integration of the three aspects of personality (or fragments of each) and also allows for the development of strengths and talents. In our example of the Achiever motivation, actualization of talents, the courage to make a real effort, competitiveness, and other qualities become practiced and reinforced. So in one sense the creation of subpersonalities is the means by which our potentials unfold.

Another example might be the child who receives praise and attention only when “being good” (i.e., acting the way parents define as “good”) and who feels rejected when not conforming to expectations. A Good Boy subpersonality can thus develop around the need for love and acceptance (which after survival is probably the most imperative need during childhood) and the child will again tend to develop and reinforce aspects of body, feelings and mind which conform to this particular pattern. In the process he may possibly develop an acute sensitivity to subtle cues in his environment in order to anticipate what is expected as “good” behavior, as well as peace-making skills, tact, and the ability to fit in and adapt. We can hypothesize with our model that these qualities and/or skills may fit into the needs or plans of the Self, to be used in some way in later life.

Each creation of a subpersonality, by limiting us to a narrow range of feeling, thought and behavior, allows greater development and refinement within that range. And as we grow we develop other subpersonalities in order to meet our different needs. The earliest and often the strongest are those formed in childhood within the family, like the Achiever, Good Boy or Girl, Pleaser, Victim, Scared Child, Little Helper, Big Girl or Boy (miniature adult), Ray of Sunshine (always cheerful), and many others. In school others may be formed or we may continue to try to adapt with the ones we developed at home. We can see our subpersonalities in the roles we play. The changes in voice, feeling and attitude which occur when the businesswoman receives a call at work from her child and then returns to the business at hand, or the teacher in class then going home to be with his lover, can make it appear at times as if they are almost two different people, depending upon the role and situation. By identifying unconsciously with each of our subpersonalities we experience the world from a variety of perspectives, allowing fuller development of a specialized range of ourselves. Together our outer subpersonalities make up what has been called our Persona, the mask we wear in order to fulfill and adapt to certain roles.

Problems can arise when a particular subpersonality has outlived its usefulness or when we have persisted too long in identifying with it. While we identify with a subpersonality we perceive the world through its eyes. The Achiever sees the world in terms of competitors, tasks to achieve, success versus failure. That may work in appropriate situations in school or at work, but in a marriage it could lead to difficulty. Likewise the Good Boy sees the world in terms of approval/disapproval and is not concerned with what he thinks is “right,” only with what others

want. This may work well for making friends and getting teachers to like him but it prevents the development of assertiveness and an internalized sense of identity which can be self-reinforcing and not dependent upon others for approval. So the limiting and narrowing which is at first an aid to learning eventually becomes imprisoning, cueing the need for a maturing or dropping of particular subpersonalities.

The problem may not be with how the subpersonality functions but with our unconscious tendency to identify with it, not knowing other ways to be or to respond in a given situation. There is no need for a subpersonality to persist beyond its usefulness, though they are usually not easily convinced about that. We find that our habitual way of dealing with situations does not seem to work anymore and we find ourselves in increasing conflict with others or within ourselves, perhaps manifesting symptoms of stress. One of the greatest sources of stress in our lives can be the refusal to let go of a known and habitual way of being in order to move on and adapt with new creative responses. This may require the creation of new subpersonalities or the merging of two or more old ones into a new one.

In the creation of any new subpersonality it is inevitable that in the acceptance of certain boundaries on our experiences and behaviors we are excluding others. Sooner or later the excluded range of experience must be acknowledged, accepted and integrated. However from the perspective of the existing subpersonality there is usually a negative charge associated with these excluded areas. If I am identified with the Good Boy, then those actions or experiences which are unacceptable or "bad" to those in my environment must be prevented from coming to light and I will strive to repress them, even to deny their existence. When they erupt I feel threatened because the identification I have with the Good Boy is threatened. After all, Good Boys simply don't do those things (i.e., get angry, disagree, break rules).

If I am identified with the Achiever because that worked for me in many situations in my life, then my need for play, relaxation, or even the anonymity provided by mediocre or average performance cannot be allowed. So with the development of each subpersonality based on a need we are also creating, because of our natural tendency to split everything into pairs of opposites, an opposite and unacceptable subpersonality. These unacceptable subpersonalities together make up what has been called the Shadow, just as the subpersonalities we have identified with comprise the Persona. One is the mask we present to the world and the other is everything in us which contradicts that mask and which therefore we wish to hide. There is no reason to assume that our best qualities are what we find in the Persona and that our worst ones form the Shadow. The split is actually based upon what has been acceptable or unacceptable for us. For most people there is a healthy share of creative and positive qualities within the Shadow, from having repressed some of our potentials in order to be loved or accepted or safe from vulnerability.

Whatever the actual content of the Shadow, it demands our acceptance if we are to discover our true Identity and find wholeness instead of fragmentation. These Shadow figures, the opposites to our preferred subpersonalities, often present themselves in dreams or images as horrifying or primitive forms, partly because having been rejected by us they have not had opportunity to develop. Upon emerging from our dreams or imagery they are usually met with our fear, contempt or rejection. This relates closely to our discussion of unacceptable feelings when we looked at the emotional body because those feelings are usually an aspect of a rejected subpersonality. So the same exercise we used in Chapter 3 (page 49) can apply here. If we look at the type of person toward whom we have a strong positive or negative reaction we are probably seeing a rejected subpersonality in ourselves reflected back to us by that person. The Achiever cannot stand peo-

ple who are “lazy good-for-nothings”; a strong self-reliant subpersonality abhors people who are “weak,” meaning those who ask for help.

In the early stages of personality development we must eliminate ambiguity if an identity is to clearly emerge from our undefined potential. As a result we find ourselves unconsciously identifying with one half of a pair of opposites. If we could realize that this is simply a preference for one side and not an exclusion of the other, a choice of which we want to learn first, then a lot of the pain and suffering of growth would be unnecessary. It appears that we proceed from our Source – the Self in Which all is included – to narrow and limit our sense of identity in order for a defined individuality to form. But once we have this as our foundation we are asked to open up that separated sense of self to include what was earlier excluded, in order that we can as an individual recognize and remember our true Identity, the Self which includes all opposites. So the formation of subpersonalities as partial aspects of identity from identification with family, religion, culture, ethnic group, sex, or nation are appropriate in this earlier context, but become limiting once the individual has succeeded in developing the sense of “I” as separate from others.

To summarize, the personality – once it has even the most primitive capacity to act, feel and think – expands through the creation of subpersonalities, little selves which have physical, emotional and mental components based upon specific needs. This seems to come about from a combination of environmental influence and natural tendencies. The creation of a subpersonality implies the exclusion, or at least disapproval, of thoughts, feelings and behaviors which contradict the identity provided by that given subpersonality. As a result, there often are found “outlaw” subpersonalities in one’s unconscious attitudes and behaviors, and the presence of these can often be indicated by strong negative or positive (compulsive) reactions to these denied qualities when they appear in another person.

It is important to remember that this is a natural process and that we are invited to cooperate. At each step in the birth of the Self our greatest asset or liability is the quality and degree of our trust of ourselves and our natural evolutionary unfoldment. This trust is initially fostered or impaired by our earliest experience of life. If it was supportive and nurturing, we can trust; if not, then trust must be acquired through an educational effort requiring risks on our part. This becomes even more important during the symbolic stage of labor when the transpersonal Self is coming into expression in the personality.

It would probably be helpful here to give an example. Susan is a young woman in her early 20’s who sought guidance for her personal growth because she felt like something was “holding her back.” She was not in crisis nor experiencing any physical symptoms. Possibly a conventional therapist might have refused to work with her, saying she didn’t need therapy. But why shouldn’t someone be able to ask for assistance in self-actualization? Why should help only be for elimination of symptoms or restoring someone to “normality?” We have reached an evolutionary point where many people need help in going beyond “normality” because their own inner unfoldment is taking them beyond the models provided by their parents or society. Discontent can be a powerful clue to the presence of the superconscious, implying that because of an intuitive sensing (unconscious at first) of a higher ideal or a new model for being we are dissatisfied with our present self. This is not the same as the habitual disapproval of oneself engendered by an identification with a critical subpersonality who never is satisfied with anything we do.

The term “superconscious,” remember, refers to that aspect of our psyche which seems to “contain” our goals, ideals, creative inspirations, values, and models before they come into consciousness. It differs from the “lower unconscious” which “contains” memories, primitive instincts,

traumas, repressed feelings, and complexes. The lower unconscious is behind us symbolically, in our past, while the superconscious awaits us and draws us on, in the future. In a symbolic sense, the superconscious seems as if it is energized by the Self, thus inspiring us or motivating us to grow, and one of the first signs of this is often a sense of dissatisfaction or emptiness: “there’s got to be more.”

Susan described herself as kind, likeable, and feeling like she wasn’t using her potential. She worked in a day-care center with children, and appeared younger than her age. She was open with an air of innocence and honesty. Her history included some leg problems at birth which caused her to wear braces until the second grade. Susan had two older brothers and described herself as a child as being well-behaved and earning good grades in school. She saw herself as unable to say “no” when asked for help, rarely expressing anger, and over-extending herself in taking care of others’ needs. She quickly came to see how she was denying her own needs in the process. This issue arose because Susan told me her mother was dying and that she felt like she had to be there to take care of the rest of the family.

Using imagery she was asked to imagine seeing a door and that behind that door was the part of her who took care of others and couldn’t say “no.” The image was of someone with many arms who looked in control but wasn’t. She said this part of her did too much and that she felt sorry for her. By entering a dialogue with this subpersonality in imagery Susan discovered that this part of her wanted to give herself away to others in order “to connect with them.” Out of that original need had evolved an automatic response, now kept in place in part by Susan’s fear of finding a new way of relating. This exercise marked a recognition by Susan of the existence within her of this subpersonality which she called the “Caregiver.” In doing so, she had already begun to separate herself from it or to disidentify, which would allow her to realize that though she might at times act like the Caregiver, she was more than just that one part of herself. Ultimately this would allow her the freedom to choose when and how she wanted to be in a situation, instead of automatically responding as the Caregiver.

As she observed herself in situations, she came to experience herself at times as an Observer and not the Caregiver and found that at other times she was feeling alternately angry, especially at men, or like a little girl. This only began after she first admitted her anger at the Caregiver for apparently controlling her life. As our work deepened to explore the motivating need behind the Caregiver’s behavior there emerged a Little Girl subpersonality who was very needy and whom Susan had seen come out in her relationship with her lover. Susan was angry and disgusted with the “clinginess” of the Little Girl and could not accept her at first. But when she was asked to identify with the Little Girl, to see through her eyes, Susan expressed some early childhood feelings that had been forgotten for a long time – feeling small, meaningless, not liking herself and wanting to disappear. When asked what she needed, the Little Girl said “love and attention.” It took some time for Susan to begin to accept responsibility for this part of herself because of the painful feelings it held – the same feelings which originally led her to try to bury this part of herself.

Once having done this she found it easier to experience and express disagreement or anger in her life and for several weeks she seemed to swing to the opposite extreme from her former congeniality, experiencing anything from outrage at world injustice to self-disgust, and attempting to re-define her roles at work and with her lover, who had been playing an adult/parental role with her much of the time. At times this was disturbing, as the previously denied and repressed

emotional energies were streaming into her awareness, restoring over time the balance which had been lost with her earlier identification with being a Nice Girl, a Caregiver.

The Caregiver had been formed out of Susan's unfulfilled need for love and acceptance as a child. As a child she found that offering assistance and being nice got her attention and approval. Recalling that this is a natural process which allows the strengthening of specific qualities by limiting attention and development to a certain fixed range of feelings, thoughts and behaviors, we can see that the Caregiver allowed Susan to practice and develop her sensitivity to others' needs, her capacity to nurture and support others. No doubt these can be valuable qualities for the use of the Self, but Susan had reached the limits of this subpersonality at this point in her life, as indicated by her dissatisfaction and her sense of not using her fullest potentials. Other parts of her were awaiting their turn, having been considered unacceptable to the persona of the Caregiver. In order to help her free herself (disidentify) from the control of the Caregiver who tended to see the world through a lens which was always looking at people in terms of what they might need, of how she might help them, Susan was encouraged to express disagreement, including anger and other forms of confrontation, and also to say "no" when she wanted to. We will return to Susan later, in Chapter 11. We have seen here an example of how subpersonalities form and influence one's life.

When a subpersonality has become limiting, forcing itself and its behaviors into our awareness or presenting symptoms, we must look behind the subpersonality's facade to the need around which it has formed. In Susan's case what emerged was a Little Girl subpersonality who, unable to meet the need for love and acceptance as a child, turned into the Caregiver. Susan's desire to deny the Little Girl with her pain and neediness held this structure in place. Only when we accept within ourselves all such subpersonalities and take responsibility for meeting their needs can we expect to find the freedom which is our birthright as human beings, the freedom to choose to be, rather than reacting automatically within a rigidly held narrow range of response. As long as we deny or unconsciously push away the needy, dependent or unpleasant parts of ourselves, those parts continue to experience rejection and their need only intensifies, leading them to resort to negative or destructive behaviors. Then we have headaches, anxiety attacks, eat, sleep or drink too much, cannot control our temper, and so on.

This idea of subpersonalities can be very helpful, especially in dealing with inner conflicts. Let us assume that symptoms like stress, anxiety, ulcers, or headaches are caused when either a rejected subpersonality is trying to get our attention or when two subpersonalities are struggling for control. We can also recognize the presence of a subpersonality in our behaviors when we seem unable to control ourselves, when it seems as if something other than our own will directs our behavior. Working too hard, eating too much, losing our temper, being unable to say "no" or to confront others, or to ask for help are some typical signs. Even if we don't see it, it will often happen that someone in our environment points out these habits because they often appear as inconsistent or self-destructive. In the natural process of creating and outgrowing subpersonalities our identity is changing (see Kegan, 1982). We are continually finding that we are not really who we thought we were. This is usually not easy because we have an instinctual desire to defend and hold on to the identity we have formed, however painful or ineffective it may be. We may say we want to change, but when the time comes for us to let go of being the way we have been, we are faced with the insecurity of not knowing who we are or even if there is an identity to follow.

Thus subpersonalities can be directly related to stress reduction as well as other dysfunctional patterns. Our starting assumption is that there would be no reason for us to experience distress

or pain in our lives if we were fully functioning with all our potential capabilities. For most of us such a state remains an ideal to strive for and some stress or pain is likely to be part of our reality. But we can work effectively to maintain this stress on healthful levels by identifying the subpersonality in us who is the “Stressed One.” We can use our imagination to fantasize how we look and act when under stress, how we seem to be identified at those times, how the world looks through the eyes of that part, and what need is generating the behavior that is linked with the stressful situations.

As we learn to see the world through the eyes of previously rejected parts of ourselves we come to understand them, to feel compassion, and to forgive them for the pain they have caused us. We realize it is in our own best interests to take up their cause, to accept responsibility for them and for meeting their needs. If our Little Girl or Boy needs love and acceptance, it is up to us to give it to them. Trying to meet our needs entirely from others leads to desperate, manipulative, or other types of compulsive behavior which ultimately sabotage the very thing we are seeking. We discover that we are really internally a whole family of beings, some in alliance with others, some excluded or struggling for recognition or control. At the core of each of these subpersonalities is a positive quality, something which becomes available when we realize that we have this subpersonality, but we are not it. The Little Girl or Boy, for example, contains qualities like playfulness, creativity, the ability to see things as new, mysterious, or hopeful. When an Achiever or other Adult subpersonality takes over in our life because it is time to outgrow childish behaviors like weakness, dependency, or naiveté, we may lose the creative aspects of the Inner Child. We never leave behind these parts of us from earlier life phases, but simply grow new ones, and sometimes the new ones feel superior to or threatened by the earlier ones. The maturing personality must accept and integrate all sides by seeing the value of each, while retaining the capacity for choice and direction. Where this capacity comes from is the subject of the third trimester of this psychic gestation.

## Exercises

This exercise is done with the pie-shape on the next page. Take some crayons or colored pens or pencils and sit quietly. Reflect for a moment on the subpersonalities you are aware of.

With your eyes closed, in your imagination summon each of these subpersonalities in turn. As the first one emerges, focus upon it and let a visual image appear that expresses the essence and quality of this subpersonality. Look at this image in your mind’s eye for a moment, then draw it into one of the Pie segments.

Do this for each subpersonality until all but one of the slices contains an image. One piece is left blank to symbolize the incompleteness and potential of our growth process at any one particular moment. Leave the small circle blank, too, for this symbolizes the center of your awareness.

If you had difficulty letting an image emerge (you don’t necessarily have to have “seen” it; it could be a feeling or an idea), simply begin by choosing a color and then let the image form as you draw.

Now spend some time “eavesdropping” on some of your drawings. Imagine that the images are speaking to each other and interacting with each other. Listen and observe. Which are in conflict? Do any form alliances against others? Which cooperate? Are any dominating or bossy? Trying to please? Withdrawing? How do they relate to each other?

Write down the important aspects, and the meaning of what you observed. Most importantly, do you recognize any patterns which occur in your daily life?

Now talk to the images and enter into their dialogue. Can you help them to meet their needs more satisfactorily, to better appreciate each other, to work out more harmonious relationships? Do they meet your needs? If not, can you work things out with them?

Finally, note any other important aspects of the way your subpersonalities relate to each other and to you – and how you can help.

## **Bridging with the Transpersonal Self**

Relax, breathe, and imagine you are the Higher Self awaiting the further development of this personality which contains these subpersonalities. What could You use each of them for? How is their present relationship affecting Your purpose? What quality would it be fruitful for this personality to cultivate through meditation and attention in order to help the relationships between these subpersonalities work better? Imagine sending that quality to the personality and it being absorbed.

Are there any other subpersonalities which You, the Self, would like the personality to give its attention to? Which ones are ready to be let go of or to be integrated in a new way? Are there any new ones which are beginning to form? Help the personality to remember that loving acceptance of all parts of itself is the way to greater harmony and integration.

# Chapter Five

## Gestation: The Third Trimester

### Integration

*“What is REAL?” asked the Rabbit one day. “Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?”*

*“Real isn’t how you are made,” said the Skin Horse. “It’s a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.”*

*“Does it hurt?” asked the Rabbit.*

*“Sometimes,” said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. “When you are Real you don’t mind being hurt.”*

*“Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,” he asked, “or bit by bit?”*

*“It doesn’t happen all at once,” said the Skin Horse. “You become. It takes a long time. That’s why it doesn’t often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don’t matter at all, because once you are Real you can’t be ugly, except to people who don’t understand.”*

*“I suppose you are Real?” said the Rabbit. And then he wished he had not said it, for he thought the Skin Horse might be sensitive. But the Skin Horse only smiled.*

*“The Boy’s Uncle made me Real,” he said. “That was a great many years ago; but once you are Real you can’t become unreal again. It lasts for always.”*

*The Rabbit sighed. He thought it would be a long time before this magic called Real happened to him. He longed to become Real, to know what it felt like; and yet the idea of growing shabby and losing his eyes and whiskers was rather sad. He wished that he could become it without these uncomfortable things happening to him.<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>12</sup> Margery Williams *The Velveteen Rabbit*, (New York: Avon Books, 1975) pp. 16-20

**I**N THE THIRD TRIMESTER we have the parallel to physical gestation in which the fetus gains most of its body volume and weight and also in which the brain becomes capable of directing an independent being. Ideally the work of the first two trimesters is already done. But contrary to physical gestation there is an opportunity to make up for lost ground in the psychological version. For example, it may turn out that because of inhibited early emotional growth the third stage of personality integration is obstructed. As this comes to our attention we may find ways to develop our feelings and sensitivity during adulthood, perhaps through natural means like becoming a new parent or by seeking professional help. Just as the physical body has its own natural healing capacity, the psyche tends toward integrity and growth.

Ideally when we reach the third trimester the personality has a more or less flexible range of feelings to which it is sensitive, the ability to think in concrete and symbolic terms, and a functional physical body. In addition, there are probably several major subpersonalities which have developed as well as more fragmentary “pieces” of the personality, including newly forming abilities or ideals which have not yet found effective forms of expression in daily life. Our sense of personal identity at this point is not stable but consists of a “floating” from one identification to another. Arising in the morning, I may think of myself and see the world around me as Father or as Husband. On the way to work I may be identified with an impatient part of me, especially if I am late. At work, I become the Boss, or the Co-worker or Employee. My answer to the question, “Who am I?” would vary depending upon the time of day or circumstances and I would be hard pressed to give a simple one-dimensional answer. It would more likely be a list. As I float from one identification to another, different fragments of my range of feelings and thought become available. Most importantly, with each shift in identity I see the world through different eyes. As the Father, my daughter is cute in her play while I get ready for work. But as I realize I am late her antics become annoying, seeming almost intentionally designed to delay me. Yet for her nothing has really changed, except my response.

We are brought to the point symbolized as the third trimester by the mysterious quality which we call “desire.” Just as we can recognize gravity, can understand its effects as a law and formulate exactly how it will act but still have no idea what it really is, we can identify our desires (some of them). But what are they really? In one sense we can imagine them as inner promptings which lead us to attach positive or negative values to certain ideas, objects, people, or experiences. Over time this quality of desire can change and what was attractive to us at one time can later become neutral or repulsive. It outwardly may not have changed at all but our perception of it has. As a result of desire or of assigning value we are attracted to what we feel will make us happy, fill an emptiness, or make us complete. On the other hand, we find other things repulsive and make an effort to avoid (or even to destroy) this source of discomfort. Buddha taught that as long as we do this we will suffer and that the path to our liberation is detachment, or non-desire. On the spiritual path, or when the transpersonal Self is becoming more imminent in our experience, desire can seem opposed to our growth and fears may arise that we will have to lose our most treasured possessions or relationships or freedom if we reach for our fullest potential. We will look at this in our discussion of the Labor phase of the birth of the Self in chapter 7.

During personality growth and development desire in its many forms, both attractive and repulsive, appears as the most natural way for us to evolve. As something within us attaches great value to food in infancy and places it and survival as the highest priority, this assures that we will make every effort possible to survive at a time when we are physically most vulnerable (see Maslow, 1968). Even as adults we may find this mechanism reactivated at times of stress or threat and unconsciously respond by eating more than we need. The most important aspect of this third

trimester period is the discovery of the “I”, of an organizing center for the personality around which the various thoughts, desires, feelings, sensations, and subpersonalities can become organized and integrated as interrelated parts of an organic system. This “I” may always have been present in us but asleep in its identification with partial aspects of the personality and thus not available yet to fulfill its role as Director or Integrator.

As the “I” emerges, again by a natural process, we become aware of how we have let our desires automatically determine our choices except in cases where we have been trained or conditioned to consider certain desires as unacceptable and needing control or suppression (by the “superego”). Even then it is our desire for acceptance which has given the superego its power. We have reached a point of personality development which calls for increased self-awareness or the capacity to observe consciously what we are doing or experiencing, as well as for greater will or the power to make choices based on our purposes in life. This development is symbolically parallel to the development of the brain as a directing organ in the fetus, the seat of control and direction for the new person. It is also similar symbolically to the time in American history when instead of separate states with their individual governments a federal government emerged to direct and coordinate the separate states with their different needs (while they continued to retain their individual state governments).

In order better to understand this concept of “I” we must examine desire first. The physical body has deeply programmed within it, perhaps even at a cellular level, the desire to maintain its integrity by persistence and adaptation which includes the prehistoric development of basic instincts like aggression, sensitivity to danger, and the ability to find food. It also carries an instinctual desire to insure the continuation of the species by sexual activity. Expressed in the simplest terms this means that the physical body can be considered to have one pair of desires – to survive (to have enough to eat, to conquer enemies or perceived threats, to procreate) and to avoid death. We can see that these are really two ways of saying the same thing, but they differ in that one represents something to which we attribute positive value and which attracts us, while the other has a negative value and repulses us. We want to have one and to avoid the other. The world then becomes perceived through a lens which gives everything a smaller or greater positive or negative survival value. We can experience this even today although it is usually overlaid with other value systems based on later-developing levels of desire, i.e., feelings and thoughts. But on a deep instinctive level we are still screening people, situations and choices from the perspective of whether they enhance or reduce our chance of survival.

If we are unaware of this mechanism it has the possibility of evoking corresponding feelings, images and thoughts which we are then tempted to take as rational or intuitive judgment. This is obvious in racial conflict as well as, unfortunately, international relations (see Walsh, 1984). It is well portrayed by the stereotypical military leader with an “us-or-them, win-or-lose” mentality. There is in each of us a part of us who wants all the food and all the power, who wants to see potential enemies weakened or destroyed. This instinct is not evil, but has been developed over thousands of years in order to insure our survival. But when we ignore or deny it, it can become an invisible influence, whispering paranoid thoughts, magnifying the slightest threat as requiring aggressive response, or even making us self-destructive. The enemy is then within and I must insure my survival (meaning the survival of my “good” self-image) against the threats of my normal lower human instincts. Then I divorce myself from my body and instincts, as we have culturally done over the past centuries, and identity seems to rest someplace above the shoulders.

Anything bodily like birth, elimination, or death becomes negative and avoided. This is also in part because the body and its functions serve as a reminder to the ego which is still conditioned by its own will-to-survive that its mortality is most obvious in its dependency upon the body (see Becker, 1973). The entire Feminine aspect of existence becomes a threat – body, matter, vulnerability, intuition, feelings, intuition, belonging, trust or receptivity, and survival seems to rely wholly upon the Masculine – rationality, clarity, action and aggression. Then we become unconsciously captivated by the Feminine by obsessive materialism. Some recent therapeutic movements are the result of this imbalance, claiming that through the body and/or the Feminine wholeness and healing can be found. That would appear to be true as long as we don't repeat the same mistake and make mind and the Masculine the enemy.

Such a situation can easily arise if we recall that in the natural process of development there is a tendency for each new emerging stage or level of identity to see, in its struggle for independence, the prior stage as a threat, as something which seems to want to swallow up new development and to return to relative unconsciousness. This can be seen in the myths of the Great Mother as devourer of her offspring (see Neumann, 1954; Wilber, 1981). We also see it enacted in the often destructive efforts of the young as they seek to break away from the hold which parental authority and its security has on them, even though previously this security was desirable.

At the stage of emotional-feeling development we find the same type of duality as in body-level consciousness. Instead of survival/death we are motivated by the desire for pleasure and the avoidance of pain. The world is again perceived through a lens which evaluates each potential situation on this basis. In most cases there is agreement between the physical consciousness lens of perception and the feeling one. That which aids our survival usually feels good to us; for example, eating. And threats to our survival are usually associated with experiences of pain. But conflict of desires also occurs. Sometimes we need to experience pain or discomfort or to sacrifice pleasure to insure our survival. In fact, in our earlier discussion of pain we pointed out that pain could in many cases be a signal warning us that our present direction is against our survival interests. Avoidance of pain, if the highest priority, could lead to our destruction, as in denying symptoms which allow cancer to flourish or resisting growth by clinging to the familiar even when it is destructive. As these conflicts occur we have the opportunity and need for choice. These choices are usually unconscious and based on our predispositions or upon whichever desire is strongest. If pleasure means more to us than survival we may impair our health by our lifestyle habits. Or we may refuse to submit to life-prolonging diets or treatments which we find unappealing, even though we need it. We are able to override the physical body's priorities, at our risk.

While survival and safety are organic concerns of the physical nature, the emotional-feeling dimension emphasizes relationships and our worth or self-esteem. What gives us pleasure is whatever makes us feel good or important or loved and thus enhances our self-worth. Through the lens created by this desire we evaluate our experience in terms of whether a given situation or person adds to or subtracts from our sense of "all-rightness." Thus the normal time for the development of this aspect of the personality, which we discussed in chapter 3, coincides with later childhood and adolescence, a time when we are usually greatly influenced by our need for peer support and acceptance. We can be compelled by this desire to be untrue to ourselves, to try to fit others' expectations, and in the end something in us knows we are doing this. We have fed the emotional desire to be special or of value and in doing so created a false self while sacrificing our budding integrity and authentic identity.

Doing this persistently in order to please others can lead to a starved sense of any true identity, and thus we are compelled to fill this emptiness the only way we have learned, by continuing to build up our false self, the image we want others to see. As we do this, a growing pain arises at our predicament and alienation from ourselves. Since we are rarely able to endure or to show this pain it easily becomes buried under even more false self-image. Our true nature then often tries to emerge in the shape of twisted, angry, fearful, or distorted subpersonalities. These subpersonalities often feel resentful of the honored ones who have developed in service of false self-image. Before the transpersonal Self can be born in the personality the true person must be acknowledged and buried feelings and unaccepted parts of the personality must be accepted and integrated. Life has a way of stimulating this process though we often do our best to fight it with escapism or by finding others in similar situations with whom we can collude (“If you don’t force me to be real, I won’t force you.”)

Yet inside of us, if we have gone down this path, is someone crying to get out. We know we are not real, we know others do not really know who we are. Yet we feel like we don’t know how to change this. What we need to begin doing is simple yet not easy. Taking down our shield of false self-image takes courage, partly because we ourselves don’t know who will be revealed. We become afraid that there may not even be anyone there, that without that self-image we will cease to exist. Love can give us the strength to take this risk. It is psychic and spiritual suicide not to make the effort to trust another, to show someone what we really think and feel. If we don’t we remain buried under facades, unknown to ourselves and to others.

This situation was more common earlier this century, but the arising of the Self within Humanity has forced society to deal with the need of its members for openness and honesty. Freud instigated this in the last century when he confronted polite Victorian society with its repressed sexuality. The process has gained momentum this century and there are groups now available to support just about everyone in their need to be seen, heard and accepted for who they are, though the resistance to some of these groups is still quite strong. Anger which has long been suppressed is openly expressed now. As we bring previously unacceptable (though not dangerous) behaviors “out of the closet” for all to see we clear the way for our true nature to emerge by releasing the feelings which by being denied have blocked the way.

The same holds true for the individual and the pushing to the surface of our old hurts, anger, fears or joys signals the presence of something deeper in us trying to emerge. Thus crises can be seen in a new light, either as the time for letting go of earlier identifications in order that something new can emerge, or as the bringing up into the light of material which is clogging the channel of our Self-expression. This doesn’t necessarily make these crises any less painful, but it does give them meaning, a reason to accept them and more importantly, something to trust in, waiting on the other side of our suffering. We don’t have to know who will emerge as we let go and move on from previous habits or identities; we can choose to trust that it will be all right. This is what the mother must do in the pain of labor and what we each must do at the brink of emergence.

Thus the emotional-feeling body can be healed and strengthened while at the same time we can become more familiar with that core aspect of our identity which does not depend upon acceptance by others for its worth. There is a part of us which knows our worth simply because we exist. If we could have had that part of us recognized and affirmed by our parents and teachers as children we would not have had to develop false selves. If we did not have such good fortune, then we must be willing to dig down through our surface layers of self-image, through deeper layers of darkness like pain, ugliness, self-hatred, fear, or inferiority to that place in us which

knows our worth. It is all right if we feel we need to ask for help in doing this. The act of asking is already a step in self-revelation and honesty.

If our feelings are always seeking to fulfill their desire for pleasure, how is it that so many people seem stuck in self-defeating patterns of unhappiness? For many the nearest approximation to pleasure is in the avoidance of pain – not pleasurable but at least giving the sense of surviving without being overwhelmed by negative feelings. Some may unconsciously avoid warmth or intimate loving relationships because in the past these have been painful. Aloneness may seem preferable to the pain of rejection. A symbolic wall may be erected around one's heart, keeping out love and sealing them within. One client had a pattern of making herself guilty, taking the blame when something went wrong. This certainty did not give her pleasure but it was preferred to the terror that was aroused on a deeper level by shocks and surprises because her mother had been suddenly taken away by an ambulance when she was a child of four. She did not see her mother again for two years. The feelings of terror and abandonment were overwhelming and as a child she found another way to cope with upsetting situations – to make herself responsible for everyone else's feelings and to try to fix things. Another client had a subpersonality, the Cynic, which was created as a defense against hope or idealism after she had suffered a painful disillusionment. The pain of a cynical outlook on life with no hope was preferable to the vulnerability of trusting or hoping.

It appears that unhappiness and pain are unavoidable. The young Buddha, given everything he could possibly need, could not be prevented from experiencing the pain of seeing old age and infirmity in others. In our attempts to protect our children from pain we unwittingly teach them that pain is to be avoided. As a result they are forced to find indirect ways to cope with painful situations. To support their experiencing of pain we must be willing to accept our own. Some things just hurt. Our feelings would like to avoid these because they threaten our security, but if we allow ourselves to split off painful experiences and perceptions we become partial and lose our capacity to empathize and our compassion. We also shut out the warning signals provided by pain.

Our feelings create our perceptions so that we see whatever offers to fulfill our desires as having attractive qualities. The same object or person can be compellingly attractive to one person and threatening to another. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. These perceptions are often distortions of what is actually before us. It may help to bring in another perspective in order to give a more objective or rounded out picture, and the mind can do just that.

The “desire” of the mental body is for order and certainty – to know. What is death for the physical or pain for the feelings is confusion, ignorance and uncertainty for the mind. Our senses reveal the physical qualities of the objects of our perception. Our feelings overlay (and often distort) the sense data with subjective reactions of relative values (“I like this; I am afraid of that”). The mind substitutes symbols and concepts for what our senses perceive, often to the degree that we are barely aware of what our senses are telling us. Instead of a tree, with texture, smell, color, and vitality we experience a “tree,” a name we have learned with all of its associated knowledge – “bark, leaves, roots.” Motivated by the mind's need for knowledge, order and certainty we have developed names, systems of classification, ways of putting everything in its proper place. But as we do that we miss seeing the miracle in front of us. This is not just a “tree” or even a “pine tree.” It is an actual living being with its unique quality. The data processing of the mind replaces our ability simply to be in relationship with this particular tree (or person or animal or feeling) at this moment in time. The body and the feelings can appear chaotic, uncontrollable, murky

and undependable to the mind. “If the feelings can change so quickly, how can I rely on them for dependable data?” asks the mind.

When we identify with our minds we perceive the world through a lens which tends to label, to order, and even to screen out data which contradicts what we ‘know.” As a complement to the feelings and senses the mind provides another perspective on experience. By itself, it tends to drain the experience of its life and vitality, of its color and its relatedness to us, submitting it instead to the microscope and trying to fit it into a category. But it also often reveals facets of what we observe that are missed by sense or feeling. This book is an example. It is hoped that the ideas in this book will nourish the mind of the reader so that when circumstances arise which the feelings might interpret as “bad” the mind will have another map with which to interpret the experience. This model of body, feelings and mind and their associated desires is only a map and our experience does not really tend to conform to such a black-and-white way with three neat and separate compartments. Our minds would like to think it is that simple because of the clarity and security which such a neat system would provide. If we observe ourselves we can see, for example, that the feelings seem to have an “intelligence” of their own, as when they manipulate in order to meet their needs. Or we can see that the mind seems to have a feeling component when our cherished ideas are threatened and we become dogmatic, angry or afraid. Though there is this interplay, when we refer here to identification with mind or feelings we mean whether ideas and concepts or feeling-qualities are the most relied upon data.

Each or any of these three aspects of the personality can come into conflict with another or two may appear to ally themselves against a third. For example, sensual pleasure (body) and feeling attractive and desirable (feelings) may overwhelm my commitment to marital fidelity (thought). Or my mind may have good reasons for my taking a risk and setting out on my own professionally but my feelings are afraid and paralyze my will (or vice versa). These types of situations tend to arise more frequently as we approach the critical stage of the third trimester – the emergence of the “I”. The normal process of development has been by way of an identification with the body, feelings and mind through childhood, adolescence and early adulthood. For a particular individual the process may not have followed such a neat sequential pattern. But sooner or later, each of these three sides of the personality must have its chance at development for a healthy integration. Years of imbalance may need correction. The movie “Blue Angel,” in which a very rational university professor becomes obsessed and victimized by a beautiful nightclub singer demonstrates an extreme form of this imbalance and the natural process by which denied feelings tend to force themselves into our awareness. Or our increasing destruction of the planetary environment by technological pollution and neglect mirrors to us how we have let mental (scientific) development overwhelm our physical instinctual side, and the resultant crisis and growing global ecological awareness represents again the natural process of restoration of balance.

Out of the growing number of conflicts arises a need for a third and higher perspective which can resolve them. If my mind and intellect are in conflict with my emotions, how will I make my choices? Once these three aspects have matured it is time for a Director to emerge, someone to coordinate these three with their differing desires and perceptions. Like the Chairman of the Board or the Director of an orchestra, the function of the “I” is to direct the parts of the personality:

*. . . identification as the “I” brings freedom. It gives us the freedom to choose at any moment to become fully identified with any part of ourselves – an emotion or habit pattern or subpersonality – to be involved in it and experience it deeply. Or, on the other*

*hand, it gives us the freedom to observe and to act while remaining fully identified from it – or to choose any intermediate degree of identification between these two extremes.*<sup>13</sup>

Until such a Director is present our choices are made by our desires Ñ whichever is the strongest or most clever. Our identity rests entirely upon the decisions we make and if our decisions are based upon a false self-image then we reinforce that image, all the while knowing inside of us that these decisions are not really what “we” would do. This can lead to a sense of guilt. Our desires are one-pointedly seeking to fulfill their purposes and will do so immediately if unchecked or lacking direction from a higher level of organization. At first this higher level direction comes from the ego, which is really a mental complex and thus tends to devalue body and feelings. The ego also has its desires – mainly to protect itself, to secure its position as ruler of the personality and as special or different from other egos. This is necessary because its function within the personality is to provide a stable and secure sense of identity which is not going to be swallowed up by the undifferentiated collective out of which it has struggled to emerge. The development of ego begins when we realize this body is “my” body, that this name is “my” name, that there is a “me” who is separate from you and everything else. Since we are at the same time never completely free from or separate from our identification with physical matter and biological life as a body, or collective feeling and family/social identity in our individual feelings, or cultural language and ideas as an individual mind, the ego must labor to create the illusion that we are self-sufficient. This it usually does by emphasizing whatever in our self-image is different from others and by building itself up at the expense of others by judging and criticizing, if it remains insecure.

In the transpersonal model this ego, which is the goal of traditional psychotherapy and developmental psychology, is simply the scaffolding upon which can be erected the “I” and ultimately the higher Self. The worship of the ego is evident everywhere in our society and can also be identified as the cause of many of our present problems, not because the ego is bad, as some people misinterpret Eastern teachings to be saying, but because it is time for the next stage of human unfoldment which follows that of ego-development. This is not to say, however, that there are not many who still need to pursue ego development because they are at earlier stages of identification with partial aspects of the personality. Ego development glorifies competition, mastery, will, achievement, knowledge, success, and other Masculine traits since it is the task of the ego, as it struggles to emerge from the collective to individuality, to assert itself against the pull of the Feminine – sharing, relating, love, participation, instinctual wisdom and the realm of biology. The ego is aggressive, warlike and also defensive, and our political environment clearly reveals ego-values or desires as the determinants of global decision-making. The awakening of the Feminine in our times, while most visible in feminism and the reappearance of the Goddess, may be primarily the result of the Soul of Humanity forcing a repolarization in which the personality as a whole must now shift from a masculine to a feminine role – to be the receiver, vessel and form-giver for the higher Self.

The same crisis which the individual with a strong ego faces now confronts us collectively: the pole of individuality which it is the task of the ego to manifest must be balanced once again by the pole of belonging/collectivity/relatedness – from our collective tribal identity, through individualization, and now to group participation. This higher relatedness is what we call the “soul” or Self. Self is not different from ego as much as it is greater than ego and includes it. In order that the Self can “take the reins” of the personality (see chapter 7), the personality must have integrity before it can give them up. In our model this is referred to as the realization of the

<sup>13</sup> Betsie Carter-Haar, “Identity and Personal Freedom”, *Synthesis*, (Redwood City: Synthesis Press, 1978) p. 78

“I” as our identity, and this implies the recognition that body, feelings, mind and ego are not our real identity. This path has its ups and downs since at each point of disidentification (realizing that what we thought was our identity is not) we must let go of previous attachments, desires and self-images and be open to our next step, to “walk on” as the Zen teacher puts it.

The “I” is difficult to describe in words and must be experienced to be known. In one sense it is that in us which is not our body, feelings, or thoughts. In India teachers have tried to evoke this experience in their disciples by teaching them to observe their inner experience of sensation, feeling, and thought while saying “*Neti, neti*” (“[I am] not that, not that”). As we continue to observe our inner experience and to remind ourselves that none of what typically passes for “me” is really “I”, the realization slowly or suddenly dawns that all that remains is the Observer. This Observer does not process or label or evaluate, It simply IS. Its presence is experienced simply as awareness, as the capacity to Witness. In zen training attention is persistently focused upon the breath, allowing the detachment of one’s awareness from its usual identification with the inner stream of thought, feeling and sensation, which are now witnessed as the rising and falling of a stream of inner “objects.” Again the purpose is to experience that we simply ARE.

The “I” is what is left when we have disidentified from the many partial aspects of personality which we have mistakenly taken as our identity. Having freed ourselves by learning how to observe the contents of our consciousness, identifying with the Observing Self, our awareness turns toward its source – awareness itself. “I am aware of myself as the Observer of my thoughts, feelings, and sensations. Who is it that is aware of this Observer?” At some point we may realize a non-dual knowing – no content, no object – only I AM. This state has been described as “empty but full,” “nothing but everything,” “fully myself yet everything else as well.”

It is the goal of personality development in this transpersonal model not to leave rulership in the hands of the ego but instead to reach a point of being able to observe and disidentify from the ego with its grasping, attaching, security-driven, defensive stance, and to know oneself as “I”, as pure awareness with the potential of free choice. Many of us have had spontaneous experiences of the “I”, often during times of crisis. If misunderstood or occurring before we are ready, such experiences can undermine personality development. Some people labeled as “schizophrenic” may have had premature experiences of the “I” or even of the Self which they were unable to integrate. For example, if our body level of awareness has been tenuous and we are not grounded in our physical body the experience of the “I”, which shows us we are not our bodies, may serve to dissociate the sense of identity from the body even more. Ultimately we are to disidentify from the body but only after we have identified with it first. If this identification does not happen we are unable to include the body as part of our sense of self and we are unable to ground our experience in relation to the physical world around us.

At this point you may be asking, “What exactly is the difference between the ‘I’ and the transpersonal Self?” The “I” is simply our experience of our identity as being purely awareness, not thought, feeling or sensation – the Observer or Witness, the One Who watches and Who is aware of thoughts, feelings and sensations but does not mistake them for who we are. The Self is the Source of the “I” and may be reached by way of knowing oneself as the “I”, but It includes a universal dimension, bringing us into relationship with the larger Whole (Humanity, Life, Earth, Universe, God, etc.) of which we are a part. The “I” is not a thing but a state of detachment which excludes nothing and therefore is open to our higher-level Identity as an experience of relatedness and participation in Something which includes us. People experiencing the “I” report

freedom, joy, or a solid permanence. The Self usually evokes transpersonal love, identification with the Whole, and a sense of responsibility for Humanity or the planet.

*The Transpersonal Self can be reached from the “I” because the “I” is in fact a projection, a spark, an intrinsic part of the Transpersonal Self. It is as much of the Transpersonal Self as we are able to experience at the time.*<sup>14</sup>

The ego is likely to interpret the approach of the “I” or the Self (or Its energies which we have described as “superconscious”) as threatening its sense of control as well as its ability to continue to pursue its personal (and selfish) desires. This distortion arises from the ego’s maintained illusory sense of complete individual separateness in which the Whole and Its needs seem to be opposed (or at least unrelated) to those of the individual. The reality is that the ego or individuality is also an integral part of the Whole and its needs and desires are not separate from the Whole, though if this illusory separateness is continued beyond its original usefulness the desires of the ego become inappropriate because they thwart the “pull” of the Whole toward greater participation and more inclusive identity. Thus a society of egos develops a social/religious/political structure which institutionalizes and gives positive value to ego gratification and views with suspicion and excludes from its official education influences which might validate movement beyond (“trans-”) the ego. It confuses such movement with regressive images of the collective pole – i.e., totalitarianism – in which the individual’s rights are threatened with being swallowed up along with his or her sense of individual identity. The experience of the superconscious or Self does not erase the individual’s identity, however, but gives it a larger (and therefore more meaningful) context for its unique gifts and experiences.

As the experience of “I” occurs it may be misunderstood as some type of breakdown. In one sense that is exactly what it is, a breaking down of former identifications, but not the destruction of the personality. This breaking down has happened before, but in those cases we were moving from an old subpersonality to a newer one. We exchanged narrow limits for broader ones. This is also not without its feelings of terror or of dying in some way. But in discovering the place of pure awareness we let go of it all. Not having been taught about any such state it appears to threaten us with annihilation. The ego, as the Controller of the personality always on the alert for any threat to its security, is especially likely to fear and resist the experience of “I”. People sometimes experience the “I” as if they were somehow floating above themselves, watching their actions and thoughts and feelings. If misunderstood, this can appear to be signalling some kind of psychotic break and the person will immediately try to shut down any such experience and to avoid a repetition. If in this situation we could take the time to be aware of the experience – and simply breathing and watching the breath is a great facilitator in doing this – what is likely to emerge is a stronger and more solid sense of being who I am, not a fragmentation and breaking down and loss of identity. Image is lost, but identity is liberated. Even if, as many do, the experience is described as one of “nothingness,” it is a nothingness that is positive and free, not obliteration.

The following is an account by former Harvard psychologist Richard Alpert of a drug-induced experience of “I”:

*Now a few hours later I had gone off by myself to reflect upon these new feelings and senses. A calm pervaded my being. The rug crawled and the pictures smiled, all of which delighted me. Then I saw a figure standing about 8 feet away, where a moment before there had been none. I peered into the semi-darkness and recognized none other than myself, in cap and gown and hood, as a*

<sup>14</sup> Betsie Carter-Haar, “Identity and Personal Freedom”, *Synthesis*, (Redwood City: Synthesis Press, 1978) p. 89

professor. It was as if that part of me, which was Harvard professor, had separated or dissociated itself from me.

“How interesting . . . an external hallucination,” I thought. “Well, I worked hard to get that status but I don’t really need it.” Again I settled back into the cushions, separate now from my professorship, but at that moment the figure changed. Again I leaned forward straining to see. “Ah, me again.” But now it was that aspect of me who was a social cosmopolite. “Okay, so that goes too,” I thought. Again and again the figure changed and I recognized over there all the different aspects I knew to be me . . . cellist, pilot, lover, and so on. With each new presentation, I again and again reassured myself that I didn’t need that anyway.

Then I saw the figure become that in me which was Richard Alpert-ness, that is, my basic identity that had always been Richard. I associated the name with myself and my parents called me Richard: “Richard, you’re a bad boy.” So Richard has badness. Then “Richard, aren’t you beautiful!” Then Richard has beauty. Thus develop all these aspects of self.

Sweat broke out on my forehead. I wasn’t at all sure I could do without Richard Alpert. Did that mean I’d have amnesia? Was that what this drug was going to do to me? Would it be permanent? Should I call Tim? Oh, what the hell – so I’ll give up being Richard Alpert. I can always get a new social identity. At least I have my body . . . But I spoke too soon.

As I looked down at my legs for reassurance, I could see nothing below the kneecaps, and slowly, to my horror, I saw the progressive disappearance of limbs and then torso, until all I could see with my eyes open was the couch on which I had sat. A scream formed in my throat. I felt that I must be dying since there was nothing in my universe that led me to believe in life after leaving the body.

Doing without professorship or loveliness, or even Richard Alpert-ness, okay, but I did NEED the body.

The panic mounted, adrenalin shot through my system – my mouth became dry, but along with this, a voice sounded inside – inside what, I don’t know – an intimate voice asked very quietly, and rather jocularly, it seemed to me, considering how distraught I was “. . . but who’s minding the store?”

When I could finally focus on the question, I realized that although everything by which I knew myself, even my body and this life itself, was gone, still I was fully aware! Not only that, but this aware “I” was watching the entire drama, including the panic, with calm compassion.

Instantly, with this recognition, I felt a new kind of calmness – one of a profundity never experienced before. I had just found that “I”, that scanning device – that point – that essence – that place beyond. A place where “I” existed independent of social and physical identity. That which was I was beyond Life and Death. And something else – that “I” Knew – it really Knew. It was wise, rather than just knowledgeable. It was a voice inside that spoke truth. I recognized it, was one with it, and felt as if my entire life of looking to the outside world for reassurance . . . was over. Now I need only look within to that place where I Knew.

Fear had turned to exaltation. I ran out into the snow laughing as the huge flakes swirled about me. In a moment the house was lost from view, but it was all right because inside I Knew.

Around 5 in the morning I walked back, plowing through the snow to my parents’ home, and I thought, “Wouldn’t it be nice; I’ll shovel the walk – young tribal buck shovels the walk.” So I started to shovel the walk and my parents’ faces appeared at the upstairs window.

*“Come to bed, you idiot. Nobody shovels snow at 5 in the morning.”*

*And I looked up at them and I heard the external voice I had been listening to for 30 years, and inside me, something said, “It’s all right to shovel snow and it’s all right to be happy.”*

*And I looked up at them and I laughed and did a jig and went back to shoveling snow. And they closed the windows and then I looked up and inside they were smiling too. That was my first experience of giving a contact high! But also, you can see in that moment in the early morning the seeds of the breakaway. The seeds of the ability to be able to confront, and even disagree with, an existing institution and know and trust that inside place that says it’s all right. It’s something I could never have done without anxiety until that moment – until that day.*

*Now I thought at that moment, “Wow, I’ve got it made. I’m just a new beautiful being – I’m just an inner self – all I’ll ever need to do is look inside and I’ll know what to do and I can always trust it, and here I’ll be forever.”*

*But two or three days later I was talking about the whole thing in the past tense. I was talking about how I “experienced” this thing, because I was back being that anxiety-neurotic, in a slightly milder form, but still, my old personality was sneaking back up on me.<sup>15</sup>*

We have quoted this description at length not only because it contains a colorful description of the discovery of the “I”, but also because it hints at the aftermath of such peak or self-transcending experiences. By being willing to experience such a denudation of our masks, roles, subpersonalities, or identities we can uncover the essential “I”. Otherwise it may take a shattering crisis. Since birth we have been covering over this essential identity – which then was diffuse and undefined – with name, status, and roles. The “I” at birth is like water and can only find its unique shape by first being molded by external containers – other people’s expectations, social roles, etc. If ignorant of the existence of the “I” or an essential self, we become identified with and attached to the containers, not realizing that they only serve to help us to congeal, to find a central point of reference. At the beginning of life this central point of reference has nothing else in the psyche to refer itself to. As unfoldment and life experience give form and content to the psyche, the essential self is diffused. As a result it often takes something extra-ordinary like a drug-induced experience or a personal crisis to temporarily shatter the persona behind which the “I” has been hidden. A personal crisis which brings home to us, often through great pain, “I am not the person I thought I was” can lead to “who am I?”. “Not that, not that,” until we come to realize our identity as the One Who is Watching, the “I”, awareness itself, instead of the objects of awareness.

## Exercises

*We are dominated by everything with which our self becomes identified. We can dominate, direct, and utilize everything from which we disidentify ourselves.<sup>16</sup>*

Relax in a comfortable position and take a few slow deep breaths. Ideally this exercise is to be done with eyes closed, once you are familiar with it.

<sup>15</sup> Baba Ram Dass, *Be Here Now* (San Cristobal, NM: Lama Foundation, 1971) p.

<sup>16</sup> Roberto Assagioli, M.D., *Psychosynthesis*, (New York: Viking, 1965), p. 22

Be aware of your body, of how it feels to you right now. Where do you feel tense, and where are you relaxed? Recognize how your body serves you regularly, maintaining itself, transporting you, allowing you to interact with the material world. Affirm to yourself:

“I have a body, but I am not my body.”

Now become aware of your feelings. What are you feeling right now? Your feelings may change dramatically in any given moment, from love to hate, sadness to happiness, or peace to anger. Yet you remain the same person. Your feelings also give life and color to your experience. Affirm to yourself:

“I have feelings and emotions, but I am not my feelings or emotions.”

Now focus your awareness on your thoughts. Sometimes they are under your control, while at other times they have a momentum of their own. Your thoughts allow you to organize your experience. Affirm to yourself:

“I have thoughts, but I am not my thoughts.”

Place your awareness at the very top of your head, and realize that throughout this exercise you have been the One Who Observes, the One Who has been aware of the body, feelings and thoughts. Affirm to yourself:

“I am a center of pure awareness and choice. I AM.”

Stay with this awareness as long as you can. You may practice opening your eyes briefly to observe the environment while trying to maintain your awareness of “I am.” Regular practice of this exercise is recommended.



# Chapter Six

## The Full-Term Personality: Spiritual Awakening

*Picture men dwelling in a sort of subterranean cavern . . . Conceive them as having legs and necks fettered from childhood, so that they remain in the same spot, able to look forward only, and prevented by the fetters from turning their heads. Picture further the light from a fire burning higher up and at a distance behind them. . .*

*. . . do you think that these men would have seen anything of themselves or of one another except the shadows cast from the fire on the wall of the cave?*

*. . . When one was freed from his fetters and compelled to stand up suddenly and turn his head around and walk and to lift up his eyes to the light, and in doing all this felt pain and, because of the dazzle and glitter of the light, was unable to discern the objects whose shadows he formerly saw, what do you suppose would be his answer if someone told him that what he had seen before was all a cheat and an illusion, but that now, being nearer to reality and turned more toward real things, he saw more truly?*

*. . . And if he were compelled to look at the light itself, would not that pain his eyes, and would he not turn away and flee to those things which he is able to discern and regard them as in very deed more clear and exact?<sup>17</sup>*

**W**E HAVE DESCRIBED three overlapping phases of the preparation of the personality to serve as a vehicle for the transpersonal Self. While this Self is a mystery to us we can deduce from our experience of It and our observations of Its apparent presence in others that it is an organizing Center potentially knowable in each of us. It is apparently identical with and participating in a higher level of organization than the purely personal. While It has to do with the functioning of Humanity (or even of the planet) through each of Its individual parts, we can acknowledge Its presence and influence in our lives, knowing that our personal life experiences and evolution are not ends in themselves but the means to provide experience and expression for the higher Self in the world of sensation, feeling, thought and action. Our incentive for seeking the Self is that It provides purpose and meaning for our life and allows a constructive interpretation of crises or challenges. We become less personally self-centered and gain a larger perspective with a wider range of relationship. And where there is more relationship

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<sup>17</sup> E. Hamilton & H. Cairns, eds, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 747-8

there there is more meaning. In addition, whatever in each of us seeks meaning in some sort of service to Humanity can see the Self as the Source of both our love of the Whole and our vision of our purpose.

The term “transpersonal” has been chosen to describe the Self because of its dual meaning. “Trans-” is defined as “across, beyond, through.” The Self is beyond the personal, outside of the normal (up to now) range of personal experience and expression, and has been referred to in this capacity as God or Christ or some Divine Other in the West. But Western institutionalized religions have ignored or denied that aspect of the Self which operates through us. Such an idea undermines the authority of those who presume to speak for or to interpret for us the meaning and purpose of the Divine. They have been unwilling for the most part to trust in the presence of the wisdom of the Self within us all. As a result there can be a sense of guilt and sin in searching for the Source of Authority (the Self) within the individual. It is like Prometheus stealing the fire of the gods and paying by having an eagle eternally gnawing on his liver. This attitude is not only present in organized churches but also in the mental health field in the assumption that if one is not adjusted to the norm (which is no indication of health, simply what the majority of people think or do) then there is something “wrong” with that person, instead of there being something in the norm which needs changing. At the present time there is an increasing number of people who are manifesting an evolutionary growth by which the normal is shifting. But the traditional sources of guidance and authority – the churches, government, psychiatry, medicine, science – are still clinging to the previously defined and crystallized definitions of reality and normality. As a result many people have no place within the system to turn to for support or understanding. With no context for interpreting upsetting experiences or crises which undermine previously held beliefs, we are more likely to doubt ourselves and our experience and to seek relief from a traditional source, even if it means invalidating our intuitive knowing and resorting to medication to suppress the stress which accompanies most growth. The result is then possibly what we would call in our birth metaphor a miscarriage, where out of fear or misunderstanding the personality “closes the door” to the Self, denying or interpreting as insane the new impulses and images coming from the superconscious.

The physical birth process is one which begins with a coming together, a union of two cells, and culminates in a separation of baby and mother. In this psychic birth of the higher Self we begin with a separation, a loss of the sense of unity or identity with the Whole, and the birth represents a re-union, where the self-aware individual is now also aware of themselves as an expression of the Self. Gestation is then the process by which the separation from unconscious infantile embeddedness occurs, because it is only by separating from the Whole in steps (i.e., from Nature, from Mother, from family) that we are able to discover our unique individual identity. Only by drawing boundaries which separate and limit us can we see and experience that which is unique and individual about us. But in reaching that realization we only recognize one of two poles which make us who we are. We are neither totally separate from nor are we fully at-one with the Whole; we are both-and. You are an individual with qualities that define your distinctness from others, but at the very same time you are part of something larger due to the qualities which you share with others – human, family, or cultural traits. At some times in your life the unique and individual side has taken priority in terms of development, but at others the aspects in you that are shared and serve to connect you with a greater collective have dominated. To emphasize either of these in a way that excludes the other is destructive of your identity. You may either become proud and isolated, unable to relate to others, or may instead define yourself entirely by the way others see you and have taught you to be, denying anything in you which sets you apart.

As we saw, “trans-” also means “through.” The transpersonal Self is not only beyond our personal, family and culturally conditioned sense of identity, it is within us at the same time, operating through the personality. The growth described here as gestation is not so much sequential as it is interpenetrating. Without the development of the body, feelings, and mind (first trimester) there could be no subpersonalities, so subpersonality development makes more sense as a second trimester phenomenon. But subpersonality growth is also one of the main ways by which body, feelings and mind develop. Thus they depend upon each other.

The circumstances of our experiences are secondary to the qualities which arise out of them. It will be difficult if not impossible for the Self to stimulate the personality in a heart sense with images and feelings of compassion, for example, if life experience has not sensitized the personality to these particular feelings. The capacity to respond to different feelings, ideas or sensations may need to be conditioned in the individual. In many cases an inability to respond may be more a case of natural sensitivities having been wounded or distorted by earlier experiences. Much of traditional psychology is an effective agent at healing these wounds and in so doing, preparing the personality to serve as a vehicle through which the Self can manifest. Conventional psychology has done much to contribute to our knowledge of ourselves as personalities and many of its methods would appear to serve the purpose of the transpersonal Self. It is only in its denial of the possibility of there being such a higher Self that traditional psychology then becomes outdated and even detrimental to our health.

The personality built consciously around the sense of “I” is capable of giving birth to the Self. No longer attached to the desires of the body, feelings or mind for safety, survival, pleasure or certainty, or to the avoidance of death, pain, or uncertainty, we know we have subpersonalities but that we are not those subpersonalities. We have taken off each previous layer which we took as our identity and found that we still exist but with greater flexibility and freedom. Our will becomes increasingly available for making the choices most in line with our highest values and purpose. We are open to the signs and promptings of the Self in whatever form the personality registers them. We will not deny that our body will some day die, but we have experienced a place in us that seems to have existed before the body and to possess the ability to outlive the body. But can we be sure? Even if we believe in life after death, we don’t know how we might experience that life. Most importantly, the “twinges” and “kicks” of the Self just prior to Its birth show us our relationship to a larger Reality than we had previously known, and our experiences of that larger Reality promise that it will be worth undergoing labor in order that the Self may be born in one more human personality. Our lives have begun to take on a meaning that includes but also transcends individual gratification.

The gestation and birth of the Self in the personality is a process of extending relationship. At the beginning of life our relationship is one of embeddedness within first the biological womb and then the nurturing psychic womb provided by the mother. During the first years of life we establish relationships with objects and people in our immediate environment. At first our relationships are the result of the biological need for survival. We stay closest to those who offer food, touch and protection. As our feelings develop, so does our desire for pleasure, self-esteem and belonging. Our relationships are then formed on the basis of how well they will meet these needs. We seek love and acceptance which mirror back to us a sense of our value and worthiness. With intellectual growth, ideas and abstract ideals become important and we relate to the world in terms of ideological agreement. This is not to say that we only form relationships with those who agree with us, for ideological opponents may provide the opportunity to test and refine our

convictions and even to indulge in self-righteousness. Each of these levels of relationship is motivated by our underlying desires. Why else would we have them?

When we can disidentify from the aspects of personality through which we have grown and which have provided us with our sense of identity, and experience ourselves simply as awareness and not as the objects of our consciousness, we become open to the growing realization of our relatedness with All That Is. Everything That Is, on physical as well as non-physical levels, is in relationship with everything else. Physics recognizes this, but at first we do not. Out of the necessity of excluding the larger sphere of relationship in order to concentrate and focus our awareness in a limited arena so that a separate sense of individual identity can develop, we lose the awareness of our relationship to the Whole.

Is this the failure of religion, whose purpose is to preserve this sense of participation and connectedness? Perhaps organized religion has been undermined in this role by the natural process of human evolution which calls for a disempowering of the authoritarian and mediator role of the churches so that we can discover our inner Authority and relationship with Divinity. In transpersonal consciousness we come into relation with God, or Energy, or Universe, not only because we worship It as a Divine Other, but because we feel ourselves at-one with It. It is us and also beyond us. This is no longer a simple dual relationship between two separate entities but the part in relationship to the Whole. The Whole is in the part and not separate from it. In the revelation of the presence of the Whole within the heart of the part, that part's relationships with all other parts is transformed. There is a kind of unanimity which is not a subjugation of individual will, but a common identity of purpose, a group-consciousness.

By the end of gestation we may have glimpsed this reality, but it is not yet a continual aspect of our everyday awareness. We have reached a state which some characterize as inner warfare. On one side are the habitually conditioned aspects of the personality which have served their function by pursuing desires which serve the establishment and maintenance of a separate self: survival, self-esteem, pleasure, knowledge, ego, power. Because of the gestation process and our increasing sensitivity to the transpersonal Self, there has also developed the desire for self-transcendence, aspiration to reach beyond purely personal desires and goals to become a more consciously cooperative part of the evolutionary process which seems to entail greater group participation, group responsibility and service. We reach the point symbolized in the Bhagavad Gita which begins with the disciple Arjuna upon the battlefield, riding between the two great armies lined up to fight to the death (the "I" and the pairs of opposing personality elements), feeling overwhelmed at having to battle with old friends, relatives and teachers, those who have served the disciple well in his growth. Out of this despair the disciple Arjuna turns to his chariot driver Krishna (the Self) to seek His guidance and advice. And His advice is that Arjuna must fight, yet with no attachment to the results, only because it is his destiny, his dharma, the place in which he finds himself at the time. It is the consecrated fulfillment of his particular role at this point of the evolutionary cycle.

There are exceptions to everything that is written here. There are those few who seem to have never lost the sense of true Identity. We are drawn to such people as our teachers, whether they be a farmer, cab driver, leader, priest or whatever their role in the world. There is something in us which magnetically is drawn to those who are Self-expressing personalities because the buried Self in us is nurtured and drawn out by their presence. Their sense of serenity, courage, unconditional love, wisdom or other transpersonal qualities mirror our own. There are also those who seem somehow able to follow the path of growth without the usual struggle, crises or pain.

They do not need this book. However, my own path and those of the people who have come to me for guidance seem to necessitate crises, and I do believe that our natural path is that of harmony realized through conflict, synthesis through polarization. The great majority of kind people working, teaching, organizing, or healing for the good have found their place of service through their own suffering and have become the wounded healer, the one who can serve others because they themselves have had to struggle. The service offered by those who have as yet been unable or unwilling to recognize their own conflicts, negativity or capacity for evil is more limited. They cannot foster acceptance of the whole being in another if they have not at least made it the object of their own efforts. The state of perpetual conflict in our world should lead us to recognize that we are conflicted within and that we have to, as one psychologist has said, “internalize war.” As the UNESCO Charter states: “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that we have to erect the ramparts of peace.” The labor process which culminates in the birth of the higher Self in the personality typically involves struggle, suffering and pain, producing joyous release and a new presence. On our planet, this seems to be the way of creation.

Terror is natural at such a time because we face death. We seem to need to be willing to die as who we were if we are to experience a surviving sense of a self who has watched and remains, as Alpert did. Carlos Castaneda’s mentor Don Juan taught that death is the “ally” of the warrior or the man or woman of power. By that I take it he meant that only when we remain conscious of our mortality are we able to truly live, and that the person (like most of us) who represses this awareness out of terror also misses out on life to some degree. The Full-Term Personality has to face the existential issues of mortality, meaninglessness, responsibility and choice, as well as the realization that we are, as individuals, essentially alone, in spite of whatever we might choose to believe about our interrelatedness. The person who does not encounter and accept these givens of our existence remains cut off from a very real source of power by repressing the horror that these facts evoke. There is a difference between someone who has faced these issues and experienced the terror and then has progressed to a transpersonal perspective through inner experience and someone else who has aligned with transpersonal values without ever going down into the possibilities of imminent death, a world with no meaning except the one we give it, the awesome responsibilities of our choices, and the inability to ever really know another or to be known fully from within (see the “Centaur” level in Wilber, 1979). These are our “anchor” and represent the phase of fully incarnating or individualizing. The existential philosophers and psychotherapists have mapped this territory well, but for the most part seem to have been unable to go further (for example, Yalom, 1980 or Becker, 1973).

The loss of a job, children growing up and leaving home, an illness, or a failure may be the catalysts for our awakening. Biographies of creative personalities often reveal such a turning point. It is easy to see, given Alpert’s “seeds of the breakaway,” why most institutions deny or devalue such experiences, since they give people the ability to “confront, and even disagree with, an existing institution.” Unfortunately, official psychology has done this by labeling such ego-transcending experiences as insane or psychotic, or at the very least as regressive. This places additional pressure on the person going through such a death/rebirth because they are not only in a transitional state, searching for new ways to orient themselves, they are also being told that this means there is something wrong with them and if they persist, they will end up institutionalized (!!) and ostracized from society. This has always been the penalty in some form for those willing and able to breakaway from official Truth.

The realization of one's identity as "I", as pure awareness and not as a role, a particular set of feelings or thoughts, nor an image, is a transition stage from separate individual self to transpersonal (and therefore also to collective or universal) Self. All previously accepted labels and masks need to be shed if we hope to discover our deeper, yet subtler, identity. Some teachings have compared the "I", or awareness itself, to a beam of light which is overlooked while we focus our attention upon the objects which appear in this light, i.e., our sensations, thoughts and feelings. When we look out our window and say, "It is light outside," we are perceiving mainly the contrast between different shades. How do we come to perceive the light itself apart from the objects it illuminates? It must be there, for without it we would not be able to see at all. Once we realize ourselves to be the inner beam of light which reveals to us or makes us aware of the objects of our consciousness, we may begin to realize the Source of the light itself – the Self. But until we withdraw our attention from the objects it will be difficult to recognize that they are not the self. Not "I am happy," but "I have an experience of happiness" or "Happiness is arising in my awareness." Not "I am a Democrat" but "I am aware of a thought which labels me as a Democrat." Every time we say "I am (blank)" we misappropriate our identity which can only be expressed in the words "I am."

The most practical point here is the freedom provided by knowing ourselves to be simply "I". We can be aware of various feelings, sensations, or thoughts without automatically believing them or allowing them to make our choices. We can hear that inner voice which says, "It's all right to shovel snow and it's all right to be happy." We can still be miserable, impatient or controlling, though now we know it is because we choose to. Our choices gradually become more able to reflect our values and purpose, rather than seeming to be automatic or out of our control.

This is gradual, no matter how sudden or exciting the experience of being "I" may be. As a matter of fact, at any time during gestation we may experience an illumination – either 1) of being "I", someone who exists in spite of or beyond the roles or subpersonalities we have mistaken as ourselves; or 2) of the superconscious as an inspiration, vision, or "religious" experience; or 3) of the Self as an experience of identification with Humanity, Earth or Universe. These can happen at any time and often foreshadow future development or offer impetus to our personal growth, revealing some kind of guiding Intelligence behind our development. I may have experienced myself as "I" (or Self) when I was 14 years old, as can happen in adolescence, or during any time of transition of identity, and this experience can serve as a memory which becomes a foundation for future growth, as it did for Jung (see chapter 2). Even if I cannot experience myself as "I" now at this moment, I know I have experienced such a place in me before and that memory serves as both a basis, a rootedness in something solid in spite of the changes in my life, and also a goal, a sense of identity I am working toward establishing. It is a taste and once having tasted, I somehow can discern my path.

An enlightened education would not only teach such possibilities, it would foster them and encourage young people to give them the proper respect. As it stands now they are usually taken to mean "craziness" and are taboo. Usually someone who has had such experiences can hear and understand them in another. The current atmosphere of breakdown and permissiveness allows for more openness of mind and questioning of authority – especially religious and psychological – and we may come to realize that our own interpretations may be as valid as those of the "experts." This is also another aspect of the "breakaway" from institutionalized thinking fostered by such experiences.

One of the main obstacles to reaching this stage comes from both our well-developed habit patterns which, after such illuminations, re-assert themselves (Alpert's "my old personality was sneaking back up on me"), and our fear of being responsible for our lives. The freedom which the "I" offers us (which has always been there but not recognized) to make choices about how we want to be confers at the same time great responsibility. We could make the wrong choice; we could make a mistake with our life. Memories of early painful mistakes and the presence of an inner Critic or Judge subpersonality can make responsibility seem more like blame.

The "I", with its connection to the Self and the Whole, has a foundation upon which to trust Itself because It knows Itself to be part of an intelligent and loving process. But the personality has experienced defeats, failures and errors, and to take responsibility for the totality of one's life seems almost too much to handle. But there is something in us which "Knows" and having discovered it, we can trust it. This doesn't mean that we don't make mistakes or that we become perfect ("I'll know what to do and I can always trust it, and here I'll be forever."). It means we can trust ourselves to do the best we can at our present stage of development and to accept and learn from mistakes or "failures." It is as if having seen the almost blinding light of the promised land of what our life could be, our personality recoils in fear or creates unattainable expectations of perfection.

There is a parallel in the final trimester of the psychological birth of the Self to the experience of the pregnant mother. This period during physical pregnancy is often the slowest in passing, intensifying the desire for birth. In part this seems related to the fact that the baby is now much more of a physical presence to the mother both because of its size and movements. Similarly in our case during this mature phase of personality integration there is likely to be a growing awareness of something within which seems to be both outside of our normal sense of self yet a part of us. The "I" is the most objective Witness to the signs of the presence of the Self and superconscious qualities, but they may also be reflected upon the body, feelings and mind. Illuminating insights, joy, impersonal love, compassion, or bodily sensations may signal the influence upon the personality of a higher Presence. These are likely to be interpreted in the context of the person's existing belief systems, though they can also serve to break up crystallized beliefs if the timing is right. A Buddhist experiences satori, nirvana or shunyata; a Christian the Love of Christ; a Hindu atman; or an agnostic scientist the intuition or a universal Law. If there is no context for such experiences they may be met with compelling fascination or terror. It is best to suspend judgment and to research but many people find it difficult to remain detached after having experienced a rush of powerful energies.

Regression is not an unusual reaction to peak experiences. We may run from the Teacher or circumstance which opened us up and find ourselves seeming even more entrenched in our old habits than before. We may find our desire for sexual activity or sleep increased, or drink or use drugs, reinforcing our false sense of identity as a separate self. There seems to be a normal process of approach/avoidance in the early stages between personality and its higher Identity. It is as if all the parts of the personality which want to preserve the status quo of personality control and fulfillment of selfish desires rise up and assert themselves. An inner struggle may follow, perhaps for many years. This is our next phase, that of Labor. If awakening happens during adolescence or early adulthood we may close the door to the transpersonal, perhaps permanently. There may be some wisdom in this, though it probably isn't necessary if a balanced understanding can be achieved.

The experiences of “I” or of Self are of great power which may be experienced in ways ranging from terror to bliss (or a combination of both). The personality may feel threatened by this power, or in early life before psychological gestation is complete it may not be prepared to integrate such power. A temporary withdrawal from these experiences may be wise because the personality may react not by denying or sabotaging, but by inflation. We may see this power as the solution to real or imagined weaknesses and try to “rip off” the experience by imagining we have reached a state of advanced (and “special”) development. We have seen a possibility and instead of beginning the necessary work to actualize this potential we assume it has already been achieved. The real danger in this attitude, beyond the pride and false sense of self it fosters, is that it leads to a cessation of personality development and a rigid identification with a false self-image which cannot be questioned. Feedback from others is interpreted as their not being ready to understand our specialness or as jealousy. We need to see how the actual facts and reality of our daily lives are not reflecting our inflated sense of spiritual specialness. The limitations of the personality must be acknowledged or we face the possibility of a “premature birth” – the emergence of the Self in a personality which has not reached a stage of maturity necessary to sustain and support the Self.

This is common in the “New Age” movement. Young people, sensing the impending birth by means of a variety of terminologies and systems, find supportive environments in which to experience these deeper aspects of their Identities which usually are experienced as a “high.” The perfection, love and idealism that the Self and superconscious seem to promise are particularly attractive when compared to a world of violence, hypocrisy, starvation and pollution. As a result it is easy to become addicted to these peak experiences and to believe that we are “spiritual” beings in the sense that our true Identity has nothing to do with the world of “illusion” we live in. If these experiences are not understood as a type of fertilization or as a vision of potential and are mistaken for actual achievement of higher states of consciousness, the individual withdraws from the world and his or her responsibility in it. This “premature transcendence” is only premature because of misinterpretation. The fact that it is happening at any given time in the individual’s life implies that it could instead be understood and integrated in a constructive way.

As a result of these two distorted reactions to disidentification from our personality we can observe two significant groupings. The first group has closed the door to transpersonal possibilities because they threaten the security of the ego and personality. These people align naturally with those who have simply not been aware of such experiences and who have grown up with a belief system that honors ego development, success, materialism and pragmatism. The second group has tried to close the door to ego development and its values by pursuing transcendence. Together they complement each other but their typical relation is one of mutual misunderstanding, projections and mistrust. We will meet them again as the Mystic and Pragmatist subpersonalities within the individual in chapter 11.

There may have been signs of a transpersonal realm occasionally prior to this stage. They are normal in childhood and adolescence. At that time of emotional opening and turmoil, an inspirational ideal model may serve to vitalize the more selfless and aspirational feelings and give the young person something to emulate. If met with ridicule, embarrassment or misunderstanding in these earlier situations it may well lead to a defense against further contacts, denying them or considering them hallucinations or insanity. As a result those aspects of the personality which feel most secure in the sense-defined world of matter and/or the black-and-white logic of the intellect become subpersonalities not open to transpersonal experiences. Personality development is primarily one-dimensional along individual, ego and pragmatic lines. The result may be

an effective personality capable of creativity, responsibility and leadership, but closed off to the recognition of an expanded sphere of relationship beyond the personal. If carried to an extreme this development culminates in an Existential Crisis where success, wealth, power, or other previously satisfying desires of the personality lose their meaning (i.e., their relatedness to a larger context or purpose). This can be a painful and prolonged crisis because it demands an opening to the existence of a second dimension of growth – the transpersonal. In order to open to this dimension earlier painful transpersonal experiences or fears may need to be faced. The individual somehow needs to realize “I am part of something larger than my personality life.” The ecology movement has evoked this recognition for many, making them aware of their participation in and responsibility to the planet and environment. This is a clear sign of emerging planetary consciousness. Responsibility to something beyond the personal sphere is often the first sign of an awakening to the transpersonal.

On the other hand, there are those who find transpersonal experiences preferable to the limitations of the material, here-and-now world and who seek to develop “spiritually.” Personality development is neglected and only ideas or feelings which seem “spiritual” or dietary or physical disciplines which promise “salvation” or spiritual rewards are valued. These thoughts, feelings and habits may be antithetical to personality development which becomes defined from this perspective as “selfish” or “profane.” Negative feelings are often denied and ambition and the desire for power become displaced as spiritual striving. This one-sided pursuit also leads to an impasse like the one-dimensional goals of the Pragmatist. It becomes more and more difficult to get high, to reach God, to transcend. We reach a Crisis of Duality in which no matter how hard we try, we cannot seem to bridge the gap between us and the Divine (see Vargiu & Firman in Boorstein, 1980, pp. 92-115).

Ideally as in the case of polarized subpersonalities, what needs to happen is a synthetic fusion of these apparently mutually exclusive sides. The Pragmatist needs the more universal perspective of the transpersonal dimension in order to find renewed meaning and the Mystic or Seeker needs to develop the practical skills and personality effectiveness which the implementation of their vision or ideals demands. Thus the transpersonal vision finds its vehicle for expression in the world through the effective efforts of an integrated mature personality. These two crises are the natural result of an imbalanced development which is certainly not necessary, as many can show us by example (like Schweitzer, Mother Theresa, Einstein, Martin Luther King). An individual may need to temporarily emphasize one dimension for a time and then the other, ideally without losing sight of either. When the value or reality of one of these dimensions is denied we set ourselves up for these crises of reorientation.

This polarity and others which arise during normal personality development (i.e., mind and feelings, Victim and Controller, Trickster and Good Girl/Boy, etc.) present the opportunity for recognition of the center of the personality we call the “I”. Perceiving our problems as a pair of conflicting parts of the personality, we are in a position to realize that we are therefore neither of the combatants, not even the conflict itself. We are the One Who observes them and their conflict and as a result, we have the potential to mediate as a coordinating or organizing center within the personality. Any neutral subpersonality can do this and for much of personality development the ego-complex serves this purpose, and as it does it consolidates its power as governing center of the personality. For those who pursue the transpersonal dimension and neglect the personal it is difficult for a strong, healthy ego to develop because power and selfishness are devalued. As a result the ego is often weak or poorly defined, which is dangerous in the encounter with transpersonal energies because of the risk of being overwhelmed by them or becoming inflated

by an identification with a transpersonal quality, believing it to be one's personal identity. Eventually as we reach Labor, our role is that of mediator between ego/personality and the higher Self.

Traditional psychological treatment of the existential crisis can be through medication to suppress symptoms or an effort to bring the person back to "normal," i.e., finding meaning again in purely personal pursuits. The practitioner with no sense of the transpersonal colludes with the selfish aspects of the personality to close the door to an awakening to a higher level of meaning. Official psychology is better suited to helping the Mystic who has pursued the transpersonal and has reached a crisis, because its strength is in ego development. But if the individual in crisis falls into the wrong hands their "spiritual" experiences can be misinterpreted as psychotic and may result in institutionalization or medication. The door may be closed permanently to the transpersonal because the individual has been told that it is dangerous and threatens their sanity.

This polarization is an aspect of the larger split in our times between Spirit and Matter from the mistaken belief that these two are mutually exclusive rather than two complementary sides of the same reality. These two dimensions must be reconciled for a sense of identity as a whole, and so must body and mind. For many, "spirit" equates with rationality and nothing more. The body (and feelings) are seen to be irrational and a threat to the purer and more advanced state of rational "spirituality," resulting in a fracturing of the wholeness which is. Thus during the final trimester preceding birth there often needs to be a re-owning of the body with its instincts, weaknesses, and especially its mortality. We are neither body nor mind, we are. I have a body and a mind, but "I" am. Out of polarization can arise the third overseeing viewpoint, the observing "I". But we must learn to distinguish between the individual with a shaky ego structure who is threatened by regression and dissolution in a sea of non-personal and collective impulses and the developed personality who has reached the limits of ego development and is awakening to a higher level of human evolution. "I am not my personality" can be either a statement of defeat or one of liberation. To treat them identically is a tragic mistake. Yet this is the official approach of psychology today.

## Exercises

Are you aware of times in your life when you had an experience of the "I", of a solid center of identity within yourself which seemed not to be a part of your normal self-image or roles? What was that like, and what seemed to bring it about? How did you react to or interpret the experience at the time?

What about transpersonal experiences in your life? What do you remember and what did they mean to you? How do you feel about such experiences now? In which group (if either) do you feel you belong – the Pragmatists or the Mystics? Have you always felt that way, or can you see a shift that took place as you look back? What about your family – were any of them prone to identify with one extreme or the other?

What were you taught about God and the Universe as a child? What was the attitude implied by your parents' actions toward God and the Universe? Was what you were taught congruent with what you observed in your family, or were they dissonant? How do you see your present attitude in relation to the past?

What presently holds the greatest meaning and satisfaction for you? Would you say the desire behind this activity is primarily survival, pleasure/self-esteem, knowledge/certainty, or self-actualization or self-transcendence? If the latter two seem important to you, do you feel there are unmet desires or needs in you that still relate to the first three?

Relax in a quiet space and allow yourself to go through the same process which Richard Alpert described. See yourself in front of you in your different roles and let each one go. Allow your imagination to bring to you different aspects of the personality which you identify with and see what it is like to experience yourself apart from each one.

## **Bridging with the Transpersonal Self**

Relax, follow your breath, and imagine yourself to be the higher Self Who seeks to express and experience through this personality. Do You find this personality to be receptive to You? Are there times when You have contacted this personality in the past? How? What was the response and what was Your intention?

Are there splits within this personality which impede integration? If so, between what aspects? Is there an imbalance where too much energy goes into one specific aspect or subpersonality to the detriment of the whole personality?

Or is the personality open to You but limited in some way in being able to ground or practically manifest Your vision or intention? If so, what would help?



# Chapter Seven

## Labor and Delivery

*All beginnings are hard.*

*– The Midrash*

*Two birds,*

*Inseparable companions,*

*perch on the same tree.*

*One eats the fruit,*

*the other looks on.*

*The first bird is our individual self,*

*feeding on the pleasures and pains of this world.*

*The other is the universal Self,*

*silently witnessing all.*

*– Mundaka Upanishad*

**W**E HAVE OBSERVED THE PROCESS by which parts are brought together as wholes, which themselves are parts of greater wholes. Systems of cells make up organs and organs are the parts of a person's physical body. Different feelings are the parts which make up the feeling body and thoughts combine to make up the mental body. Together, these three wholes are parts of the higher-level whole we call personality, which when matured is directed by an integrating center which we call the "I". The individual personality is a part of a larger whole, a subjective grouping which has its own organizing or integrating center we call the transpersonal Self. We recognize the existence of more and more inclusive groupings, from Humanity to planet to solar system ad infinitum. While these each can be imagined to have their own integrating center which carries the sense of identity and purpose for that level, we are here simplifying by looking at them from "below upwards," from the level of everyday personality toward the transpersonal. In doing so, we need not yet distinguish between these increasingly higher, more inclusive and subtle levels, but only to acknowledge the presence of a level of identity, integration and purpose beyond that

of the individual. If acknowledged at all by the ego, these mysterious transpersonal energies are often seen as something to be mastered or used in the service of the personality.

The process of psychological gestation described in the previous chapters naturally covers roughly the first half of our life. It is not usually until mid-life (mid-30's to early 50's) that we are prepared for the birth of the Self within the personality, if we are at all. It appears to take most people at least 29 years for the personality to form and individualize, and many find they need to take corrective measures during their 30's. Perhaps that is why Indian gurus required their disciples to have first been "good householders," adults with family responsibilities and worldly identity, and why Sufi teachers include in their training of spiritual aspirants very practical skills like rug-weaving or instrument making (see Hesse's *Siddhartha*). This birth of the Self implies the presence of the Self within the personality and is experienced as a different way of being with dissimilar values and motivations from ego/personality. Some may impatiently try to force the birth prematurely or assume that such a birth has already been accomplished from having had contact with the Self and/or superconscious. Certainly there are individuals who reach a mature and integrated stage of personality development before mid-life, but they are exceptional. For the majority of us the personality gestation phase needs to take precedence until we have a foundation for integrating transpersonal experiences. To abort personality growth and integration in pursuit of higher consciousness defeats its own purpose and is just that – an abortion. Spirituality for many is a way of avoiding the work of personality development, the negative feelings, responsibilities, and existential issues like mortality and meaninglessness. But it is not, as some psychologists believe, an escape for everyone.

When enough of our life has been lived as a personality fulfilling our obligations, assuming responsibilities, growing through crises, we approach the time when the Self can more fully emerge through what we are calling the symbolic labor process. The remainder of our life is spent in labor and in birthing the Self. Some seek this and some seem to have it forced upon them. We recognize those who have given birth to the Self by their Sainthood, Sagely wisdom, or world service. The labor and birth process means giving over the reins of personality to a higher level of direction through a willingness which leads not to submission to an outer will but discovery of an inner Will which comes from an Identity of a higher order.

Personality development or ego formation within the transpersonal model are congruent with conventional personality theory except for the major difference that personality integration is not seen as an end in itself but a means. Similarly, from the perspective of biology the maturation and refinement of the male and female individual of the human species is not an end but a means to providing the species with reproduction and continuation. From the transpersonal view, our individual lives are not as important as is the experience gained through them by the overall Mind of Humanity or the possibilities provided for expression and manifestation of the unfolding Purpose (whatever that may be) of Humanity through the individual. Hardly an appealing prospect to the ego! Thus a decentralization of identity and attitude is called for. One author has compared this transformation to the difference between our Sun and its identity as the center and life-giver for the solar system and the Sun as one of a vast collective of stars (Rudhyar, 1975).

Let us stop for a moment here to visualize our solar system with its bright fiery source of life at the center. Around it silently float spheres of different sizes and colors, absorbing its light and warmth. . . (pause) . . . Now imagine you are that Sun at the center, radiating energy which nourishes and sustains your system, and also holding the system in place by the power of your

gravity. Be aware of how that feels. . . (pause) . . . Now realize that you not only occupy this special place but that you also are a participating member of a great community of stars. There are thousands of stars, some older or larger than you, others newer, some smaller, and some similar to you. Experience your sense of identification with that community of stars . . . (pause) . . . Compare the two experiences. What does each have to offer? . . . Now try to hold both awarenesses at the same time: you are both an individual star at the center of your own solar system, and a member of a starry collective.

After many years of being naturally compelled to individualize and to leave the innocence and safety (but also the lack of boundaries) of unconsciousness behind (“banished from Paradise”), we are reaching the point where the survival of our species depends upon our recognition of a group or planetary identity. The labor phase is symbolically where this shift takes place. During gestation this change may be an ideal or goal, but through labor it becomes a definite quality of livingness. It is the objective of a great variety of transformative technologies, many of which are ancient yet still relevant. The main difference between the transformative needs of our times and those of the past lies in the fact that intellectual and personality integration are now becoming the norm, being the latest development for collective Humanity, whereas in ancient times humans were mainly body-based and their identities were primarily instinctive, sensate and defined by action or emotion. Disciplines like hatha yoga were designed to evoke a higher state of consciousness through concentration upon the body, but did not necessarily include the emotions, mind or personality as a whole. In later times, bhakti yoga (or the path of union through devotion) and similar means arose as the need for emotional purification and transcendence became widespread. Raja yoga and its contemporaries followed as spiritual paths emphasizing mental concentration. We are now at a point where there is a need for what Sri Aurobindo called an integral yoga, one that applies to the whole person, including the earlier forms.\* Today there are also many schools of growth and of psychotherapy, some physically based, others emotional or mental. What is rarer is an approach which values each yet has a more comprehensive scope which includes each (see Assagioli, 1965; Ajaya, 1983; or Rudhyar, 1979). This would allow for a unique approach to each individual and would also recognize the differing stages on the path of personal and transpersonal development where a person may be at any given time.

In our model there is not only part-within-whole-within-whole, there is also a similar relationship of cycle within cycle. What may at one level appear to be a complete cycle is also but a phase of a larger cycle. There have already been smaller psychological births before the spiritual one. We have experienced the birth of the body, of new feelings, ideas, and of subpersonalities, as well as of the “I” by the time we approach labor. We already know from experience about birth, labor, transition and even death. Our life on Earth is a cycle (perhaps part of a larger one that includes a state of physical nonexistence) and it includes within it smaller cycles, each with a beginning, middle and end. So we have already had preparatory birth experiences prior to this labor phase as we have passed through the usual transitions and metamorphoses in our personal unfoldment. There are definite parallels between leaving behind earlier stages of development like growing into adulthood or outgrowing subpersonality identifications and this major passage. The structure underlying the process is similar, while the main difference is in scope: the earlier shifts were taking place within the boundaries of the personality but during the labor phase of the birth of the Self we are leaving those boundaries to go beyond the personality.

The physical mother often experiences Braxton-Hicks contractions during late pregnancy, when uterine contractions occur not as a sign of active labor but apparently to prepare the body and baby for labor. The experience of physical labor provides one striking model for spiritual unfold-

ment. Consider this clinical description of the mother's experience of labor and imagine it to be a metaphor for the birth of the Self. Typically the baby becomes less active just before the onset of labor. Labor begins with contractions which are usually painful tightenings which have in part the effect of dilating or opening the cervix, through which the baby must pass for delivery.

As they accelerate the contractions become stronger with more intense peaks, dilation continues and the mother's mood becomes more serious and introspective. She also begins to tire. The advice for this stage is for the mother to breathe, following different specific rhythms. We note here that in many spiritual disciplines the breath is the key to staying self-aware or mindful and also to experiencing a sense of one's essential identity. The most intense phase of labor is the "transition" phase in which the contractions are stronger and closer together until the dilation of the cervix is completed and the opening is large enough for the baby to pass through. There is an increase in bloody discharge from the vagina because of the pressure on the cervix and there is often a strong urge to push even though it is not time yet. The mother may experience this phase with nausea, irritability, exhaustion, and may want to give up. It is here that the mother seems to be pushed to go beyond her imagined limits and where many mothers intent on natural childbirth ask for medication. Many mothers have no recall of their actions during transition and what seems to be called for is a complete letting go of one's need for control and to surrender to the body's process. Up to this point there has been nothing for the mother to actively do except to follow her breathing exercises.

After the first stage of labor and the transition comes the second stage where the baby moves through the birth canal, the contractions remain strong but begin spacing out more, and the baby's head appears at the vaginal opening. Here the mother is finally able to push (to use her will), which leads to the delivery of the baby and a great sense of joy and relief. The third stage follows in which less intense contractions aid in the delivery of the baby's placenta and ideally mother and baby interact and bond.

At least as relevant here is the baby's experience. After a peaceful period in the womb labor signals a disruption and brings discomfort in the form of squeezing contractions. The baby then undergoes tremendous pressure on its body, the possibility of having its oxygen cut off and/or painful body positions. Up until second stage the baby is stuck, caught in a painful and life-threatening situation from which there is no exit. During transition we can imagine the pain reaching its peak and then freeing the baby to begin moving toward release. In LSD therapy and rebirthing sessions in which participants appear to be re-experiencing imprinted memories of their birth experience, the pain is often indistinguishable from pleasure, and the struggle of the baby is associated with inner images of conflict, aggression, and in the final stages, of death and rebirth (Grof, 1976).

This process provides a map for change, for creation, and for bringing to birth the "New Man in Christ" of the Bible, one who is now a conscious expression of the Self. Our experience may at times seem more like that of the mother and at other times the infant. It helps to distinguish between the stages of 1) awakening or contact and 2) fusion or birth in transpersonal development. There may occur at any point in one's life 1) an awakening to the presence of the Self. This does not refer to mental indoctrination of a philosophy and belief system about God or Spirit but to an actual experience which brings us into living relationship with an Energy, a Being, a Spirit which seems both within yet beyond the personality. Our reactions to this awakening usually vary and have an impact upon our receptivity to and ability to integrate future contacts. These may occur in the form of insight or mental illumination, feelings of peace, security, love, terror

or awe, or sensations of flowing energy or sensory “hallucinations.” Or they may simply be a sensing of one’s deeper Identity, of one’s Being. Richard Alpert’s experience (chapter 5) was an awakening. Awakening or contact may occur during a crisis and is beyond our control. Some refer to it as “grace.” 2) Fusion represents a growing continuity of contact and a process by which the elements of the personality are brought into line with the Self. This alignment means, for example, that the mental aspect of the personality is increasingly able to understand the meaning of knowledge in the light of the Self or in a larger context than the purely personal.

The emotions and feelings become able to reflect an intuitive connectedness to the greater Whole and gradually become tranquil in the midst of chaos. And the physical body and its activity reveal a spiritual livingness in simplicity, discipline and effective expression of the inner vision. The alignment of personality/higher Self means that the choices made by the personality are based upon its highest sense of values and purpose which are becoming, through the fusion process, concerned with the greatest good for the greatest number.

We should not delude ourselves that this culminates in a perfect being or that there are no more problems or crises when this fusion is complete. On the contrary, it may be that our problems and crises simply become broader in scope and implication and less emotional. We now become more directly involved in group or planetary crises, rather than only in personal ones. And there is no reason to believe that because the Self represents a higher level of ordering, integration and purpose which is beyond the personal, It is not also evolving and not yet perfect as well. It is also unlikely that this process demands a perfect personality any more than mothering requires perfection. A personality which is “necessary and sufficient” for the purposes of the Self may still be prone to personal quirks, delusions or problems. Perhaps this will help dispel the illusion that a Self-realizing personality is bland, neutral and without feeling or color. On the other hand, we need not be so serious or oppressed by our inner spiritual Top Dog which uses spirituality as a measure by which we are always falling short. A Self-realizing person can still like movies or baseball, can still cook and mother, can still argue or cry, but increasingly can discriminate between the essential and the non-essential or between the Self and the not-Self.

Each physical labor is unique, though they seem to have certain common landmarks. As with the mother, our psychological labor seems to demand a willingness to yield to the natural process, to “continue to breathe” or remain conscious of our individual rhythm of life, even as something within seems to accelerate with increasing pressure. We apparently have to wait until the right moment, until the spiritual “cervix” is dilated, before we can push and deliver. This breathing symbolizes a rhythm which we select and maintain as a way of centering in the midst of the contractions. Ritual, study or meditation can provide this kind of self-imposed rhythm which can serve to anchor us and provide order in the midst of change.

## First Stage Labor

Like the contractions which begin labor and where the baby has no room, we can assume that the birth of a new aspect of personality or the higher Self begins with the experience of tightness, of limitation or of being squeezed. We rarely interpret this experience as a birth because we are usually identified with a Victim perspective, being squeezed or limited, sometimes quite painfully. We see through the eyes of a baby whose time in the womb is ending and we attach images and feelings of death, powerlessness, loss of meaning, rejection, punishment or aban-

donment to these signals. We face a dark time, not knowing how it will turn out, usually not having a map to interpret these “contractions” as presenting new opportunity and identity.

We can feel overwhelmed by the power and increasing intensity of these feelings of loss, stuckness and limitation. It is natural to try to project the cause of these feelings upon someone or something outside oneself. It is my job, my partner, my health which is making me feel this way. It feels like we are being pushed toward our destruction. As a result our instinctive programs to avoid destruction and pain become mobilized to resist and try to terminate this threat. We often regress to familiar and secure behavior, whether it is clinging to a “mother” or mother-substitute, keeping active and busy, drinking or using drugs, sleeping more than we need, or whatever has been associated with feelings of safety or well-being in the past. The dissolving pattern or subpersonality mobilizes for a last attempt to maintain control. Should it succeed, it would be like the baby succeeding in resisting being expelled from the womb, and growth (and even existence) would be subverted. Some type of “breathing exercise” can be most useful during this phase, remembering that we mean by breathing anything which is rhythmic and regular and which demands concentration so that attention is diverted from the most upsetting symptoms of the birth and can be centered in that aspect of the person which transcends the changes and persists. Another way we could put this is that it helps us to disidentify from the part of us which is being outgrown. It also helps one to maintain a sense of control and thus of choice. Our psychological “breathing” exercise may be daily house-cleaning or a regular meal schedule.

We noted also that during physical birth these increasing contractions coincide with the mother becoming more serious and introspective. Here is an obvious parallel in the psychological birth process as the individual is drawn inward by the sense that something is “wrong,” i.e., disruptive of inner harmony. Thus this is a time when many seek some kind of counseling or psychological help or pursue knowledge of the inner world through meditation or study. In the psychological birthing process we are the mother and the child, the deliverer and the delivered. How much easier would it be if we knew that these times meant something was coming to birth in us? The birth would happen most easily if we accepted it and tried to cooperate with an attitude of willingness to trust the process. Our worldview, concepts, attitudes, habitual feelings, a subpersonality or an identification with one of the three aspects of the personality (body, feelings, mind) may be letting go in order that something more whole and inclusive can emerge.

At the birth of the Self it is our identification with the personality as a whole which is breaking open. Since the personality is programmed for survival (both body and ego), it is likely that we will be unable at first to get out of our own way. If we or our helpers do not recognize it for what it is, the outcome may be surrender to defeat. When those aspects of the personality which are aligned with the birth, which desire self-transcendence and Self-realization, can band together with enough strength, the result may be a conscious choice to give oneself up, not in defeat, but in the sense of “not my will, but Thy Will, be done.” These aspects of the personality are the ones which have been stimulated by previous experiences of contact by the Self and which have somehow “absorbed” this higher energy and thus have a natural resonance with the “higher vibration” of the Self.

Physiologically within the mother the contractions have brought about the effacement (stretching) of the cervix and then its gradual opening. Likewise we can imagine the strain and constriction of this phase of psychological birth stretching the personality, eliminating non-essentials by bringing our attention to the crisis at hand and then gradually opening the personality until it is ready to admit its Master, creating the Self-infused personality. If only we could remember at

these times that the stuckness can only be happening if there is something in motion which is encountering an obstacle. New growth is meeting resistance in the form of our attachments to our attitudes or identities. This is probably what underlies our experiences of emptiness, stuckness, and loss of meaning. If so, while we struggle with the death that seems to be happening to our present identification we could also be alert to signs of what is trying to emerge. In doing so, we assist the process by acting as the Observer and withdraw our identification from whatever is being outgrown.

## Transition

At the point of transition the baby is at the peak of the crisis, being crushed and possibly suffocated, while the cervix is opening enough to allow passage. Bloody discharge is increased, symbolizing the release of previously life-supporting but now useless psychological material due to the increased pressure. The mother may be out of control or want to give up. Often she expresses rage at the husband or baby as the cause of her suffering. Her later lack of recall at what occurs during this phase suggests that it is a time of disengagement from consciousness, and in psychological birth this transition represents the letting go of prior attachments or identifications yet having nothing to take its place. It is a time of free floating, often accompanied by terror, anxiety, or disorientation. At this time we, like the cervix, are totally open. We are also most vulnerable, like the lobster who has shed its protective shell and waits on the ocean floor for the new one to grow. We have shed the old identity but have not seen the one which will follow. Throughout this process the best “drug” is trust – “I know this is natural; I know it happens to everyone and has happened in other ways to me before; I know that while it seemed dark and hopeless before, something does emerge.”

## Second Stage

The baby begins moving down the birth canal and has to be flexible in order to maneuver by the angle caused by the mother’s pelvic bones. Its head appears at the opening and symbolically we reach the point where we can at least recognize that something new is truly coming to birth in our life, even if we cannot see its outline in detail. The mother can now push, can put her will into action in a more dynamic way than the previous acceptance and cooperation with the body’s natural process. The transition from receptivity to active pushing symbolizes the time when we are able to actively use our individual will because it harmonizes with the higher Will which directs the whole process. We can exert ourselves fully in bringing to light the newly emerging aspect of the personality and as we align our will with the will of whatever is emerging we are assuming a new identification.

The woman in labor is no longer pregnant, she is the mother of a child. Her relationship with the child changes—it is no longer physically at-one with her, but is now dependent upon her and she must take responsibility for it in a more immediate way. What was provided by her body unconsciously now must take conscious effort. Likewise, we are no longer stuck or floating without a sense of self or a frame of reference, but are responsible to our newly emerging potential which still depends upon us for its survival. We can experience joy and relief like the mother because we

have survived what felt like a life-threatening experience, and we can see that what we thought was “us” has been let go yet we still are here. We have experienced an aspect of ourselves which can survive transition, which is not dependent upon the partial aspects of our personality.

And the baby itself has had a parallel experience. It has found release from an overwhelming situation, after stuckness and tight passage, into the air and light of a whole new context for its existence. It stands at the end of one phase and the beginning of a new cycle as pure potential. This initial experience of crisis and transition could be imprinted upon our nervous system in such a way that it provides the source for expectations, hopes and fears when we face any new passage in life. It also points to the importance of the receiving environment when the baby is born and the need for increased awareness of the baby’s experience – whether there is dim enough light to allow the baby to see, soft touch and mother’s warmth, or blinding light, loud noise, and rough handling, not to mention immediate and prolonged separation from the mother (“for her own good”). This new environment has the potential to color strongly the quality of this first challenging crisis and transition and thus future ones as well.

## Third Stage

Movies and television depict childbirth without the usual pain and as ending when the doctor holds up the new baby and says, “It’s a boy,” or “It’s a girl.” But in real life there remains stage three: the delivery of the placenta. The placenta has been the source of nutrition for the baby and is so healthful that in primitive cultures it was often eaten by the adults. The placenta would appear to symbolize for us the teachings and relationships which have nurtured the emerging Self (or the parts of the personality which serve the Self). We must also let go of these after they have served their purpose. Just as the personality must find independence from collective thought and social roles while not necessarily rejecting them, the disciple must outgrow the Teacher and the Teachings if he or she is to be fully creative in the expression of that larger Whole which they now both consciously embody. Teachers as models have served their purpose when the model has been incorporated in the student, and Teachings on the spiritual path are ultimately only the “finger pointing at the moon” once the disciple has realized within their experience the Truth which the words or images of the Teaching hide at the same time they seek to describe. Likewise the client, patient, or analysand must terminate their relationship with the therapist if they are to be independent. Like parenting, therapy is successful when it results in loss of that form of relationship because someone has become self-sufficient.

## Labor and the Personality

As we approach the labor stage wherein the Self emerges in the personality, it becomes our responsibility to align our will with the Intention of the Self. This presumes our will is singular and we have reached the stage of full-term personality (see chapter 6). We register this Intention typically by insight, vision, creativity, inner guidance, psychic sensitivity, or compassion. These experiences are not rewards but responsibilities which we undertake to integrate into the personality or to manifest creatively in the world. If we do not, we find ourselves increasingly cut off from these “highs,” and if we first interpreted them as rewards their loss now seems punishment.

In labor, including transition, we are raising the energies of our thoughts, feelings and actions into greater alignment with the transpersonal. We become increasingly able to discriminate and choose between feelings or reactions of a selfish nature and those which promote a greater sense of harmonious relationship with the environment. We do not attack, deny or try to eliminate personality reactions like fear, envy, competition, craving for pleasure, and so on, but instead concentrate upon the thoughts, feelings, and actions which reflect our best understanding of the Purpose of the Self, the higher level organizing Center which we seek to serve.

Attacking or denying our selfishness only serves to energize it. Our selfishness is not “bad,” but has served the very important purpose at an earlier stage of our development of building a sense of individuality. We cannot expect these desires and instincts to simply withdraw, but instead we focus upon the incoming or developing qualities we aspire to integrate, and indifferently leave the earlier habits to lose their power by starvation. To do this we develop detachment or practice meditation which fosters a sense of impersonality. This does not mean lack of personality, only that we learn to stop seeing ourselves as the center of our Universe. This self-centered attitude has helped the separate individual ego to develop, but then becomes an obstacle to further growth. We cannot expect these previously controlling aspects of the personality to accept this new state of affairs. Thus we may experience renewed personality upheavals and apparent inner sabotage of our efforts to greater service or group-identification. But to enter into battle with them is to make them victorious, because in doing so we may easily lose sight of our larger purpose (see Lewis, 1961). Like the disciple Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita, we must participate in the battle without becoming attached to either side or the results. Our attitude is non-violent in the truest sense, otherwise we lose that third detached perspective (“I”) which it has taken so long to attain.

Christ advised, “Resist not evil, but make energetic progress in the good.” We continue with our meditation, our intent to serve, and do not let the glamour of expecting ourselves to be perfect, without faults or selfish tendencies, set us up for disappointment. We often find at this stage a new version of the Critic subpersonality, a spiritual Top Dog, who judges us mercilessly for not measuring up to our unrealistic expectations of how we should be if we are “spiritual.” We can forgive ourselves for being imperfect, accept ourselves as we are and then concentrate on taking the next step. We are aided in this process by the Self, through the superconscious, if we develop receptivity and inner listening to help us stay open to this guidance (see chapter 12). Dreams may be very useful in the communication between conscious and unconscious. Not all dreams come from the lower unconscious, as Freud thought. Meditative silence fosters receptivity during waking hours, and acting “as if” we are already the Self, as we have been doing in some of the exercises in this book, creates greater alignment and a resonance to subtler impressions.

Specific qualities, such as serenity, joy, strength, or compassion can be fostered through exercises, one of which follows this chapter. The mind becomes a valuable servant as it studies the principles of organization by which evolution occurs. Through practice it also learns to fulfill its true purpose – to reflect intuitive truths from higher levels and to give them form through interpretation. It can only do this when it is quiet enough and not immersed in the mechanical noise of the personality. The physical vehicle becomes purified through our attention. This aspect of spiritual development has been overemphasized, just as the physical or material aspect of almost everything else has. Just as ritual, appearance and form has become substituted for actual experience of the Divine in organized religion, we have often fallen for the glamour that if we eat, dress, and act “spiritually,” we are spiritual. We do not have to refuse meat, dress in colored robes, change our name or adopt Eastern postures for meditation. We can if that is our prefer-

ence, but to think that the Universe depends upon what clothing we wear seems a reversal of priorities. There have been many inspiring spiritually centered individuals who have neglected or at least been indifferent to their physical bodies and habits. The main question is whether or not something interferes with our ability to carry out our intention. If not, why not consider it as one of our idiosyncrasies which contributes to the multiplicity aspect of the Whole? It is never so much a matter of what we do, but what our motive or attitude is in doing it.

By choosing to think about wholeness, about principles and relationships and to study the underlying order, whether as science, religion, or any other subject, we create a repository of thought from which we may draw in order to clothe or interpret our increasing intuitive perception of ideas. This we must be able to do if we are to function as a creative agent in the birthing of transpersonal order on the planet. At this stage of development many are naturally inclined to explore these cosmic or metaphysical principles and larger perspectives, a sign of the influence of the Self upon the mind. By following some form of disciplined meditative practice or study in which we learn to control our thought, to concentrate at will and to hold the mind open and steady in silent contemplation, we prepare the mind for its third major function – that of receptive inspiration generated by ideas which seek to become embodied in thought and action, the growing edge of the incarnating evolutionary process. We see indications of this higher global mind in the synchronous discovery of a new idea by more than one person, as in the discovery of calculus by both Newton and Leibnitz. Thus the mind evolves from (1) its infantile stage of learning names and date (establishment of the mind itself as a working entity) to (2) its role as coordinator of the feelings and the personality as a whole (relationship with other aspects of personality), then (3) as interpreter and reflector of intuitive (holistic) perception (relationship with higher levels of organization).

At the same time on the feeling and emotional level, previously unconscious patterns of desire, defenses, and glamorous self-deceptions are brought to the surface by the intensification of one's aspiration toward union with the Self. As those aspects of the personality which desire liberation and feel a sense of responsibility to the Whole become organized, they often arouse a backlash response from the more selfish and illusory parts which have had a degree of unquestioned control. The comfort of self-satisfaction, of cherished false self-images, or of isolation behind separative boundaries becomes threatened. As a result, following the inflow of superconscious energies and their registration by the feeling nature as joy, serenity, harmony, beauty and love, there can appear to be a regression toward selfishness. But in doing so, the more selfish aspects of the personality are making themselves more visible to the Observer than before. We can now uncover their secret motivations and learn to calmly choose which of our motives we wish to feed and how.

A confusion often arises here as the newly inspired aspirant tends to see any personal needs as being "selfish" and thus in opposition to spiritual development. As a result, a long and painful struggle can ensue in which the personality balks because it senses rejection or abandonment on the part of its caretaker. This struggle may be unnecessary and follows from the mistaken tendency to split oneself along spiritual/ non-spiritual lines. If we can remember that the personality is a necessary means to fulfillment of our life purpose as a vehicle of the Self, we would treat it with more respect, striving for a loving and accepting management of the personality instead of trying, as some teachings suggest, to "kill" the ego or the personality. In this transpersonal model our goal is not transcendence of the material world and loss of identity in a blissful union with God, except as a temporary bridge-building process – to God, back to personality, then to God, and so on, until the distinction between the two blurs and increasing identification

of the two occurs without loss of either. Again the necessity of that third place within which is not “either-or” but “both-and.”

On the other hand, instead of identifying with a view which sees personality as “evil” or “bad,” we may fall into our fear that to become “spiritual” will mean having to give up everything we care most about. In one sense this is true. But we do not necessarily give up the people or things we hold most dear, only our possessive attachment to them. This fear is a sign that we have become identified again with our desires and see the world through their eyes. It is one more way that the spiritual path takes us to the portal at which we must be prepared to let go – of control, of possessiveness, of specialness. Beyond that point we may still own material things, live with loved ones, or have unique qualities, but we also remember that nothing is permanent or wholly our own; it is given to us in trust and is ultimately beyond our control.

So we follow a path of emotional upliftment in which we foster those qualities which can most suitably express the transpersonal, qualities which are inherently harmonious. Even conflict and suffering come to have a harmonious aspect, an innate rightness, as a natural phase of the process of growth. Courage and strength are such qualities, serving us in times of crisis or de-structuring. Feelings of envy, hatred, greed, or fear are seen to be real at the level of the separative personality competing with others for its survival, but not relevant in light of the interrelatedness revealed by the Self. We can hear the cries of the personality, all of which are ultimately based on fear, without either judging or rejecting the personality because of its conditioning, or indulging the thoughts or actions to which these separative feelings lead.

How do we choose to treat a child who cannot see all that we can and whose simplistic worldview offers very few options of how to respond? If we would judge a child for her greed or anger and make her bad or wrong, as has been the rule for many generations, then we reject a real part of her. But if, on the other hand, we show acceptance for her experience as real and human we can give her loving support for learning how to manage those reactions. We also empower her will which can choose how she wants to respond to those feelings. Our personalities, like our bodies, are here to serve us in the fulfillment of our purpose. If we degrade, reject or punish them, we only sabotage ourselves. If we love and accept them, while still maintaining control of how they are to be used, they are much more likely to serve us well.

## Exercises

Relax and take some slow deep breaths. Decide which quality you would like to use this exercise to develop. (We will use the quality of serenity in this exercise, but you can substitute any quality you wish.)

Think about serenity, reflect upon its meaning. What is it? What is its quality? How do you recognize its presence? Write down any ideas, insights, or images.

Hold yourself open to any further ideas or images related to serenity that may emerge from your unconscious, and write them down.

Consider the value of serenity, its purpose, its use. Praise serenity in your mind. Desire it.

Assume a physical attitude of serenity. Relax any places of tension. Breathe slowly. Allow serenity to express itself on your face. If it helps, visualize yourself with that expression.

Evoke serenity directly. Imagine you are in a cool place which makes you feel serene: a quiet beach, a temple, a cool green park—perhaps a place where you have experienced serenity in the past. Try to feel it. Repeat the word SERENITY several times. Let serenity permeate you to the point of identification with it, if possible.

Imagine yourself in circumstances common to your daily life which in the past would have tended to upset or irritate you; perhaps being with a hostile person – or facing a difficult problem – or obliged to do many things rapidly – or in danger – and see and feel yourself calm and serene.

Resolve as much as you can to remain serene through the day—to be a living example of serenity—  
to radiate serenity.

Make a sign with the word SERENITY, using the color and lettering that best conveys this quality to you. Place this sign where you can see it daily and if possible at the time when you need serenity the most. Whenever you look at it recall within yourself the feeling of serenity.\*

#### Alignment with the Transpersonal Self

Sit with spine erect, using a straight backed chair or sit cross-legged on the floor. Do not feel strained, but relax all tensions. Attend to your breath (“My breath is calm and regular”) and surrender your weight to the chair or to the floor, as the case may be (“My body is heavy”). Try to gain a sense of quiet and serenity (“I am at peace”).

Imagine in space a brilliant point of light about one or two feet above the top of your head. Imagine this is your “soul star,” a symbolic representation of your transpersonal Self.

Sound the OM audibly, regarding yourself as the physical being, and holding as you do so the thought of physical coordination. Then take some deep breaths, and as you do imagine a beam of light descending from the soul star, entering your physical head and flooding the physical body and its biological energy field.

Sound the OM inaudibly, regarding yourself as the emotional-feeling being, holding while you do so the thought of the purification and transmutation of emotion and desire. Then take several deep breaths, and as you do so imagine another beam of light descending from the soul star and penetrating your physical, energetic, and emotional bodies.

Sound the OM inaudibly, regarding yourself as the mental being, and holding the idea that the mind is the reflector of the light of the Self. Then imagine another downpouring of soul light entering your physical, emotional, and mental fields as you take several deep breaths.

Raise the consciousness into the head, and carry it upward through the top of the head, through the energetic (“etheric”), emotional, and mental bodies to the point of soul light. Identify the personality consciousness with the soul consciousness, and realize they are one as you repeat the following mantram:

More radiant than the sun,

Purer than the snow,

Subtler than the ether

Is the transpersonal Self,

The soul within me.

I am that soul, that soul am I.

From this point, definitely and consciously, assume that you are the transpersonal Self and that you can observe the personality with its various bodies and energy fields.

Sound the OM audibly and in doing so realize that as the transpersonal Self you can control and dominate the personality, and infuse it with the light of the soul. Consciously throw soul energy down into the energy fields of the personality, visualizing these fields as one completely integrated energy field.

Finally, visualize that energy flowing out through the personality into the world to wherever it is needed.

When you are ready, gradually open your eyes and stretch.\*

### **Section One Conclusion**

So we can see how one of the most archetypal experiences of life – that of birth – can reveal to us an underlying order within the outer circumstance of individual human evolution. This model could also be applied to the emergence of the ego. It restores an organic livingness to the psyche which balances the limited view of human potential developed by materialistic science and especially Freudian reductionism. The description of human beings as if they are machines is neither totally true nor false, but we must recognize that humans can outgrow their mechanicalness and that when they do the psychological models which rely on reduction of human nature to instincts, drives and biological functions have reached the limits of their usefulness. These theories do not need to be rejected, which would only be a repetition of the same error that scientific logic made in rejecting earlier models like astrology, alchemy, shamanism, yoga, or God. Some spiritual technologies have tried to overlook our mechanicalness and have fostered the dream that we can simply transcend our baser and more instinctual humanness if we meditate enough, eat the right foods, or deny our biological urges. That may work for some, but I believe we are in need of an approach to life which includes it all and which has as its goal the synthesis of mind and body, inner and outer, Spirit and Matter, Masculine and Feminine.

By postulating the existence of a Reality which lies in mystery beyond our present attainment which we here call “Self,” we remain open to exploration of what has been called the “ultimate frontier.” Wherever there is a mystery we naturally have always projected our unconscious fantasies to fill that uncertain void in our knowledge. But in this century we have recognized that we do this projecting, and in this recognition we have lost the illusory certainty which those projections used to offer. I don’t know what the Whole is, or how big It is, or even if “bigness” is a meaningful term to use to describe It, but I can logically and intuitively accept that if there is a Whole I am certainly not separate from It. And I refuse to believe any voice in me which tells me otherwise, though I respect that in its experience it may truly feel separate.

It is so easy for our minds to fall into the “either-or” fallacy. But Reality seems much more like “both-and” in the way the Chinese described the interplay of the two polarities of yang and yin. One or the other may predominate for a time or they may seem to be almost stagnant in their equilibrium. But there are not really two separate segments to our lives – “old age” and “youth,” for example, just a time when youth and its potential predominates and another when old age

and the wisdom of experience does. There is not “either light or darkness” in the course of 24 hours; it is more light than dark during the daytime and more dark than light at night, but both are always present. The appearance of any pair of opposites calls not for polarization and conflict, but for the arrival at a “third” point of view which can see the two opposites as both necessary and both true, not mutually exclusive. If this simple lesson which some have known for thousands of years could be learned, how much useless conflict could be spared. Yet conflict has its place, as a complement to cooperation. Thus I am separate and connected to the Whole. There is Whole and Part, individualizing and becoming at-one.

The model of birth as a map for transpersonal development has been described and opportunity has been given after each chapter for personal exploration. In the next section we will explore a few of the possible applications of this model. Many more have not even been born yet. The transpersonal in many forms is finding application in education, medicine, psychology, business, economics, religion and politics, as well as in science. It is basically the discovery and description of a set of principles which appear to organize our experience. It will change and evolve as models always have. May That within us which it seeks to reveal respond with recognition and inspire us to explore.

# Chapter Eight

## Principles of Transpersonal Evolution

*A principle is that which embodies some aspect of the truth on which this system of ours is based. . . A principle, when really fun-damental, appeals at once to the intuition and calls out an immedi-ate re-action of assent from the [person's] higher Self.*

*To apprehend a principle justly marks a point in evolution.*

*A principle is that which ensouls a statement dealing with the highest good of the greatest number.<sup>18</sup>*

ONE OF THE MAJOR SHIFTS IN PERCEPTION which occurs as we become sensitive to the transpersonal dimension is that we learn to see the world of meaning which lies behind the outer world of appearances. What was previously considered the most obvious (perhaps even the only reality) because it was observable through the senses comes to be seen as a symbolic expression of an inner Reality. This esoteric (i.e., “hidden”) reality has been recognized by a few down through the ages in terms consistent with the mentality of the times. Goddesses and Gods, nature spirits, a Divine Creator, or demons were the explanations given to the intuition of an ordering principle, invisible in its own right but perceivable by means of the events in the psyche and outer world. As a result of the awakening of scientific consciousness and its antipathy with Church-enforced dogmatism which gave ultimate power to the Church as the Definer of Reality, a materialistic bias arose. The hidden forces which previously had been called Gods and supernatural Spirits were now labeled in terms of scientific laws and mathematical equations. For some reason it was assumed that because of these new names the possibility of a Divine Intelligence had been outgrown, and these laws became things in themselves with no overall integrating ordering principle relating them or being postulated as their source. The more intuitive scientists, like Einstein, sensed such a principle but failed to find an adequate form to express it.

Human beings were seen as the objects of the operation of these scientific laws and as pawns within a meaningless and random universal machine. Freud and others helped to popularize the idea that forces also existed and acted upon the person from within. But these forces were blind and biological, reducing any refined human expression or religious sensibilities to elemental instincts. Jung (1959) and Assagioli (1965), among the contemporaries who dissented from Freud, felt that there was also a “higher” instinct, that religious aspirations and experiences were not reducible to biological impulses, and also that humans possess a relative freedom for choice.

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<sup>18</sup> Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, (New York: Lucis 1951), p. 116

They saw humans as having the potential for self-transcendence, higher orders of integration, and the responsibility ultimately for our own evolution.

The Gods and Goddesses have returned in the form of complexes and archetypes in the unconscious (Hillman, 1975). The so-called “paradigm shift” which we seem to be undergoing in the latter half of the twentieth century necessitates new models for understanding physical, biological, and psychological reality. It is also quite likely that new forces are becoming active within the psyche, that energies from the transpersonal levels are reaching into the worlds of everyday experience. Or we could say instead that human beings have reached a point of evolution where we are now becoming sensitive to a quality of vibration which was not responded to before by many.

We are all explorers in this newly emerging realm. We have some maps that have been handed down from the past by similar explorers, yet we must remember that their language, belief systems and cultures were different from ours, which may account for their choice of words or symbols to try to describe the new territory. We have our own experience, which is ultimately all we can rely on. Above all we must be honest with ourselves. It is likely, perhaps even inevitable, that at points on this journey we become deceived by our own wishes, projections, blind spots or inexperience. No matter how good something may sound or how much we may wish it to be so, if it doesn't correspond to our experience it is not real for us. And even if we can validate it, it still is at best an approximation, a hypothesis, a garment of words or ideas which for now seems to fit well enough to be considered a useful interpretation of an unknown Mystery.

The model of transpersonal development can be applied to our own growth or that of others in an infinite number of ways. It provides maps by which we may assess growth – the point at which we stand or our next step. It also invites us to develop a technology by which we can enhance our cooperation with the developmental process, including our receptivity to awakening levels of consciousness. Imagination and meditation are two such techniques. If we are, as modern physics and esoteric philosophy tell us, energies in a sea of energies, then learning to recognize as well as to direct those energies which are expressing through us all may be our responsibility, our next evolutionary step, foreshadowed materialistically by our discovery of atomic energy. Unless we master our inner energetic self, we stand a very good chance of being destroyed by the material energies we have unleashed. The energy of that mysterious something within us, for example, which we name “will” is so potent yet misunderstood and misused, if it is used at all.

The term “Self” here refers to the totality of energies which we are potentially able to contact, to experience and to express. It will take time for humans collectively to realize that anger, hunger, joy, or illumination are energies. Just as we have to de-condition ourselves and our language from the powerful and insidious influence of Newtonian particle physics which thinks “objects” are solid “things” to be able to see that they are really energies, we have to “de-objectivize” our inner world and see that thoughts, feelings and sensations are energies and not things or objects in themselves, nor are they essentially “us.” We can do this by applying the ideas of transpersonal models of human beingness. In doing so we will build a bridge which was unknowingly begun long ago, a bridge between the purpose for the existence of the human race and its manifestation in the physical world, bringing about what the Buddhists call “right relationship” between the kingdoms in nature – subhuman, human, and trans-human. There is already scientific speculation about the Earth being a living integral organism (the Gaia Hypothesis) (Lovelock, 1979) and that Humanity might be a global brain.

As evolution proceeds we can probably expect a continuation (at least for some time) of what we observe from the past: that new energies or qualities or human developments (the intellect and individual ego have been) tend initially to cause chaos, upheaval, and destruction of the existing order, which we call “crises,” and that upon being experienced these new developments are subject to misunderstanding, misinterpretation, illusion and projections – which we call “glamours” (Bailey, 1950). Little in most of our educational experience has taught us that crises are right and natural, or that “It is through the pain of confronting and resolving problems that we learn” (Peck, 1978). As a result we are surprised and most of us interpret crises as “wrong” or “bad,” an intrusion which we can try to ride out in order to “get back to normal.” But crises are normal; a life without crises is not normal, and indicates a potentially stillborn soul. It would probably reduce much suffering if we could recognize and accept crises for what they are – a point of tension between what has been and what is emerging, which has reached a level of intensity which demands a choice from us. Glamours are also natural because of our limited consciousness and the partial perspectives which identification with fragments of the whole Self provides. But again, if we could but recognize and accept our glamours for what they are we could take steps toward greater comprehension of Truth and lessen their distortions.

As a unifying thread, it would be best if we paused here to declare some basic principles of the transpersonal model of evolution:

- 1) The Universe is an integral organism presently in a process of dynamic self-creation and self-organization, implying some sort of Universal Purpose or Will.
- 2) The Universe as an integral organism consists of a hierarchy of lesser (more limited, under greater numbers of laws) wholes, each of which has its own purpose within the more comprehensive whole which includes it (“Holarchy”).
- 3) Each whole of any level of inclusiveness or complexity is organized by a center of will and consciousness (capacity to respond) at that level, and which seeks to bring the component parts of that level into optimal relationship (“Love”) for the fulfillment of purpose.
- 4) In the process of this organization on any level, the center is guided by feedback from the parts, as well as from the organizing center on the next higher level.
- 5) The process of self-organization within our observable Universe seems to be directed toward increasing synthesis or at-one-ment.
- 6) In order for integration to occur, the component parts on any level first have to reach a necessary degree of differentiation or individualization. The lower order pieces must be able to maintain their identity when integrated into the higher order unity. Since synthesis combines elements in a way that increases unity-in-multiplicity, there needs to be a dynamic equilibrium in the interplay between the two complementary principles of differentiation (which produces multiplicity) and integration (which combines differentiated units into more complex wholes).
- 7) If integration into a greater whole is attempted before the part is differentiated enough to maintain its individual identity or boundaries, the result is detrimental to both whole and part, with the possibility of destruction. The two possible responses of the part in such a situation of premature integration are to either lose its boundaries and give up its sense of self (including will) to the higher order whole, or to crystallize its boundaries as a defense in order to preserve its identity. Either response is detrimental to both individualization and integration.

8) Evolutionary development is now proceeding primarily through the unfoldment of consciousness and not form.

9) Consciousness as it unfolds requires more suitable forms for its expression. As a result, when forms have served their purpose, whether an organization, nation, personality, religion, etc., they are de-structured in order that a more suitable and less limiting form may be born to express the inner quality more fully.

10) Consciousness implies relatedness, since it must involve both a subject and object. Thus, evolution now occurs primarily through changes in the quality and scope of relatedness of the evolving entity.

11) The quality of relatedness which represents a progressive (i.e., toward synthesis) movement is experienced by the evolving organism as desirable, or of a positive value. This does not necessarily guarantee that all component parts of that organism share this evaluation, only that the center does.

12) Human beings represent the present pinnacle of material development, though not necessarily its end. The "Great Chain of Being" can be defined from above downward or below upward. Evolution has progressed through material form from the mineral kingdom to the vegetable kingdom (which is "alive"), to the animal kingdom (which is "conscious"), to the human kingdom (which is "self-aware," or able to be aware of and to direct its awareness).

13) The locus of our identification determines our perceptions and the range of our relatedness. The evolution of human consciousness proceeds through progressive disidentifications from partial aspects of human beingness.

14) As a human being approaches the threshold between one level of consciousness and another, s/he experiences opposing pulls between the urge toward self-transcendence and the urge toward self-preservation. As a way of avoiding this dilemma, we have developed projects which allow us to pursue some substitute for self-transcendence and Unity (love, fame, wealth, knowledge, etc.) and to substitute something else for the threat imposed by our own desire for transcendence, something we feel we can control, deny or avoid (enemies, illness, Nature, etc.).

15) Everything already exists. Revelation is really recognition of that which already is. Synthesis is, and we are gradually realizing it.

With these principles in mind we can proceed to explore some applications of the transpersonal model of human development.

# Chapter Nine

## Complications of the Psychological Birth Process

*Unity on a new level: that unity which can be arrived at only after man has experienced his separateness, after he has gone through the stage of alienation from himself and his world, and has been fully born.*

– Erich Fromm

*Each stage of biological birth appears to have a specific spiritual counterpart: for the undisturbed intrauterine existence it is the experience of cosmic unity; the onset of the delivery is paralleled by feelings of universal engulfment; the first clinical stage of delivery, the contractions in a closed uterine system, corresponds with the experience of “no exit” or hell; the propulsion through the birth canal in the second clinical stage of the delivery has its spiritual analogue in the death-rebirth struggle; and the metaphysical equivalent of the termination of the birth process and of the events in the third clinical stage of the delivery is the experience of ego death and rebirth.*

– Stanislav Grof, M.D.

### Archetypal Experiences

OVER THE PAST CENTURY comparative religion and depth psychology have made us aware that there appear to be within the unconscious psyche (whatever that is) certain recognizable ordering principles which organize collective human experience. These archetypes are not directly perceived but are revealed historically especially by art, religion, dreams, myths and fairy tales. They provide the common themes or structures to which different peoples at different times have added specific cultural content. Archetypal experiences, common to us all, include Birth, Death, Illness, War, Pursuit of Meaning, God, Abandonment and Return, Masculine/Feminine, and so on. There are times when an individual or a collective becomes possessed by the power of an archetype, in which case there appears to be a larger than personal Will at work, for either good or evil. C.G. Jung used Nazi Germany as an example of the possession of a nation by an archetype – in this case the archetype of the Superman. These archetypes are similar, or perhaps identical, with the natural instincts we perceive ordering behavior in the animal

kingdom, as in beehives, ant colonies, or schools of fish or flocks of birds. We can use terms like “God” and “Will of God,” “scientific Laws” or even “Fate” instead of “archetype,” but beyond our choice of terminology (which is but a la-bel) we find a Reality which has to do with the Energies or Forces which di-rect or influence life. We may worship Them or study Them with the aim of mastering Them, but to ignore Them is suicidal.

The Self, in a sense, is THE archetype, because it represents the Source of all archetypes. The Archetype of the Self in human incarnation is portrayed in stories and myths like the parable of the Prodigal Son in the Bible (Luke 15:11-32) or the film “E.T.” This theme is present in many variations in myth and fairy tale and portrays the hero as leaving or being sent away from Home, becoming lost in a strange world, and eventually finding his or her way Home. (Campbell, 1949) This archetype rests deep within us and creates feelings of abandonment, guilt, emptiness, shame, and a yearning for something which, when found, will make us whole. Something within us is the Traveler, the Stranger in a Strange Land. This inner Stranger is searching for something, being drawn toward someone or something which promises us a deep sense of rightness and belonging, of acceptance and wholeness. By running from our feelings of shame, of having been banished, of having done something terrible now forgotten for which life on Earth is a punishment, or of somehow not being all right or acceptable, we are also running from that in us which is capable of finding what we are all searching for. For a while it may seem that money, fame, health, love, or power will fill that emptiness, but not for long.

*Man only seeks to deify himself in the temporal sphere because he is ignorant of his real divine essence. Man is born the son of God, participating totally in the nature of the Supreme Principle of the Universe; but he is forgetful of his origin, illusorily convinced that he is only this limited and mortal body which his senses perceive. Amnesic, he suffers from illusorily feeling himself abandoned by God (while he is in reality God himself), and he fusses about in the temporal sphere in search of affirmations to support his divinity which he cannot find there.*

*(Benoit, 1955, quoted in Wilber, 1980, p. 108)*

We are a fragment of the Universal Self temporarily cut off in awareness from our Home, the Whole, by having been immersed in the material world of separation and multiplicity. Our life here may be, as some have said, but a dream. Somewhere else we are awake and aware of our True Identity. Nothing short of realizing our True Identity and Identification with the Whole can end this search. As T.S. Eliot has said, “The end of all our exploring will be to arrive at our starting point and know it for the first time.” We cannot know why yet, but it seems that even though our Goal is also the Place from which we’ve come, we must still leave and come back. The archetypal themes of being evicted from Paradise, being mistakenly locked out, becoming separated and reunited obviously have great fascination for the human mind, since they persist as the dominant themes of films, literature and music after thousands of years. But as much as we yearn for reunion and re-Unity something in us is afraid of what that will cost. The possibility of the loss of our boundaries and separateness threatens our very existence, and at every threshold we are pulled in two directions by the desire to transcend and the desire to preserve. (Wilber, 1980) We can come to perceive the presence of certain archetypal themes as major patterns in our lives, as if we identify with certain myths and seem compelled to live them out in some modern version.

## Systems of Condensed Experience (COEX's)

In the course of therapy or self-exploration we may find no apparent early experience which can account for certain of our compulsive reactions or behaviors. Or we may find that having uncovered what appeared to be an early childhood cause for our problems still has not changed anything, thus implying a deeper cause. While it is not necessary to uncover the archetypal roots of our inner obstructions to growth in every case, it is better to at least know of their possible existence in case they do emerge. In transpersonal development we are not, for that matter, as intent upon "cleaning up" the lower unconscious with its instincts, traumas and complexes as we are on realizing our potentials. That is the course we pursue unless we come up against an obstacle which blocks our movement. As Assagioli said,

*We think we can – as normal people generally do – put up with a certain amount of unanalyzed unconscious material as long as it remains more or less quiet and does not interfere with normal life and normal activities. . . . When the unconscious disturbs, it has to be dealt with; if it keeps quiet, we do not make a systematic offensive against it.*

*(Assagioli, 1965, p. 100)*

We could amend (as would probably Assagioli) this to refer also to life and activities oriented beyond the normal. If there are places of darkness within us which still do not prevent us from our goals, what is the purpose of undertaking their removal? As Christ said, "Resist not evil, but make energetic progress in the good." What would be our motive for doing so? Much apparent therapy seems to overlook the intention and motivations of the client for being there and is based upon the therapist's assumption of what is needed.

Dr. Stanislav Grof, in his famous experiments using LSD as an adjunct to psychotherapy, developed from his experiences the concept of the COEX System or System of Condensed Experience. A COEX is a "specific constellation of memories consisting of condensed experiences (and related fantasies) from different life periods of the individual. The memories belonging to a particular COEX system have a similar basic theme or contain similar elements and are associated with a strong emotional charge of the same quality. The deepest layers of this system are represented by vivid and colorful memories of experiences from infancy and early childhood." (Grof, 1976, p. 46) He cited numerous examples of basic themes such as all past exposures of an individual to humiliating or degrading situations that damaged their self-esteem, emotional deprivation, claustrophobic or suffocating feelings evoked by oppressive or restricting situations from which there was no hope of escape, guilt or failure. He went on to discover the existence of potentially archetypal or transpersonal cores in some patient's COEX systems. These appeared first in the form of apparent recall of one's physical birth experiences, and then in some cases as apparent past life, racial, collective or ancestral situations. There were also instances of transpersonal or peak experiences, including "oneness with life" and "planetary consciousness":

*From this point of view, the earth appears to be a complicated cosmic organism with the different aspects of geological, biological, cultural, and technological evolution on this planet seen as manifestations of an attempt to reach a higher level of integration and self-realization.*

*(Grof, 1976, p. 185)*

The main emphasis of his findings as presented in *Realms of the Human Unconscious* concerns the impact of the birth or perinatal experience as a common core experience in his patients' COEX's. He has formulated a system of four BPM's, or Basic Perinatal Matrices with their associated pathologies and phenomenologies, as shown in the paradigmatic illustration on the next page.

Thus in any given situation we are likely to be consciously or unconsciously evoking a COEX system which in turn may strongly color our experience of the present circumstances. If we are about to enter a new phase of life, whether it is to commit to a relationship, end a relationship, take a new job, or change our lifestyle, we may be evoking unconscious memories from all our prior experiences of beginnings, all the way back to the imprint of our birth upon our nervous system. I remember experiencing this type of COEX quality when my dog was killed, and in my grieving I encountered images in which I found myself grieving not only for his loss but for my first marriage, which had ended by my wife leaving five years earlier. When we separate from someone or something close, we may re-experience some or all of our previous separations, including the physical separation from the mother at birth. (Note that one type of COEX may relate to separations in which we have been the one to leave, while another may refer to times when we have been left by another.)

It typically takes time for a COEX theme to become apparent as it reveals itself gradually through a variety of situations as a common thread of meaning, for example, being betrayed by someone we thought we could trust, or giving up initiative and waiting for someone to come to our rescue when we are challenged. We could call it a compulsive repetition of the same actions or responses. In some ways, the COEX idea is simply a new way of describing a phenomenon well known to psychology for some time – that we tend to repeat early traumatic situations, apparently in the attempt to resolve them this time without the same traumatic result. But because of our unconscious feelings and perceptions we tend to bring about a repetition which serves only to reinforce our fears or expectations. Thus if we felt rejected by our mother we may develop a defensive mistrust of women which brings about situations in which women “prove” that they cannot be trusted by again appearing to reject us, without their ever having recognized how we contributed toward the result by our mistrust.

We are constantly being born. At least we should be. “The man that isn't busy being born is busy dying.” And birth is not really leaving the womb as much as it is going from one womb to another. The fetus becomes differentiated enough to leave the mother's womb and survive. But it now becomes supported within the matrix of the mother's care at first and then the family as a whole. Through the development of a social identity or persona and participation in the social education process, the child leaves the protection of the family and joins society or at least a particular subculture. With the emergence of the “I” comes the possibility of leaving the womb of socio-cultural roles and norms in order to take responsibility for our life. And this integration of the personality allows the Self to emerge, permitting assimilation into a larger whole (i.e., Humanity or the planet).

All of this points to the idea that our birth experience may likely have imprinted upon us the patterns which we continue to enact as we move from womb to womb throughout our lives. (Janov) What occurred at that time physically becomes translated also to the psyche (which contains the physical). A “tight” situation unknowingly mobilizes the same responses that were originally evoked by our mother's contractions. Having almost died when the umbilical cord became wrapped around our throat, we respond with rage when we feel we are being “cut off” by some-

one from expressing ourselves. While not yet proven by organized research, it makes for a very interesting hypothesis, one which we can at least consider by examining our lives. It may be important for us to find out all we can about our actual physical birth, either from our mother, the attending physician or birth records, because that birth (according to Grof's and Janov's work) is likely to be a core experience around which a COEX has developed. Its relevance lies in the real possibility that we are to this day continuing to operate within the framework of a particular COEX, rather than by free choice.

For that matter, it is possible that our physical birth is not really the core experience but that the core lies even deeper on a transpersonal or racial level, and the circumstances of birth may already be a layer reflecting a prior pattern. It is also valuable to know about our birth because it is likely that at other thresholds in our life we will be unconsciously influenced by that first experience, including the birth of the Self. As an example of COEX's and our birth model, we will examine here the idea of complications which can arise during physical birth and their psychological correspondences which may continue to influence our experiences and choices throughout life.

## Birth Complications

The movement from old identification through 1) constriction, struggle and letting go, to 2) disorientation and loss of boundaries, and then to 3) a new and more inclusive sense of self ideally occurs repeatedly in our lives. Just as fear and resistance to the first stage (letting go) can obstruct the process, so can fear of the last stage – moving into the new, committing and learning to experience life through new eyes. Whether we are talking of the birth of the Self in the personality or a more partial renewal during the course of personality development, there appear at times to be problems. These “complications” arising during the psychological birth process can be seen to be in many cases analogous to those which can occur in physical birth. Again physical birth can provide a map with which to understand (and to heal) the obstacles to our growth. It remains to be seen whether the complications which may have been experienced during our physical birth tend to repeat their patterns on psychological levels during later recapitulations of birth when new aspects of the personality or of the Self emerge.

### Breech Birth

The “breech birth” occurs physically when the baby's position is other than head-first, coming instead either feet or buttocks first. Metaphorically this could express an attitude of resistance to birth, or “I won't go.” In transpersonal terms we could call this a “reluctance to incarnate.” This pattern may arise later in images or sensations, perhaps in the course of therapy, sometimes appearing in vivid imagery as an unwillingness to be born, or to go down a dark hole or tunnel. What matters in terms of its meaning is that the personality in this case has a tendency to falter at the threshold or to resist commitment or movement into new areas of experience in their life. Because our model portrays human unfoldment as a natural process of repeatedly leaving the “womb” (mother's womb, mother, home and family, school, youth, old identifications and subpersonalities) in order that the more essential Self can emerge, this resistance is potentially against the person's best interests, not to mention against living evolution itself.

The therapist who is open to testing this model is willing to take apparent memories or images which imply birth at face value, instead of having to manufacture intellectual interpretations to

explain them. Therapy in this instance may at times be more like midwifery, as the therapist supports and aids the spontaneous birthing of the client with love and the simple urge to “keep breathing” or to “let it happen.” This may be contraindicated in the case of someone with a fragile ego-structure. Without this model the often powerful breathing and body sensations that may arise during the experience can be frightening to the therapist, thus undermining his/her ability to provide a sense of safety and trust for the client. If it looks like birth, sounds like birth, feels like birth, maybe it is birth.

It is possible for someone re-experiencing their breech birth to apparently recall what it was that made them unwilling to be born. If it can be remembered, then healing is possible, and with it, the possibility to undo that prior resistance and to make a heart-felt commitment to live, to be present in the physical body in this world of time and space. Sometimes the newly re-born person also realizes the purpose for which they have been born, perhaps to gain experience or to express love or a vision in the world. Just as psychoanalysis and other traditional schools of therapy would have us relive our childhood traumas and release the repressed emotions from that time, we can do the same with birth recalls. The fear, life-threatening trauma, or struggle of birth can be re-experienced and reinterpreted. When we can experience at the deepest levels of being the MEANING of what we went through then (not intellectual meaning, but a context), we are free to choose whether or not we want to intentionally participate in life. This is the choice which above all seems to face the breech-birth person. This is not meant to imply that all people who seem to have trouble living intentionally must have been born breech. But it would be worth researching how many breech birth babies have become adults with this life issue.

So a breech birth implies issues of choice, commitment, will, and loss of purpose. The individual may unconsciously set up his or her life so that this experience is recapitulated again and again, with them being led to take the next step by circumstances. Often there is a strong identification with a Victim subpersonality, a Rebel, or the attitude of “I won’t.” The answer is not in any intellectual formula about breech births, but in the person’s buried will. In order for them to release their will and become empowered to act by choice and their own sense of purpose, they must be willing to open to the experience of how painful it is to be a Victim or to be powerless. It is this same principle which is used in the “Despair and Empowerment” Workshops which have appeared in the ’80’s. (Macy, 1983) By gathering in supportive groups people are encouraged to share their pain and despair about the global situation, and having done so a new sense of empowerment and will emerges for most, along with actual choices for involvement and action.

One does not have to be born a breech baby in order for these issues to be central, but in any case the approach to healing and recovery of will is the same. By accepting and experiencing the pain of powerlessness their deeper cause can come to light. Whether the core of the COEX is birth, parental humiliation, early failures or some other wounding of the will, the cause, when it emerges, brings the source of healing along with it. An issue like this may lie dormant for many years with the person coping as a Victim, but when it is time for their will to be freed the identification with powerlessness becomes too painful to bear. The simple rule in this and all situations is we can trust the natural process, and by cooperating with it and fostering it healing will occur.

### **Caesarian Section Birth**

The Caesarian Section birth (or C-section) is a surgically performed birth in which the baby is removed directly from the mother through an incision in her abdomen. These also seem to be related to will issues. Depending upon the circumstances which have led to the C-section, there

are variations. Some C-sections are planned in advance for a variety of reasons. Perhaps the mother's pelvic opening is not large enough for the baby to pass through or it might in some other way be life-threatening to mother and child to attempt natural childbirth. Up until recently, any woman who had had a C-section once was automatically assumed to need one for future births. Or the C-section may be scheduled simply for the convenience of the mother or doctor. The wisdom of the latter procedure, which is increasingly being used, is certainly open to question. And there are also situations in which a C-section is performed at the last moment, sometimes after many hours of labor, because of an emergency like when the baby is unable to receive oxygen.

In any of these cases, the baby has been "rescued" from having to endure a natural process to its conclusion. If no labor occurred, then we have an "easy" birth, with no discomfort or threat. On the other hand, if an emergency C-section is performed after great stress and struggle, it may indeed be a relief or salvation. In either case, it is easy to imagine the baby being imprinted with an expectation that either someone else's will is necessary, or at least can be depended upon, for help. Perhaps the person grows up avoiding challenges and struggle because of an "easy" birth. Or they may, on the other hand, become attracted to danger because their first experience taught them that someone or something would always come to the rescue. Or it is possible that the person could resent anyone's help, feeling the doctor's hand as an invasion and interruption of the process. Research would be of great value here. The particular resulting patterns in any case would still be handled in the same way as the breech birth person – acceptance of the present-day pattern, possible emergence of an apparent birth memory, and supportive guidance. It is by slowing down and consciously re-experiencing any trauma – birth, childhood, or archetypal – that earlier misinterpretations, lapses in awareness, or distortions can be undone.

### **Premature Birth**

As we know, some babies are born weeks or months before they are ready and as a result, they need to be kept in isolated technological support systems until they have matured enough to survive. In less sophisticated cultures, simply keeping the baby bundled next to the mother's body under her clothes can be equally effective. Though our society's approach is now beginning to incorporate greater individual attention for the baby because the damage of isolation is being recognized, the baby is probably imprinted with a sense of rejection, lack of stimulation and especially with the loss of much, if not all, of the opportunity to bond with the mother. The premature baby may become a person who has a hard time establishing contact with others, or may never feel ready to take the next step. It is also possible to imagine the opposite, where the preemie develops into the individual who is always in a hurry, impatient, never finishing or following through.

There are many other possibilities for complications – being choked by an umbilical cord, induced labor, anesthetized birth, long and stressful labor, toxemia, and so on. It is not our intention to catalog these here, mainly because this is speculation and research is needed. These examples have served to illustrate the concept of the birth COEX, as well as to direct our attention to the importance of the birth experience for later development.

As yet there is great resistance in the medical establishment to acknowledging the possibility that newborns are anything more than "objects" unable to feel or to register their experience at birth. I suppose one reason for this resistance is the unwillingness to feel the pain that would result from the realization by a physician or nurse that all the babies they have delivered or handled, often in a somewhat insensitive or businesslike fashion, were potentially affected for life by that

experience. It is an awesome responsibility. Similarly, anyone who has given birth is likely to feel guilt or defensive about having allowed the medical people to take so much control for how the birth was handled, and to wonder how their child might have been different if they had had a more conscious birth. Yet the results of therapies like LSD, rebirthing or primal, as well as the spontaneous emergence of apparent birth memories, demand consideration.

### **A Note on Rebirthing**

Rebirthing is an approach to healing which utilizes forced breathing techniques for the purpose of reawakening birth experience trauma and imprints stored within the nervous system, for reasons theoretically similar to those in this chapter. Spiritual teachers have known and used the breath as a powerful tool for development for thousands of years. But they were spiritual teachers, hopefully with a sensitivity to the subtle body of the disciple and his or her readiness. They were also in a long-term relationship with that person and so could be counted on for assistance in the event of upsetting effects. Rebirthing is now offered to anyone who wishes it, including so-called “borderline” cases of weak ego development. Forced breathing techniques do indeed bring about potent results. But most rebirthing practitioners lack the expertise to understand the ultimate effects of a rebirthing session. “New Age” methods now tend to substitute blind faith for responsibility.

The path being described in this chapter honors the person’s experience as the starting place and does not force anything, allowing the organismic responses and defenses of the individual to create their own pace. Most rebirthers seem to assume little or no responsibility for the client after the session and don’t even have any follow-up with the client. The rebirthing is usually experienced as a powerful body energy often releasing strong emotions, and is to be “grounded” or integrated into the person’s daily life by the repetition of an affirmation.

This chapter is about spontaneous recall of birthing experiences. Both rebirthing client and practitioner give no consideration to possible repercussions of the session. Some clients appear (who can say for sure?) to have had their more primal “energy centers” energized, resulting in the reactivation of regressive instinctive issues of sex, hunger, or survival. The revival of the “energy” concept – that we have energy bodies and energy centers – in our times has put many in danger. Forced breathing techniques are supposed to especially affect the subtle or energy body and its centers. These should be practiced under the guidance of someone who knows what they are doing. People undergo powerful techniques provided by individuals who have had a few “training” sessions. Rebirthing, for example, was developed by a salesman in a bathtub. It went on to become a California experience, resulting in training for potential practitioners. Imagine conventional medical techniques or new medicines being used in such unresearched ways.

We are still mainly ignorant about these techniques and their implications, and to rush into their use is irresponsible. It would appear much wiser to allow for the possibility that spontaneous rebirthing can occur naturally, not because we intend it or apply forcing techniques to make it happen. The technologies of the New Age are still in most cases being used with the attitudes of the past, as tools on people who are “objects,” just as traditional medicine is inclined to do.

### **Exercises**

#### **Incarnating**

(This exercise works best by having someone read it to you.)

Close your eyes and take some slow deep breaths.

Imagine floating in space, in a dark peaceful, silent void. Around you are the stars, and far from you you can distinguish the small bluish sphere of the Earth. . .

Remain in these safe and peaceful surroundings, aware only of your breath. . . Now you begin to notice a slight pull, a slight discomfort, something disturbing your peace. It slowly increases until you can no longer ignore it, and it seems to draw you from your floating freedom toward the Earth. . .

Be aware of your instinctive reactions to this change. Also be aware of how you feel about this growing pull from the Earth, as it begins to compel you to approach the Earth below. . .

You are now moving toward the Earth, seeing it grow larger in your field of vision, noticing more and more of its detail. You are aware that you are being drawn to a particular location on the planet, faster and faster. . .

Almost immediately you find yourself entering the body of a woman in labor. You are now enclosed in a very small body within that woman. And you are aware of a tremendous pressure pushing inward on you. making it impossible for you to move. Experience what that is like . . .

What do you want to do? What are the automatic feelings and images which arise in this enclosed situation? What do you automatically imagine will happen next?

Now imagine that you are beginning to move. Slowly you are moving through the darkness, still unaware of where it will take you. How do you feel about your new movement?

Imagine you are now released, into a new and strange world. You are permanently out of the tight, dark place and cannot go back. Around you are new sights and sounds and sensations. How do you feel about entering and remaining in this new world?

(This exercise may or may not relate to your actual birth experience. It can reveal to you some archetypal attitudes or expectations which underlie your experience of transition, stuckness, or movement into new possibilities or commitments. It may be worth your while to take some time to explore the possible analogies between your experience in this exercise and parallel situations within your daily life. Also make sure you take your time in concluding the exercise, perhaps by doing some relaxation and/or movement exercises, if it has strongly affected you.)

### **Babies**

Call a local hospital and find out the visiting hours for their nursery. Go during the appropriate time, and find an awake baby near the window to observe. Watch this baby for 5-10 minutes, and as you do, try to imagine what it is like to be this baby at this moment. See if you can imagine seeing through the baby's eyes.

(This exercise may help to make you aware of the presence within you of the infant level of perception and experience. It also may sensitize you to the importance of the birth experience.)



# Chapter Ten

## Worldview and Choice

*The slenderest knowledge that may be obtained of the highest things is more desirable than the most certain knowledge obtained of lesser things.*

– Saint Thomas Aquinas

*I could see peace instead of this.*

– A Course in Miracles

*Some travel into the mountains accompanied by experienced guides who know the best and least dangerous routes by which they arrive at their destination. Still others, inexperienced and untrusting, attempt to make their own routes. Few of these are successful, but occasionally some, by sheer will and luck and grace, do make it. Once there they become more aware than any of the others that there's no single or fixed number of routes. There are as many routes as there are individual souls.*

– (Pirsig, 1974, pp. 187-88)

*Maps are useful because they allow us to see where we are and how to get to where we want to go. The maps of human nature provided by the Transpersonal model offer us a meaningful context within which to evaluate our situation, especially at times when we feel lost or disoriented. Of course, as E.F. Schumacher said,*

*A map or guidebook. . . does not “solve” problems and does not “explain” mysteries; it merely helps to identify them.*

(Schumacher, 1977, p. 8)

**T**HE REAL BASIS FOR HOW WE CHOOSE to approach life rests in the underlying belief system we use to interpret experience – our worldview. Usually we begin life with the worldview handed down to us by our parents and teachers and we are rarely aware that this system of assumptions is just that – assumptions, and not the Truth. This is one of the most prevalent aspects of illusion in our world – mistaking assumptions for Reality. We naturally interpret the world and ourselves based upon our present state of consciousness. Biologically ruled primitive peoples who had to struggle for survival against the forces of Nature interpreted those forces, especially the ones which had some kind of identifiable repetitive appearance, as nature spirits. Later cultures which developed on the basis of farming and breeding interpreted reality as

the dualistic interplay of the opposing forces of Life and Death, Masculine and Feminine. Our present culture has developed the rational intellect and the ability therefore to use abstract symbols to describe reality. This is similar to the idea of identification we discussed during the Gestation phase – that we tend to perceive the world through the eyes of whatever partial aspect of the personality with which we are identified, and to take those perceptions as the way things really are. The very fact that we can experience shifts in our identifications and thus see the world in very different ways leads to the realization that all we can ever know is our perceptions and that they may or may not accurately reflect what is really there. Modern physics is now suggesting that what is really there are wavelengths of varying rhythms, and it is our brain which translates these wavelengths into apparently solid objects, colors, sounds, and so on.

In becoming conscious, emerging from prenatal unitive bliss and identification with the mother, we begin the process which ideally leads to the birth of the Transpersonal Self in the personality. This process can be defined as the creation of boundaries which then allow us to differentiate in various ways between what we take as ourselves and that which appears to be other than ourselves. At various stages of this process we make these distinctions based upon different sets of values. At first we learn simply to distinguish our physical body from the physical environment, because we are moving from a physical embeddedness where there was no separation between our body and the environment. Sensations like hunger, tension, relief, bodily pleasure and pain help us to realize that we are a distinct organism separate from the world in which we live. Once we have begun to establish these boundaries of self-definition we have also created the experience of fear for ourselves, because wherever there is a boundary there is the threat of its being erased. “Wherever there is other, there is fear,” says the Upanishads. So whether we live in a primitive or modern culture, we live within collectively assumed boundaries of one kind or another, behind which we are relatively safe and without which we fear our death. The worldview of any given time and collective is the system of beliefs, rituals, symbols and myths which seem most effectively to insure survival, to create a psychic bonding of the people against outside threat, whether that threat appears to be Nature, Life, instinct, or other people.

Thus a person’s worldview has had the distinct purpose of the preservation of the sense of separateness which reinforces the boundaries which the people of that time needed in order to differentiate or to individualize. At the same time it served to integrate the group within those boundaries. “God (or the gods) favor us, and will wipe out our enemies” or “Scientific knowledge gives us the keys with which we can manipulate and control Nature.” In our times we have reached a new level of development calling for new worldviews. The boundaries now have become individualized, reinforcing more the distinction and separateness of the individual from other individuals, rather than group distinct from group. Individual freedom and ego development have become the new underlying assumptions upon which Western worldviews are built. Western democracy proclaims all of us to be equal as egos and gives us the right, or even the responsibility, of pursuing our own aims and letting each separate ego look out for themself.

Not everyone subscribes to such worldviews. There are mainly two groups who do not. Those who have not yet developed a sufficiently independent ego and who feel unable to compete for power tend to place the reins of authority and responsibility in the hands of others. In doing so, they create systems which obstruct ego development.

On the other hand, there is a growing number of individuals who have already become sufficiently self-organizing and self-responsible, who have developed to the level of effective ego expression and are progressing beyond that stage. They can see many individuals and cultures

which seem stuck in potentially destructive patterns of self-aggrandisement, defensiveness and greed. It is difficult, at least at first, not to derive a new worldview in large part in reaction to this negative perception and thus to emphasize what one is not going to be, rather than to define what one has the potential of becoming. So we have individuals and groups believing that the next step is retreat to the land to live like our ancestors or spiritual withdrawal from a world gone mad. They do not recognize ego development as a necessary transitional stage of human development leading from tribal unanimity, made up of units with no sense of individual identity, to an as yet unclear spiritual oneness, in which individual uniqueness can find its rightful place within the whole, aligned with group purpose by free choice.

At this time those of us entering the Transpersonal stages of growth live side by side with people who are struggling to become ego-conscious, to develop the sense of empowerment which can allow them to take greater responsibility for their lives, as well as those who are fully caught up in the games of ego-fulfillment. Some of the latter are exactly where they belong, while others have been caught up in a mass epidemic of materialistic desire, trivial pursuits and alcohol or drug-induced numbing of their hunger for the sublime. Our mainstream institutions, including psychology, have been built by egos and for egos and therefore have little interest in opening up to the possibility that their power is based upon a temporary phenomenon. We also have within our midst the relatively small number of individuals who are at differing stages on the path of Self-realization. There is at this time at the end of the 20th century an overwhelming number of possible worldviews to choose from. Gone are the secure days in which everyone believed the same thing and interpreted reality in so uniform a fashion that the concept of worldview did not even exist. You either subscribed to the collective belief system or you were “insane.” We have lost that security but gained freedom. We can select from a variety of worldviews, much like shopping in the supermarket, or create our own. We rarely look deeply enough into ourselves to discover the reasons why we choose a particular worldview. For that matter, many of us have not even realized that this is a choice.

I believe there is one simple dividing line which greatly simplifies this issue. No matter what the outer form of words, images and symbols, what matters is whether we believe that the Universe, by any name, works (is ordered, has meaning) or that it does not. If, as the Transpersonal view assumes, the Universe is “is an integral organism presently in a process of dynamic self-creation and self-organization, implying some sort of Universal Purpose or Will” (Principle 1, Chapter 7), then we, as part of that integral Universe, have a purpose within it and there is a meaning to our lives beyond whatever self-centered goals we may pursue. If, on the other hand, our most deeply held belief (or fear) is that the Universe is a random, meaningless machine from which we are excluded or into which we have been cast by chance, it will not be possible for us to recognize the presence of an inner purposeful guidance system which is interdependent with other lives. (There is actually a third position: that the Universe is ordered by a cruel or vindictive Force which is intent on hurting or torturing us. We will not consider this here.)

Most of us have a varied collection of worldviews within us. Our feelings see the world in one way and hold certain assumptions about reality, while our intellect may differ. What matters here is which worldview is determining our direction and until there is a sense of integrity, a single directing purpose around which our life is organized, it is likely that we will behave from moment to moment in ways which conform first to one, then to another, and perhaps at times to other belief systems, all of which reside within us. The more integrated and mature our personality is, the greater is our freedom of choice of worldview. It is not that everyone in the world should subscribe to the same belief system that we do, for a reductionistic mechanistic worldview may

stimulate ego development better in many cases than a more spiritual, holistic one. But it is by their having become more or less mutually exclusive that these two perspectives have made eventual Transpersonal development more difficult.

If the spiritual worldview, which holds that the Universe is a purposeful, meaningful, working Whole, denies totally the value of personal individualism and ego development, it is obviously faulty, because it is judging that the ego does not belong in this holistic Universe, and if so, the Universe is then not a Whole, because it appears to exclude certain aspects of its own natural development. On the other hand, the materialistic perspective, while highlighting the separateness of atomic particles, objects and egos, makes it more difficult for us to recognize, nurture or to trust those higher instincts within us which intuit a connecting Love and common Purpose, leaving us imprisoned in a separative, competitive, and mistrustful box made of our own beliefs. And until we are willing to admit the limitations of those beliefs, we are like the monkey caught in the Indian monkey trap, in which a nut is placed inside a jar which has an opening just large enough for an outstretched monkey paw to enter, but not big enough for a fist closed around the nut to pull out.

As we saw earlier in Chapter 4, when faced with an apparent mutually exclusive dichotomy, the solution rests in the discovery of a third position in which the relative truth of both sides is reconciled in a synthesis. That is the purpose behind this description of Transpersonal growth. Where this misunderstanding exists, both sides are easily caught in the glamour of having the Right Answer, and thus of seeing the other side as Wrong, all of which is an ego game of self-righteous justification. Christ did not say that we had to choose between His world and Caesar's, but to "render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto me that which is mine," leaving a third middle position of discriminative choice. That is the position of the place within us we call "I". A truly holistic worldview has a place within it for all others, seeing each as right for a certain phase of our development, just as different schools of psychological theory and treatment are right for those who are at the point where that emphasis fits their needs. But we also need a comprehensive synthetic psychology in order that we can see each approach in its right relationship with the others. In doing so, we can end the separative competition and quarreling based upon the mistaken belief that there can be ONE Right Way.

Our worldview determines our interpretation of our experience and in doing so determines our options, which define our choices, which are reflected in our actions. A truly holistic worldview, for example, cannot hunt game or exploit Nature unless the act is seen to be of mutual benefit. But someone who sees Nature and its wildlife as objects put here for our enjoyment and use will have no guilt over taking the life of a deer, and may even believe it is one's right or duty to do so.

At some point in our development, our worldview comes not from a collectively held and unquestioned belief system, as it has, nor even from a consciously chosen, because logically sound or elegant, set of assumptions, but from an inner knowing. The same progression can be seen in the evolution of our inner basis of sensing what is right. We start with what Freud called the "superego," which is a set of rules and collectively enforced behaviors, including what we can think or imagine, which have been taught to us by parents and teachers. If we are able to free ourselves from this restraint, which means overcoming our conditioned sense of guilt about breaking the rules of the superego, we realize a deeper, more individually authentic conscience, which tells us when we are not being true to ourselves and our inner moral code. This reflects a stage of development where we are able to think for ourselves, and to be responsible for our own actions, even when they disagree with the collective norms.

Finally, if we allow it, a deeper, softer voice begins to guide us from the heart, not that different from our conscience, except that it appears to widen its sense of responsibility to include others, and in time, the Whole. Thus we are eventually guided by an inner knowing which advocates our choosing the greatest good, even in situations calling for personal sacrifice. This is done not out of a trained sense of duty, which is of the superego, but an inner sense of rightness. It is from this place within the heart that our Transpersonal worldview arises. And in doing so, it equips us to make our choices which determine our actions based upon the quality which the esoteric teachings call “love-wisdom,” the understanding of which comes from the intuitive experience of the integral wholeness which we are.

We might consider ourselves to be like a point in space, through which an infinite number of straight lines pass in all directions. Each of these lines represents a potential direction in which we may develop, and our choice as to which one(s) we consider most important and to which we want to direct our efforts will be decided by our worldview. This example is limited in part because our development is not really best pictured as along straight lines, except for perhaps short distances. It is much more like a dance.

If we choose to live within a belief system which views the Universe as a random mechanical operation, we are left in a very vulnerable position. This has been aptly described by the existentialist philosophers in a way that makes being human sound like being kept in a concentration camp. We are faced with meaninglessness unless we create our own meaning, with certain death and decay and an awesome responsibility for our choices and our lives without any solid sense of certainty about the outcome of these choices. If, instead, we believe the Universe is an expression of a loving God, that everything is “God’s Will” or the expression of some archetype, it may invite us to avoid our responsibility for ourselves and each other, and can provide us with some sense of security which can help us to avoid the existential terrors associated with being human. Somewhere in the middle of these two lies a view which admits WE JUST DON’T KNOW. We have usually been taught in school that the Universe is just a machine, like billions of billioniard balls randomly colliding, and life is an accident. I see too much that seems to indicate the presence of some kind of Intelligence – human birth, flowers, crystals, sunsets and sunrises, synchronicities in which apparent coincidences seem meaningfully connected. But I have also seen what appears to be needless suffering and death – gifted young people murdered for no reason, suicidal warfare in Ireland and Lebanon and southeast Asia, starvation in Africa, tornadoes and plane crashes. I have not found meaning for these, and I expect I never will.

I don’t really know, and neither do you. For that matter, neither does anyone else. No one knows how things really are – not the experts, not the priests, not the true believers, not the hardened cynic who’s seen it all. Everyone just has their opinion. And that opinion acts effectively as a filter on our perceptions, screening out whatever doesn’t fit, and highlighting what does. Why not trade the false security that comes from thinking we know what life is about for the less secure freedom which not knowing offers? When coming to this realization, many people at first become frightened that there is no dependable answer, and then dawns the freedom of realizing that if no one knows for sure, the answer could be anything at all:

Once, in the Greek New Testament class on Sundays, taken by the Head Master, I dared to ask, in spite of my stammering, what some parable meant. The answer was so confused that I actually experienced my first moment of consciousness – that is, I suddenly realized that no one knew anything . . .and from that moment I began to think for myself, or rather knew that I could . . .suddenly this inner revelation of knowing that he knew nothing, – nothing, that is, about any-

thing that really mattered. This was my first inner liberation from the power of external life. From that time, I knew for certain – and that means always by inner individual authentic perception which is the only source of real knowledge – that all my loathing of religion as it was taught me was right.

(Nicoll, 1973)

Since you and I will never know for sure, or at least do not right now (except by “inner individual authentic perception”), whether the Universe works in a meaningful way or not, because there is apparent evidence supporting both views, why not choose whichever approach appeals to you as an hypothesis to test, and proceed to test it by the way you live your life? Given that choice, I have chosen to test the hypothesis that the Universe works because that seemed to offer greater opportunity for creative living, not to mention less fear. So my choices are based upon the assumptions that I am not a victim of the world I see, that Love underlies all, and that I can trust the Universe because we are lovingly and purposefully related. The opposite choice appears to offer a life of fear, expecting the worst, defensive living with little risk-taking. In the end, should I find out either way, I will have at least gotten there in the most open, trusting, self-affirming and life-affirming way I could. And of course, once I began living this way, which was very different from the way I was raised and had been living my life, this trusting view seemed to be confirmed by many experiences. Instead of feeling locked in a tight box of negative expectations and fear, from which life appeared to confirm all my worst suspicions, life has opened up, there is more love and trust, and especially acceptance of what is. Frustration and dissatisfaction have ceased for the most part to be blamed upon the environment, and now can be seen as stemming from my own unmet (or unrealistic) expectations.

There are present in most of us each of these perspectives in differing proportions. When we have been meaninglessly hurt, or have observed senseless suffering, it feeds the part of us that fears. If that side becomes dominant, we come to view openness and love with suspicion, and to close off to whatever invites us to trust. What matters is what we listen to when we make our choices. For a long time I found myself teaching and claiming to believe that the Universe worked, but still made my important decisions from a fearful place in me. It is only when we see this dissonance that we are able to see our choice as a free one with more risk. I knew that I had to make choices based upon a trust of myself and of life if I were to survive in a way that made life worth living. What are you willing to settle for? What's really at stake?

#### EXERCISE

What do you most firmly believe to be true about life? Does it work in a meaningful way, or is it haphazard and threatening? Where did this worldview come from? Is it like your parents' or different? How?

Has your belief system changed much over the years, or is it basically the same? If it has changed, what brought that about?

Again, do you believe that the Universe works, or not? Why? See if you can open up to the possibility that you are wrong, that the opposite is true. Watch whatever in you may resist doing that. What is it like to realize that the opposite to what you believe may be true? Try for a moment to imagine that it is true. How would you live your life differently if it were?

List a few of the major decisions you have made in your life. What worldview seems to have been influential in making those decisions? Has the outcome, if it is clear, appeared to support that

worldview? What about the opposite worldview – how does the outcome look when examined through that lens?

What decisions are you facing now? Which worldview do you want to use in deciding? What decision would you make if you used the other one?

Take a moment to let yourself contemplate the fact that no one knows for sure how, why, or even if the Universe works. Just observe any reactions, whether fearful or otherwise. Focus upon what you consider positive reactions to this thought. If you haven't seen any, look for them; they are probably there. Now look at the positive reaction to realizing that no one knows what's true, and imagine living your life from day to day with that realization.

1 Summa theologica I,1,5 ad 1.

1 Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance by Robert Pirsig, William Morrow & Co., New York, 1974, pp. 187-88.

3 A Guide for the Perplexed by E.F. Schumacher, Harper & Row, New York, 1977, p. 8.

See Beyond Individualism by Dane Rudhyar, Quest Books, Wheaton, IL, 1979.

Psychological Commentaries, Vol I by Maurice Nicoll, Robinson & Watkins, London, 1973.



# Chapter Eleven

## Working with Subpersonalities

*A complex with its given tension or energy has the tendency to form a little personality of itself. It has a sort of body, a certain amount of its own physiology. It can upset the stomach. It upsets the breathing, it disturbs the heart – in short, it behaves like a partial personality. . . We like to think that we are one; but we are not, most decidedly not. We are not really masters in our house.*

*(Jung, 1968, pp. 80-81)*

*Although it seems paradoxical it is true that the less we are identified with a particular role the better we play it . . . Actually the role is a point of arrival, not the starting point. The starting point is the complete immersion in each subpersonality, with degrees of awareness of the incongruity of the situation. The goal is the freed self, the I-consciousness who can play consciously various roles.*

*(Assagioli, 1965, p. 75)*

**I**N CHAPTER 3 WE INTRODUCED THE IDEA of subpersonalities, suggesting that these roles or partial personalities provide a specialized focus which allows for the practice and advancement of certain feelings, behaviors and attitudes. As Assagioli suggests, one of the main values of using subpersonalities as a map for observing our internal life is

*Éthat revealing the different roles, traits, etc., emphasizes the reality of the observing self. During and after this assessment of the subpersonalities one realizes that the observing self is none of them, but something or somebody different from each.*

*(Assagioli, 1965, p. 76)*

It is not possible to offer any kind of complete “how-to” manual here for working with our subpersonalities, because the process varies and each individual has her or his own cast of inner characters who can be organized in differing ways. Before offering brief sketches of some of the more common subpersonalities, we can at least give some general guidelines for exploring and working with our own subpersonalities. We can often benefit from asking for help in this work, but much can be done on our own, especially as we develop the capacity to stand aside as an Observer from the interplay of our subpersonalities in order to assume direction of them, helping to draw them out, to mediate between them, and to develop more inclusive plans for their mutual integration.

o The first step in any subpersonality work is that of Recognizing their existence. We may choose to do this voluntarily, as in the exercise at the end of this chapter. By examination and dialogue, we can discover more about who that part of us is, how it operates, and what it needs. Or we may be forced into recognition by our environment or messages from within by way of dreams or symptoms that some part of us is requiring our attention. One good way to expand our recognition is by doing an “evening review” in which we look back over the day each evening, paying particular attention to the subpersonality we are learning about. This is most helpful if done with an objective and detached attitude, rather than judgmentally.

o Having recognized the existence of a subpersonality and learned more about it by observation of its activity within our life, and perhaps even having given it a name, we must learn to Accept its presence and our responsibility for it. Sometimes in order to fully accept it we must first be willing to accept and to express our own negative feelings toward it. Quite often the key to acceptance is imaginarily placing ourselves inside of the subpersonality, seeing through its eyes and imagining what life is like as lived by that part of us. This often evokes compassion and leads to acceptance. Acceptance does not mean necessarily that we love this part of us, only that we accept that it exists and that it is up to us and no one else as to how we are going to be in relation to it.

Often when we let ourselves see through the eyes of a subpersonality, we realize that we ourselves have been identified with another subpersonality as well. This is another aspect of the recognition phase and can offer awareness of the presence of a pair of subpersonalities with their interactive dynamics. For example, in beginning to observe or to dialogue with a Scared Child, we may feel superior or disapproving toward it and find out that it needs love and safety. Then when we imagine being the Scared Child, we find that the person who has been talking to us is really acting critically because they are afraid of the helplessness and vulnerability embodied in the Child. Further dialogue may allow us to recognize that this is another subpersonality, a Critic or Judge who uses a judgmental attitude as a defense against feeling vulnerable.

o This leads to another principle of subpersonality work – that pairs of opposing subpersonalities, while seeming mutually exclusive, need to transcend their opposition/fear of one another in order to cooperate. Here, in our example, the Child could use the discrimination and sense of confidence the Judge has developed, and the Judge could use the vulnerability of the Child in order to be more open and spontaneous. Up to now each has been stuck in only one mode of behavior and perception and in an antagonistic relationship which serves only to drain energy and limit growth. When identified with the Judge, we are unable to tolerate our own feelings of helplessness or weakness or fear; and when identified with the Child we allow ourselves to be undermined by the real or imagined judgments of others. Pairs of subpersonalities usually have something to offer one another.

o In the process of subpersonality work, we are striving to uncover the underlying need which created the subpersonality in order that we can determine if there might be better ways to try to meet that need. Once we do this we often find that we are still using childhood means to meet needs in indirect ways which we are now capable of dropping in order to be direct. For example, we may be able to stop using the approval or praise of others for work well done as a substitute for self-love and self-acceptance, which we can now learn to give to ourselves.

o The incentives for doing this work – which can be quite challenging – may be either the reduction of pain or distress, the freeing of potentials for greater use, including the positive qualities

which lie at the heart of each subpersonality, or the development of a healthier subpersonality which, whether we know it or not, can serve as a vehicle for the birth of the Self.

A few subpersonalities which are commonly found (though in a variety of guises and by many different names) can be identified because they often appear in the natural process of growth. Maslow has identified a “hierarchy of needs,” thus suggesting for us a hierarchy of subpersonalities. At times these needs may conflict, seeming to threaten one another, and our problems may be understood as friction between subpersonalities.

### **The Little Girl or Little Boy**

This one is basic and almost always worth our attention, especially if there were unmet needs or traumatic situations in childhood. Or perhaps we might be identified with an inner Child who was so well treated and secure that we have been unwilling to leave that stage behind. The Child may appear as the Scared Child, the Sickly Child, the Cutie-Pie, the Angry Child, or in other forms developed in childhood. This part is often rejected by other subpersonalities because it is too vulnerable, needy, helpless or dependent. It often has to offer the positive side of these qualities – openness, desire to learn, innocence and creativity. Our ability to accept this part of us is often greatly influenced by the degree of acceptance we experienced as children.

### **The Inner Parents**

These are usually more likely to be what we as children experienced as the dominant subpersonalities of our parents. If Father was critical, then he becomes an inner Critic who dominates and inhibits the inner Child. Or if Mother was over-protective and tended to present only the positive side of everything and to deny negativity, we may have an inner Pollyanna or Rose-Colored Glasses subpersonality who clouds our judgment by screening out others’ shortcomings or distorting reality. There can be many kinds of alliances or conflicts between the Child and Parent subpersonalities. For this reason, it can be useful to try to objectively consider exactly what were the main subpersonalities our parents presented to us when we were young.

### **The Victim**

Many of us have a part of us who feels powerless and that we have no control over our lives. This can naturally develop from the relatively helpless and dependent role we had as children. The Victim’s strengths include the ability to relate to others in a non-threatening way and empathy for the underdog. It is also greatly influenced by the degree of empowerment our parents offered us. An authoritarian parent can often foster the development of the Victim in the child. But it is likely that the presence of a Victim subpersonality implies the presence of an authoritarian subpersonality as well, however hidden it may be.

### **The Pleaser**

The Pleaser may develop out of the need for love, or even to survive. Taking care of others, being agreeable, hiding our true feelings, or only feeling worthy when helping or pleasing others are typical behaviors. If the Pleaser knew s/he was loved and accepted, s/he would feel secure enough to be real, to disagree or to say “no,” while retaining his or her often considerable helping skills.

### **The Controller**

This is often the enemy/partner of the Victim. This part needs safety and develops skills in being able to control situations and others, as well as himself or herself. Often an obvious Victim is tied to an unconscious Controller, or vice versa. Obviously the Controller cannot stand to feel helpless or out of control, which is how the Victim feels. The Victim sees people as the powerful ones to whom s/he must submit, while the Controller sees people as threats to his or her control. Controllers usually do not like the inner Child, and rely on manipulation or rigid concrete thought, as well as the tendency to avoid new or unpredictable (and therefore potentially creative) situations. Its strengths may be logical thought, self-control, or leadership.

### **The Bitch, Witch, or Grouch**

These often lurk in the unconscious where a Pleaser or Good Girl or Boy have been dominant. All negativity, hatred, anger, or bitchiness are embodied in this subpersonality, who often first appears in dreams or imagery in particularly nasty forms. It's also possible for this to be the main identification in someone who needed to find a way to preserve their individuality in a family where these feelings were excluded. Its strengths may be honesty and discrimination, which the Pleaser often lacks.

### **The Critic or Judge**

These are in abundant supply and represent analysis, discrimination, and judgment having gone to extremes. To eliminate these skills would be dangerous, though that is often what we want to do when we realize our victimization by this subpersonality. If we do not recognize that inner criticism or self-judgments are simply the result of this subpersonality doing its job, and that we can choose to take or leave what it tells us, we end up feeling weak or inferior. Variations can also be in the form of the Doubter, Cynic, Scaredy Cat (always seeing potential for disaster), or Gloomy Gus. It is often difficult for the person with a Victim or Child who is oppressed by the inner Critic to realize their own ability to discriminate or analyze.

### **The Mystic**

Out of a need for security or transcendence this subpersonality can be open to transpersonal experiences, but have a difficult time being grounded in the material world. There is difficulty in discriminating between the intuitive knowing that "all is One" and the effort necessitated by dealing with the physical world with its details and responsibilities. The Mystic then can be a form of escape. Its strength can be openness, intuition and vision. It often is repressed in people who have a strong identification with logic, rationality, or material security, and can be considered in many cases to be the enemy/partner of

### **The Pragmatist**

Sometimes better described as the Skeptic, this subpersonality has the tendency to see the world only in terms of sensory data. Out of a need for security, which often includes fear of the unknown or of unbounded situations, this part seeks its niche in the order and responsibilities of the material world, which the Mystic tends to see as either an illusion or a prison.

This summary hopefully will aid the recognition and understanding of certain major subpersonalities. It is by no means exhaustive. We could go on with the Nag, the Genius, the Jock, the Alien, the Charmer, the Efficiency Expert, the Dictator, the Martyr, the Striver, the Perfectionist, the Rebel, the Seeker, the Expert, the Cold One, the Fixer, and on and on. It is more important to objectively observe your own subpersonalities and to name them for yourself, rather than to

be limited by a list. It often happens that names become limiting as we come to know the subpersonality better, and their changing appearance may call for a different name. For example, the Bum comes to be seen as the Relaxer, after we realize we had been identified with a Striving/Achieving part of ourselves who has devalued this lower-key subpersonality.

Who's eyes are you seeing with now? What does this particular perspective on your world reveal about the place in you with which you are presently identified?

## A Subpersonality Example

Recall the example of Susan who came to therapy identified with her Caregiver subpersonality (Chapter 3). At first she was seeing the world through the eyes of this part of her who couldn't say "no" to others' needs and who neglected her own needs. This part of her evolved from a Scared or Rejected Child as a way of meeting her need for love and acceptance. But buried outside of her consciousness was another subpersonality who consisted of feelings and behaviors unacceptable to the Caregiver, behaviors that threatened rejection from others like anger, assertiveness, or taking care of her own needs (which felt selfish). In confronting me during a disagreement, in spite of her fear of doing so because she felt she might lose control and become some kind of hateful monster (how the Scared Child sees such behavior), she experienced herself entering a new range of possibilities. The tension grew for several weeks as she began experiencing anger at men past or present, her work, or world injustice. Not only was this newly felt anger emerging because she was more open to it, it is also possible that some of it may have stemmed from the fact that she was about to let go of an old identification, an experience similar in some ways to dying. The typical stages of the death and dying process – denial, anger, depression, bargaining, and acceptance – are quite often experienced in varying degrees during the letting go of old identification, as is grief.

She became more assertive yet ambivalent, expressing fear at changing from her familiar patterns. She left for a retreat in this state, angry at the world, fearful, and complaining of everything seeming meaningless. Perhaps this was a recapitulation of her experience of birth. At the retreat in a supportive atmosphere, Susan had the insight that she was neither her fearful Child nor her anger. She found herself able to observe these behaviors as they interacted from a third position, the Observer. Later that same evening while listening to music, Susan found herself "filling with energy," approaching a bright yellow-orange light which she felt was the Self. It was difficult for her to describe this Self in so many words. She resorted to contradiction: "It was inside but also outside me. It was me but it was also everything else." It filled her with a deep sense of acceptance and love, and a connection to the Universe. She came to her next session looking peaceful and happy, confident she could make the changes in her life which she sought, and welcomed the challenge of realizing more of her potentials. She understood that her experience was showing her a possibility and not an established fact yet.

Through her willingness to persist in the tension created by her inner opposites she was able to find that third position of the Observer in her consciousness. From this place she could experience herself as being neither identity and as having the freedom to direct her attention in any direction, as well as to choose her actions. She could see and hear what each part of her was experiencing, but she gained an inner freedom from automatically responding as if she were the Scared Child or her anger. Having done this, the door was opened for her peak experience, which

for her was healing and self-affirming. Realizing the presence of an underlying foundation in her life gave her greater trust of herself and of her growth process.

## Exercise

Relax and review your life in the present for a few moments, to see where you 1) seem to react in compulsive or automatic ways that you don't feel are in line with your intended way of being, 2) where you feel limited or stuck, or perhaps 3) where nagging symptoms appear with no obvious physical basis. Write these down and see which one you would like to choose to focus on.

Now imagine you can see the part of you who acts or feels this way in front of you. (We will call this part of you SP, but you can substitute any name you wish.) Look at SP there in front of you, at how it looks, at its facial expression or appearance (it doesn't necessarily have to look like you or look human; it could be an ice cube, a cloud, anything). How does it seem to you? How do you feel toward it? . . . Honestly. Tell it in imaginary dialogue how you feel toward it. Imagine it hears you and watch or listen for its reaction. Continue this dialogue for a few more moments, saying what comes naturally to you in this situation and letting your imagination supply the responses coming from SP.

Tell it how you feel about what it does in your life. Ask it why it does what it does. What does it want? Why? What does it really need? Ask it what strength or quality does it have to offer. Again, be aware of how you feel toward it and whether either it or your feelings toward it have changed.

Now let yourself imagine becoming SP, being involved in this conversation from the other side, looking back at yourself (which we'll call the "reader"). Take your time to experience in your body what it would be like to be SP, and also to get a sense of how the world looks from this perspective. Help yourself to get more into this other side (SP) by making statements about SP which begin with "I . . ."

Imagine what it would be like if your whole life were lived from this identification. Now look back at "reader" who has been talking to you; how does s/he appear to you? Describe them (this pronoun is easier to write with than "he or she"). How do you (SP) feel about what they said to you earlier? What do you like about them? Dislike? Do you feel you act the way they ("reader") perceive you doing? Why or why not? Talk with them for a few moments (It is best for the dialogue to continue until either a state of im-passe is reached or there appears to have been a shift in the relationship, perhaps a deeper rapport or understanding.)

Ask "reader" what they want. Why? What do they really need? And what do they have to offer? Are there any suggestions either of you can make toward improving your relationship and providing each of you with what you need?

Now let yourself detach from SP and become an objective Observer Who has been watching and listening to both of them. What do you see happening here between them? Is "reader" possibly identifiable as another subpersonality? How would you character-ize this one? What do you think they need in order to improve their relationship? What does each perhaps need to give up? What will each gain?

Imagine the three of you standing together in a meadow in the sun. Let the light and warmth of the sun envelop and permeate you all. As this fills you, a transformation happens. Watch. . . . (pause). What happened? What potential new model has been revealed by this change?



# Chapter Twelve

## Inner and Outer Guidance

*The potential of our choices to shape the conditions under which we live and the quality and quantity of our lives is enormous. As people become more and more able to consciously and freely choose, they gain the inner security of knowing that they can depend on themselves, move toward chosen goals and better their health and their lives. . . Professionals can care honestly and deliberately in ways that acknowledge the full humanity of the patient and also their own; ways that recognize the potential of others and promote their integrity, autonomy, and growth.*

*(Remen, 1980, pp. 181, 226)*

*You cannot help men permanently by doing for them what they could and should do for themselves.*

*– Abraham Lincoln*

*Applied in this broader sense, astrological techniques can become as valuable to the depth psychologist as dream interpretation. They would inform him, not of future events or even fixed character traits, but of unconscious basic dynamics and form patterns that a given person is “up against” and to which he continues to react throughout his life in his own peculiar, individual manner as the characteristic way his particular life is embodied in the cosmic whole.*

*(Whitmont, 1970, p.8)*

**W**HETHER WE SEEK IT OR GIVE IT, guidance is most valuable when it leads to greater autonomy. Ultimately we are moving toward relying upon our inner guidance system, and prayer, imagination and meditation can be helpful in this way. But as we move through the often long and winding process of infusion of the personality with energies of a more inclusive quality, we often encounter periods of disorientation, of darkness when our inner source of guidance seems to have left us, and it may occasionally be helpful to seek the counsel of someone whose purpose it is to serve as a liaison or interpreter of the larger patterns of order. Their advice cannot take the place of our own intuitive knowing, but often the words, images or symbols with which they communicate serve to open a pathway through our present confused thoughts and feelings that allows the light of our inner knowing to reach us. There are, however, certain inherent dangers in these times, and they call for much greater discrimination on our part in seeking help than we may realize.

People experiencing confusion or insecurity often turn to astrologers, card readers, psychics, religious counselors, psychiatrists, or self-administered systems of divination like the I Ching or Tarot cards. At these times we may wish for guidance from our dreams, but they often seem to disappear or to offer images of our own ambiguity.

## Inner Guidance

Our first step here is in the act of choosing to believe that there exists within us a part of us which Knows, something as part of our inner world which knows our purpose and which has a direct connection to the orderly unfoldment of the Whole of which we are a part, even when we consciously do not. We will likely proceed differently in our uncertainty if we act “as if” (see Chapter 15) there is such a source of direction within us than if we assume we are incapable of finding out for ourselves with our own resources what we need to know.

Then why, if we already have a source of inner guidance, do we need to ask someone outside for help at all? In fact, many of us do not need to look outside. But we should here, as in other choices upon the Path, be aware of our motives in “going it alone.” When inner guidance is not forthcoming, our doubts seem to thrive and soon we may find ourselves losing faith, and with it the ability to act “as if” there is indeed such inner help. Or we may believe in it, but lacking it, presently find ourselves moving deeper and deeper into a convoluted dead-end, becoming stuck, and perhaps succumbing to self-pity or desperation. To refuse then to seek outside help would seem in part to be due to the illusion of inner-outer separation. If “every particle consists of all other particles” as one contemporary theory of physics puts it, then why can’t another person be as valid a way for the Self to reach us as our own dreams or inspirations?

From the perspective of the Self there is no separation. Remember that the Self is an organizing center around which many individual personalities serve in group formation to fulfill the Purpose of the Self, just as the many subpersonalities of which we are composed ideally become organized by the will of the personality’s center of organization, the “I”. So we may prolong a time of darkness out of a sense of false pride in our own separate individuality, a pride which tells us we shouldn’t have to ask anyone for help. In fact, it may be that our present dilemma is mainly a lesson in learning to overcome our personal pride by asking for help. Or we may be caught in the glamour that says we must suffer in order to grow. How do we know the real meaning of our crises? Their meaning can only be perceived by their relationship with the past and the future.

Meaning provides the light by which we can see our next step. Genuine guidance – whether inner or outer – helps us to discover for ourselves the meaning of our situation; it doesn’t tell us what to do. Perhaps we would be best off to acknowledge that we simply do not know the “right” answer, that there may not even be some kind of pre-existing “right” answer which we, conditioned by our early educational experience and test-taking, have to find or else we fail. How do we know that when faced with two or more alternatives our true test may not be learning to make decisions, rather than in having one choice be “right” and the other “wrong?”

Our hesitation to seek outside help might also be in part based upon a healthy desire not to become dependent upon outer sources of authority for guidance. After all, haven’t we been going through a period in which we have been liberating ourselves from feeling subservient to the “experts” in order to discover our own inner authority? It is understandable if we want to preserve

this new independence. But we have much to learn. Try it alone, and see how it goes. Or go to someone for help, and see how that works. Whichever we do, as long as we do it consciously, aware of our reasons for doing it and accepting responsibility for the outcome, we are doing the best we can.

If at first it seems worthwhile to pursue a course of seeking direction from within (which it probably is), there are some techniques which may help. In fact, any outside consultant we contact when confused or uncertain as to our direction who is truly interested in our welfare will first determine whether we have indeed made an effort to find what we seek within ourselves. If we have not, then the consultant will try to assist us in doing that, rather than offering advice. But unfortunately, a great number of individuals become consultants because it enhances their sense of ego and self-worth to dispense advice to others in need, and in doing so, to encourage their dependency. It would be of greater service to the seeker if they came away from a consultation with a renewed intention to at least first try to rely on their own resources.

### **Prayer**

One of the best methods of seeking inner guidance, though it has not often been seen as self-reliance, is prayer. That is because typically prayer is an act of seeking help from an “outside” source – God, the soul, etc. But this is based upon the illusion of individuality and separateness. The guidance provided as a result of prayer still comes from “within,” only from a different level of consciousness than that of the ego. In our transpersonal model the true value of prayer is in the fact that it induces an attitude of openness or willingness on the part of the one who prays.

Ideally there is a relinquishing of the ego-attitude of having control over all aspects of one’s life and a recognition of one’s dependency upon a greater Will. Prayer seeks to invoke a response and is one of the first methods according to some teachings which will become generalized into the science of invocation and evocation in the coming years. (Progoff, 1957) Invocation is an act by which we simultaneously reach out and wait, willing to respond – an “active receptivity.” This focused attempt at communication with a higher level evokes a response which we experience as an “answer,” whether in the form of a dream, an inner voice, a sign, a quote in a book or a movie coming at just the right time that it seems to speak directly to us.

Prayer is a form of invocation which is usually feeling-based, seeking the fulfillment of some desire, ranging from personal desire for improved health or wealth, to asking for something on behalf of another. Praying for someone’s safety or healing, or on a larger scale for world peace are examples. For any form of invocation to work, we need to let go of our preconceived ideas of how the response will come. This entails a sustained openness and alertness which may be experienced as evoking a response, perhaps because we are open to perceiving or interpreting apparent responses in a way that overrides our usual inner noise and filters outer stimuli.

### **Creative Meditation**

A mental form of invocation-evocation has been described for us by creative artists and scientists as they searched for an insight or inspiration that would solve a problem or lead to creative effort. In Creative Meditation, we learn to quiet and align body, feelings and thoughts, and to think reflectively upon our problem or project. This may involve research, reading, or gathering data. The first phase is the time for focused concrete mental activity or reflective meditation, as we sort out and organize relevant information. When we have reached the end of this phase, often signaled by feelings of frustration, loss of energy, or stuckness, we can begin phase two – that

of receptive meditation, in which our mind is held steadily and silently open, awaiting insight. Any dis-tracting thoughts, images or feelings are simply witnessed, without letting go of the intention to remain open and silent. This is followed by the third and final phase, that of creative expression, in which the insight or idea is clothed by our mind in thoughts which make possible tangible expression or application of what we have learned. We follow through from inspiration to concrete execution in form.

This model of mental invocation-evocation may cover a period of years, as in the case of the scientist who pursues with determination the cure for a fatal disease, with repeated cycles of reflection, reception, and creative effort. Or it may serve as a model for a daily discipline of ten or fifteen minutes. The mind is the tool and the "I" or the Observer is the one who uses that tool. Like any useful skill, we should expect that it may take time and practice before we realize the fruits of our patient efforts. So many begin meditation only to drop it after a few weeks or months because there is no apparent dramatic result. As with prayer, we must be open to any kind of response and also to the fact that a response often comes to us outside of the time normally set aside for meditation – perhaps on the bus, playing tennis, or even during sleep. We do our part with our conscious mind and trust the rest to the unconscious processes from which comes creativity. Usually when a response comes in any form something in us knows it, even if its meaning is not immediately clear. This may lead to continuation on a deeper level of the three stages, as we reflect upon the symbol, idea, image or words we have been given.

### **Imagination**

One of our most powerful yet misunderstood tools is the imagination. Our predominantly rational cultural attitudes have portrayed the imagination as having little value, equating it with "fantasy" or being "unrealistic." In truth, everything upon which our culture prides itself as progressive, efficient or superior came to us by way of the imagination. But just as we have tried to cut ourselves off from our roots – ethnically, bodily, from Nature and instinct – because they appear from our advanced attitude to be too messy, too out of control or irrational, we have left imagination in the domain of the artist. Even in organized religion where it could be so effective, it is ignored, probably because it would undermine the hierarchical order.

In the imagination, all things are possible. The imagination is like a mirror which can reflect any level of being into our awareness. Our biological instincts can stimulate images of food or sex; our desires hold before us an imaginative ideal which may or may not match the actual consumption; the intellect may evoke images of geometrical perfection; and at times we are subject to inspirational flashes or floods from the superconscious. Our attitudes towards boundaries are likely to be revealed by our relationship with our imagination, since it is a boundless field. The Daydreamer enjoys the freedom offered by this boundlessness, while the "Realist" who doesn't have time to waste on the imagination is likely to have structured their life fairly tightly or rigidly in order to avoid the threat of being swept away by the unconscious. The creative individual is one who has been able to bridge between the material and imaginative, again finding that middle place between the two apparent opposites, able to link both in a creative synthesis. Our educational system has surely been incompetent if not damaging in its treatment of the imagination, and so our most creative citizens are typically the ones who never adapted to their childhood education.

We can approach the imagination in at least two different ways, and also can move in at least two directions. We may seek to actively utilize the imagination, choosing our starting point consciously or directing or interacting with our images in an "active daydream." Or we may simply

relax and passively observe the natural flow of images which are always present. A third approach would be a blend of these two, with active and receptive stages flowing together. Our purpose for imagining probably determines the most useful approach. If we seek to construct an experiment first in our mind before committing the time and resources to it, we may direct a step-by-step imaginative process, allowing ourselves to passively observe possible results or certain stages. If we are in a state of confusion, depression or anxiety, and our purpose is to try and uncover its cause, we may find it more useful to focus on the feeling we are experiencing and to observe passively whatever image emerges. Then we have the choice of allowing that image to unfold naturally or to interact in some way, perhaps to dialogue with it. There is a delicate balance between trying to over-control our imagination and setting up enough boundaries so that its flow stays relevant to our purpose.

The two directions mentioned above are similar to our discussion of the levels of the unconscious. We can image downward or upward, to the past or to the future. We can use this orientation in interpreting the natural flow of our images or can actively seek to follow a particular direction. If, for example, I have been feeling depressed recently and would like to find a way to uncover its cause or at least to cooperate with its apparent desire for some kind of deepening, I may choose to lie quietly, to focus upon the feelings and bodily sensations of the depression and to imagine myself descending a stairway into the earth or down into a basement. There I am likely to encounter images which relate to my own depths – perhaps a monster with whom I need to establish a relationship. In this case it is likely that if I simply practiced a passive approach my feelings and sensations would naturally evoke images of deepening or of depth.

In the process of transpersonal fusion, we may increasingly find ourselves seeking guidance of a higher nature, in the sense that it speaks of our potentials and imminent unfoldment. Moving in an upward direction, as in imaginatively climbing a mountain, can serve to evoke images which may provide models of our next step or some form or archetypal Wise Being Who can offer us advice. Music is an excellent adjunct in this process and we can find different pieces of music which have a tendency to lead the images in a particular direction. If we are confused or disoriented and wish there were someone wise and loving with whom we could consult, we can imagine that such a Being comes to see us, perhaps coming from the Sun or down a mountain, reflecting Its transpersonal origins. The transpersonal dimension, of course, includes all directions. Here height refers to our potentials and forward movement. We need only recall Jung's vision in childhood of the phallus on the throne beneath the earth to see a different aspect of the transpersonal – this one dark, deep and earthy (see chapter 2).

We may also find it helpful to use the imagination in ways other than only visual images. Some people find it easier to imagine kinesthetically as bodily sensations. Others may imagine sounds, hearing voices or music. One of the best ways to interact with the imagination when we don't have much confidence in our ability to do so is by using crayons, pastels or paints to create specific or abstract images on paper (or by clay, wood, stone or other modality) which can then serve as an objectified image with which to relate. Or some may prefer a writing approach, in which they creatively write a dialogue between themselves and some aspect of the imagination – perhaps with a symptom or a subpersonality. In any of these approaches to the unconscious via the imagination, we can apply these methods “upwardly,” much in the same way that the one who prays or who meditates imagines their attitude to be one of “upliftment” toward a higher Source. Archetypally human beings have long held that the Source of Light and superhuman guidance is in the Heavens, a projection perhaps of an inner orientation, especially given that the study of energy centers or chakras in the energy or etheric body reveals that the Crown chakra is a

source of illumination, including the so-called halos observed around the heads of saints or wise persons.

But this must be balanced by the experiential reality of the wisdom of the body, as well as of the heart. A very effective approach to seeking inner guidance can be in dialoguing with the heart. By allowing ourselves to receptively imagine our heart we can get a revealing assessment of our deeper inner condition. By dialoguing with the heart and seeking to penetrate to its core we may become subject to a potent healing influence from within, as well as able to connect with our inner wisdom. Or this may involve a longer term process in which our first steps lay more in the recognition of our wounds (see chapter 14).

Through any of these methods we must not allow ourselves to lose our sense of discrimination. There is an inner sense of rightness about genuine supportive guidance and this knowing is our greatest ally in this process. Otherwise it is possible for critical or sabotaging inner influences to masquerade as benign forces. If our heart, for example, judges our behavior harshly in a way that diminishes our self-esteem, we can suspect that it is not really our heart speaking but a critical aspect of the personality, because the heart manifests loving courage, acceptance, and compassion. I have seen people receive advice from the image of a Wise and Loving Old Man or Woman which did not sit right with them and when they challenged the Wise Person the image changed into that of a critical father or mother. So just as we must not give our power away to the people from whom we might seek guidance, we need to make sure we don't also do the same thing within. The inner source of genuine guidance encourages self-trust and self-responsibility and our freedom of choice is never denied. "A guide does not control but she does direct, leaving it up to you to follow." (see Course in Miracles, Vol. I)

## Outer Guidance

During times of change like the present, increasing numbers of people of various levels of development seek answers from those who are supposed to know. The individual who has not yet experienced their own inner source of purpose and integrity is especially vulnerable when the rules of the game seem no longer to apply. Unfortunately for them, one of the main rules of the game which is now suspended says that there are always experts who have the answers – who know what is going on or what is right. Now anyone who claims to have this knowledge with complete certainty is not to be trusted. Whether the deception is intentional or self-induced, this certainty is one of the main sources of our troubles. But there are also sincere and responsible individuals doing their best to try to meet the obvious need for guidance at this time and they venture suggestions, always respecting the self-responsibility and freedom of choice of the one seeking help.

The counselor or psychiatrist who tells their client what they should do is not helping that person unless they are unable as yet to stand on their own. The counselor is taking on a responsibility which is not theirs to take, often out of a desire for respect or power, sometimes from a genuine desire to help. To foster an individual's growth means to empower their will and trust of himself or herself. To be able to do that we have to have a trust in human nature or the natural process of growth. If we do not trust ourselves or that process, then we will instead reinforce the other's fear. The best advice is that which says the client must practice trusting their own judgment and making their own choices.

Non-traditional (which really means in many cases having come from an older tradition) counselors such as psychics, astrologers or card readers are especially sought when someone wishes to know the future. The lack of certainty or clarity about present trends evokes insecurity as traditional paths and roles break down. The majority of such counselors have been willing to feed their own egos at the expense of their clients by assuming the ability to predict the future. Not denying that some people do seem to have this ability, it is still highly questionable as to whether doing so is really in the best interests of the client. Negative predictions foster fear and may actually lead to their fulfillment, while positive predictions often lead to a passive attitude or fear that we will not be able to take advantage of the coming opportunity.

In any case, the act of telling the future implies a lack of free will and as a result, encourages an attitude of resignation. Since one apparent evolutionary goal of our times is the emergence of the individual who can think for himself or herself, make his or her own choices and be responsible for them, and thus, when aware of their participation in the larger Whole, fulfill their unique function within that Whole, any approach to counseling which weakens their will is counter-evolutionary, unethical and at worst evil. Counselors of this type need to be made aware of their responsibility for the effects of their predictions upon the client. The person seeking counseling of this sort always has choices and even if some events seem “fated” and unavoidable, we have choices about how we wish to respond to those events. The counselor needs to make this clear and to present any foreseen crises as an opportunity in a way which highlights their free will and evokes the willingness of the client to encounter, accept and assimilate whatever may be coming. And it is always open to question as to whether or not the client’s subsequent choices will affect the outcome of what may have been pre-visualized.

Astrology is a valuable tool of assessment and guidance for those who truly need it when it focuses upon the natural cyclic nature of organic unfoldment as those cycles uniquely apply to the individual. The client needs to know that the birth chart can only reveal potentials and possibilities and that they are ultimately free to make choices. The astrologer should never tell the client what to do or for that matter what the outcome is likely to be. By apprising the client as to the points of emphasis and the likely quality or meaning of approaching experiences, the client has more information with which to make a choice. This is not always easy, since many clients are looking for someone to tell them what to do and therefore to absolve them of the responsibility for choosing. Astrological forecasting is similar to weather forecasting in that it can help us to decide if we want to plan a picnic. But we know that the weather forecast may be wrong, that it is a matter of probabilities which we may choose to ignore or to gamble on, and also that we can still picnic even if it does rain, if we are prepared.

The forecast simply helps us to know the odds and to prepare for possible conditions. An astrological chart may reveal that the coming 6 months call for limitation of our activities at a time when we are contemplating starting a business. The astrologer of the old school might say, “Don’t do it now, the time is not right.” An astrologer seeking to foster individual growth would interpret differently: “There is likely to be an experience of having some kind of limitation placed on your activities during the next six months. There is no way to tell whether that means you will fail or if it indicates that hard work and discipline will be fruitful as you make this attempt. Only you can decide whether such a time is right for what you seek to do, and you can be better prepared, should you decide to go ahead, for the likelihood of greater effort or concentration being necessary than what you may be expecting.”

Any chart or psychic or card reading is only as reliable as the lens through which the reader interprets. The interpretation is based primarily on what the reader knows and has experienced, and thus anyone seeking this kind of guidance would be well advised to find out the worldview and perspective of the counselor, as well as their view of human nature, free will, and their purpose for giving readings. There is a wide range of possibility here and it is a risk and potentially damaging to assume that all such counselors are the same. The psychic or card reader's approach is also subject to the same criteria as the astrologer's. There is a glamour about being able to tell people what to do, to appear to know what will happen, and I have seen many unfortunate results of such counseling: "I have been told I should not marry my fiancée, that she is not the right person for me." "I was told I am really homosexual and that I haven't realized it yet." "The psychic told me I would be seriously ill this summer." Unfortunately the counselor practicing from this perspective of glamour is rarely seeking to expand their abilities if it would necessitate their letting go of the aura of "expert."

A surprising number of psychiatrists and psychologists who have much greater training also presume to tell their clients what to do. Anyone on the transpersonal Path must be on their guard against becoming dependent on others or fostering the dependence of others upon themselves if free will is to be respected. There are times where it may be appropriate to share with a client what we might do in a similar situation, but with the added disclaimer that that route is not necessarily right for them.

The medical model with which we have all grown up is one in which there is an expert whom we must approach submissively, to whom we give our power and responsibility, and who will tell us what is wrong and what to do, often without offering any real explanation. This model has been the result of a collusion between the doctor and patient. The doctor has often enjoyed playing God and the patient feels better as the child who can be secure because s/he will be taken care of. In many helping relationships the pattern of parent/child gets repeated, to the detriment of both participants. This is a model which is losing its hold on the collective mind. As a result many are finding themselves angry or scared. Because our typical education and family training have not addressed the need for true mature individualization, we pay the price later by being "forced" by circumstance to grow up. Guidance from others can be most useful at these times, provided they themselves have emerged from this distorted childhood model of guide/client relationship. Then the relationship fosters equality and mutual learning or mutual healing. This is one definition that has been given for the transpersonal model of counseling and therapy. (Walsh & Vaughan, 1980; also, Brown, 1983)

Any outside guide might best serve some clients in the role of an "external unifying center," a temporary means by which the client becomes aware of that in himself or herself which can play the role presently projected onto or expected from the consultant:

While it does not represent the most direct way or the highest achievement, it may, despite appearances, constitute for the time being a satisfactory form of indirect self-realization. In the best instances the individual does not really lose himself in the external object, but frees himself in that way from selfish interests and personal limitations; he realizes himself through the external ideal or being. The latter thus becomes an indirect but true link, a point of connection between the personal man and his higher Self, which is reflected and symbolized in that object.

(Assagioli, 1965, p. 25)

Again, this involves the knowledge and trust that there is such a center of integration within the client, which they have either not yet encountered or from which they have become temporarily disconnected. Whether guidance is based upon rational 20th century medicine or ancient techniques of planetary motion, the more important issue is how it is being practiced. Anything, no matter how bizarre, can at a given time and place be of profound help to someone in need if it is offered in the spirit of loving acceptance by someone able to see the potential for individualization and transpersonal Selfhood in the client. In that moment, both people become open to the organizing patterns of the Self and each is provided with what they need in order to move on to the next phase of their development.

From the apparently opposite extremes of the tea-leave reader or the psychiatrist, there needs to emerge the third way in which we can recognize that each and every approach is simply an outer form by means of which a mysterious process of healing or guidance can take place. Whether we call the process by the name of Transference, Spiritual Guidance, Mediumship, Synchronicity, or the Holy Spirit, it likely comes from the same Source, and serves the same end.

## Exercises

Choose a specific problem or question with which you could use some assistance, and write a letter to the Higher Self explaining the situation and asking for what you need. Having done this, silently reflect for a few moments, and then read the letter you have written and, imagining yourself to be the Self, write a reply.

### The Wise Person

Relax, quiet your breathing, and visualize within your heart a Wise and Loving Person Who knows all about you. Explain your question or problem to them and listen receptively to what They have to say. They may instead have an image to show you or something to give you. You may choose to dialogue with Them if that seems appropriate.



# Chapter Thirteen

## The Development of Powers

*Most people have had at least one intuitive experience for which no rational explanation can be found. . . Some people, however, experience so many premonitions of such accuracy that they would appear to possess extraordinary powers of mind. . . People who cling tightly to the sensory-dependent mode of consciousness – the majority – often react to these unusual individuals with fear or mistrust. Consequently, the meaning and mechanism of experiences that seem to defy the assumed limitations of the human mind have not yet been questioned or dealt with seriously by many branches of learning.*

*(Motoyama, 1978, p. 47)*

*The psychic powers, higher and lower, are hindrances to the highest spiritual state and must be left behind by the man [or woman] who can function freed from the three worlds [thought, feeling, body] altogether. This is a hard lesson for the aspirant to grasp. He is apt to think that a tendency towards clairvoyance or clairaudience is indicative of progress and a sign that his practice of meditation is beginning to take effect. It might prove just the opposite.*

*(Bailey, 1955, p. 325)*

**W**E HAVE COME TO TAKE FOR GRANTED our abilities which we share with most other humans – we can think, feel, imagine, move, sense, speak – even though at one time in our ancient history these abilities were either nonexistent or found in a small minority. In those earlier times, it is likely that the possessors of the newly emerging ability were seen as having some kind of supernatural powers. Many were put to death. Since in our transpersonal perspective human evolution is open-ended, the appearance of “supernormal” abilities or “powers” in the few and which are viewed with suspicion or envy by the majority is likely to continue.

With the awakening of our sensitivities to more inclusive levels of awareness – or to put it another way, to a more comprehensive range of relationship – some of us find ourselves perceiving what have been called “subtler vibrations,” “energies,” “parapsychological phenomena,” or “spiritual realms.” These perceptions may be visual, auditory, tactile, or even by smell or taste. Or they may instead be experienced as a direct “knowing” without any kind of sensory representation. The presence or possibility of the development of “psychic powers” or “intuition,” of the power to heal, or telepathy have become a focus of public attention, though for the most part they have

been mainly portrayed dramatically for entertainment or been reported in bizarre ways by the supermarket checkout counter media. This is usually the case for any unconventional subject which has the potential to undermine our shaky institutionalized beliefs about reality. It is a combination of a taboo in the official media and a propaganda effort to portray these subjects (psychism, astrology, alternative healing, and before that – feminism, hippie-culture values) as only being of interest to people who are naive, unbalanced or fakes. But if any of these subjects are expressions of truth, we can count on their eventual acceptance. The main purpose of this chapter, however, is not to argue against closed-mindedness but instead to point to the dangers which can arise when abilities or powers develop and there is no place in our educational or therapeutic institutions which recognizes their validity or offers guidance or training in how to respond healthily to their appearance.

No doubt there always have been and still are individuals who try to gain power, attention or financial gain by faking knowledge or abilities that others do not have. We can leave them to the law, either statutory or karmic. But there is a growing number of people who either spontaneously find themselves experiencing paranormal powers (knowing the future, reading people's thoughts, ability to heal by touch, out of the body experiences, hearing inner voices or seeing "spirits") or who are actively attempting to develop such abilities. In the latter case, the motive for such forced training is most often compensation for inadequacies – real or imagined – as a "normal" human being. The specialness which these powers seem to offer is alluring to someone who has never distinguished himself or herself by beauty, intelligence or talent.

The usual result of a program of breathing exercises, rituals or meditative imagining in order to develop psychic powers is a magnification of personality defects and the substitution of the sense of specialness for healthy individualism. This can make further personal development difficult, as one becomes identified with their "special" abilities. Even if authentic psychic or healing powers develop they are still manifesting through a defective vehicle – the user's unintegrated personality. Thus we have psychics who use their sensitivities to further their own desires rather than to help others, and who have an investment in being "right" which prevents a natural learning by their mistakes. The integrated personality who is not identified with their powers and whose self-esteem does not depend upon their success will likely be of much greater help to those who need it. It is open to question as to who suffers the greater harm in the case of prematurely forced psychic development – the practitioner or their clients.

Because of the increased tension of psychological growth at this time of crisis, a great many people are also finding themselves spontaneously able to perceive or to heal in non-traditional ways. We can expect more of this. It is becoming apparent that our children are in many cases capable of seeing "auras," knowing our thoughts, or precognition. The popularity of movies which depict children as satanic with destructive powers does not help our cultural inability to handle these gifted cases. There are many psychologically wounded adults who as children have undergone the same ridicule, rejection or misunderstanding because of such abilities as has always been the case for the creative artist, genius or visionary as a child. The result can be self-hatred, shame, anti-social attitudes, withdrawal, repression of one's gifts, meaninglessness or despair. Rare are the parents as yet who can allow the child to have his or her specialness without either over-emphasizing it at the expense of the child's balanced development or else fearing or invalidating it.

We are already needing to find ways to educate parents as to what these abilities mean and how to nurture them without the child being made to feel like a freak. The organism we call Humanity

appears to be trying to develop a greater number of sensitive “cells” or “units” and these would seem to need at least some assimilation into the whole organism. Even if one is a relatively stable and integrated adult, the appearance of such abilities unexpectedly can evoke fear or misinterpretation. The fact that such people are often diagnosed as psychotic or hallucinatory only serves to reinforce their worst expectations. Much unnecessary suffering is the result of hospitalization, medication, or an isolated attempt to hide “abnormalities” from others.

## What are Powers?

What are these powers and where do they come from? Why do they arise in some of us and not others? How should we respond if and when they do? And how can we educate ourselves as to the dangers of forced psychic development so that those individuals who seek to develop this side of themselves can at least know the risks? It is not that we should never undertake self-development of this kind. It appears that evolutionarily the appearance of these abilities is called for and there are probably individuals who respond to that call most naturally by training or study. The key questions are are they ready, are they supervised, and what is the quality of that training or supervision? And what do we do in the case of the child who exhibits these “special” abilities? What do we do to help those who have gone too far or too fast and have suffered a breakdown?

When genuine, we can define “powers” as the human capacity to sense or to use energies which do not manifest within the present normal range of human sense perception and which appear to represent the transcendence of the individual boundaries of the person. Without the second half of this definition we would have to include thoughts, feelings, and imagination as powers. This definition, of course, offers no real explanation of the source of such powers. As with the Self, we don't really know what they are, but that doesn't prevent our learning how to deal with their influence upon the personality.

Many automatically assume that powers indicate advanced spiritual development or that they are the result of a special relationship with God (or the Devil), the Universe, or the Self. It may be more accurate to say that the development of powers is probably one “side-effect” of spiritual unfoldment, but that the presence of powers per se does not necessarily indicate special advancement. It is a case again of our tendency to mistake outer characteristics or phenomena for the source of those manifestations and then to assume that if we can create their appearance that will mean we have achieved enlightenment. This attitude may be what Christ referred to in his disrespect for the Pharisees, people who did all the outer things associated with being a good person who believed in God, but who did not reflect that goodness in their hearts.

We can see this today in the person who believes that by the act of going to church once a week they are being a good Christian (or Jew or Moslem), or the one who wears special robes, eats special foods or has a special name and believes that those outer forms make them somehow more spiritually evolved. Spiritual development would appear to be more of a “from the inside out” process than “outside in.” But we are so conditioned to mistake outer appearances for what is inside and our physical senses are still given the ultimate authority to determine what is true or real in most cases. This is what we have to unlearn. And the appearance of powers, when accepted, is one way we can unlearn.

In our model of reality we assume that there are many levels or different qualities of energetic influence. As an example, the most obvious and easily perceivable level is that of physical objects and actions. But as we train ourselves to perceive that which underlies the obvious we become aware of subtler and subtler causes behind the effects we observe. Thus an ulcer is not only a physical condition but is also an effect of a condition which exists on a subtler level – the emotions. Most of us cannot observe emotions visually, though there are those who can, describing them as “auras” or energy fields of different colors. But we could learn to become more consciously aware of that in us which is sensitive to the emotions in our environment.

That sensitivity as a conscious factor lies in our prehistoric past, from a time when it was probably as obvious to the observer what another was feeling as it is to us how one is physically acting. Our sensitivity to another’s feelings is primarily unconscious, resulting in a dialogue of body language and facial expression, voice tone, and “gut” response. It is not that difficult to accept that behind any physical activity is a desire of some kind and that behind many desires lies a concept or an ideology, a plan which arouses the desire which motivates the activity. We can accept that because all we need do is observe our own experience to verify it. But when we come to consider that our thoughts are also the effects of even subtler forces, or that global and community events are the result of the movement of energies, it strains our capacity to understand, partly because we have not yet trained ourselves to observe and distinguish these energies.

The main point here is that there are many different levels of non-physical energies, existing in a continuum of increasing (or decreasing) subtlety. It has been suggested by the ancient wisdom tradition of Plato, Hermes, and others that on the continuum between Matter and Spirit the energies become more refined, subtle and also more influential the closer to Spirit they are. If that is true, where does that leave the majority of us who have placed almost total emphasis upon the densest, least subtle (and therefore most obvious) and least influential range of energies?

*I find it difficult to take these Western (psychologists) at all seriously. . . yet perhaps one ought to, for half-knowledge is a powerful thing and can be a great obstacle to the Truth . . . They look from down up and explain the higher lights by the lower obscurities; but the foundation of these things is above and not below . . . The significance of the lotus is not to be found by analyzing the secrets of the mud from which it grows; its secret is to be found in the heavenly archetype of the lotus that blooms forever in the Light above.*

*(Aurobindo, in Satprem, 1968)*

We have been obsessed as a culture with the description, measurement and manipulation of physical matter, tending to see it as the cause of phenomena with chemicals in the brain causing our emotions or thoughts instead of the other way around. We have reversed cause and effect, just as we have mistaken individualization and ego development for the end, rather than the means to Self-realization. Here is one suggested descending sequence of energies:

Universal

Solar

Planetary

Transpersonal Will

Intuition/Transpersonal Love

Mental

Emotion/Feeling

Vitality

Dense physical

What this sequence reflects is that the dense physical body (our own or Nature's) is the ultimate effect of a series of causes. By refusing to even hypothesize the existence of these causes, science has dead-ended itself. In reaction to the non-discriminating acceptance of nonmaterial realities by our ancestors, which then provided a tool by which the churches could assume power as the intermediary and interpreter of these "divine" realities, rational scientific thought has barricaded itself in the limiting and illusory world of materialism and sensate perception. Now science and religion appear to be moving toward the third position of resolution and synthesis. And in psychology as well, based on the same assumptions as materialistic science, the great majority of official academic emphasis has been upon physical responses and behaviors and, with Freud, a mechanistic portrayal of human nature as being the result of blind biological psychodynamic forces. We appear to have touched bottom, so to speak, and are now beginning to look upward again via the new physics, biology, chemistry, and transpersonal psychology. Since we are composed of all the energies of the Universe, we have the potential to consciously experience and even to direct these various levels of energy.

What we are calling the personality is primarily the integrated collection of the vital (aliveness, activity), emotional/feeling (desires) and lower mental (thoughts, concepts) levels of energy, all manifesting by means of a dense physical body and coordinated or directed by an awareness and will we have labeled as "I". This "I" appears to be related to the mental level or "plane" as some schools call it, and seems to occupy a place on the scale which provides a point where the higher and lower (transpersonal and personal, Universal and individual) energies can consciously interface. The higher mental, intuitive/transpersonal Love and transpersonal Will levels would relate to the Self, to the higher level(s) of organization for which the personality is a unit, a sub-whole.

Transpersonal and

Higher (abstract) Mental Levels

/

"I"

/

Lower (concrete) Mental

and Personality Levels

If, for example, we consider that higher level to be Humanity as a whole, as a global organism with Identity and Purpose, then higher mental, intuitive/transpersonal Love and transpersonal Will would be analogous for that level to vital, emotional and lower mental for the personality. Higher mental refers the formless activity engendered by transpersonal Love and Will which is seeking to precipitate into tangible manifestation. To us, that level is the level of Plato's "Divine

Ideas” or archetypes, of abstract thought which structures and organizes concrete thinking into meaningful patterns. Intuition/transpersonal Love represents the energy which magnetically integrates and holds together the greater Whole (including the lesser wholes). We call it intuitive because it offers an inclusive and holistic perspective in which we can see (and experience) how everything “fits.” Transpersonal Will refers to the level of purposeful dynamic implementation of Intention, whatever that may be for the larger Whole. In that sense it is the Source of our livingness, because without that Intent and Will of the Whole, there would be nothing to impel evolution.

Evolution is the expression of transpersonal Will (though that Purpose may be hidden from us), mediated by the coordinating and integrating magnetism of intuitive/transpersonal Love, which then provides the patterning “force field” which structures archetypal principles. From that point, the human being is capable of responding to these transpersonal levels of activity mentally (by illumination, creative thought and planning), emotionally (by aspiration, love, and unselfish values), and physically and vitally (by living activity which reflects and implements evolutionary and global interrelationship).

## Higher and Lower Powers

Since our unfoldment occurs by means of increasing sensitivity to higher levels of energies (or planes), our experience may be to sense the presence of alien or unrecognizable forces. Without any meaningful interpretation or theoretical understanding we have no way of determining whether we are spiritually awakening or breaking down, progressing or regressing. We may simply be awakening to our natural birthright – the powers which our mind and cultural training have tended to mask or screen out. But conventional psychology has been quick to judge because for them there is no question of which is happening – it is always regression. The awakening of “powers” can be either progressive or regressive. We will rarely find, however, a psychically sensitive individual willing to give up their specialness by admitting that their powers may be regressive. It is increasingly important that we begin educating ourselves as to the idea of levels of energies (or whatever we choose to call them) because it appears that the “veils” between consciousness and previously unconscious levels are weakening. We see this reflected in our mental health statistics.

Regressive powers are those which the human race has outgrown and are really only regressive when they are misinterpreted as indicating higher evolution. They presently reside below the threshold of consciousness in most of us and refer to our animal instincts, our capacity to sense the vital “spirits” or forces of Nature, our bodily wisdom which comes from our identification with living matter, and our “gut”-level psychism such as we find in mother and child when the mother “knows” her child is hurt or in danger, even though she cannot see the child. These are potentially wonderful gifts, passed on to us by our ancestors, and deserve recognition. Our fairly recent mistrust of Nature, the body and feelings has tended to cut us off from the benefits these senses offer us, though there is a movement to recover them now underway. For that reason, we must strive to recognize the place of these powers within the overall scheme of evolution. By respecting and recovering them we are retrieving old ground, not breaking the new. To glamorize these powers or feel that we are more highly evolved by their presence is likely to prevent the evolutionary growth ahead of us. It would appear wiser to learn to sense and trust what these powers offer, without focusing our attention and energy upon developing them to greater and

greater degrees. Instead it would probably be more useful to follow the evolutionary path as indicated by our scale of energies. An intelligent interpreting mind is necessary now, unless we still live the life of the primitive, close to Nature and the land. If we are to participate in the global birthing of a higher order of organization than that of tribe or of the individual, then we must have all of our faculties – instinctive, intellectual and intuitive.

These lower-level psychic abilities have to do with the survival and needs of the separate self. The higher psychic powers are transpersonal in nature and manifest in ways that emphasize the place of the individual within the larger Whole or the evolutionary Plan. These powers are, in a sense, “above” the threshold of consciousness and lie in the future of human unfoldment. It is our responsibility to awaken and nurture these because they are our “eyes” and “ears” with which we may see and hear the Self, the Center which we eventually seek to provide Purpose and Identity in our life. The heart registers compassion and universality, an identification of an impersonal nature which results in unconditional love. The Crown (the energy center at the top of the head) is receptive to transpersonal Will, eventually providing the direction for our activities.

## Responding to the Awakening of Powers

The yogic and other paths of transformation have long acknowledged that the development of powers is a common result of spiritual unfoldment. But they have also warned that too much attention to these powers is one of the most common means of self-undoing. The ego’s hunger for specialness and self-glorification makes the acquisition of powers one of the real tests of spiritual development. Beyond this there is the real danger of those who believe that the way to achieve spiritual enlightenment is by means of their development, rather than the other way around. As a result, many fragile or poorly integrated personalities become overwhelmed by energies which they are not capable of assimilating. Progressive transpersonal powers with their main emphasis upon group collective identity can be destructive when there is no established firm sense of individuality. And too much emphasis upon regressive powers which have dropped below the threshold of racial consciousness can leave us open to obsession and close the door to further evolutionary development of the intellect or true intuition.

The key to the ability to respond to the awakening of any powers is to stay aligned with the goal of personality development that has already been cited: to know oneself to be the Observer, the Witness Who is aware of these new areas of awareness and Who can choose how to respond. We are not the powers themselves, nor must we attribute Truth to what they reveal. When we become able, for example, to see, hear, or sense the feelings of others (possibly including those who have physically died), the novelty of the experience in no way indicates that the content is any more reliable than what we are told in a normal conversation with others. Out of ignorance of the concept of levels it has been easy for many to interpret any non-physical knowing or communication as “from God” or as Divinely inspired. The tragic extremes of such cases are found in the stories of individuals who commit crimes because “they were told to do it,” as in the case of the “Son of Sam” mass killer in New York City.

Since apparently external messages may come from a variety of sources it would appear best to simply observe and to keep some kind of journal or log for a while in order to ascertain the value and validity of what we receive. These sources could range from our own instincts and complexes which we have dissociated or split off from our consciousness to the feelings or thoughts of an-

other person or group of people (again with the possibility of the source being out of the physical body), to tapping creative sources of inspiration. An understanding of the transpersonal model described here would also help protect us from attributing the impressions which we might receive from higher levels to our being somehow chosen as the one special person to carry out a divine mission. It may be quite possible that at times certain individuals who are suited to the task are somehow inspired to assist in a creative undertaking, but it is also just as possible that such inspiration comes from a sensitivity or responsiveness to an impersonal opportunity which can meet a collective need, and not out of any personal uniqueness or specialness.

At this time of tension in which human sensitivity to subtler realms is increasing we are in great need of individuals who have experienced and explored psychic experiences of all types so that they may counsel and guide those who are uninformed. For this reason, it is not suggested here that individuals who have progressed to a point of relative stability and integration as personalities should avoid crossing these frontiers, only that it be allowed to unfold naturally or under experienced guidance. It would be best if the guidance came from those who have a developed thinking ability and who place no great sense of specialness upon these powers.

Those for whom these powers represent personal gain, public attention or escape from responsibility would be best to drop them, to concentrate instead upon "normal" human development. And if they seem to be arising naturally there is no reason to fear them, although to seek help from mainstream psychology may result in gross misunderstanding. The greatest danger at this time from the awakening of powers in those who do not understand them is not from the powers themselves, but from the kind of "help" such an individual is likely to find in conventional counseling, religion, and therapy.

*I cannot impress too strongly upon aspirants in all occult schools that the yoga for this transition period is the yoga of one-pointed intent, of directed purpose, of a constant practice of the presence of God, and of ordered regular meditation carried forward systematically and steadily over years of effort. When this is done with detachment and is paralleled by a life of loving service, the awakening. . . will go forward with safety and sanity and the whole system will be brought to the requisite stage of "aliveness."*

*(Bailey, 1957, pp. 18-19)*

The same advice would follow for those who are parents of children who are gifted in these ways. The ability to see auras, to prophesy, or to know what is happening at a distance, for example, are not unusual in many children today. But parents are prone to react with embarrassment or fear that there is something wrong with the child. Psychiatric advice may only confirm that there is a serious problem and that the child is in danger of psychotic breakdown. In some cases this may be valid but in a great many others it would be safer and healthier for the child to receive support and understanding. If that is not possible from the parents, at least they could seek consultation with someone who has experience with these abilities. There are not yet very many such helpers, but they can be found.

The flowering of some kind of unusual sensitivity or psychic ability in a child needs to be treated in the same way as any other special gift, like athletics or music. The child should be able to receive guidance and training to fulfill the responsibility that such a gift entails, yet they should also be treated in such a way that they do not lose the opportunity to develop other facets of childhood or do not also become seen as identical with their gift. There are many obvious cases of artists and athletes to attest to the damage done by encouraging the child to see himself or

herself as primarily their unique gifts. As adults they are likely to have one-dimensional lives and this may prevent them from knowing how best to use their gifts.

When a child reports unusual perceptions which the parents cannot verify experientially, it would appear much better to accept the child's experience as valid for them and to consider that it may or may not be fantasy or imagination. Too many gifted children are told that what they perceive is "not true" or "not real." This undermines their gift as well as their ability to trust their own experiences. During this transition time it is likely that psychology practitioners will see more and more cases of young people who are gifted with powers but who have suffered from ridicule, rejection or the fear of their parents or friends. This situation needs to be recognized and discussed openly in journals and conferences. In most cases the young person is not likely to trust the psychologist or counselor with their gift unless they receive some encouragement and sense a willingness on the part of the counselor to believe them.

In summary, acceptance, interpretative skills and perspective seem the most valuable aids in encountering powers in ourselves or others. A scientific attitude in which we observe, test and learn from others is most likely to foster our transpersonal development, not self-glorification, pride or enhancement of our separateness. As an exercise to complete this chapter, if it seems appropriate, it might be useful to find someone who has an understanding and openness about these powers and to tell them about any personal experiences you or someone close to you may have had, which perhaps you have not been willing to share with anyone out of fear or embarrassment. Doing this in an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding can help to undo possible defensive attitudes or behaviors which may be trying to repress our sensitivity.

Quite often a fear of loss of control, with our present film and literary portrayals of powers as destructive weapons or possession by demons, prevents us from being open to our own natural abilities. Exceptions can be found in some popular films like "E.T." or "Resurrection," where healing motivated by love is demonstrated. Our 20th century rational scientific mind has a dark shadow of unconscious fear of psychic powers and collectively we have much reluctance to trust ourselves with those powers. Our experience with the atom and technology in general tends to reinforce those fears. That is why the finding of our transpersonal Center is vital if we are to learn to handle our powers constructively. And to do that we must undergo a long and at times difficult path of individual personality development and increasing responsiveness to the Self. This response emerges as a sense of responsibility to the larger Whole and as active service to others. Until then, the short-cut represented by development of psychic powers will usually only result in what esoteric teachings call being "lost on the astral plane."

*It is not the part of a coward, in these matters concerning the subjective life, to move with caution and with care; it is the part of discretion. The aspirant [to spiritual unfoldment], therefore, has three things to do:*

- 1. Purify, discipline and transmute his threefold lower nature.*
- 2. Develop knowledge of himself, and equip his mental body; build the causal body (soul) by good deeds and thoughts,*
- 3. Serve his race in utter self-abnegation.*

*(Bailey, 1962, p. 162)*



# Chapter Fourteen

## Heart

*It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.*

*– Antoine de Saint Exupéry*

*(The Little Prince)*

**T**HE WHOLE IN WHICH WE PARTICIPATE HAS INTEGRITY – It organizes and maintains Itself according to Its Purpose. We are one means by which It does this. It is not easy for the ego to admit that the Universe does not center upon its activities, but the Heart in each of us is in direct contact with the integrity and Purpose of the Whole in which we have a place. We capitalize Heart to distinguish it as referring to an inner psychic organ which registers integrity – our own as individuals or that of the greater Whole of which the human is an element. Integrity refers to oneness or wholeness. The Heart is our psychological core, holding us together as a whole, and it is the seat of our inner wisdom. The Sun, which astrologically symbolizes the Heart principle, is the heart of the Solar System and we can observe its influence as the giver of light and of life and the gravitational source which holds the system in place. It is an illusion of the lower mind to think that the individual planets are somehow completely separate from the Sun. They may physically appear that way to the eye because of the distance between their physical bodies and that of the Sun, but they are composed of the same matter as the Sun and are nurtured and carried within a field of solar energies. Similarly each of us as human beings within the Solar System are solar. There is within us in our Heart a principle which is identical with and responsive to the Sun and Its influence.

Unfortunately because of the Heart's interconnectedness with all beings we often experience pain in our Heart. Our love and compassion, as natural expressions of the Heart principle, make us vulnerable to suffering on behalf of the numerous life forms on our planet whose lives are not yet directed in alignment with the Heart. The Heart tells us that when another human starves or is tortured or oppressed, or when trees are allowed to die as a consequence of industrial pollution, or when whales or baby seals are murdered for profit, so are we. The world is now supersaturated with pain and we are challenged to keep the Heart open and not become numb or paralyzed. It is risky to have our Heart open when so many others are closed. Yet we must consider what will happen if all Hearts close off. There are countless men and women of good will who are hindered by a wounded Heart. The Heart is one of the chief vehicles of impression and expression of the transpersonal Self. Our purpose in this chapter is to uncover the wounded

Heart, the Heart in hiding, so that It may be healed. The healed Heart heals us all and love and forgiveness are the healers of the Heart.

Close your eyes for a moment and be aware of the beating of your physical heart. Be aware of what that beating does for you, of how it is constantly keeping your circulatory system moving. . . Allow an image to come to you which can show you the condition of your innermost Heart. This image can take any shape, or even may be a sound or feeling. How does your Heart appear? Ask it what it wants. . . And why . . . Ask it what it needs. And why. Ask it to show you any indications that it is hurt, impaired or hidden in some way. You may ask your Heart why that is, how it came about, and what you can do about it.

Often in such an exercise someone sees images like gaping wounds, chains, imprisoning bands of steel, dark spots, pieces missing, the Heart in a small box. It is probably impossible for a young child to avoid hurts, disappointments, and other wounds to the Heart. The question for parents is more than how to protect the young from these wounds, because too much protection leaves a child unprepared for life (as may too little). Pets or friends or relatives die, playmates move away or find other friends, and these hurt the Heart which knows only love and expects the best. More important than protection is the question of how wounds are healed. Parents who are unable to tolerate their own pain are usually unable to encourage the natural outpouring of hurt which is necessary for the child to heal. A child quickly senses that their tears or anguish are too uncomfortable for the parent and in order to spare the parent further pain, the child begins to develop a suppression response to pain, perhaps a Martyr subpersonality (see chapter 11) or a false facade which says everything is all right. Too often they learn such a facade from one or both parents.

The result is years of building up hurt and pain in the Heart until it becomes overburdened and closes down. The person suffers in silence or worse, is not even aware of their own pain. Without the opportunity to release our suffering through tears, screams or other physical expression (including writing or composing, etc.) we create a wall around the Heart. The accumulation of pain necessitates some kind of protection against even more and we seek to limit our vulnerability, which also limits our love, our capacity for intimacy and for taking risks. Yet without realizing it we are not so much sealing out future hurts as we are sealing in not only our old unreleased suffering but also the additional pain which comes from feeling there is no release or healing possible. We then may turn to denying our hurting Heart with alcohol, drugs, television, constant activity, or trivial pursuits.

There are also those who are not successful at sealing the wounded Heart yet who have been unable to heal. These people are usually in pain and are either always angry or sad. There is no room for joy. They either wear their sorrowful Heart on the outside or try to hide it behind apathy, cynicism, intimidation or anger. The Heart's wounds are not only caused by loss of love. The Heart is that in us which yearns for something meaningful to aspire to; it believes in the existence of an ideal of Truth, Goodness or Beauty. Lacking experience or discrimination we may have to learn through disillusionment which can easily turn into bitterness, resentment or cynicism – more shells. “I will never trust, I will never love, I will never believe in anyone or anything again,” say our walls.

So the Heart goes into hiding, not only from others but from ourselves as well. We feel unloved, isolated, out of touch with our own center. We may reject or push away that sad and messy Heart because it troubles us without realizing that we are also the recipient of that rejection, causing us to feel even more unworthy. A self-perpetuating cycle develops in which we reject the Heart

because it is hurting, thus causing more pain to ourselves and more rejection, and on and on. We develop masks, self-images and defenses which not only shut people out but also alienate us from ourselves. There is an inner emptiness which we desperately try to fill – with friends, money, success, food, power. But there is only one antidote for the wounded Heart: we must take it out of hiding, bring it into the light, and lovingly accept it and its pain, nursing it back to health. The mystery of this healing is that it is the Heart itself which is the source of the healing. It can heal itself and wants to and it is only our fear of pain that keeps us from allowing this to happen.

The love of the Heart accepts and supports others as they are and, while not necessarily supporting negative or destructive behavior, can see the Heart of the other and beckon to it. When our Heart is open we are present as a whole person – sensing, feeling, thinking, imagining and intuiting – with a bifocal vision which sees both the personality and the potential in the other and we invite their full presence as well. People often describe the experience as one of “being seen,” feeling “bare or revealed,” without judgments. It is with the Heart that we can experience being the Whole seeing (hearing, loving, touching) Itself. We are willing to be vulnerable and open, though if we are faced with attack from another we know how to protect our Heart while holding no animosity. We can see any attack from another as a cry for help from a wounded Heart and we know that any attacking thoughts of our own are in reality attacks upon ourselves.

Through the Heart we know our relatedness to each and every being within the Whole and so we “Teach only Love, for that is what you are.” (Course in Miracles) We can perceive the world as a place of love or needing love, or as a threat. We can see through the eyes of love or the eyes of fear. We can choose how we perceive the world – we are responsible for what we see. An insult can be something at which we take offense and either retaliate or withdraw, or we can see behind the insult into the Heart of the one who gives it to understand the pain which motivates attack. We can also empathize with what it must be like to be isolated behind a wall of attack which repels others. We can forgive the insult, not from a place of patronizing superiority, but because we know we too are capable of the same pain and attacking behavior.

Forgiveness is the key by which the Heart is freed from its prison. Whatever the form of attack – either on ourselves or others – with which we have barricaded the Heart out of fear, and whatever the source of our fear, the Heart can be healed by forgiveness. The exercise following this chapter can teach us to forgive. Remembering the Full-Term Personality (Chapter 6) who has an Observing/Directing “I”, we can be aware of the particular lens or eyes with which we are viewing the world – is it fear or love? And we can choose to see the world through the eyes of the Heart. This does not mean that we now believe that everything is perfect, but that we can see how pain and suffering are the way in which we learn. Fear is based upon the illusion that we are separate. On one level we are separate from each other with our individual distinctions, but the illusory aspect is in not realizing that we are also linked or related as well. When we succumb to this illusion we are alone in a threatening world and it is not easy to trust the environment. At that point we are experiencing the world from the perspective of the survival of the separate self.

But if we have ever known a higher reality of unity, connectedness, brother- and sisterhood, even for a moment, then we know there is another way in which we can perceive. And if we have not had a glimpse of that higher reality we can nurture our desire for it and seek it out. In our lower consciousness we believe we must protect ourselves and that to give to others diminishes what we have. The Heart knows that we increase by giving. Anyone who has experienced the growth of loving acceptance and joy by sharing it with others knows this. Which would you prefer?

You may have been hurt at some times in your life. You may even have hurt yourself. But you can let go of that and learn from it, even be grateful for it because it teaches love, sensitivity and compassion. Once we have been hurt we know what it is like to be hurting and can empathize with others. But if we defend against our pain and lock the hurts away in a secret compartment we also lose our capacity to love, heal and understand. Compassion for ourselves means we can accept our shortcomings. We may still get angry or withdraw into cold silence. But if we intend to be loving and to keep the Heart open our first response upon awakening to our mechanical attack behavior is to understand and to forgive – not only the other but also ourselves for having reacted. When we can recognize and remember that we are part of the larger Whole it becomes necessary for us to give the same quality of love and forgiveness to ourselves as we would to any other aspect of the Whole. Self-punishment and guilt only serve to reinforce our boundaries and in some ways serve to gratify the ego, which would often rather be special in its negativity than average or indistinguishable.

Too many of us have been told it is wrong to love ourselves. It is only the self-love which sets us apart from others which is in error. Loving ourselves for our humanness as well as our gifts enhances our contribution to the Whole and thus serves everyone else. Until we love ourselves we cannot truly let ourselves be loved by another. Most often our work in learning to love ourselves begins with the Inner Child subpersonality, whom we must learn to accept and to love. The Child within us is the one who learns and it is as a child that we learn about love, not with punishment and disapproval but with gentle practice and support.

*Whenever I see someone else as guilty, I am reinforcing my own sense of guilt and unworthiness. I cannot forgive myself unless I am willing to forgive others. It does not matter what I think anyone has done to me in the past or what I think I may have done. Only through forgiveness can my release from guilt and fear be complete.*

*(Course in Miracles)*

The next time you find yourself perceiving through fear, attacking others in thought or act, judging or condemning yourself or others, remember: “I could see peace instead of this.”

## **Exercises: Love and Forgiveness I**

Close your eyes, relax, and watch your breathing for a few moments. Turn your awareness to your Heart and ask it to show you where you are holding something against someone. See who it is and what it is you are still holding against them.

See this person in your mind’s eye. Be aware of how you feel in facing them. Tell them how you feel and what it is you are still carrying bad feelings about. Be aware of their reactions, and if you wish, continue to dialogue with them.

Now take a moment to become that person. . . Put yourself in their shoes, and see what it feels like to be them. What does the world look like through their eyes? . . .

Now, as that person, imagine being their Heart. What is it like to be this person’s Heart? . . . (Take your time) . . . Look at the person (the reader) who has been telling you their feelings. See if you can understand why they feel the way they do.

Now go back to being yourself (the reader). Look at the person in front of you again who you have been holding something against, and see if you can forgive them. If that seems too difficult, can you at least want to be able to forgive them? Can you tell them that you want to be able to forgive them, and that you will try?

## **Exercises: Love and Forgiveness II**

Again relax quietly, close your eyes and follow your breathing for a few moments. Direct your awareness to your Heart, and ask it to show you where you are holding something against yourself – either an act of commission or omission or some characteristic.

Explore this for a while, look at what it is you are feeling badly about. How long have you held these feelings? Talk to your Heart about it. Ask your Heart to tell you how it feels about these feelings you've been holding. Ask it for advice if you wish.

Now take a moment to imagine being your Heart. . . What is it like to have these feelings of guilt, resentment or anger held? What is their effect on you as the Heart? What do you see as the Heart about the the source of these feelings that the person you belong to does not see? Tell the person what you would like them to do, and what you need.

Now go back to being yourself (the reader) and ask your Heart for forgiveness. . . (take your time). . . If it does forgive you, see if you can really let it in. . . Can you forgive yourself? . . . Can you let go of the guilt, resentment, disappointment, whatever negative feelings you've been holding toward yourself? If not, do you want to?

Imagine you have two golden doors which you can choose to open or close around your Heart for protection when you need to. Remember to listen to your Heart when it reminds you to open them. Imagine proceeding into your daily life being constantly in communication with your Heart, or better, as your Heart. . .



# Chapter Fifteen

## Creativity, Will and Grounding

*And what shall thy soul say when it wakes and knows*

*The work was left undone for which it came?*

*Or is this all for thy being born on earth*

*Charged with a mandate from eternity,*

*A listener to the voices of the years,*

*A follower of the footprints of the gods,*

*To pass and leave unchanged the old dusty laws?*

*Shall there be no new tables, no new Word,*

*No greater light come down upon the earth*

*Delivering her from her unconsciousness,*

*Man's spirit from unalterable fate?*

*Cam'st thou not down to open the doors of Fate,*

*The iron doors that seemed for ever closed,*

*And lead man to truth's wide and golden road*

*That runs through finite things to eternity?*

*Is this then the report that I must make,*

*My head bowed with shame before the Eternal's seat, –*

*His power he kindled in thy body has failed,*

*His labourer returns, her task undone?*

*(Sri Aurobindo, 1973)*

*The way of the Creative works through change and transformation, so that each thing receives its true nature and destiny and comes into permanent accord with the Great Harmony.*

*(Wilhelm-Baynes, 1950)*

The natural course of human evolution can be seen as a progressive uplifting of our motivating desires. An integrated and individualized personality, a center of self-awareness and will with sovereignty over its field of consciousness eventually emerges. Within the boundaries of individual selfhood this "I" possesses the capacity to direct its activities according to a chosen purpose. Out of the primary desire for survival and safety, and later for belonging and self-esteem, has come the desire to actualize our potential for its own sake. This intention for self-actualization is related to the desire for self-expression, for power and influence, and solidifies our sense of ego. Out of the desire to be effective and self-sufficient we become aware of that mysterious and misunderstood power we call "will." By means of our will we implement our intentions, which are like points of tension between what is actual and what is potential and which are created by our sense of purpose. We learn to make choices, to wield a sword of decisiveness which cleaves between two or more possibilities, casting our fate with one option and sacrificing the other(s) as stillborn.

But there is more to the will than making choices, just as there is more than traditional psychology's conception of the will as a repressive and controlling power over our instincts and biological urges. The will also has qualities like persistence, concentration, resoluteness, or initiative. At first the will is used unconsciously to fulfill desire. Before its appearance desire has, like water, automatically flowed to its own fulfillment. We have simply been "along for the ride," taken wherever our strongest desire wishes. The first appearance of the will comes as we face choices as to how we will fulfill our desires. In time as we disidentify from our desires the will – as a power of the directing "I" which is beginning to emerge – is used to choose among competing desires, sometimes favoring one which is not necessarily the strongest but in line with our values and purpose. At this stage of personality development, in conjunction with greater self-awareness, our will at some times implements desire and at others comes into a struggle for control with desires which conflict with our purpose. We learn that force and repression are not always the best way and we develop a skillful will which is capable of harnessing whatever desires or skills we possess to implement its intention.

In this moment, try as an experiment to will yourself to stand, or to sit, or to do something with your hand. Try to experience slowly each moment from the reading of these words to the choice to do the experiment, to the realization of "I will (stand, sit, etc.)," to the action which fulfills your stated intention. See if you can capture the experience of the actual moment in which you will yourself to act. What does that feel like? Who are you at that moment? Try it again with another action. Can you get a sense of what the experience of willing is like? Again, who is willing?

Imagine living your life from this place of conscious willing. What would that be like? Imagine waking up each morning consciously choosing to live your life that day. Is that a common experience for you? If not, what is it that does get you up to start the day?

## Will and Purpose

The will depends upon the presence of purpose and intention. Without a sense of some defined purpose it is not possible for us to know what we intend. Often we have an intention but are not conscious of the purpose or context behind that intention. One of the challenges of creative willing, of actively manifesting a creative thought or ideal, like a book, is to remember our original purpose for what can become tedious or difficult work. The mechanical mind becomes focused upon a task and we lose our perspective as to why we are doing what we are doing. We become again subject to the “optical delusion of consciousness” described by Einstein and our boundaries for our activity become narrowed to include only the task at hand. We may, for example, become inspired with a sense of purpose which includes being a defender of justice and the rights of the people, but it may be difficult to remain aware of that purpose when we are in the midst of studying to take the bar exam or to pass a course in law school.

Yet purpose is like a wellspring of motivation and if and when we can remember our purpose for having begun what may be a long or difficult commitment, we find ourselves usually renewed, tapping a deeper source of motivation. But as a rule we are not taught the importance of searching for or clearly defining our purpose. Our life often appears to be operating like a sailboat without a rudder, catching this breeze now and that one later. That is exactly what a life lived from desire is like. The desire for food arises and I eat. Having eaten enough, the desire for stimulation arises, so I seek company or activity. When satiated, perhaps the desire for a meaningful activity arises and I seek a “meaningful” relationship or job. Of course out of these arising desires we make longer-term commitments, like to a job or relationship, and then we find ourselves having to be at work during certain hours of the day, even though that no longer seems to be our desire. If we can remember our purpose for choosing that work (assuming we had one) we can renew our motivation and our sense of the meaning of what we do.

Purpose implies a vision. In my mind’s eye I see a world with more love in it, or myself with more knowledge, or a product of my efforts like a book, an organization, or a professional degree. Part of our evolutionary growth means becoming aware of the inner purpose for our life. In the early stages of development our purpose is not really clearly defined but is the fulfillment of needs, the elimination of tension. Early purpose may be something inherited or assigned by our community, but as we individualize so does our purpose. In fact we might say that it is primarily through the progressive emergence of a sense of our unique purpose, coming from our sense of self, that our individuality is defined. The sense of “I am-ness” which we discussed in Chapter 5 carries with it the will-to-fulfill its purpose. It is possible that when either our deepest inner purpose is fulfilled or when we have lost all hope for seeing it realized, our life comes to an end.

In a meaningful Universe everything is imbued with purpose. The Universe has a Purpose for Its existence and so does everything contained within It. Identity and purpose may be one and the same. The objective of spiritual unfoldment is to realize our identity as a participant within the larger Whole, and with that realization comes a willingness to submit to the Purpose which vitalizes that Whole. But just as the ego does not embrace the idea that it is really only serving on behalf of a more powerful Ruler as it directs the personality, our sense of willfulness which has achieved all that we hold dear does not usually rush to selfless service. There is an aspect of our will, however, which does provide the means by which we can bridge between personal will and transpersonal Will. The good will, which has been called the will-to-good, exists in us all. Somewhere in each of us (in our Heart?) is a response to others’ needs, a capacity to devote our

energies to the greatest good for the greatest number, even if it means personal sacrifice. Our desires, of course, contain many resistances to the freeing of this good will – selfishness, greed, fear of scarcity or loss. These glammers all rest on the illusion of separateness and we have seen how they serve the purpose of individual development at a certain phase of evolution, but as we approach the birth of the Self we become caught in a “battle of wills” and only we can choose.

The will is the agent of intention. Do we follow through with our intentions? There are two paths by which to pursue this question: 1) Are we able to ground our dreams, vision, and creative inspiration; and 2) Do we actually work in a consistent way at integrating new awarenesses and desired qualities into our personality? These are in a sense the “extroverted” and “introverted” sides of the question. Take some time here to clarify your purpose by going to the “Clarifying Purpose (part I)” exercise at the end of this chapter.

## Creativity

Imagine that you are the Earth, a planetary Being with intelligence, and that you have a Purpose to fulfill in the larger scheme of the Solar System. You are working toward achieving that Purpose by slowly evolving physical forms of increasing complexity and intelligence, physical forms which approximate more and more closely over billions of years the ideal forms which you hold in your Mind. You have reached a point in your Plan where some of the forms have reached a sufficient degree of complexity to potentially be aware of themselves, of your intent, and to direct the fulfillment of your Purpose in the physical world. But in order for them to serve you in that capacity more time is needed until their mechanisms are sufficiently sensitive to register your Plan. They have developed the skills, the intelligence and adapt-ability necessary to create the required organizational structures in the physical world, but relatively few of them have awakened to their relationship with each other or to you or to their responsibility for the direction of your Plan.

Only the smallest minority have been able so far to actually align their choices and actions purposefully with your intent. The majority have worked for so long at establishing and insuring their survival by creating well-defended boundaries that it is very difficult for them now to reach out beyond those boundaries to each other or to you. Sometimes they join together for the purpose of maintaining even more solid and heavily defended shared boundaries. You continue to hold in your Mind the ideal forms of organization by which these human beings and their world need to be patterned and occasionally some of them are able to register these forms, though their actual implementation usually is distorted by the selfishness and fear of the majority. You patiently wait until more and more humans are able to become aware of your Plan and their particular role within it.

But even if all of them were to become aware of the Plan at this moment, they would still need to learn how to use that little understood and poorly developed power you have given them which they call “will.” There have already been some disasters which have occurred as a learning experience for humans when some of them have been able to use that will without first being aware of their relationship to each other and to you. These willful individuals have also given will a bad name and reinforced the fears of the majority that the will is somehow prone to evil and should be left alone. But without both the will and the awareness of their interrelationship (which they call “love”) your Plan cannot be implemented. But now the time has arrived within your Plan

when you are stimulating in them both the vision of wholeness and the power of the will to implement (or “ground”) that vision. This stimulus is forcing much growth, evoking global and individual crises, and demanding love and will (or loving will) from human beings.

Creativity can be seen as the registering of some aspect of the evolutionary Plan by a person or group whose mechanism of consciousness is sensitive to the higher mental levels on which the Plan exists. The creator may be a scientist, an artist, a writer or a group of political revolutionaries. But any idea also needs to be grounded – given a physical form – to be creative. The form may be words, a government, an organization or an artwork, and it usually takes some aspect of the will to create the form. We are also not exposed to this concept of the will as a vital component of creativity in most of our education and so what may be the most central and significant aspect of being human (besides self-awareness) remains shrouded in ignorance.

*Fundamental among these inner powers, and the one to which priority should be given, is the tremendous, unrealized potency of man's own will. Its training and use constitute the foundation of all endeavors. There are two reasons for this: the first is the will's central position in man's personality and its intimate connection with the core of his being – his very self. The second lies in the will's function in deciding what is to be done, in applying all the necessary means for its realization and in persisting in the task in the face of all obstacles and difficulties.*

*(Assagioli, 1973, p. 6)*

We have discussed the transpersonal Self as a higher-order Center of organization, the Purpose and Identity of a greater organism in which you and I are like cells with a particular function to perform, either individually or in conjunction with others. We can imagine a Plan, a pattern of organization which is held in the “Mind” of the greater Whole to which we only respond unconsciously at first. This unconscious patterning we have identified as “archetypes.” For thousands of years human beings have been unconsciously directed by these archetypes to order their life experience in certain ways and to gather together in certain patterns of social organization. Our evolution is the result of breakthrough ideas being registered by receptive humans which are then “grounded” or given some kind of form on the physical plane. We could characterize this creative process as one in which the mind of one or more humans reaches a resonance (the capacity to be impressed) to the archetypal pattern which has the potential to meet a need of the times.

This archetypal pattern can be imagined to be analogous to an energy or force field like the magnetic field which can organize a pile of iron filings into a pattern or a field of sound waves which arranges particles of sand into harmonious shapes. When a human mind or minds contain enough of the “pieces” of knowledge which relate to this pattern they “fall into place” and an “aha!” occurs. With this illumination comes a release of energy in the person(s) experiencing it in the form of joy, exhilaration and excitement. The idea seems to carry with it not only a pattern which organizes the bits of knowledge in the creative person's mind, but also the energy necessary to motivate the effort called for to translate the new idea into form, though that may take years in some cases.

In earlier times of human evolution this motivating energy or desire often served to bring the new realization into form (though imperfect). But now we have reached a point where we are aware of the process itself with its stages of information gathering, concentrated inquiry, creative tension which can be experienced as frustration or stuckness, insight, and creative activity

(see “Creative Meditation” in chapter 12). With the emerging human will we can choose how we wish to participate in this process and know ourselves to be in cooperation with an evolutionary Plan. With this recognition comes also the realization that we are really seeking to function as one in a group of creative workers, those in our own field and also with the larger group of consciously creative workers in the many fields of human activity. Thus we are forming larger mental resonance fields of a global nature. This natural process by which increasing numbers of human beings consciously undertake to cooperate in evolution by creative work has been called “white magic” (Bailey, 1951). White magic occurs in service to the greater Whole, to the Self, while “black magic” uses the same methods of tapping invisible energy fields in service of the separative ego and one’s own glory or power.

## Grounding

What is needed today are great numbers of intelligent creative persons who can explore and map the regions we have called the superconscious, just as Freud and his followers have attempted to map the lower unconscious. There are already maps of the unconscious in existence from earlier times in the form of myth, alchemy, astrology, and religion (all of them myths). But for the newly emerging order being sensed by many to become effective our collective human will must awaken. Just as the individual who finds himself or herself at an impasse, caught between opposing needs or desires, must take charge and choose, so we – Humanity – caught between the communists and democracies, industrial growth and conservation, and all the other apparently irreconcilable opposites, must awaken from our paralysis and make choices. It has reached the point where we must choose whether to live or to die, and where no choice is really a choice to perish.

As we have seen in our model in Section One the emergence of the sense of autonomy and will comes with the realization of “I am.” As the directing “I” within the personality we gradually become free from automatic behaviors and from being pulled by our desires. We come to realize that we have desires and automatic responses but that we also possess the freedom to choose how we wish to be in relation with these desires and responses. Some of these desires may be selfish or even destructive and others may be from love and compassion. The full-term personality accepts the presence of a full range of human experience, from animal to angelic, but retains the power to direct and to choose his or her actions. The battle may be fierce at times between our desires and until we realize our role as Observer and Director we are tossed back and forth or paralyzed by the struggle. We may wait hoping that sooner or later these conflicts will resolve themselves without our having to take responsibility for them, but that rarely happens.

In order to ground our intentions they have to be clearly understood and authentic, as well as realistic. If they are and we still do not follow through, then our problem may be that we are weak in one or more of the qualities of the will:

- 1) Energy - Dynamic Power - Intensity
- 2) Mastery - Control - Discipline
- 3) Concentration - One-pointedness - Attention - Focus
- 4) Determination - Decisiveness - Resoluteness - Promptness

5) Persistence - Endurance - Patience

6) Initiative - Courage - Daring

7) Organization - Integration - Synthesis

(Assagioli, 1973)

Is there a particular quality of the will which you have become aware is needed in your life? How do you know that? Is there a quality which you find attractive in others and wish that you had? Quiet your thoughts, focus your awareness on your breathing and become aware of your Heart. Your Heart knows what is the next step for you and knows you truthfully. Ask your Heart what you need in order to take that next step. Allow a word, image or feeling to emerge into your awareness from your Heart.

Choose the quality with which you wish to work, knowing that you can choose others to work with later if you wish. Use the exercise "Evoking and Developing Desired Qualities" at the end of chapter 7 to begin developing this quality. It can also help for you to use the "Acting 'as if'" exercise following this chapter to ground and practice the new quality.

## Blocks to Our Creative Willing

What words or images come to mind when you think about the will? (Take a moment to write down several.) Typical responses may be "power," "harshness," "control," "aggression," or "struggle." Our misunderstanding of the will has at least two sources. First, the fact that the will was the controlling and repressive ability which was expected to be used during Victorian times to keep sexual and aggressive drives in check; and second, we have witnessed cold, cruel and destructive results of apparently willful men (have women had the chance?). But why aren't we able to recognize the presence of the will in someone like Mother Theresa, Saint Francis, or any one of the many who have left to us tangible results of their vision? Probably it is the product of our habitual tendency to separate the world into polarities and so to see love and will as opposites: a willful person cannot be loving and a loving person must not be willful. Yet we have many examples of the synthesis of love and will. Christ is often considered the Teacher of Love, yet can't we see in His teaching and acts the presence of a Divinely inspired will? Perhaps there is something more than dualistic vision which prevents us from learning more from the examples through history that love and will not only can be blended but that when they are the results are potent and constructive.

Imagine that from this moment on you were able to free the power of your will and could use it in any way you chose . . . Now what are you aware of in you that doesn't want that, that objects or backs away from that possibility? What kinds of scenarios can you imagine would happen if you did use your will to its full potential? There may be a variety of discoveries from this exploration, but two of the most common are probably fear of doing harm, of being too powerful, controlling and repressive, or fear of the responsibility it would entail. These are really two sides of the same fear, which can also take the form of believing that we would have to do things which are beyond our capability. The presence of these and other fantasies should make us want to uncover what it is in us which is so resistant to our using our potentials. (Haronian, 1974)

We can hypothesize that the source lies in our childhood training, much of which has been based for centuries on the premise that the best thing a parent could do was to teach the child who was boss, to break their will, and to do it before the child was old enough to be able to remember it happening. (Miller, 19??) The authority of the parents (and society) needed to be established and the fear was that the child would become uncontrollable if allowed to be willful. So at least part of our fear may be conditioned by upbringing, reaching back through many generations afraid to be willful. One result of this fear has been that individuals who are most capable of willing (usually because of a weakness on the love side of the polarity) have often been our leaders and used the passivity of the majority to their personal advantage. As a rule humans have let someone else do it, make the decisions, be responsible. It is not working. Just as we need to be educating our children about negative feelings and psychic powers, we also need an enlightened approach to training children in the use of the will. The child whose will has been broken becomes an adult in age only, since an essential part of the individual has been lost. A good deal of transpersonal psychotherapy has to do with helping adults to recover their will or helping others who have no problem in willing to integrate their love nature.

We can imagine the will as initially the means by which our individual boundaries are established, a power which moves from the center outward. Love attracts toward the center and so serves to integrate the parts within the whole and to bridge beyond boundaries. Either one without the other is partial, resulting in either a centrifugal scattering or a centripetal inward collapse. To have a dream or a vision but not the will to direct its expression is painful. This pain, as we have seen before, must be experienced and not denied. If we allow ourselves (with an open Heart) to realize the pain of unfulfilled dreams or intentions we will be moved to do whatever is necessary to find the means to express them. Exploratory work on the will may uncover wounds from earlier experiences (some of which may even appear to predate this life) of willing, or it may appear to be a lack of opportunity for training and development (for example, being a “good girl” who must be quiet and compliant).

The will is most able to be experienced in our choices. We are rarely aware of our willing, however, and most of our decisions occur more or less automatically with little or no consciousness. It may be helpful that we do not have to consciously choose to breathe, eat or eliminate, but to express anger, enter or leave a relationship, or follow the majority of our activities throughout the day without a sense of self-direction or of having purposefully chosen leaves us victims of inner or outer circumstance. It usually takes time for us to recognize our power and responsibility for our own life. Weakness, blame, low self-esteem and the confusion of responsibility with blame foster in most of us from childhood an aversion to seeing how we are responsible for our experiences. Traditional reductionistic psychology reinforces this avoidance by trying to make our parents, our childhood, and the biochemicals in our brains the causes of our problems. Indeed, the responsibility for how we choose to live our life can be awesome. Our choices not only eventually come back to us in ways that can be painful, but they can impact on others. Two of the most important teachings many of us never had in our childhood but which provide a solid basis for accepting and using our will have to do with mistakes and with trust.

It is inevitable that we will err yet it is remarkable how many of us are taught that mistakes are bad or wrong, or worse, that they make us bad or wrong. Instead of being encouraged to risk new experiences and to learn from our errors many are implicitly or explicitly taught that errors are to be avoided. Many parents and teachers give the message that we must strive for perfection and that any deviation or error can cost us love, success, or self-worth. The result is a compulsive attachment to the safe and familiar, excessive self-criticism and fear of risking or of new learning.

An inner Critic subpersonality dominating a weak or helpless Victim can make any potential for change terrifying. What would happen if we rewarded our children for errors, telling them that risking was positive and encouraging them to find the learning hidden in any mistake? It is not that more mistakes are better but that a life without mistakes is a life without risk and contained by fear. "To err is human; to forgive, Divine."

Encouragement for risking and learning from mistakes helps foster trust in oneself. If we trust that we can learn from and repair the damage from our errors we will be much more likely to enter new experiences. We learn self-trust by being trusted. Parents who always fear the worst and who lovingly over-protect their children are teaching fear and mistrust. The child grows up fearing the world and seeking protection. A worldview which believes the Universe is meaningless or threatening (like a punishing God) teaches children to hide their true feelings, their creativity, and to avoid risking. Without the willingness to risk there is no creativity. Many are afraid that to tell children (or himself or herself) that it is all right to make mistakes or to trust himself or herself will lead to irresponsibility: if mistakes aren't "bad" then we won't care what results from our actions and we will become destructive. But this also stems from a lack of self-trust, the inability to recognize or to trust that in our Heart we know what is right and we can evaluate our actions. This is why work on our Heart (see chapter 14) is so important, because if the Heart has been wounded or we are estranged from it, we lose touch with the loving Center which knows in us and then perhaps we are not to be trusted. Before we can trust ourselves we must be able to love ourselves.

There is at least one other reason why we may take so long to come to recognize and accept our power and responsibility for choosing our life – to choose is to sacrifice. With any choice we make we also destroy the other potentials which are not chosen. We become a murderer and we may irrevocably lose an opportunity. There is nothing more painful than the death of a child because of his or her un-lived potential. The same loss is found in our choice not to pursue a particular goal. A choice may entail grieving for what is being given up. It is lost and we may never see it again. In some way we are all like Sophie in *Sophie's Choice*, choosing who may live and who will die. It is understandable that if we know this on some unconscious level that we become paralyzed and hope that the choice will be made by someone else or will resolve itself. But one of the most important lessons from the novel *Sophie's Choice*, in which a mother in a Nazi concentration camp has to choose which of her two children she will keep, is the fact that Sophie was told that if she didn't choose she would lose them both. This is exactly what may happen to us if we refuse to choose. For our unwillingness to enter one door and close the other we may find that both are closed. We must recognize that not choosing is a choice we are making. This is the key that can free our immobilized will because it forces us to see that we are not and can never really avoid our responsibility. Paralysis or refusal to choose is only an illusory freedom from responsibility – it allows us to mistakenly believe that as long as we do not choose we still are free. But we are not; we are even more imprisoned than if we choose because we have lost our will, our source of power and direction.

In addition to these three major reasons for avoiding willing – fear of mistakes, lack of self-trust, and avoidance of sacrificing potential – there are also many who have experienced will and power in negative ways, particularly by way of their parents. An abusive, controlling or dominating parent may force passivity and submissiveness on the child as a way of adapting and also lead the child to vow never to use their power because it appears to be such a negative or destructive force. This may be most apparent in how we deal with our anger. Anger is a powerful emotion and if we are afraid of or unfamiliar with our own power our anger may be denied or turned

inward upon ourselves. Or a parent who is afraid of their own strength or power and will may model and encourage a victim role and pass on their fear to the child. This is not to place blame on these parents because they in their turn have learned from others. The question is not so much where did it start, but how to change it. It may be that assistance is called for if we wish to de-condition old habits and to learn to love and trust ourselves and to free our innate will and power.

Since it is the intention of the Self that we be able to effectively ground or implement our particular role within the evolutionary Plan we can expect that we will unconsciously choose circumstances or relationships which will highlight any unnecessary limitations we have with regard to willing. These can, perhaps by means of temporary pain, motivate us to go beyond those limits and to free our will. This will especially be true when there is something trying to emerge through us which calls upon our capacity to will.

As we work on developing and trusting our will it is best to remain aware that the will is an instrument of the transpersonal Self, of the Whole in which we live, move and have our being. With the realization of the importance of the individual will for the fulfillment of planetary Purpose when used in combination with others' wills we become more receptive and resonant to the creative energy fields which await precipitation by means of our actions. As long as we are afraid of the responsibility or seeking safety by anonymous inaction we provide an inertial brake on the evolutionary process. This is not to say that in the cyclic nature of our lives and of the evolutionary Plan that there are not times of necessary rest or apparent inaction. Some of the most important phases of the creative process involve a receptive waiting or a patient day-by-day expression of newly acquired attitudes or qualities in our immediate environment. These quiet times are as vital for the fulfillment of creative purpose as are the more exciting times of inspiration. The glamor of incessant activity is common in many people whether or not they may be inspired by a higher Purpose.

As long as we retain awareness of our higher Identity as transcending individual boundaries and consecrate our choices and actions to the greatest good on behalf of Humanity we are moving toward greater alignment of personal will with transpersonal Will. Our individual purpose within the greater Whole may take any form and we need to be open to all possibilities because none of us has a broad enough perspective of the Whole to know when or how our actions will impact upon that Whole. We must take care to avoid glammers which feed our desires for specialness or our pride with fantasies of martyrdom or being a savior. Each of us is Humanity acting upon behalf of Itself and it is all too easy to use spiritual aspirations as a means of fulfilling ego needs. The key is retaining our group consciousness, our awareness of our identification with Humanity. The more we do that, the clearer is the channel for the transpersonal Will of the greater Whole to manifest through our lives.

### **Exercise: Clarifying Purpose (part I)**

What would you say – at this moment – is the primary purpose which you are trying to accomplish in your life? Write that down and beneath it list some of the main ways you are trying to achieve that purpose. For example:

Purpose: to feel good about myself (or to be happy, to love others, etc.)

Ways I am trying to achieve this: physical exercise

accomplishing professional goals

developing assertiveness

volunteer work in hospice

(A) Now go back to your stated purpose and ask yourself, “Why is that important to me?” and write down your answer in the form of “So I can . . .” Then repeat the “why” question: “Why is that (the last answer) important to me?” Then repeat once more. You may continue to question why your last answer is important to you. This will help to reveal deeper levels of motivation, some of which may be surprising, especially if answered with complete honesty.

(B) Now pause, and look back over the past 10-20 years of your life and particularly at the choices you have made. List the 3-5 most important choices you have made during that time. For these choices see if you can see an underlying progressive purpose behind them. What do they reveal about your motives?

(C) Then also list any unexpected events or crises which directly affected you but which appear to have come about involuntarily (i.e., major illnesses, deaths, accidents, surprises). Then examine this list as if they were somehow also of your own choosing, as strange as that may seem. Again, seeing them together as a sequence, can you see an underlying purpose behind them? What do they seem designed to accomplish?

(D) Now look at the three results –(A) the deepest reason why your consciously stated life purpose is important, (B) the underlying purpose behind your past choices, and (C) the purpose apparently behind the involuntary turning points in your life. What do you make of these three answers? If you consider the possibility that some guiding Force has been behind (C) the third set of events as an unconscious aspect of your life purpose seeking to balance or to correct for your conscious choices, is there a broader or more comprehensive purpose which reveals itself to you now as you silently hold in your awareness all of your answers?

(E) Now having reached the point of greatest clarity (hopefully) about your purpose, how would you state your immediate intentions by which you wish to achieve this purpose? (Even if you are confused about your purpose, you may decide here that your immediate intention is to find greater clarity about that purpose.) Try to limit your intentions for now to three or less. Taking each one, write down how you intend to accomplish that stated intention. Then under that, how will you accomplish that. Repeat this, as you did in section (A) until you feel what you have written is practical and achievable in the short-term future, and you feel willing to commit the necessary time and energy to it. If there are any places which present a problem because you don't know how to fulfill your intention, simply state there your intention to find out how to do it.

## **Exercise: Clarifying Purpose (part II)**

Look at your lowest level intention (E) and write down a detailed concrete plan, including exactly when, for how long, how and what you are committing yourself to. Then recall the purpose for which you are choosing this (A) and affirm your commitment out loud, “I will . . .” Be aware of

how it feels to say this and if it doesn't feel solid or if it feels like it's not really you speaking, try it again. Also try to be aware of the long-term implications for your life if you are unable to fulfill your commitments to yourself.

Visualize yourself carrying out this commitment. See what that feels like and if there are any changes you wish to make in your plan. You can also place word cards or pictures in your environment (on your desk, bathroom mirror, dashboard, refrigerator) which will remind you of your intention. You can even ask a friend to call you and see how it is going.

(Should you fail at this attempt to carry out your stated intention it does not necessarily mean that you lack will. The test of will at this point is in going back to your list and seeing if there was some way in which part of you may have sabotaged the exercise, perhaps by creating unrealistic expectations. See if there is a smaller step toward the fulfillment of your goals which is still possible. It is also possible that you need to redo the entire exercise, having now recognized that your stated purpose or intention may not really be your own, but instead someone else's expectation of you – a "should." It is unreasonable to expect that this exercise need only be done once. Its value may lie as much in the awarenesses we achieve in failing to fulfill our commitment as in accomplishing our stated intention.)

### **Acting "as if"**

We can, to a large extent, act, behave, and really be in practice as we would be if we possessed the qualities and enjoyed the positive mental states which we would like to have. . . More important, the use of this technique will actually change our emotional state. (Assagioli, 1973, p. 80)

It is also helpful to practice acting "as if" you have already developed any qualities you are working on. This would mean behaving in a way which is how you imagine you would be if you were already fulfilling your intention or your potential. This acting "as if" technique is quite effective.

# The End/The Beginning

When you are feeding the ducks, the Universe is feeding Itself.

When you are eating your dinner, the Universe is feeding Itself.

When you are praying, the Universe is talking to Itself.

When you are attacking, the Universe is forgetting Itself.

When you are loving, the Universe is recognizing Itself.

When you are willing, the Universe is organizing Itself.

When you are born, the Universe is loving Itself.

## Notes

1 Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic*, (New York: Lucis 1951), p. 116