



**MYSTICISM:
PSYCHOSIS and GNOSIS**

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Introduction:

“The first forty years of life furnish the text, while the remaining thirty supply the commentary: without the commentary we are unable to understand aright the true sense and coherence of the text, together with the moral it contains.”

Essay, Shopenhauer, “The Ages of Life” (1891)

Investigation of liminal experiences

I am proposing to investigate liminal experiences, especially those classed as mystical experience, which are problematic to the experiencer because they do not fit the prevailing paradigm, the prevailing ways of assessing experience which operate specifically within the psychology professions and mainstream religion. My specific investigation is of the states of knowing, or numinosity, of transcendence, of oneness and exultation, which I refer to collectively as mystical experience. I will look at these from the two perspectives of psychosis and gnosis - the most common (and polarized) ways of making sense of these experiences within our society. In order to broaden the scope of possibility for regarding such experiences, I also look at other cultures and their way of dealing with these states, and compare and contrast them with Western culture. I do not include in my definition of mysticism those experiences often given the name mysticism within our western society, usually in a derogatory way, namely so-called paranormal experiences in general.

Research into mysticism is important to me because I have had experiences which were thought psychotic by some and gnostic by others, and as soon as I was able to gather my thoughts together sufficiently, I wanted to know upon what they had based their assumptions. I wanted to know where I personally fitted within the body of knowledge, so that I could come to a more comfortable understanding of my own experience, and also that of others. As a therapist I am frequently presented with problematic dynamics by my clients which involve spiritual experience, so I also knew that I was embarking on research which was

'for the others' as much as for myself. I wanted to know what had engendered these experiences, and how they fitted within my ideas of what was the spiritual life. I am reassured to read that the lives of others are similarly shaped. As Sholem says, "*The center of what a mystic has to say always remains a shapeless experience, spurring the mystic on to his understanding of his religious world and its values.*"¹ In doing this research I am therefore attempting to find a place for myself in the human community through a body of knowledge. In this sense it is a personal search for validation and meaning, and joining others in their experience and thought, and through their experience and thought. What I will be investigating is the question of how much of what is thought of and diagnosed as psychotic is part of a transformative process. I will also investigate what it is about experience of the numinous that makes it either gnostic or psychotic. Conversely, I will investigate the possibility that what may be thought of as mystical and transformative within a religious context, may have elements of the psychotic. If an experience is to be regarded as transformational, the question remains: transformation to what, from what?

It seems to me that much of what is claimed to be spiritual or religious experience attains a status of inscrutability, and therefore seems to be beyond the scope of analysis, and beyond the realms of the psychological. This is, to me, not a viable position whether held by me personally or by collective opinion. I therefore attempt to discover whether this inscrutability is a deliberate obfuscation, a defense mechanism, or the consequence of venturing into territory

¹ G Sholem, Religious Authority and Mysticism

which is beyond language. I hold that *all* human experience, however difficult or sublime, must be open to investigation, contemplation and opinion.

My methodology

In my approach to this thesis, I will follow Jung's proposal that the best way to move toward a difficult question involving the unconscious is by a ritual circling. I propose to circle around my subject from many points of view, in trust that a greater meaning will reveal itself. I propose that this plural approach will enable me to discover many truths rather than the one truth. This plural approach leads me to stand on the shoulders of many others. I quote from T.S.Eliot:²

"That the past experience revived in the meaning

Is not the experience of one life only

But of many generation – not forgetting

Something that is probably quite ineffable:"

This plural approach means that each chapter can stand alone, to a certain extent, and is not necessarily reflecting a development from the previous chapters. Having said this, however, the final chapter is a restating and culmination of all that has gone before.

My frame of reference

Heidegger, because of his emphasis on phenomenology,³ has provided me with some of the philosophical framework for this discussion. I have also chosen him because his opinions are almost contemporary and because we know something

² T.S.Eliot, *The Dry Salvages*, Four Quartets, Faber and Faber p 28

³The word phenomenology is derived from two words *phainomenon* and *logos*; " *what we get is a unified notion of "letting something show itself as it actually is."* (Robert Avens *The New Gnosis* Heidegger, Hillman and Angels, Spring Publications, Dallas, Texas, 1984, p 29)

about his personal psychology, and his own nature of “being”.⁴ I have also found those writers who approach both the psychological and the spiritual simultaneously to be most helpful, namely Schwartz-Salent, Almaas, Hunt, Laing, and John Weir Perry. The chapter on Chaos Theory required some scientific knowledge, and there I refer to van Eenwyk, Zohar, Porter and Gleick, and Holland. Elsewhere I make use of the ideas of Kristeva and Lacan and these two writers also provide the backbone for my knowledge of contemporary neo-Freudian views. The Jungian view is well spoken by Neumann, Jung himself, Robert Johnson, James Hillman, Marie-Louise van Franz, Singer and Spiegleman, most of whom are contemporary. The mystics themselves are my constant reference point, both personally and in this writing, specifically St Teresa of Avila, Hildegard of Bingen, St John of the Cross, Thomas Merton and Teilhard de Chardin. Religious historians and contemporary commentators on religion are a necessary inclusion, and Smart, Needleman, Sanford and Soares represent views from the most radical (Soares’ interpretation of the Kabbala) to the most conservative (Smart). I have found it necessary to include all these disciplines in my research, as my premise is that “truth” is not to be found in any particular arena, but that one is a metaphorical reflection of another; in this sense I take a pluralist approach where I search for many truths, rather than the One

⁴ “Paul Ricoeur has observed that Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology represents a “second Copernican reversal” in that the question asked by classical epistemology – “How do we know?” – is inverted by asking “What is the mode of that being who exists through understanding?” ... The meaning of Ricoeur’s words is clear: hermeneutic phenomenology begins with the recognition that ontology, the inquiry into the ‘being’ of things, must be tied to an analysis of man, the being who is engaged in that enquiry.” (Avens, 1984, P 38)

Truth.⁵ This view itself can be seen as mystical, as inclusive, rather than exclusive. This pluralist approach also affects the conclusions that I draw.

The objective and the subjective

I recognize that what I write is a reflection and expression of my own identity, in the way that Quantum physics recognizes that the observer and the observed influence each other. For those who investigate the transpersonal or the spiritual in any way, it would seem that an inescapable transparency exists between what is revealed and the person through whom it is revealed. In other words it is an amalgamation of the objective and the subjective.^{6 7}

Key assumptions

Some of the key assumptions that I am making are that all experience is valid – a phenomenological approach. This means that I do not question the existence of what we term mystical experience, but rather how it is interpreted, and what significance it is given. And I assume that all experience, even that which is the least accepted within a norm has meaning, even although that meaning may not be apparent. In this way I assume the position of the psychoanalyst. I also assume that my reader has roots within a Judeo-Christian Western culture, and I use doctrines and terms from this culture to frame my discussion. However, this assumption does not mean that I regard this culture in any way superior, or that I am speaking for or against the Judeo-Christian culture, but I need to begin with

⁵ According to Samuels, *"Pluralism is a attitude or ideology that can hold the tension between claims of and tendencies towards unity and claims and tendencies towards diversity...A place for ultimate reality and for a plethora of phenomena."* (Samuels, A. *The Plural Psyche. Personality, Morality and the Father.* 1989. Routledge, P4).

⁶ Harry Hunt's caution against a *"defensive and premature move towards the impersonal (objective) in writing"* is particularly pertinent. Hunt, H. 1995

⁷ Morris Berman argues likewise, that *"the notion of "objectivity" as it has evolved over the last few centuries actually works against true understanding."* Berman, M. 1988, P 11

what I know, what my own destiny has provided. In this I presume a similarity with my reader.

I will also situate my discussion of Mysticism: Psychosis and Gnosis, within the assumption of a fundamental condition or rift from which either psychosis or gnosis could be assumed to arise. I mean, simply, that if mysticism is an experience of knowing, unity and oneness, I take the inference that there has been a preceding state of *lack* of knowing, unity and oneness. (Chapter three) Towards the understanding of this lack I investigate the experience of the 'self' and 'the other.' I also consider whether this rift is intrinsic to the human condition, or whether it is epoch specific, or culture specific. I will give evidence that the assumptions which we make, and which I reflect in my argument, may have other interpretations and meanings, both within our own culture and time, and from other cultures and times. (Chapter four)

Working definitions

There follow some working definitions of the key issues in this work, which will later be developed more fully.

What do we mean by God?

I acknowledge that every person who uses the name 'God' probably has in mind something slightly, or even radically different. My own use of the word encompasses two specific concepts. Firstly, that in using the name 'God' I am referring to something that is 'a thought beyond all categories of thought', and is

referent to something that transcends all thought. I understand Lacan was referring to something similar when he discussed that which is without a signifier, is beyond signification, something which '(sur)passes all understanding.' An example of how I use this concept of God is found in the chapter "Killing the Buddha", where I examine the concept that 'God' is a force within the Cosmos, as well as within the psyche, a balance between the forces of change and the forces of permanence, of creation and destruction. In this way, I intend this meaning of 'God' to imply that as soon as we think that we have grasped what God is, as soon as we have '*assimilated him in an experience*', as I interpret Levinas⁸ as saying, we have not found 'him'. This is in effect a summary of my interpretation of what mystics refer to in their experience of 'God'. (Chapter Two) A further definition provides us with "cosmic perspectives for the soul enabling us to discover a sense of depth beyond the merely personal."⁹ There is a secondary aspect to this, which the mystics emphasize, and which I take up also, and that is the paradox that this same 'God' is also knowable through humankind,¹⁰ through everyday encounters with "the other."¹¹ This secondary aspect is important in that I later take the position that this embodied aspect of God, so to speak, is one of the areas in which definitions between what is gnostic and psychotic can be made.

⁸ "God...not an evil genius or a politics hidden beneath a false name..." and "not a knowledge which assimilates him in an experience, given back to immanence, back to the totality which the "I think"...tends across universal history." Levinas,, E. 1998

⁹ "The basic function of the imaginal Gods is to provide cosmic perspectives for the soul enabling us to discover a sense of depth beyond the merely personal". Avens, R. 1984, P 37

¹⁰ "But to follow the Most High is to know, also, that nothing is of greater importance than the approach made towards one's neighbour, the concern with the fate of the 'widow and the orphan, the stranger and the poor man', and that no approach made with empty hands can count as an approach." Hand, S. 1989 P202

¹¹ As Spiegelman says, "If you wish to know God, you must know man, and know him in the flesh." Spiegelman, M. 1991, p154

The numinosum

Here I take my definitions from the etymology of the word, through Otto and Jung. When Rudolph Otto, German philosopher and historian of religion, wrote of the '*numinosum*', he was referring to a particular aspect of religious experience, the '*mysterium tremendum et fascinans, the mystery which causes awe and which fascinates*'.¹² To such an experience he gave the label 'numinous', from the Latin *numen*, meaning a spirit, and by this he was implying a spiritual experience. In Jung's opinion it was not essentially religious at all, but "*a dynamic agency or effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will.....The numinosum is either a quality belonging to a visible object or the influence of an invisible presence that causes a peculiar alteration of consciousness.*"¹³ So my own definition encompasses the experience of awe, fascination and alteration of consciousness. Different cultures approach the numinous in different ways: as an example, for aboriginal people '*waiting for God to happen*' in a land infused with spirit is a waiting upon the numinous.¹⁴ This quality of 'waiting upon' is referred to by Heidegger in relation to Being.¹⁵ This approach adds another

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¹²Otto, R. 1917

¹³ Jung CVV 11: para.6

¹⁴ "It is as if Aborigines were 'waiting for God to happen'. Like waking to the diffuse light of dawn. As for many other highly spiritual peoples, traditional Aborigines did not know a personal God, a Totally Other. But they had access to that unknown Other, through the spirit of God immanent in their world of experience. In a land felt to be infused with spirit, they listened attentively and waited in wonder: *dadirri*." Stockton, E. 1995, p120

¹⁵ "Like that Taoist action through non-action, it points to a kind of waiting which is beyond the distinction between activity and passivity. In waiting, we leave open what we are waiting for and merely attend, 'stretch toward,' what is going on." Heidegger, M. Discourse on Thinking p 68

emphasis to my definition; that is, that the numinous is something to be waited upon, it is not bidden by the will.¹⁶

Mysticism

My own definition of mysticism,¹⁷ is simply that it is to do with personal communion with divine nature, with all-that-is. I would like to refer now, to some historical definitions. A foremost scholar in the field, Leuba, writing in 1929, defines mysticism as an experience taken by the experiencer to be an immediate contact or union of the self with the 'larger-than-self'.¹⁸ Thus mysticism can be defined as direct experience of that which is beyond the ego, that which is essentially Other, that which is non-ego. I take this point as an essential element in my definition of what is mystical, that it is relationship to that which is non-ego, and by implication not knowable though the ego; I define this as a *spiritual* cognition. (Whether "non-ego" means within self, or outside self I also discuss, in chapter 6 for instance)

The above and other researchers have attempted a definition between "True" and "False" mysticism. In my opinion this is an appropriate distinction, as the Oxford Dictionary applies to mysticism a secondary meaning of 'self-delusion and

¹⁶ "Normally, waiting pertains to human desires, goals, needs; we wait for something that interests us or can be advantageous to us. But there is also a sense in which we can wait without knowing for what we wait. In this kind of waiting, which can be called 'waiting upon', we leave open what we are waiting for." Avens, R. 1984, P 40

¹⁷ Definition from The Oxford English Dictionary first published 1991, reprinted 1996, Oxford University Press. "Mysticism: Spiritually allegorical or symbolical of a sacred mystery, pertaining to the ancient religious mysteries, that branch of theology which relates to the direct communion of the soul with God, of hidden meaning, mysterious, inspiring an awed sense of mystery, obscure mysterious, often used vaguely

Mysticism: 1. the opinions, mental tendencies or habits of thought and feeling characteristic of mystics; mystical doctrines or spirit; belief in the possibility of union with the divine nature by means of ecstatic contemplation; reliance on spiritual intuition or exulted feeling as the means of acquiring knowledge of mysteries inaccessible to intellectual apprehension. 2. as a term of reproach, from the hostile point of view, mysticism implies self delusion or dreamy confusion of thought; hence the term is often applied loosely to any religious belief to which these evil qualities are imputed. Sometimes applied to philosophic or scientific theories alleged to involve the assumption of occult qualities or mysterious agencies of which not rational account can be given."

¹⁸J.H.Leuba, Psychology of Religious Mysticism 1929

dreamy confusion'. To the researches I cite, "true" mysticism, to differentiate from delusional psychosis, is active and practical, not passive and theoretical; the living union with the One is experienced as a form of enhanced life. Evelyn Underhill for example, emphasizes the mystic way as an arduous *psychological* process that entails a complete remaking of character.¹⁹ So the second part of my definition of what is mystical entails the *psychological*, that is the experience of the self and the way one lives one's life. 'True' mysticism must transform the life of the experimenter in order to be authentic, not through its rational content but to the extent to which "*its hidden, non-rational, numinous elements predominate and determine the emotional life*", as Rudolph Otto said in his book, *Mysticism East and West*.²⁰ So mysticism is, to me, also about the relationship between the spiritual and psychological within the individual.

I suggest that there is yet another aspect to how we can define mysticism, that is the physiological. The technological age has enabled us to test both brain waves and blood chemistry. If mysticism is the profound state to which the mystics of all ages attest, then changes in blood chemistry, release of hormones, and brain waves would be concomitant to the ecstatic state. In 1993, the writer on mysticism, William Johnston asserted that "*mysticism must be recognized as an autonomous and unique science with psychological, physiological and neurological dimensions*".²¹ Measurements of brain waves, and stimulation of certain parts of the brain have enabled scientists to study the physiological and

¹⁹Underhill, E. 1955, p 57

²⁰Otto, R. 1962 p158-159

²¹ Johnston, W. 1993, P31

neurological affects of mystical experience, so I hold that it is prudent, and may be even essential, that we include such determination within a definition of that which is mystical.²² I will, however, be mentioning this important distinction only in passing, as it takes me beyond the scope of this work.

Psychosis

My personal definition of psychosis is that it is a chaotic descent during which problem solving capacities of the non-ego aspect of the psyche are activated in order to create a more workable way of being.²³ I perceive this process as fraught with difficulties at every stage, and that the individual may not be able to function in everyday life, due to the extreme suffering which this labour involves. I am aware that this is not the definition you will find in the DSM, and it is part of my argument that I challenge this view. However, for the sake of clarity, and my own discussion, a brief and more conventional definition for psychosis is: *“Any mental illness or disorder that is accompanied by hallucinations, delusions, or mental confusion and a loss of contact with external reality, whether attributable to organic lesion or not.”* (The Oxford English Dictionary²⁴) My understanding of psychosis is likely to change as my investigation throws further light on what it is: what I anticipate is that I am interpreting the experiences of psychosis, mysticism and gnosis through a particular frame of reference, rather than proving their reality.

²² See Persinger page 54, personal conversation July 22nd, 2002, and published papers, various dates

²³ I support this definition of psychosis in several of the following chapters, including chapter five.

²⁴ Definition from The Oxford English Dictionary first published 1991, reprinted 1996, Oxford University Press. *“Psychosis: Any kind of mental affection or derangement; especially one that cannot be ascribed to organic lesion or neurosis. Any mental illness or disorder that is accompanied by hallucinations, delusions, or mental confusion and a loss of contact with external reality, whether attributable to organic lesion or not. An activity of the psychic organism as distinguished from neurosis.”*

Gnosis

The Gnostics²⁵ were a so-called heretical movement nearly two thousand years ago, who practiced a spirit of inquiry that is independent of dogma and which required confirmation through personal experience and reflection.²⁶ This spirit of gnosis²⁷ has persisted through the ages as the esoteric expression of exoteric religions,²⁸ and can also be thought of as knowledge²⁹ of the heart,³⁰ which Heidegger placed as “direct and immediate reference beyond man to Being.”³¹ *Gnosis* in Greek, (cf *agnosis* meaning ignorance)³² refers to a kind of direct internal or visceral knowledge rather than to rational-analytic knowledge.³³ The Christian gnostics held that it was not sin but ignorance that prevented their freedom; in this way the gnostic principles are much more aligned with the transformational self-knowledge required by psychotherapy³⁴ and mysticism, than the Christian doctrine of sin. Gnosis can be thought of as conjunction with

²⁵ “What Gnosticism and early Christianity did share was a belief that gnosis, that is, knowledge through experience of inner truth, had a saving efficacy. In an attempt to acquire this gnosis, early Christians sought insights from dreams and visions, interpreted the scriptures symbolically, believed that knowledge of the Word came through the soul, and taught the precept ‘Know thyself’, as the way to the knowledge of God.” Sanford, J.A. 1996 p 112

²⁶ “Gnosis, as first enunciated two millennia ago by heretical sects who refused to be bound by institutionalized ‘truths’, was understood by Jung as a spirit of inquiry that is independent of dogma and that requires confirmation through personal experience and reflection. Gnosis today still supports the knowledge that either comes from within or that is found in the world and is confirmed by an inner sense of correspondence with one’s own experience.” June, S. 1990, P 48

²⁷ “But what is gnosis? John Keats, in a famous letter of 1817, refers to an ability to work with imagination without the necessity of seeking out fact and reason as ‘Negative Capability, that is, when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.’” Avens, R. 1984, P 2

²⁸ “Historically, gnosis constitutes the esoteric in the official or exoteric religious traditions of the world.” Avens, R. 1984, p132

²⁹ “What is taken to heart, however, is left to be exactly as it is.” Heidegger, M. 1968

³⁰ “I am not referring here to ‘common religious piety, (in which) the heart has become a sentimentalized and prettified version of the ego, but rather a quality of soul’.” Avens, R. 1984, P 42

³¹ “In contrast to calculative thinking which deals with things in terms of personal advantage, *Besinnung* – which is really the same as meditative thinking – involves direct and immediate reference beyond man to Being, i.e. to things as they are in their concrete, tangible aspectivity.” Avens, R. 1984, P 48

³² Singer, J. 1990, p 85

³³ “In Corbin’s words, gnosis is a “salvational, redemptive knowledge, because it has the virtue of bringing about the inner transformation of man.” In contrast to all theoretical learning, it is “knowledge that changes and transforms the knowing subject.” As if echoing Corbin, Needleman describes gnosis as “a search for knowledge conducted with such all-round intensity that this search itself becomes an ontologically transforming force.”” Avens, R. 1984, p 4

³⁴ “Gnostic knowledge is the knowledge of the soul and its aim is not to prove or to explain the soul but to transform it. Gnosis is an ancient name for depth psychology.” Avens, R. 1984, p 5

the Source,³⁵ and this immediately, to my mind, aligns the gnostic with mystical principles. In turn, to the gnostic wholeness is more important than perfection, and I therefore see another connection between gnosticism and mysticism. The gnostic reaches insights by concentrating upon the “subjective factor”, which Jung found to exist “in the demonstrable influence that the collective unconscious exerts on the conscious mind.” He noted extraordinary parallels between gnostic symbolism and his own and other’s findings of the psychology of the unconscious.³⁶ Thus my definition for gnosis comprises personal subjective knowledge which is independent of dogma, and which involves vivifying symbolism. This kind of symbolism also emerges in the psychotic process, a fact which underlines for me the possibility that psychosis involves a revivifying engagement in the unconscious and that it therefore might be (or become) a transformative process, thus someone who is a diagnosed psychotic may also be capable of the process of gnosis. My use of the term gnosis includes the assumption that it is *transformative* knowledge.

Note: In this work I am not referring to the historic Gnostic movement unless I use the uppercase G. Rather it is reference to a personal experience in any age or culture.

Ecstasy

The word ecstasy is derived from the Greek word *exstasis*, which means to stand apart from, or outside of, oneself, specifically one’s ego self. Thus we already

³⁵ “You are not separate from this Source. Neither have you any control over it. You have the privilege of choosing to serve it. This is to have gnosis, the knowledge of the heart.” Singer, J. 1990, P212

³⁶ As Jung put it, Gnosticism “reached its insights by concentrating on the ‘subjective factor’, which exists empirically in the demonstrable influence that the collective unconscious exerts on the conscious mind. This would explain the astonishing parallelism between Gnostic symbolism and the findings of the psychology of the unconscious. Jung CW vol 9 ii par.350

see, in relation to non-ego information, that ecstasy is part of mystical experience.

Religion

I use the word religion (from the Latin religio, to regulate) "in the sense of a belief system handed down through a line of authority and supported through an institution designed to preserve that system," to quote June Singer's definition in full.³⁷ Carlos Suarez, in his book *The Cipher of Genesis: The Original Code of the Qabala as Applied to the Scriptures*, has said that the purpose of all established religions is "to prevent, to remove from the mind, the perception of the immediate all-pervading mystery."³⁸ In this sense religion is in opposition to the mystic, who participates in that all-pervading mystery. Joseph Campbell claimed, following Jung, that religion is a defence against mysticism and direct personal spiritual experience. On the other hand Robert Johnson, himself an Jungian and ex-priest, suggests that a religion, ideally, enables us to have small enough samples of direct spiritual experience without being burnt by it. In my view both these apparently opposite opinions convey equal truth - that is that being 'burned by the salmon,' to use the terminology of the Grail myth, is both necessary and dangerous.

³⁷ Singer, J. 1990, page xiv

³⁸ Suarez, C 1992, P 209

Spiritual Experience.

It seems important that I emphasize that I am not proposing that mystical experience is the only 'authentic' religious experience³⁹. As I have already implied, by *spiritual experience* I mean an individual's use of a high degree of refinement of thought and feeling, and that this is not necessarily pertaining to religion. I hold with Jung's definition that any experience that is "*a source of life, meaning and beauty*," (Jung, CW XI, 167) constitutes spiritual experience.⁴⁰

Commented [KG1]:

Phenomenology

By phenomenology I mean the *experience* of mysticism itself, rather than theories about it. By this I mean *libido over credo*, or impulse of life as against beliefs about life. I do not mean to provide a phenomenology of mysticism, as I see this as a different subject.

Brief overview of discussion presented in each chapter

Chapter One: Understanding mystical experience: the limitations of phenomenology

Here I argue that spiritual experience is an instinct which is largely repressed. I agree with Freud that a repressed instinct gains an accretion of shame, and propose that this fact accounts for at least some of the hesitance and

³⁹ Some writers, such as William James in his classic "Varieties of Religious Experience" mention several other authentic categories. Moreover, mystical experience is not intrinsically 'religious' at all, as I have already mentioned in the definition of numinosum, above, although it is commonly interpreted as such. See chapter four in particular.

⁴⁰ Definition from The Oxford English Dictionary first published 1991, reprinted 1996, Oxford University Press. *Spiritual*: of or pertaining to, affecting or concerning, the spirit or higher moral qualities, especially as regard to religious aspect. *Spirit* in express or implied distinction to bodily; intellect or higher faculties of the mind; ecclesiastical rather than mundane; a high degree of refinement of thought or feeling; to do with the immaterial.

embarrassment with which a person speaks about his or her spiritual life. I point out that interest in spiritual experience is common, but that people do not necessarily, or commonly, look for its fulfillment within a religious hierarchy. I provide a framework for defining the mystical by following William James's, namely that these experiences are noetic, transient, ineffable and passive. But since, in my opinion, these same qualities can be attributed to the psychotic experience, I add the categories of compassion, joy and the lived life. I am then in a position to compare and contrast the experience of the psychotic 'delusion' with that of "true" mysticism. In beginning to determine why an experience might be understood as either psychotic or gnostic, I propose that the phenomenology of mysticism cannot stand alone as a means of distinguishing true mysticism from psychotic delusion, and that an understanding of context is needed also.

Chapter Two: The contemporary socio-cultural context and its significance for mystical experience

In "On The Way to the Wedding", I look at why personal spiritual experience especially mysticism might be so compelling for people today. This chapter enables me to demonstrate the ways in which the enchanting, numinous and ecstatic are either experienced or repressed, and the consequences of so doing for both the individual and the collective. I posit that mysticism is a polar opposite to, and a compensation for, the dryness of economic and psychological rationalization, and as such is an enchantment which revivifies the individual. I see this need for enchantment as an inner imperative towards being, in the Heideggerian sense, where Dasein or presence, is about man as the site of the

revelation of Being.⁴¹ I discuss the possibility that both gnostic and psychotic experiences are ways to vivify the personal experience (towards being) outside of the collective consensus. I use the metaphor of the Hero's journey as a way to present the possibility of validating experience outside of the collective consensus, and the bringing back of this experience into the collective.

Chapter Three: The psychology of mystical experience

In this chapter, "Paradise Lost", I discover something of the psychology of religion and the way in which this relates to the question of psychosis and gnosis. I focus on concepts which have been used within contemporary psychology to express our fundamental experience of separation, and which as a result frame our religious belief. I refer especially to object relations theory, and the idea of the Transitional Object (T.O.), and compare this with ideas from various spiritual traditions. If we look at religion in a fundamentally psychological way, religion operates in much the same way as transference. I investigate the role of "God" as a Transitional Object in relation to the ideal of one-ness, wholeness, and connectedness. I also discuss another possibility: that this idea of God is a reaction formation against the unspeakable Other. Overall I intend this chapter to shed light on why the idea of unity and wholeness might be important to us, both the analytic and spiritual perspectives. This chapter also gives me the opportunity to discuss how an object relations view (rather than Jungian view, which I propose in the following chapter, for instance) adds to the overall

⁴¹"The German word "Dasein" means "existence," "life," "presence," and expresses the concreteness of here and now. In Heidegger all these shades of meaning are retained but in a deepened way. Dasein is not primarily man at all but the place of the presence and revelation of Being." Avens, R. 1984, P12

understanding of the desire for oneness and unity. This goes some way to fulfilling my desire for a pluralist approach, as I have found that one single schema does not allow for sufficient complexity to cover my ideas about psychosis and gnosis.

Chapter Four: A historical understanding of mystical experience

In *Mysticism and History*, I discuss some of the prevailing attitudes in the past to mysticism and mystics, how this might be different today, and the implications of this change. I propose that the phenomena of mysticism changes in response to the interpretation which it is given. I look at the phenomenology of and interpretation of mysticism in different cultures and eras.⁴² I speak more specifically about heresy and orthodoxy as complementary yet opposing forces, and how these attitudes relate to the individual psyche and to our interpretation of what is delusional and what is gnosis. I emphasize that what has been attributed to saintliness in the past is being reinterpreted as psychosis today.

Chapter Five: Liminality and mystical experience

In *The Dark Borderland*, I investigate further the idea of liminality. I provide this further discussion in order to clarify what is happening for the gnostic as well as the psychotic. I propose that liminality is the metaphorical territory that is experienced by both the psychotic and the gnostic, and give specific differences in the outcome of these liminal experiences. I will present the transition of midlife

⁴² "Beware of 'style criticism' by which experience of past eras is treated with contempt... Perhaps we can think of evolution rather than improvement." Allen, W.D. 1962. p xxvi

as an example of liminality that occurs for everyone. I discuss Sufi methods as providing a structure that intentionally engages the liminal, and apparently deals with both a psychotic or gnostic outcome with equal facility. I present the concept of the Dark Night of the Soul, and its psychological as well as spiritual implications, as an example of liminality.

Chapter Six; Individual difference and mystical experience

In *The Coat of Many Colours*, I will look at mystical experience in the light of personality type, using the typology proposed by Jung. In order to do so, I will focus on the extent to which the peculiarity of an individual's psyche affects whether and how he or she will have numinous experience, and whether this will be interpreted as gnosis or psychosis. I highlight differences as to how the shadow and the inferior function within each psychological type relate to individuation and spiritual experience. I find such differentiation particularly useful in judging whether psychosis, or certainly borderline manifestation, could instead be seen as the activation and development of the inferior function.

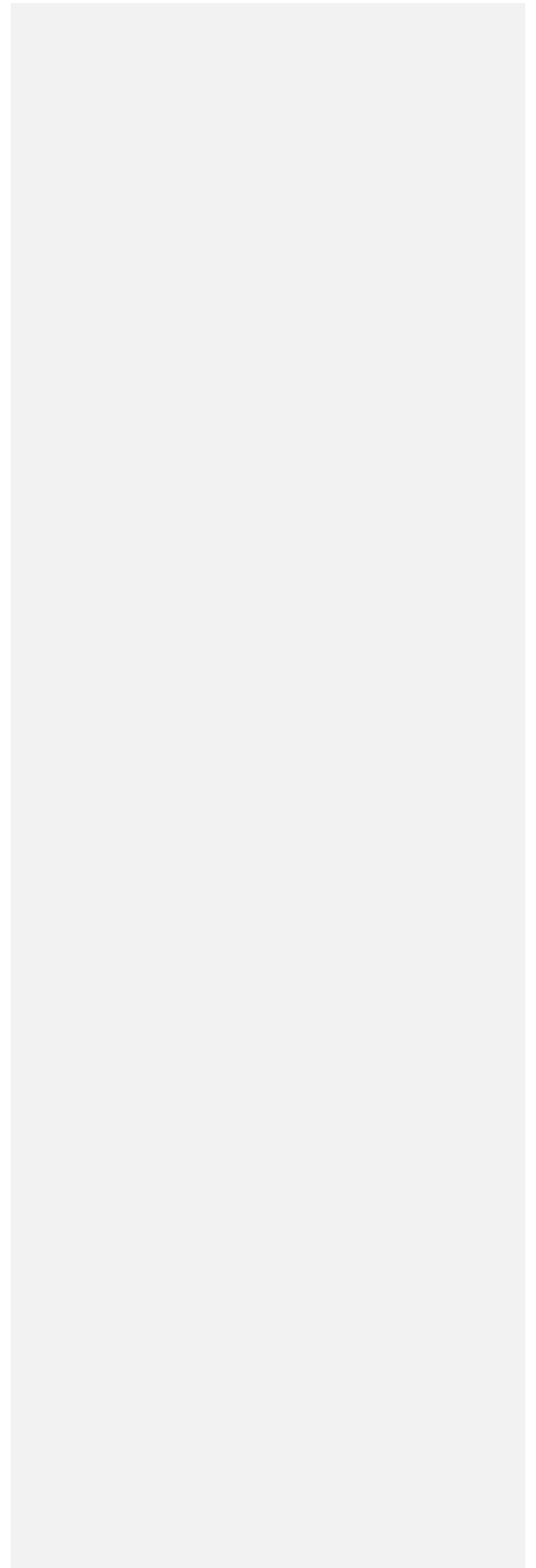
Taking the whole issue of the personality types a step further, I also demonstrate that what Neumann and others have termed *homo mysticus* can be seen as a natural consequence of the development of the inferior function. This demonstrates another dimension to chapter one, where I introduced the subject

of mystical man. Jung described this natural development as the Transcendent function.

Chapter Seven: Extending our understanding of psychosis and gnosis; chaos theory and foreclosure

In *Killing the Buddha*, I delve into chaos theory to speculate further as to how and why chaos and order might be experienced as such within the psyche. I remind the reader that those things outside the province of the ego are best approached by a ritual circling.⁴³ It is my intention that this seemingly unrelated subject add further distinction between gnosis and psychosis. To do this I develop Lacan's idea of foreclosure. Using some of the fundamental principles of chaos theory, I undertake to demonstrate that all theories and all paradigms of knowledge act as a foreclosure, but that chaos theory offers the (almost impossible) possibility of a source of meaning which lies outside the symbolic order. In this chapter I find a further way to delineate what is psychotic by using the concepts of the symbolic and the semiotic, developing the ideas of Lacan and Kristeva.

⁴³ | refer specifically to Neumann's discussion on approaching the unconscious. *"The problem of the creative unconscious, the central problem of depth psychology, is at the same time the central problem of mysticism and mystical man. Since the creative process takes place outside of consciousness and must therefore be looked upon as an experience at the limits of the ego, any attempt to approach this central and pivotal vortex is a hazardous undertaking. It is in the very nature of such an undertaking that its object cannot be captured by the direct intervention of consciousness, but that one must seek to approach the center in question by a sort of ritual circling, an approach from many sides."* Neumann, E. 1969. p 376



Chapter 1: Spiritual Instinct

"Among one-dimensional men, it is not surprising that someone with an insistent experience of other dimensions, that he cannot entirely deny or forget, will run the risk of either being destroyed by others, or of betraying what he knows."
R.D.Laing writes in the Preface of the 1965 edition of *"The Divided Self"* (P11)

Introduction to chapter one:

In my view spiritual experience is an instinct that is largely repressed. I point out that although interest in spiritual experience is common, people do not necessarily, or commonly, try to understand it within a religious hierarchy. As a way of explaining why so few individuals within our Western Christian heritage experience mystical lives, I discuss the ruling of the Council of Nicea in 325 AD which enforced a doctrine which in effect created a prohibition against personal spiritual *experience*. In order to clarify what constitutes mystical experience, I demonstrate that all individuals will find a place on a sliding scale of mystical awareness, but few will find themselves living the life of a mystic in the unitive state. While I show that therefore everyone, is, in principle, a mystic, I also acknowledge that the effort of 'waking up' and 'staying awake' is beyond some of us who do not have either an adequate psychological structure for this task or sufficiently supportive life circumstances. For those who do begin, however, the paralyzing possibility of halting mid way is an abortive attempt toward the mystical life which can result in madness. In order to discuss some of the rigours which the life of a mystic might entail, I have looked at some of the methods used for the preparation of mystical experience, namely rational dialectic, ethical preparation, disciplines of the body, and the use of drugs and intoxicants. I point out that we may do many of these things without the intention of becoming a mystic but suggest that nevertheless the living of these principles brings forth an enhanced life, for instance for the professional athlete. I introduce the radical and

curious idea of artificially induced mysticism which seems to circumvent the time-honoured view that mysticism is something which requires arduous preparation.

I provide a framework for defining the mystical by following William James's, namely that these experiences are noetic, transient, ineffable and passive. But since, in my opinion, these same qualities can be attributed to the psychotic experience, I add the categories of compassion, joy and the lived life. I am then in a position to compare and contrast the experience of the psychotic 'delusion' with that of 'true' mysticism. In beginning to determine whether an experience might be understood as either psychotic or gnostic, I propose that the phenomenology of mysticism cannot stand alone as a means of distinguishing true mysticism from psychotic delusion, and that an understanding of context is needed also.

Intrinsic spirituality

I seek to understand what could be the foundation for the need I find within myself to have a spiritual life. I note that throughout history human beings have framed certain experiences in religious and spiritual terms, even when that experience is one of psychosis, and have sought meaning beyond that which is immediately apparent. If the spiritual appears in the psyche as an instinct, "*as a principle sui generis, a specific and necessary form of instinctual power*";⁴⁴ as Jung suggests, then I propose that for the health of the individual this instinct, like any other, needs expression. When the society is not supportive of any instinct, this instinct is mostly repressed and disappears from conscious expression.

⁴⁴ Jung, *Spiritual Instinct* CW 8 p108

Needleman goes so far as to claim that this is the most serious repression in our society today.⁴⁵

Jung claimed that his "*thoughts circle around God like the planets around the sun and are as irresistibly attracted by him.*"⁴⁶ He went on to say that "*man lives wholly when, and only when he is related to God, to that which steps up to him and determines his destiny.*"⁴⁷ This pivoting around a point outside of self appears to generate the polarity of that which we call the spiritual. It gives us a potential source of energy and identity outside the personal "I". "*That which steps up to him and determines his destiny*" suggests that we are relying upon something which we experience as outside of conscious identity to give the greatest meaning and shape to our lives. Experiences of nature and art are as relevant here as any traditionally recognized 'religious' experience.

Religion and spirituality

A statistic that I find relevant in regard to the spiritual lives of people is one which David Tacey cites.⁴⁸ He claims that there is a 94% defection from the Catholic faith within 1 year after graduating from a Catholic institution. Yet 97% of these same students expressed an interest in spirituality. Pursuing the subject further, David Tacey questioned 50 of his students in his Jungian courses, and 49 of them considered spirituality as a vital factor in their lives, while only one

⁴⁵ "I wanted to speak more about this suppression, the covering over of the organ of deep learning in man; the part of the mind that receives experiences and impressions and takes them in. This has been the far more serious repression in society. Deep in man, at the core of his being, there exists the need for experiences of truth. Around this need everything else in him is arranged like planets around the sun." Needleman, J. 1980, p 61

⁴⁶ Jung, On religion. Letter March 28th 1955 p236

⁴⁷ Jung, On wholeness Letters vol 2 p66

⁴⁸ Statistics from David Tacey's lecture to the C.G.Jung Society, Perth, Western Australia, 1995

considered religion vital. This student was from Asia, and had converted from Buddhism to Catholicism.⁴⁹ Witness likewise the number of Australians who have taken up Buddhism. I do not believe that this indicates an intrinsic superiority of the religion itself, at least not in an esoteric sense. The conclusion that I draw from this discussion is that the spiritual *instinct* is alive and well but this instinct is not well nurtured within the religious hierarchy of today, within Australia at least.

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Mysticism inherent

I not only have the notion that the spiritual quest is instinctual, but that the capacity for mystical experience in particular is innate. David Lukoff, in his investigation of mysticism and psychosis in 1985 claims that “*many individuals spontaneously have such experiences (ie the mystical) and are able to integrate them into their lives without the intervention of either psychiatric or religious specialists.*”⁵¹ This observation supports my own experience with clients, namely that *many* people have mystical experiences of varying intensities, without either psychological or spiritual distress, indicating to me that mystical experience is a normal (rather than intrinsically pathological, ie a demonstration of psychosis) phenomenon.

⁴⁹ This student who ‘converted’ is significant in that in my opinion an ‘imported’ religion, rather than the one within the culture of one’s birth, can more easily carry the demands of enchantment and, at least at the beginning, be a vehicle for numinosity, in that it is so conspicuously ‘other’ to one’s experience.

⁵⁰ Mystical Man. I now turn my discussion to the specific manifestation of spiritual experience known as mystical. I find conventional terminology, the generic term of “man” to mean man and woman, particularly misleading in relation to any discussion of mysticism. In that the “soul” is generally thought of as feminine, whatever the gender of the individual, a more appropriate terminology would indicate the feminine. Jung however, while maintaining this sense of the feminine soul, also used the word “anima” (soul, feminine) to indicate this (contrasexual) principle in the man and “animus” (soul, masculine) to indicate the soul principle in the woman. Further, Lacan, speaks of both feminine and masculine mysticism, and draws a distinction between them. With this understood, I will be using the conventional term of “man” whenever another term would create a cumbersome self-consciousness.

⁵¹ Lukoff, D. 1985, vol 17, no 2

Aniela Jaffe, the Jungian analyst, author of “Was Jung a Mystic?”, writing in 1989, supports my position that mystical experience is inherent when she claims that *“In psychological terms, mystical experiences are exceptional only with regard to their intensity or degree, not in their essence, and man in his innermost nature was created homo mysticus.”*⁵² Like the Zen monk, we can say that it is nothing special, as Zen monks are wont to do, that it is part of our nature, part of our humanity.

Hildegard of Bingen, writing in the twelfth century, reminds us that the reason that we read her works is to awaken the mystic/poet which already dwells in us.⁵³ Levinas, writing within my own generation, holds that *“the human mind is inherently open to inspiration and man is inherently able to become a prophet. [seer, mystic] The receptivity of the prophet already lies within the human soul.”* (The Levinas Reader. Edited by Sean Hand P204)

Having argued that the potential experience of the mystical lies within each individual, I nevertheless assert that religious traditions of every kind have presumed to take the life of the spirit for their own collective purposes. In my opinion, the whole notion of sainthood, both in the East and in the West, has contributed to the assumption that the saint is a being with an unnaturally strong spiritual life. Further to this, in my opinion, the proclamation of the divinity of

⁵² Jaffe, A. 1985 p23

⁵³ Book of Divine Works, 1987, xviii

Christ, specifically, strongly prohibits personal experience of what commonly is given the appellation of divinity. The issue of ‘the one iota’, discussed below, is crucial to the understanding of this proclamation and the resultant diminishment of our individual possibility. Even if mystical experiences of numinosity are judged as extraordinarily good, the implication of this goodness is that they are outside the normal range and therefore extraordinary, and this contributes to the suppression of the innate impulse.

The One Iota That Makes All The Difference: Homoousios Versus Homoiousios.

Sometimes etymology reveals a great deal about our cultural and religious history. I put forth the idea that if something is disallowed within language it follows that it will be disallowed in our psyche as an experience.⁵⁴ I suggest that an understanding of the Greek words *homoiousios* and *homoousios* is therefore fundamentally important to this discussion of mystical man and of gnosis, and even psychosis.⁵⁵ It involves what the early church fathers considered to be heretical and therefore how they translated the Greek; this translation supports church dogma, rather than informs that dogma.⁵⁶ The Council of Nicea in 325 declared that Christ was *homoousios*, that is, *consubstantial*, that is, he *was* God, divine, and his divinity was a one-time event and the rest of us were required to *believe* in him, “I am the Way” – this is the path of *dogma*, which suits the purposes of a church hierarchy. Thus any sort of ecstatic or visionary experience

⁵⁴ I apply this proposal to scientific paradigm as well, in *Killing the Buddha*

⁵⁵ [Although others have presented this argument, I have relied primarily on Berman's discussion, *Coming to our Senses*, M. 1988, p139 for this synopsis]

⁵⁶ I note that it is these same beliefs about God which, according to Tacey, see Chapter One, are so uninteresting to people today.

had by anyone but Christ himself was a delusion, in short, psychosis. But if we insert the iota (the “i”), Christ was *homoiousios*, of *similar* substance. He was thus a man who had a transformative experience, and others could have this experience too if they follow his example, (“I am **the Way**”) - this is the *experiential* path of individual gnosis. That the Council of Nicea made the choice to drop the “i” has implications for us today; we do not expect, do not allow for or entertain the possibility, of our own mystical nature. This foreclosure of our mystical experience would appear to me to make the expression of it extremely difficult, in that we are then going against the Ideal Father, risking our very existence in the symbolic order. (I discuss the psychology of religion further in chapter 3)

Mystic Life not for Everyone

What I have tried to establish thus far is that the mystical capacity is an innate one, although there have been powerful influences in favour of its suppression during the last 1,700 years within the Judeo Christian community in general. (I will speak of other cultures later) This factor of disavowal I believe is partly responsible for the lack of appearance of the mystical in everyday life. Not only that, but we have a long history of those having personal spiritual experience ie those experiences not in accordance with prevailing doctrine, being condemned, marginalized, excommunicated, shunned and burned at the stake. My purpose in making this point is that I would suggest that within the psychological professions we also condemn, marginalize, excommunicate symbolically and

shun those who do not fit the prevailing psychological paradigm (ie doctrine) especially in relation to spiritual experience, and certainly in regard to psychosis.

Having stated this, I also think that there are other reasons why we do not access and utilize our capacity as '*homo mysticus*', to use Jaffe's term. Through history, observers, "*even those inside the monasteries, kept their distance from some of these mystics, lest the "eye of the Divine" blink in their direction. It was well known that few could endure "direct contact" with heaven.*"⁵⁷ If the price we pay is to be The Outsider, the conscious choice may be to turn away. I have noted many times with clients that there is a certain point, approached many times rather than just once, where there is both a pull towards self-knowledge and self-expression, and towards an apparently safer but distasteful collective.⁵⁸ So often the choice that is made is one that denies the personal necessity, at least temporarily, in favour of the collective.⁵⁹ ⁶⁰ To turn away, to refuse to be made available in this way, has been called the sin against the Holy Spirit.⁶¹ Neumann suggests that a fit prayer for world-transforming or 'high' mysticism might be, "*fill me with my selfhood*".⁶² He sees being ones self as the ultimate necessity, and it could be argued that the result of being filled with this self-hood is mysticism itself.

⁵⁷ Myss, C. 1996, P 269

⁵⁸ Merton said one must make "*a clean break with a conventional, accepted context in order to swim for one's life into an apparently irrational void.*" Merton, T. 1978 p8

⁵⁹ See Lot's wife, page 36, in this section

⁶⁰ See The Outsider, next chapter

⁶¹ Williams, H.A. 1965, P 19

⁶² Neumann, E. 1969, p407

Perhaps, however, there is a power of destiny, over which we have little or no conscious choice. June Singer believes that *"In every age there have been those few -- madmen or geniuses, prophets or shamans, visionaries or fools -- who have seen through the surface of ordinary consciousness and looked directly into the interior. These individuals have almost unanimously reported that they did not make a conscious decision to do so."*⁶³ Perhaps some individuals are more congruent with the "destiny which steps up to them", (Jung, above), and therefore do not need to make a conscious choice to be what they already are.

My major point here is that we are all, in some way or other, by engagement, denial or foreclosure, involved in the mystical, whether we consciously know it or not.

Levels of mystical experience

From what I have said so far, it could be inferred that mystical experience is something very extreme and rare, and therefore that it would be very difficult to determine as to whether this mystical experience is psychotic or gnostic. I have observed, however, that there is a sliding scale of mystical experiences and most people can find an experience on this scale to which they can relate, thus giving further credence to the assertion that man is *homo mysticus*. I will make use of

⁶³Singer, J. 1990. p106

William James' discussion of levels of mystical experience to frame my discussion here.⁶⁴

First, on the scale of mystical experience there is the 'a-ha' feeling when we grasp an idea. That which was previously hidden becomes revealed, that which is unconscious becomes conscious, and that which has been taken literally is seen more symbolically; this is a frequent experience in therapy, when suddenly the client says, "Oh, yes, I understand", and their whole world shifts a few degrees.⁶⁵

"Déjà vu" comes next, and this is the feeling of having done something before, when there is no evidence of having done so. This experience carries something of the numinous with it; it stops us in our tracks for a moment and the world as we know it stands still, for just a moment. There is the experience of a suspension of one's usual faculties, with a mild sense of wonder, and perhaps even a touch of awe. There is a sense of knowing, but not knowing what or how one knows.

The next level is an experience of a sense of impending meaning. This is similar to the sense of everything being filled with vitality and presence which the

⁶⁴ James, W. 1985 p379

⁶⁵ The analyst also experiences these revelations. "Similarly, in Chassidic mysticism, reference is made to a quality known as *Hitlahabut*, or ecstasy. Buber held that this quality transforms ordinary knowledge into a knowledge of the meaning of life. For the Chassids, *Hitlahabut* expresses itself bodily, in dance. As Buber says, 'In dance, the whole body becomes subservient to the ecstatic soul.' (Buber 1931: 35) Analysis is a kind of dance, and ecstasy is not an inappropriate word to describe some of the emotions generated...." Samuels, A. 1989. P 166

aboriginal people experience in the quiet, still awareness of “Dadirri”⁶⁶ ; “*in a land felt to be infused with spirit, they listened attentively and waited in wonder.*” In my opinion, this is a hovering of awareness around ‘the real’, of which Lacan speaks,⁶⁷ where the numinosity of all things is apprehended.

From this point there is a gradual but swiftly progressive obliteration of space, time, sensation, and any limited sense of self. Finally there remains what has been termed by Underhill and others as the ‘unitive’ experience. These are spoken of in terms of being enraptured, of being in ecstasy, of standing outside of ones-self, of understanding everything but knowing nothing, of an awareness of the interconnectedness of all things, that all is One.⁶⁸ My interpretation of this is that ‘the real’ of Lacan is being engaged in fully.

In the more rudimentary mystical experiences listed here, we have no argument as to whether psychosis or gnosis is involved; everyone, more or less has these experiences, they do not question their sanity, and their sanity is not questioned by others. It is primarily in the more intense levels where the psychosis/gnosis question arises.

No turning back

In order to demonstrate how mystical states could be or become experienced as psychotic, let us turn to the role of fear in interrupting the mystical process. The

⁶⁶ See page 14 of this work. Stockton, E. 1995,p 120

⁶⁷ See especially in Killing the Buddha

⁶⁸ See later Bucke, St John of the Cross, page 82.

Biblical story of Lot's wife, who turned into a pillar of salt when she even so much as looked back, I take to indicate the paralyzing possibility of halting mid way, much in the same way as stopping one's car midway through an intersection. In his allegorical tale "The Peaceful Warrior", Dan Millman was told that, "*For you, Dan, the conscious process of transformation has begun. It cannot be reversed; there's no going back. To try and do so would end in madness. You can only go forward now; you're committed.*"⁶⁹ This may be a crucial point, that "madness" has occurred because someone decides to "turn back", or refuses the path that they are on, refuses their destiny, or does not receive enough help to sustain them on their journey. Paul Matthiessen, in his novel "The Snow Leopard", also speaks of the "*one danger of the mystical search: there is no way back without doing oneself harm. Many paths appear, but once the way is taken, it must be followed to the end.*"⁷⁰ While this caution could be dismissed as New-Age mumbo-jumbo, we still have the reference from the Zen Buddhist tradition; "Better not to start. Having started, better to continue".

Sleepers awake

As a therapist I often visit the question of how much awareness, self inquiry and transformation is possible for any particular individual. I have examined this important question from many points of view. The father of Gestalt therapy, Fritz Perls, once said that certain people were so damaged that self-awareness had become impossible for them. Freud went so far as to say that some people were 'worthless'; they would never get free of their conditioned behavior. In many

⁶⁹ Millman, D. 1980, P 96

⁷⁰ Matthiessen, P. 1978, P 51

traditions 'sleeping' means being unconscious, as a result of being run by this conditional behaviour and overtaken by traumas or conditioning. (The Buddha means 'the woken up one') These traditions assume, at least theoretically, that all beings can become conscious and 'wake up.' It is sobering to consider, however, that Nietzsche went mad, and Plato in his later life opted for totalitarianism. Dostoevsky, through the Grand Inquisitor, tells Christ that he expected too much from people by expecting them to live conscious lives of self-knowledge, and that people have always craved someone to worship instead. The pressure of being an Outsider is considerable. So although the spiritual capacity may be an instinct, may be intrinsic, the effort of 'waking up', and of 'staying awake', may be more than the life circumstances of an individual can provide. What I will say later notwithstanding, the possibility of a lifelong untransformed psychosis does therefore exist. As a therapist I myself question how well is well enough, in relation to certain clients. I think that if they have not killed themselves or anyone else this is a good enough outcome. I think that it is not possible for some individuals to continue in therapy long enough to move to a great enough level of integration where individuation and direct experience of the numinous might be possible. It is likely that the very absence of sufficient integration would make the erupting of personal experience a psychosis rather than a gnosis. This psychosis, which some would term false mysticism, is unlikely to be able to be transformed into gnosis, into something which would be demonstrated in their lived life as a blessing rather than a curse. My experience says that although mystical experience is possible for all people, it takes certain

circumstances of personality and environment to make it likely, and even more specific circumstances to make it the ideal of world-transforming high mysticism which Neumann defines.

Preparation for mystical states

It follows from the above that I believe that mystical states can be prepared for, intentionally and specifically. I regard this preparation as a way of developing the inherent mystical tendency in the most careful way. There are two primary psychological dangers that confront the mystic, and teachers such as St Teresa of Avila, and of course the Sufis, have recommended a path of preparation which is designed to guard against these dangers. Either of these dangers could result in what we would today term psychosis. The first danger is flight from ordinary life and withdrawal into one's own world.⁷¹ The second is a too rapid or premature entry into less ego-dominated states of consciousness. When either of these things happens, *"a person may find himself unable to control and integrate the images and the knowledge that suddenly flood his psyche."*⁷² A North American Indian myth⁷³ illustrates both of these dangers; it tells of a young woman who refused all suitors but finally took as her husband a man who turned out to be a powerful sorcerer from whom she then needed to be rescued. I interpret this myth as alerting us to the possibility of being caught in the transcendent world and being made prisoner of the negative shadow side of the higher power. If you are not 'knowledgeable' you will be in trouble. Experience in the 'ordinary' world

⁷¹ Yet it seems to me that the mystical *process* requires an extreme introversion, while the mystical *result* is a return to extraversion, a return to the world

⁷² Johnston, W. 1993, P100

⁷³ I am indebted to that extraordinary purveyor of myth, for this story from his video series, the Meaning of Myth

is needed before safe entry into the 'extraordinary' world. The Indian maiden's ascent was premature in that she was naïve, and unprepared. It seems to me that the message is that the dark side of the personality needs to be worked through first, before the 'ascent' to the spiritual, lest all that you find there is a magnification of what you have not dealt with. This is a theme so often repeated in myths, stories, and cautionary tales of all cultures⁷⁴ as to become extremely repetitious, but the repetition serves to emphasize an inescapable truth.

It is a common feature of mystical experiences that although the numinous encounter lasts only minutes, (I speak here of the 'higher' states according to the scale that I have just discussed) or hours, the integration may take a life-time, indicating to me that even with the most wise preparation, the encounter with the numinous can be so potent that the personality is forever changed. It took Hildegard of Bingen years before she was able to write about what she had experienced. It is important to note that this writing enabled her to rise from her sick-bed, where she had been since her first visions;⁷⁵ her writing provided the means of integration.

While I acknowledge that there are pitfalls in making preparation for mystical experience seem mechanistic, I contend there are ways of preparing for and stimulating the mystical faculties. The methods which I have selected here

⁷⁴ For example, in the Grail myth when Parsifal prematurely is burned by the salmon which is not cooked properly.

⁷⁵ Hildegard was overcome by this experience of intuition, connection-making, and insight and went to bed sick. It was when she "*placed my hands to writing*" that she received new strength, got out of bed, and spent the following 10 years writing her first book called *Scivias*. Illumination of Hildegard of Bingen. Text by Hildegard of Bingen with commentary by Matthew Fox. 1985., P 9, quoting from *Scivias* pp.3f.,5.

include: rational dialectic, ethical preparation, disciplines of the body, and drugs and intoxicants.

Rational Dialectic

In chapter six I look at how different types of psychological makeup will predispose an individual to different ways of approaching the numinous. In presenting modes of preparation in this chapter, I also acknowledge that one or other of these modes of preparation will appeal to different types. Rational dialectic⁷⁶ is intended to lead the mind by a series of rational steps to a grasp of what is *beyond* all discursive⁷⁷ thought. The disciplines of philosophical thought as well as the tradition of rabbinical discussion are examples of this, and the Zen tradition with its *koan* practice is perhaps the most structured and well-known. Those who attain mystical experience in this way have the foundation of the tradition in which they are schooled to ground them in their experience of numinosity. It can be argued that the ‘proper’ use of words in Zen practice can effect certain changes in the mind; it can instigate alterations in the user which in turn will allow him, not to say, but to see how things ‘really’ are. (I make reference to Lacan’s use of the term ‘the real’, which I enlarge upon in chapter 5) This is the inductive power of language. I am reminded again of Lacan who said that “*The function of language is not to inform but to evoke*”.⁷⁸ I am struck by the necessity for language to frame our experience, yet the experiences which

⁷⁶ The investigation of truth through rational discussion

⁷⁷ Using logic rather than intuition to reach a conclusion

⁷⁸ Lacan, *Ecrits*, p 86

mysticism comprises are beyond language;⁷⁹ language enables us to make something manifest, as Heidegger suggested.⁸⁰

It is a curious paradox that it is by engaging in dialectical, subject-object thinking, that the subject-object split can be resolved. Professor Hans Penner suggests that for Buddhist mystics, "*discourse is so crucial to the mystical pursuit that the success in mystical attainment is said to hang by the thread of rhetoric.*"⁸¹ He concludes that Buddhist mystics have the kinds of transforming experiences they have in part because of the kinds of discourse they learn and use. Some, including Lacan, would argue for an extrapolation of this idea to how anyone uses language, viz. not only is the unconscious structured like a language, but that which we exclude from language excludes experience.⁸²

In the Western traditions, discourse, discursive thought and speculative truth as practiced in the discipline of philosophy, can lead one to a state of receptivity and insight. This is similar to the idea of Zen koans where the mind is kept busy

⁷⁹ "Words and language are not hulls into which we pack things for purposes of speech or correspondence. It is in the word and in language that things become and are things." Heidegger Quoted in Avens, 1984, p 49

As Vycinas puts it, "words primarily are not like camera pictures of previously existing things. In words things are brought from their concealment; they begin to be." Vycinas. V. 1961, p 87

Heidegger. Language is "*the house of Being.*"

The poet Stephan George:

"So I renounce and sadly see:

Where word breaks off no thing may be". quoted by Avens, R. 1984, P 50

⁸⁰ This is based on Heidegger's notion of 'retrieve' (*Wiederholung*), which aims at disclosing what a thinker "*did not say, could not say, but somehow made manifest.*" Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought, 1974

⁸¹ "So crucial is discourse to the mystical pursuit that the success in mystical attainment hangs by a thread of rhetoric." Katz, S. 1983, P77

⁸² Another view is that thought comes before language, and from this position Lacan's assertion is unsupportable.

while truth is being revealed. The sceptical tradition⁸³ fosters dialectic. The founder of the sceptical way was Pyrrho of Elis (c360-c.206 B.C) Wittgenstein's notion of philosophy as therapy is based on Pyrrhonian thinking. Central to scepticism is the need to address the sufferings of the soul. The *epoche*, a suspension of judgement, is the aim of this tradition. It occurs when the arguments on both sides are equally balanced, and a peaceful tranquility ensues. It implies a suspension of opinion.⁸⁴ The Zen practice is an attempt to go beneath language in the direction of indices or pointers to induce an insight which is not said. This is what Lacan termed the other side of language. The most intriguing paradox in all of this is that we know, in some difficult to define sense, what it is that cannot be said.

Mysticism, so often associated with the Unknown and the Unknowable, has also manifested itself in the thought of some of the great Knowers of history: Pythagoras, Plotinus, Bonaventure, Nicolas of Cusa, Spinoza, Hegel, and even Einstein. The process of dialectical development has taken these thinkers to a step beyond discursive thought; the final seeing is done with the 'eye' of the mind. Bonaventure regarded the senses, including the development of the intellectual sense, as the means by which God could be discovered. He felt that the most exquisite manifestation of this was through the study of mathematics. It is thinkers like Bonaventure who show us that mysticism can arise from any discipline, not necessarily one that is proclaimed to be 'spiritual.'

⁸³ Heaton, J. 1997, p 80

⁸⁴ In this way it echoes the necessary resolution of opposites that Jung posited as necessary in the Individuation process.

Ethical Preparation

Secondly, there is ethical preparation. Prerequisite to relationship with the other, that is ethics, is relationship with self, whether this knowledge be gained, for example, through analysis with a therapist, or through being tutored by a Zen teacher. As a basis for relating to the other, Neumann emphasizes the necessity for the development of a strong ego, echoing Object Relations theory, Singer,⁸⁵ and Almaas, although Lacan would not agree.⁸⁶ Neumann also argues for the place of ethics by emphasizing that *"ascetic rites and rigorous ethical attitudes are included in the preparations and requirements for forms of high mysticism."*⁸⁷ *"Through the other (in ethics) and thereby unto to God"*, as Levinas says⁸⁸. This appeals to me as a crucial point; that the ethical relation with the other is the pathway by which the numinous is approached. Singer, following Jung, indicates that a 'mystical' experience will not be one of gnosis unless the individual already possess an ethical attitude.⁸⁹ Levinas goes so far as to say that *"the original form of inspiration... lies in obedience...(through) ethical relationship with the other."*⁹⁰ He continues to discuss the primacy of ethics thus: *"This obedience ... derives, rather, from the love of one's neighbour, a love without eros, lacking self-*

⁸⁵ "It is important that the ego become strong, because without the ego there is no vessel, no instrument for the individuation process. It is absolutely necessary to learn to manage one's outer life, or else the inner quest will continually go awry because practical necessities will interfere with the person's ability to reflect quietly and thoughtfully upon his or her place in the larger scheme of things." Singer, J 1990, p40

⁸⁶ Lacan argued that the development of the ego was a universal psychosis.

⁸⁷ Neumann, E. 1969, 403

⁸⁸ Levinas, E 1998

⁸⁹ The need for brevity here does not do justice to the possibilities of this argument. For example, the place of Freud's concept of the Oedipal position and the entire subject of the necessity to move from narcissistic preoccupation, so that experiences outside the ego will not be confiscated by it and lead to an inflation.

⁹⁰ Hand, S. 1989, P206

indulgence, which is, in this sense, a love that is obeyed. Or equally, it stems from responsibility for one's neighbour, the taking upon oneself of the destiny of the other, fraternity. The relationship with the other is placed right at the beginning".⁹¹

Disciplines of the Body

I have chosen as my third category of preparation or training for mystical experience, the disciplines of the body which range from severe asceticism to exercises leading to total relaxation, equilibrium of body and equanimity of mind. The practice of yoga, meditation and pilgrimage come under this rubric, as does work in the community. The intense preparation of the body and mind which a dedicated athlete or dancer undergoes requires the finding of an inner quiet center, out of which one then can act. I would argue that the discipline of the body is a meditation in itself. The intense high which the athlete experiences is wonderful to behold for the onlookers as well, for when they reach the 'place where the colours of the world are mixed',⁹² the dancer becomes the dance,⁹³ the singer becomes the song, and the pray-er becomes the prayer, to use Sufi terminology. Researchers into psychosis have found that intense physical training can reduce the distress experienced by these people,⁹⁴ and my

⁹¹ Hand, S. 1989, P206

⁹² From a TV programme on the Sufis, no other information available

⁹³ "I have described some of the ways and techniques for expanding the mind and entering into mystical silence. There is fasting for instance, which has the effect of expanding consciousness. Or again, in some religious traditions, dancing leads to one pointedness, as in the case of the famous whirling dervishes." Johnston, W 1993 p 69

⁹⁴ Even for less extreme mental suffering, such as depression, strong physical exercise is now commonly recommended. Certain brain chemicals, endorphins and others, are released during exercise changes the moods experienced.

contention is that this focus on the body does indeed aid in keeping body and soul together, that is, helps to keep the experience embodied.

Preparation through Drugs and Intoxicants

Lastly, there is the use of drugs and intoxicants that suspend or limit the restraints imposed upon the self. In traditional societies, the use of some kind of mind-altering substance has been used in a ritual way in religious and initiation ceremonies. In all cases, the function of this kind of preparation is the same; to remove the veil that prevents the self from seeing the 'truth'. '*The sway of alcohol over mankind*', claims William James, '*is unquestionably due to its power to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature.*'⁹⁵ Where the sober mood of serious and often strenuous life says, 'No', intoxication expands, unites, and radiates. '*It is*', says James, '*the great exciter of the Yes function in man*', and must be regarded as '*one bit of the mystical consciousness.*' The "yes" function is what enables us to let go of our pervasive hold on an exclusively ego-based, rational view of the world.

While our Western culture thinks of drugs and intoxicants as 'recreational', other cultures have seen them as part of sacred ceremony, as an adjunct to insight and progress. Perhaps seen in this context drugs are truly 're-creation-al'. The concept of Dionysus as the god of ecstasy, of wine, of 'intoxication' with the divine, the principle of standing outside ones-self, of the 'Yes' function, fits in

⁹⁵ James.W. 1985, p387

here.⁹⁶ The use of the wine in the Mass, both the wine and the Mass being representations of transubstantiation,⁹⁷ is a ceremonial recognition, albeit esoteric, of an implied change in consciousness. Rumi, the great poet of esoteric Islam, said *"May we all be, like grapes, transformed into wine."* Both the symbolism of the medium of wine having already been transformed itself, and the 'yes' function which it represents, point us toward transubstantiation⁹⁸, from representational to actual, change.⁹⁹

Artificial induction

One of the most curious aspects of mystical experience came to my attention through an article I discovered in a magazine and which I then followed up with personal contact with Dr Michael Persinger.¹⁰⁰ An interviewer, Ian Cotton, author of *The Halleluia Revolution*, spoke with Canadian neuroscientist Michael Persinger in his laboratory at Laurentian University in Ontario, Canada. His

⁹⁶ I think it is a very clever piece of advertising on the part of the telephone company, Optus in Australia, to use the simple slogan "Yes". Archetypally, if subliminally, this is enormously powerful. The last monologue of Molly Bloom in James Joyce's novel gives the reader a similarly exultant feeling of the 'yes' function, of jouissance.

⁹⁷ It is here that I call upon Kristeva's notion of transubstantiation, which is defined by Anne-Marie Smith, in "Speaking the Unspeakable", 1998, P 65. *"Kristeva's theory is that both literary and analytic discourse, through the process of identification, link subjectivity to a sphere outside immediate subjectivity. This realm beyond subjectivity is a sort of collective unconscious which is both spiritual and corporeal, and the process through which language participates in lived experience she compares to transubstantiation, the word made flesh, the subject's participation in Being. Transubstantiation is a term from Catholic theology which evokes man's communion with the divine in the Eucharist - which literally and metaphorically involves an incorporation. It is a sacrament, a place for forgiveness and for grace, 'un lieu de pardon et de grace', a gift of meaning and transcendence."*

⁹⁸ I relate the 'yes' function to transubstantiation thus: Kristeva analyses why the Christian religion spread like wild-fire among widely disparate groups of people at the time of Paul and his travelling abroad and letter writing. She concludes that he spoke to the psychic distress of the people, providing a powerful amalgamating force. "He proposed, instead of insertion in a social set aimed at satisfying their needs, a journey between two dissociated but unified spheres that they could uncover in themselves: a journey between "body" and "soul", if you like - a "transubstantiation"...⁹⁶ (Kristeva, J. 1992 p 81). To relate this principle of transubstantiation to James Joyce, the perpetual possibility of psychosis was forestalled through his writing, through language, through "the word made flesh". He evidenced then, not the disavowal of psychosis, but a continual emergence of epiphanies, in Jungian terms maybe a reflection of the Self by the ego, for long enough periods, or with significant enough force, to be redemptive.

⁹⁹ Cultures which have no ritual place for alcohol, such as the Aboriginal people, are doomed, in Robert Johnson's view, to only manifest 'second-rate' experiences of Dionysus, that is, drunkenness. Before the white settlers brought alcohol to the aboriginal people, the latter had no knowledge of or use for it, no ritual, no myth, no ceremony involving it. Their cosmology was complete without it. In that Numinosity was everywhere immanent, there was already a yes implied in everything, so they had never developed a need for it. This discussion could open further into areas that are beyond the intent of my study.

¹⁰⁰ Cotton, I. 1995 p59-60

research involved introducing very low doses of electricity to very specific parts of the brain while the 'subject' is enclosed in a chamber that is in all other ways sensorily deprived. According to Cotton, this stimulates *"a deep core of subconscious memory.... His equipment stimulates the brain so that these memories, memories that are above all emotional rather than specific, return to consciousness, and, en route, convert into language the conscious mind can understand. This frequently is religious."* Persinger noted a direct relationship between visions and measurable brain events. *"Even though we may suspect, as scientists,"* he said, *"that this is an electrical phenomenon similar to thousands of others, for the individual the experience has been awesome, tremendous, utterly without precedent."* The subjects reported very differing phenomena: "the Devil was in there", of Beelzebub, of being a Tibetan monk, of Christ, of God.

This experiment is significant for several reasons. First, it reinforces what I have been pointing to, and that is that the mystical experience is one of the body, that it is physical as well and is mediated by and through the senses. Second, it reflects an inner world, although the experience may be interpreted by the individual as an external phenomenon. Third, the brain stimulation was without specific content even as it induced a particular type of brain wave. This stimulation was interpreted according to the individual's life experience, coloured by his or her memories and personalities, and within the framework of his or her projected identifications and conceptual beliefs. Fourth, that a change in brainwaves is available to all, whether one thinks of this as a contact with the

numinous or not, in which a profound shift in the perception of being takes place. The question arises of whether a 'mystical' state induced by brain disease, for instance, is any less 'valid' than one experienced through religious ecstasy. And does it really matter? Is Persinger's chamber the technological age equivalent of a church? Is the electrical stimulation any less valid than the time-honoured preparation for mystical states, such as prayer, fasting (a form of sensory deprivation), and the taking of vision-inducing drugs? It would seem to be an easier 'method' than the life-event stress that has commonly, in Cotton's research, led to numinous events and religious conversion. I do not attempt to resolve this speculation, merely to present it as part of the whole question of how we apportion meaning and value, especially between gnostic and psychotic experience.

Atheism and mysticism

I hold that the atheist comes with fewer expectations of form, and perhaps this makes for an easier access to direct mystical experience. Perceiving the natural world in its numinosity is one of the ways in which atheists experience mystically. An example is Walt Whitman whose poetry is infused with language which invokes an understanding of the qualities of a true mystic. ¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ As Neumann says: "Let us not forget this: The mystical man may be designated as religious, since all his life he consciously or unconsciously confronts the numinous; but he need not necessarily be a believer in God. Our insight into the scope and ubiquity of the mystical phenomenon shows that there are theistic, atheistic, pantheistic and panentheistic, but also materialistic and idealistic, extraverted and introverted, personal and transpersonal forms of mystical experience. The experience of God as a sacred adventure represents only one specific, experimental, form of mysticism; it is by no means the most common and perhaps not even the most significant. But all mystical forms have in common the intensity of experience, the revolutionary, dynamic impetus of a psychological event which takes the ego out of the structure of consciousness; and in all of the them numinous appears as the antithesis of consciousness." Neumann, E. 1969, 381
Whitman's mystical experiences are alluded to in his journals and poetry.
For example in the fifth chant of "Song of Myself", p 29.

Distinguishing features of mystical experience

Having earlier introduced the notion of 'true' and 'false' mysticism, I regard it as essential at this stage, to determine a further differentiation, especially in order to proceed to discuss further the possibility of psychosis. To discern between the two, Johnson frames the problem this way: *"In general, false mysticism means that certain states of consciousness are undesirable because they are irrelevant or morbid or regressive, or because they lead away from reality and wisdom, or because they lead to evil or to self-glorification or to destruction or to hatred....Nor is discernment easy, because one seldom, if ever, finds mysticism that is 100% 'true.' Even in the greatest mystics one finds elements of self-deception or illusion as well as emotional disturbances and the ordinary mental sickness to which mortal man is heir."* (Johnston, 1993, P 108) But I argue that this question of discernment is the price that has to be paid for inspiration of every kind, every expansive thought. As Socrates declared, *"our greatest blessings come to us by way of madness, provided the madness is given us by divine gift,"*¹⁰² that we need to know which is 'divine gift' and which is not.

*"Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and joy and knowledge that pass all the art and argument of the earth;
And I know the hand of God is the elder hand of my own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the eldest brother of my own,
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers.....and the women my sisters and lovers."*

This universality is also expressed in the opening lines of "Song of Myself":

*"I celebrate myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good as belongs to you."*

¹⁰² In the *Phaedrus* Plato writes:

"In proportion as prophecy is higher and more perfect than divination ... in the same proportion ... is madness superior to the sane mind, for the one is only of human, but the other of divine origin. Again, where plagues and mightiest woes have bred in a race, owing to some ancient wrath, there madness, lifting up her voice and flying to prayers and rites, has come to the rescue of those who are in need; and he who has part in this gift, and is truly possessed and duly out of his mind, is by the use of purifications and mysteries made whole and delivered from evil, future as well as present, and has a release from the calamity which afflicts him. There is also a third kind of madness, which is a possession of the

Again it is a framework provided by William James which I will utilize and expand upon here. From the perspective of phenomenology,¹⁰³ all mystical experience is valid, 'true' and genuine, and needs no further comment.¹⁰⁴ However, from the earliest studies done on Mysticism, scholars (St Teresa of Avila, Merton, Leuba, Underhill, James, Otto) have noted that mystics display certain qualities which, experientially for the mystics themselves and also for those around them, delineate between delusions and that which illuminates with peace and compassion. Here lie some of the distinctions between psychosis and gnosis, in my opinion, or to use William James's terminology, the 'pathological' and the 'genuine'. In his classic study at the turn of the century, "Varieties of Religious Experience", James used four characteristics of 'genuine' experience: ineffability, noetic quality, passivity and transience. To this I add compassion, joy and the lived life.

Muses; this enters into a delicate and virgin soul, and there inspiring frenzy, awakens lyric. . . . But he who, not being inspired and having no touch of madness in his soul, comes to the door and thinks that he will get into the temple by the help of art-he, I say, and his poetry are not admitted; the sane man is nowhere at all when he enters into rivalry with the madman." Plato, 1972.

¹⁰³ I refer to Almaas for a discussion on Phenomenology. "What is left for us then is only open enquiry into our experience. We can only engage in a process (which is not a technique) of finding out where we are. Finding out where we are is a matter of recognizing the self in whatever state one happens to be. It is not a matter of manipulating the soul into some state, but rather, of being clear and fully present in whatever state the soul happens to be presenting itself in. 1. Freedom from the need to fixate on any state. One is free from the need for fixed structures and ideals, including spiritual ideals
2. Detachment from comparative judgment. We are not interested in comparing our state with other states and judging whether it is acceptable or not.
3. Engaging in any activity - ego manipulation or spiritual technique - in order to put oneself in one state or another can only lead to disconnecting from where one is, which is bound to lead to alienation for presence, for presence is always now.
4. The approach becomes finding where one is - that is, what happens to be the manifestation of the soul at the moment - and enquiring into it. ... This is a celebrative and appreciative participation in life as the revelation of the mysteries of Being.
5. The insight that specifically invokes the manifestation of the new dimension is that of seeing, in one's experience, that freedom from influence does not happen through control of one's experience or circumstances, but by surrendering to where one is. ... Joy arises now..." Almaas, A.H., 1996 p 353

¹⁰⁴ "The Heideggerian phenomenology paved the way for gnosis by producing the kind of knowing which is not divorced from being. In this sense phenomenology is gnosis - a knowledge that is effectuated in the soul and by the soul." Avens, R. 1984, P 30

Ineffability

By ineffability, James meant the impossibility of expressing a state of mind by means of words, dogma and concepts. He held that the ineffable is directly experienced, and is fundamentally incommunicable. While I agree that such experiences are *indescribable* in language, I hold that they could be *evoked* through metaphor, nuance, symbol, image, rhythm and cadence, and therefore they are *expressible*. Which is why poetry, mantra, koan, chant and dance become the means of expression of the mystic. (I discuss this further under pre-language and the semiotics proposed by Kristeva) However, paradoxically, as I have discussed in *Preparation for Mystical Experience*, language does have real power to generate and inform the goal of mystical practice. The language of mysticism and psychosis may be similar because they are both experiences 'not of the ego', and both require from us a non-discursive response. Thus we see that the language of symbol and metaphor is found both in mystics and psychotics.

The danger of 'aphasia'

For me the term ineffability needs further delineation. I point out that there is a difference between ineffability and a kind of 'aphasia',¹⁰⁵ between an experience of the indescribable and dissociation, between the Zen concept of 'mindlessness' and an absence of mind. The possibility of 'phasing out', of 'spacing out' and disappearing into a vacuum, is addressed in Zen. 'To say "empty" ', Suzuki says *'is already denying itself. But you cannot remain silent.*

¹⁰⁵ I am not talking about a literal organic brain disorder, but rather a metaphoric, functional one

How to communicate the silence without going out of it is the crux.'¹⁰⁶ Hakuin, the famous Zen master, alerted his students to the possibility of empty delusion where there is '*absolutely no truth, no nirvana, no passions, no enlightenment.*' So ineffability is not enough for the Zen practitioner; 'translation', whether literally or by means of a transformed and productive life, is also a necessary sign of successful meditation practice. In my opinion it is significant that the rigorous practice of dialectical reasoning is thus a feature of Zen practice, and I see this practice as being protective against this particular delusion, and also as one of the means towards authentic and trouble free mystical experience.¹⁰⁷ So there is a difference between a 'good' and 'bad' blankness, or a positive aspect to 'not-knowing', like the leafless trees in Winter.

Noetic

The noetic quality James includes refers to the sense of absolute certainty of knowing something of great value as a result of the experience, and of being unshakeable in this confidence; Heidegger refers to noetic as "taking to mind and heart and keeping at heart."¹⁰⁸ It is understandable that such knowing, which I venture is intuitively grasped, would not be expressed in logical, discursive terms. The psychotic has this experience of certainty as much as does the 'true' mystic, so I argue that this definition is not sufficient of itself.

¹⁰⁶ D.T.Suzuki, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, New York, 1957,p28

¹⁰⁷ It is noteworthy that the Zen Oxherding pictures have one of the twelve pictures, the eighth, completely blank.

¹⁰⁸ "Heidegger understands the Greek verb *noein* in the pre-Socratic sense of "to perceive" or to be attentive to something. *Noein* means taking to mind and heart and keeping at heart". Avens, R. 1984, P 13

Transiency

Transiency refers to specific mystical states which do not last for ever, although the memory of them transforms the life permanently, even when the person has returned to a 'normal' state of consciousness. However, the mystics report that even the briefest of mystical contact can take the rest of one's life to come to terms with. This is evident in the writings of Fox, Bucke, St Teresa, to name just a few. Mystical states, James writes, '*are never merely interruptive*', but are part of an ongoing life and have a marked effect on that life in the intervals between these heightened experiences. (James, 1920) I suggest that even a psychotic break, that is a temporary rather than a permanent state, can transform and inform the remainder of life, and in this way is 'never merely interruptive.'

Passivity

Passivity is James' next category, but in my opinion it is a misleading term for the intense and often strenuous self-discipline which mystics have traditionally undergone in preparation for the mystical experience, and I would prefer to use the term *receptivity*. Paradoxically, despite the preparatory effort, the mystics report that this state of consciousness includes a vivid sense of the suspension of the will, of being outside of the ego, and of being grasped by a power beyond oneself - this is what James defined as passivity. However, the strenuous preparations themselves do not engender the experience. In one of my favourite mystical images, unless the kettle is burnished, it will not reflect the light, but the fact of its being so burnished does not command the light.¹⁰⁹ This image bespeaks the quality of grace, perhaps, rather than passivity. In psychosis also,

¹⁰⁹ Katz, S. 1983 p 250

the individual experiences his so called delusions as 'being outside of the ego, and of being grasped by a power beyond itself', so I find that this is a common factor, rather than a delineation, between psychosis and gnosis.

Compassion

In order to compensate for what I find to be the inadequacies of James' definitions in distinguishing between psychosis and transformative gnosis, I have added several further categories. Compassion, and even Cosmic Compassion, is traditionally considered to be one of the essential evidences of the experiences of 'true' mysticism. *"The mystics..ask that Divine compassion be fulfilled or come into being through them."*¹¹⁰ The loosening of attachment to one's own self is expressed through a lively concern for the welfare of others. I have the notion that the statement, 'but for the grace of God there go I', where the self is central, must, at this point, be replaced by 'there by the grace of God go I also,' reflecting a sense of brotherhood and affinity with all others. This is an expression of the relation to the otherness of the other and is an extremely significant shift. I am impressed that to the Mahayana Buddhist the paramount mystical attainment comprises compassionate love, as well as gnosis. *"Compassion means that we do not play the game of hypocrisy or self-deception. The fundamental characteristic of true compassion is pure and fearless openness without territorial limitations."* (Trungpa, 1973,P213) This contrasts strongly with the experience of the psychotic, which is primarily defensive rather than open, self-centred and very attached to his/her own 'territory.'

¹¹⁰ Spiegelman et al, 1991, P112

Joy

Whether joy is an evidence of the mystical experience itself or a result of it, much in the same way that compassion can be cultivated as a stimulus to mystical experience as well as on outpouring from it, is in my opinion secondary to the evidence that the experience of true mysticism is filled with it, and the experience of psychosis is marked by its infrequency. While the psychotic state may be visited by periods of exultation, this is more likely to be an inflation, that is, attached to the ego. To support the non-ego boundedness of joy, I refer to Kristeva who proposes, following Spinoza, that joy "*is the ultimate degree, beyond knowledge, which I shed in order to glimpse its source, in others, in the other*".¹¹¹

The Lived life¹¹²

Finally, I propose the addition of the category of the lived life to James' schema, as it is to me in the ethical relation to the other that the integration of the other qualities takes place. Katz supports this view: "*The rare and wonderful 'peaks' of experience are a part of the pattern, but only a part, and their real value lies only in their relation to the other parts, to his thought, his moral values, his conduct towards others, his character and personality, etc.*"¹¹³ Katz also reminds us that "*mystical consciousness and knowledge ... are not necessarily signs of perfect love already achieved, or perfect humanity already fulfilled,*"¹¹⁴ that of themselves they are not proof of anything and that only the larger context can confirm this. I

¹¹¹ Kristeva, J. 1998, P 58)

¹¹² I compare the lived life with the unived life, the actuality rather than the potential. In chapter five I pay more attention to this in relation to distinctions between psychosis and gnosis.

¹¹³ Katz, S. 1983, p85

¹¹⁴ Katz, S. 1983 p24

hold that in terms of the broad diagnosis of psychosis or gnosis, this is most noteworthy.

Phenomenology and context

Although I will pursue the question of phenomenology and context elsewhere in this writing, I would like to introduce what appears to be a necessity, that is that phenomenology only reveals so much, (ie James' distinguishing features of mystical experience) and that the context in which this phenomenology occurs is equally important in both the experience itself as well as the assessment of it. At least I find it essential in the distinguishing of psychosis from gnosis, that the phenomena cannot stand apart from the contextuality, just as, for instance, the figures in a person's dream cannot be taken for themselves alone, but are made important by their relation to that individual's outer life. Thus we already see evidence of the contextuality of mysticism, specifically of the formative and constitutive influence of mystical practice on mystical experience and on post-experiential mystical behaviour. Thus, the attitudes which we take *before* the experience of numinosity not only influence the numinous experience itself, but what we do with it afterwards. This emphasizes the notion that the numinous or mystical is essentially without content, or more accurately intent, and it is the psyche of the individual that interprets this and assimilates it in unique ways. What this infers, to my mind, is that the mystical itself as defined by James does not confer either psychosis or gnosis, but that the context, both inner and outer, does.

Conclusion to chapter one:

In this chapter I have observed that human beings have tended to frame their most profound experiences in spiritual terms, even when they profess to be atheists. I have proposed that this inclination to the spiritual is an instinct, and that the capacity for the mystical is therefore universal. I have observed that one of the reasons that mysticism is not expressed fully in any age is that the instinct is repressed and that it thus finds expression in other less obvious ways. As a way of explaining why so few individuals within our Western Christian heritage experience mystical lives, I have shown that the ruling of the Council of Nicea in 325 AD has enforced a doctrinal prohibition against personal spiritual *experience*.

In order to clarify what constitutes mystical experience, I have demonstrated that all individuals will find a place on a sliding scale of mystical awareness, but few find themselves living the life of a mystic in the unitive state.

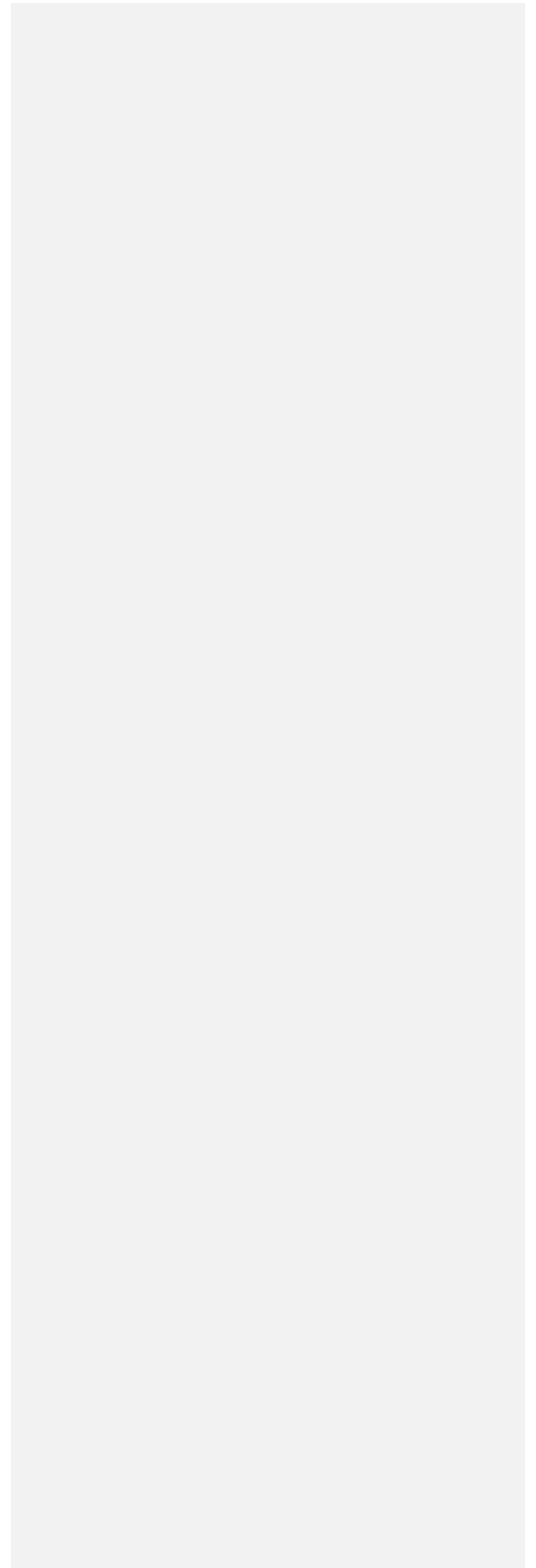
While I have shown that therefore everyone, is, in principle, capable of mystical experience, I have also acknowledged that the effort of 'waking up' and 'staying awake' is beyond most of us, as an adequate psychological structure is required for this task as well as sufficiently supportive life circumstances. For those who do begin, however, the paralyzing possibility of halting mid way is an abortive attempt toward the mystical life which can result in madness.

In order to discuss some of the rigours which the life of a mystic might entail, I have looked at some of the methods used for the preparation of mystical experience, namely rational dialectic, ethical preparation, disciplines of the body, and the use of drugs and intoxicants. I have pointed out that we may do many of these things without the intention of becoming a mystic but nevertheless the living of these principles brings forth an enhanced life, for instance for the professional athlete. I introduced the radical and curious idea that artificially induced mysticism may circumvent the time-honoured view that mysticism is something which is hard won through arduous preparation.

I have discussed the characteristics of genuine mystical experience, replacing William James' schema with my own as being more appropriate: to his original requirements of ineffability, noetic quality, passivity and transience, I added compassion, joy and the lived life, in order to give a clear understanding of what I understand mysticism to be.

Finally, I present the notion that phenomenology is, after all, not sufficient in itself to determine what is true mystical experience, and that context is important. In Chapter Four I discuss whether mystical phenomena needs interpretation.

In the next chapter, I introduce mystical experience in the context of contemporary society, and the way mystical experience is sought as a way of creating meaning.



Chapter 2: On the Way to the Wedding

*"We had the experience but missed the meaning,
And approach to the meaning restores the experience
In a different form, beyond any meaning
We can assign to happiness. I have said before
That the past experience revived in the meaning
Is not the experience of one life only
But of many generation – not forgetting
Something that is probably quite ineffable."*

*T.S.Eliot, The Dry Salvages, Four Quartets*¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Faber and Faber, Mcmxlv, page 28

Introduction to chapter two:

In “On The Way to the Wedding”, I look at why personal spiritual experience, especially mystical experience might be so compelling to people today. This chapter enables me to demonstrate the ways in which the enchanting, numinous and ecstatic are a fertile margin. I posit that mystical experience is a polar opposite to, and a compensation for, the dryness of economic and psychological rationalization,¹¹⁶ and as such is an enchantment which revivifies the individual, and, to rephrase Nietzsche, “relearns the bow to whiz.” I see this as an inner imperative towards being, in the Heideggarian sense. I put forward that Jung’s idea of individuation is a method of working with the psyche that allows for the development of the ecstatic principle in a way which guards against psychosis. I discuss the possibility that both gnostic and psychotic experiences are legitimate ways to vivify the personal experience (towards being) outside of the collective consensus. I use the metaphor of the Hero’s journey as a way to present the process of validating experience outside of the collective consensus, and the bringing back of this experience into the collective. Finally, given that I suppose that the search for meaning is what motivates an individual, I discuss the making of meaning.

I have chosen the title for this chapter, “On the way to the wedding”, for several reasons. First, because the metaphorical language of the mystic is so often

¹¹⁶I use psychological rationalization to refer to a consistently rational approach in psychology where man has devised meaning based on his ability to conquer the psychological world, on his position as subject. In Heidegger’s opinion this activity (or agitation) between subjects and objects is the source of Western nihilism, as prophesied by Nietzsche: “*Alas! There cometh the time when man will no longer launch the arrow of his longing beyond man – and the string of his bow will have unlearned to whizz.*” Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Philosophy of Nietzsche* (New York, Modern Library, 1927) quoted by Avens, R. 1984, p 11

phrased in nuptial terms, in terms of bride, bridegroom and Beloved.¹¹⁷ Second, the inner marriage when the soul meets her counterpart, is, in terms which Jung has borrowed from Alchemy, a Coniunctio. The Coniunctio is a symbol of the union of male and female and a demonstration of individuation, where the opposites within are brought into conjunction. A marriage implies coming together of otherness, of relationship and relatedness and a wedding heralds a permanency of that relatedness and the celebration of it.¹¹⁸ Third, I use the wedding metaphor to represent the ecstatic and blissful, the results of the union of opposites (within).

Mysticism and marginalization

Mystical experience as an alternative to established religion

I propose that mystical experience has become fascinating to many because it seems to them to be an alternative to religion. Mystical experience has come to be viewed by those who have not found an adequate place for their spiritual experience within the orthodoxy, as a repository of all that is best in the spiritual life and one that is free from such things as dogma and authority. I also see interest in mystical experience as a pendulum swing from the current atmosphere of economic rationalism, where the individual and so much of human experience

¹¹⁷For instance, St Teresa of Avilla: "Once the soul arrives here it has nothing to fear, except perhaps that God may not make use of it by giving it trials and the occasions for serving Him even at a greater cost to itself. Hence, as I have said, love and faith are at work. And the soul does not want to benefit by what the intellect teaches it, for this union between the bride and the Bridegroom has taught it other things the intellect cannot attain to, and the soul tramples the intellect underfoot." St Teresa of Avila, 1980, P 252

¹¹⁸ I regard this metaphorical marriage as the journey towards wholeness regardless of how it is achieved, whether through the specific vectors of psychosis and gnosis.

is devalued, where the soul has become dry, to use Hildegard of Bingen's¹¹⁹ expression.¹²⁰

The marginalizing of heretics and the mysticism of the marginalized

I introduce the idea of the margin as being a fertile borderland, especially if we extrapolate the ecological¹²¹ principle that it is in the margins between two different systems where the richest proliferation of life and greatest variety of species (life) is to be found.¹²² Because mystical experience is always first hand, it cannot be mediated by a punitive or proscriptive authority. In my opinion, this need for authentic personal experience also echoes the search of those in psychological distress for a vivifying experience of being alive which is not mediated by an authority, whether this authority be seen as within - as a superego, to use Freud's term - or from without as an impinging religious or psychological framework of normalcy and acceptability. This search for vivification can thus be seen as bypassing the authority of the ego by engagement of the mystical by the non-ego.

The very being of a mystic passes a form of judgment on the conventional religion of his tradition, because he does not need that religious tradition to mediate his experience for him. Likewise, the very being of a psychotic implies a

¹¹⁹ mystic of the Rhineland, Hildegard of Bingen (1098 to 1179) wrote "The Book of Divine Works"

¹²⁰ The possibility that mystical experiences may be the expression of the desire for a regressive (re)union with the mother I discuss in the next chapter.

¹²¹ I speak here of a metaphorical ecology of soul, a mystical ecology. As Avens says: "Ultimately, then, the Delphic injunction "Know thyself" and the modern precept "Study nature" become the same maxim, for self-knowledge is nothing else than consciousness of the world (anima mundi) as perceived by the self. There is an agreement of ideas in the mind with the laws (ideas) in nature and of human imagination with the cosmic (or divine) imagination. What we get here is a kind of universal ecology. Everything in the cosmos interconnects with its immediate surroundings, and those surroundings with the wider environs, until the world, the solar system, and more are included. Avens, R. 1984, P 26

¹²² Thomas Berry, David Suzuki and others, claim diversity as essential to the survival of any species.

judgement on the nature of being by society, on what is considered normal.¹²³ The mystic appears as it were to circumvent an established order. In mysticism, spiritual experience is brought to authentic personal gnosis and is a constant reminder to institutional religion that no individual should be subordinated to any system.¹²⁴ Mystics have been marginalized as heretics because they are outside the orthodoxy,¹²⁵ outside the symbolic order. In my view, those who are marginalized already by the orthodoxy (society, the psychiatric profession, the 'symbolic order') become, or attempt to become, mystics, that is, they attempt their 'coming to be'¹²⁶ through unmediated, authentic personal experience. In this way I can also view mystical experiences, whether psychosis or gnosis, as reaction formations to the society which refuses them.¹²⁷

Enchantment

Here I develop my discussion as to what it might be that we seek in the margins, so to speak, that seems to offer the promise of meaning, and I come upon the notion of 'enchantment' - that which delights and captivates. I use this notion of

¹²³ See my discussion of Durkheim, anomie, and the root metaphors of our society in my essay, "To be or not to be". Briefly, the legal, medical, theological, psychological and social science professions all operate by way of root metaphors which state clearly what is 'normal' and what is aberrant, what is within the law and what is outside it: While we can say, then, that these professions judge those who are outside, I contend that those who are outside also pass a kind of judgment because of their very being.

¹²⁴ Unless you believe Eccles: "We're all individuals", "I'm not", he said. (The Goons)

¹²⁵ I pursue this in detail in chapter four

¹²⁶ I refer here to Heidegger's principle of 'coming to be'. His *"contention is that the whole history of Western thought has emphasized the noun-character of the word "being" and has forgotten the verb, the "to be" of what is, dimension"*. Avens, R. 1984, P 13

¹²⁷ I pursue this in much more detail in chapter three

enchantment as a metaphor for Heidegger's 'presencing',¹²⁸ and a means of re-establishing 'presence', and re-creating meaning where it has been lost.¹²⁹

I suggest that enchantment is a fitting metaphor, whether we think in terms of Hildegard of Bingen's 'greening the dry soul', or Thomas Berry¹³⁰ proposing an antidote to 'earth murder', or a psychotic episode with its florid imagery being a means of rebelling against 'soul murder'. I propose that the notion of being 'irresistibly captured' (ie, through enchantment) brings us to a rich vein of salvational imagery, where something essential¹³¹, something about being, is recovered. Although I discuss elsewhere the possibility that metaphor may depreciate actual experience,¹³² here I concentrate on the opposite possibility, namely that metaphor and image are inductive of a state that suspends us sufficiently from a fixed conscious position to enable one of fluid possibility, a possibility that allows the unconscious to fertilize the conscious. I will now demonstrate how the metaphor of enchantment approaches us through narrative, myth and dream.

¹²⁸ "Heidegger has pointed out that the Greek understanding of *aletheia* is not an etymological issue but a question of "how the presencing of what is present comes to language only in shining, self-manifesting, lying before, arising...and assuming an outward appearance." Avens, R. 1984, P 137

¹²⁹ "It is this crystallization (of the meaning of words) that has made it necessary to resort to metaphor as a means of restoring the original unity between the perceiving subject and the percept. In a world torn to pieces by pure intellect, the poet imagines and thus re-establishes relationships which are now expressed as metaphor. Metaphor replaces the simple, given, and experienced meaning of things by created, or shall we say, recreated meaning." Avens, R. 1984 P 51

¹³⁰ Earth – murder. Thomas Berry, in "The Dream of the Earth", says it's a question of story, "We are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story. We are in between stories. The old story, the account of how we fit into it, is no longer effective. Yet we have not learned the new story." P123

¹³¹ I use 'essential' here to refer to Heidegger's ideas about being, and *esse*, to be, to become.

¹³² For instance, the contemporary philosopher Almas is critical of Jung's analogical, mythological and symbological approach which he feels is at odds with direct spiritual experience, a direct experience of the Self. Rather, Almas' approach is "guided by the understanding that, although the spiritual dimension of the self transcends all products of the psyche, it can still be experienced directly and concretely. When it is directly apprehended, it is recognized as an ontological reality, the most important element of which is its phenomenology, that is, the quality of its actual perceived existence." He later says that "the phenomenological exploration keeps us in touch with the actual lived experience, while looking for symbolism and meanings tends to take us away from it." Almas, A.H. 1996, p.460

It's a question of story

As a therapist, I understand that the patient's story,¹³³ and the way it is told, is essential to who they are within themselves, as well as their relationship to their culture. Likewise a story can inform us about life in the margins, just outside of current possibility. In this way, for instance, a fairy story is enchanting, it irresistibly captures us, it informs us - forms us within - about things which are just out of our reach. If we hold the assertion by Marie Louise von Franz¹³⁴ that some fairy stories, for instance, "are created by people who had parapsychological or dreamlike or visionary experiences", then we can see that these stories initiate us into something that we may not have yet experienced ourselves, which carry a certain numinosity. I believe that myths and personal dreams do likewise: they are clues about inner mysteries and liminality - thresholds of passage - ¹³⁵ which are deep, rich and revivifying. Myths, in my understanding, are to a culture what dreams are to the individual.¹³⁶ If our cultural myths are not keeping up with the demand of the times, then the weight is on the individual to contribute to the forming of a new myth which will inform us how to live a decent life even under the most inhuman circumstances. A myth gives us a metaphorical map of even the most difficult journey. An example of what happens when there is a lack of myth is provided by Craig san Roche,¹³⁷ a Jungian analyst who works with aboriginal people in the Alice Springs area. He says that Aboriginal myth has not yet found a place for alcohol, so it is that which

¹³³ "Each of us, mentally healthy or not, has a story. My story differs from yours. My story, my past, my present, and future, strung out like a plot, is who I am. It is far from incidental. It is central." Keen, E. "Narrative Psychology" p.17

¹³⁴ von Franz, M.L. 1997, p 14

¹³⁵ I discuss liminality in greater depth in chapter five

¹³⁶ Karl Abraham said that 'myth is the dream of the people and a dream is the myth of the individual'.

¹³⁷ Speaking at a seminar at the Churchill Clinic, Perth, Western Australia, 1996

destroys them for they do not have a symbolic representation for the conflicts involved. Likewise, if our myths and stories of enchantment disappear, we are without appropriate life models, without messages from the fertile margins. I agree with Perry who says that people in the grip of a psychosis are re-mythologizing and re-enchanting their world.¹³⁸

Yorro Yorro: Everything standing up alive.

At this point in my discussion of enchantment I think that it is useful to suspend temporarily the idea of either psychosis or gnosis, and examine the function of enchantment as a source of vivification. In so doing I am going to demonstrate how this notion of enchantment functions as a redemptive force as part of mystical experience.

The original inhabitants of various continents have possessed traditional native beliefs about the natural world that tends to view all of nature as inherently holy, as being enchanted. This speaks to me of a fundamentally mystical attitude. To quote the environmentalist David Suzuki, *"The landscape itself...is seen as sacred and quivering with life. It is inscribed with meaning regarding the origins and unity of all life."*¹³⁹ Here in Australia, in the traditional aboriginal people, we have a people who are masters at enchantment; they have the Dreamtime.¹⁴⁰ For them, stories, dreamtime, and place are inextricably woven together. The aboriginal cleric, Patrick Dodson says: *"New stories are sung from contemplation*

¹³⁸ "This inner world of the psychotic does not look like the one we know outwardly, but it is recognizable as a view of the cosmos familiar in myth and ritual forms since ancient times". Perry, J.W. 1974, P 9

¹³⁹ Kudsston & Suzuki, 1992, P 1

¹⁴⁰ Dreamtime - Originating from Eternity. The term "Dreaming" comes from the root *altjira* which means "eternal" (so that the verb 'to dream' draws from the idea of seeing eternal things, i.e. during sleep), and the noun should have been translated as 'originating from eternity'. Stockton, E. 1995, P52 The terms "Dreaming" and "The Law" are really synonymous.

of the land, stories are handed down from spirit men of the past who have deposited the riches at various places- the sacred places.”¹⁴¹ For the aboriginal people “it is not so much a matter of land belonging to people as of people belonging to land.”¹⁴² “Earth-murder” is not possible for people who are possessed by the land. For them the law is “in the form of the land and the ceremonies and stories that go with it, which are written in our hearts and minds.”¹⁴³ For these people there is no need for a Transitional Object,¹⁴⁴ no intermediary, because they *participate* in the environment. “It is everything that is living around them, that shares that common soul or spirit. It includes the entire environment. It is ‘Yorro Yorro’ – “everything standing up alive”.¹⁴⁵ To these people, numinosity, enchantment, story, land and personal experience are seamlessly interwoven.

Dadirri as enchantment.

Miriam-Rose defines *dadirri* as ‘an inner deep listening and quiet still awareness’. “She describes several settings, in which the term ‘intersubjectivity’ fittingly applies, whether walking alone on the bush, telling stories around the campfire or taking part in ceremony. In each case it is stressed that an effect is taking place: internalisation, wholeness, peace, renewal, togetherness.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Patrick Dodson, quoted by Stockton, E. 1995

¹⁴² As was stated by the Woodward Royal Commission of 1974.

¹⁴³ Rev Djiniyini Gondarra, quoted by Stockton, E. 1995

¹⁴⁴ See my discussion of God as a Transitional Object, in the Chapter Paradise Lost

¹⁴⁵ Eddie Kneebone, from C Hammond (Ed) 1991 pp89-90 *Creation Spirituality and the Dreamtime* Millenium Books
Quoted by Stockton, E. 1995

¹⁴⁶ Stockton, E.1995, p 104

A corollary to this sense of wholeness and interconnectivity gained through the sense of enchantment, is the belief that one's self is a part of everything else - that is, a mystical approach. My point is that if we seek an experience of wholeness and unity, this will inevitably include what I have defined as mystical experience. The attitude of thinkers and mystics such as Bonaventure, Hildegard of Bingen and Matthew Fox is creation-centred and is, like the concept of Yorro Yorro, one of partnership, in contrast to the fall and redemption theme of many of the church's founding father's.

Ecstasy and wholeness

Dionysus and being outside of ego

It has been said that the longing for union arises with particular intensity when the push towards the separateness of ego-identity has been achieved.¹⁴⁷ I make the further point that ecstasy¹⁴⁸ is related to Dionysus, the Greek god of 'extasis', who represents being outside oneself. So in this sense, the feelings of wholeness and one-ness, are outside of, and beyond the capacity of the ego. It is only when the ego has found itself in a certain degree of development and concomitant loneliness, as represented in the process of individuation, that it is ripe, ready and able to lose itself in an ecstatic experience. This idea of ecstatic experience arising from ego-maturity suggests that mystical experience is a

¹⁴⁷ It is from within the perspective of a Fall and Redemption theology that John Stanford, the Christian theologian, proposes that the longing for union, for wholeness, for inclusiveness, is a natural progression for the ego. When ego development goes far enough, or even too far, he says, *"then a longing for the opposite begins: a longing for union, not separation; for ecstasy, not reason; for surrender to life, not power; for inspiration, not control. It is a longing to escape our egos which live on their lonely island, and instead merge into oneness with other people, with life, with cosmos, even with God, for the human soul cannot stand alone forever"*. Sanford, J.A. 1996, P109

¹⁴⁸ The word 'existence' as Heidegger understands it, *"points to the fact that man alone, in contrast to all other beings, is not a pure object like a rock on the beach, but has to be. ... Human existence is essentially ec-static or self-exceeding. Man is truly human when he stands in the openness of Being; he is the place where Being opens up and reveals itself."* Avens, R. 1984 P 12

natural progression, rather than something either unusual or deviant. I do not think that this natural progression is a foregone conclusion, however, as a hardened egoic shell can reinforce narcissistic encapsulation.¹⁴⁹ However, rather than as a natural *pro*-gression some scholars see the mystical desire for union as a *re*-gression to an infantile state, a return “*to mother or father, but by the medium of intermediate but symbolic experience, the experience of reunion and identification.*”¹⁵⁰ Some, such as Persinger,¹⁵¹ suggest that this need for reunion and an identification that is larger than self, is a rational and cognitive way of forestalling or even denying the indisputable fact of one's mortality and immanent death. I see this opinion as denying the needs of the psyche for deep meaning, which I believe is meaning beyond the rational.

The writer on Jewish mysticism, Mortimer Ostow also makes what to me is an extraordinary claim, that both the “*efflorescence of mystical impulse and pursuit, (and) the return to religion of the most fundamentalist kind...express the need for a return to the comfort and assurance, the regularity and predictability of the well-cared-for infant.*” (Ostow, 1995, p32) What is extraordinary to me in this statement is that he has managed to bring together in one statement what I see as polar opposites, that is, mystical experience and fundamentalism. While I can see that an essential element of fundamentalism is the integration of the

¹⁴⁹ “Fritz Kunkel believed that there were two kinds of ego responses. The first, the response the ego makes out of its egocentricity, is ‘characterized by inflexibility, panic, defensiveness, rage, and sterility.’ In contrast the creative ego response is a response ‘that is exactly appropriate to the kind of situation with which the person is faced. It cannot be stylized or characterized because of the creative Ego response is always unique and one-of-a-kind.’” Fritz Kunkel. Selected Writings, quoted in Sanford, J.A. 1996

¹⁵⁰ Ostow, 1995, p 78

¹⁵¹ personal conversation, July 2002, Laurentian University, Sudbury, Ontario, Canada.

individual into the group, in effect the subsuming of his own identity within it, and that this would create a form of union, I maintain that this is a union of doctrine and belief and the function of the ego. However, I see that for the mystic, the union is experiential, and a paradoxical losing and finding of oneself, beyond the bounds of ego experience. In this way I make a distinction based upon the one iota, in chapter one.

I wish to stress here that Heidegger thought of human existence as always ecstatic, outside oneself, meaning that one is always 'self-exceeding', when one is able to be where Being opens up and reveals itself. In this sense the call to Being is itself ecstatic, and, in my terms, a mystical experience.¹⁵² In this way I see everyone who is not enclosed by the ego, as being involved in mystical experience.

Dionysus and transformation

The ecstatic principle is related to Dionysus, who represents being outside oneself –outside the capacity of the ego. It is liberating for the ego to stand outside itself, otherwise the ego is confined to and shut up in an 'ego box' of a rational attitude toward life. I also acknowledge that Dionysian energy can be interpreted as a negative force, (as it certainly was in mythology), when it makes its appearance in a society or an individual where narcissistic problems

¹⁵² Avens, R. 1984 P 12

predominate: Delusions and paranoid feelings can easily result.¹⁵³ Yet I propose that one way of understanding some of the most difficult emotions of terror, rage, chaos and depression, is that they are activations by the Dionysian principle of ecstasy that we are resisting. I remind the reader that ecstatic experiences are always a defeat for the ego -- Dionysus represents going beyond existing boundaries and is unfamiliar. As Robert Johnson reminds us “... *in ecstatic expression we will recognize a long-forgotten part of ourselves that makes us truly alive and connects us with every living thing*”.¹⁵⁴ I think that it is significant that we have the “rage drug” by the name of Extasy. Robert Johnson would mostly likely call both the drug itself and the ‘raging’ a second-rate experience of Dionysus, where the ecstatic principle is invited. But my thoughts are that the whole drug culture today is a demonstration of soul-poverty, the lack of enchantment in a sterile environment devoid of Dionysian influence, where the drugs are an attempt - ‘second-rate’, but still an attempt – to heal fragmentation and isolation. The point I am making is that a culture in which we emphasize and develop the rational, we ultimately cannot repress the desire for an ecstatic union, and “*the human spirit is free at last to be it’s truest self*.”¹⁵⁵

The abdication of ecstasy

T.S.Eliot said in *Murder in the Cathedral*, we “*fear the hand at the window, the*

¹⁵³ Robert Johnson defines our current day relationship with Dionysian energies as follows. “*The Dionysian experience is immediate and galvanizing: ecstasy or madness. This may be extreme, but it corresponds closely with our real psychological and spiritual needs. Today our scrupulously clean, law abiding religions have little place for either the love of God or the fear of God. Like the Hindu who nearly starved on the sanitized British food, we suffer the effects of spiritual malnutrition. When we deny ourselves contact with the awe-fullness and terror of the soul, we do ourselves great damage. When there is no longer any official room in our religious observance for the ecstasy of divinity or the dark night of the soul, we experience that light and darkness in whatever way we can. In other centuries that way might have been called possession; we have chosen to express it through physical and psychological symptoms.*” A Johnson, R.A. 1987, P28

¹⁵⁴Johnson,R.A. 1987, P3

¹⁵⁵Stanford, J. 1995, P109

fire in the thatch.... less than we fear the love of God." Truly to experience ecstasy, "the love of God", would mean to invite profound change, and this is inviting the unknown, something out of our control, so we are afraid. This is evidenced not only personally, but within the psychiatric profession as well, as we have already seen. Laing, spoke of his own profession in this way: *"Psychiatry could be on the side of transcendence...but...I would wish to emphasize that our 'normal' 'adjusted' state is too often the abdication of ecstasy, the betrayal of our true potentialities, that many of us are only too successful in acquiring a false self to adapt to false realities."*¹⁵⁶

Ecstasy and sexuality

I will now investigate the possibility that there is a crossover between sexuality and ecstasy. Lacan refers to the ecstasy of St Teresa, and says that, unequivocally, this is expression of 'coming', or orgasm, of sexual bliss. To him there seems little question that sexuality and ecstasy are related. The cosmological, ontological and erotic urges are founded in the primary pre-oedipal position that Kristeva termed the semiotic.¹⁵⁷ It is possible that when expressions of sexuality are precluded, either through a religious discipline, or psychological make-up, ecstatic mystical experiences arise. For example, a theologian writes: *"There is no point at all in blinking at the fact that the raptures of the theistic mystic are closely akin to the transports of sexual union."*¹⁵⁸ Reich too, insisted

¹⁵⁶ Laing, R.D. 1959, P12

¹⁵⁷ Smith, Anne-Marie, 1998

¹⁵⁸ Zaechner, R. . Mysticism Sacred and Profane, 1957, Oxford University Press p 252

that *all* mystical experience is due to the misinterpretation of sexual feelings.¹⁵⁹ Consummation, for the religious mystic, is often spoken of as the Spiritual Marriage of his soul with God. That these mystics of history were usually celibate lends credence to Freud and Lacan's theory that this religious expression is a sublimation of sexual drives.¹⁶⁰ On the other hand, I observe that there is a consistent tendency to sexualize unitive or ecstatic experiences, which de Rougemont¹⁶¹ attributes to an excess of eros without the counterbalance of the development of Agape. This excess of eros could explain, for instance, why the Christian mystic Catherine of Genoa became ill *because* of the intensity of her love-trance. Certainly, the language of mystical love can be extravagant, and filled with erotic imagery, the Song of Songs, for example. The Sufis, Kabal and Rumi, are known for their florid expressions, and the Troubadors made an art of it also.¹⁶² This eroticizing is, in my opinion, one of the ways in which an essentially objectless experience is translated into having an object, that is, the beloved. However, given that the ecstatic experience can be one of overwhelmingly being loved,¹⁶³ it is not surprising that we translate this into

¹⁵⁹ Reich, W. Character Analysis, 1950, Vision Press, London

¹⁶⁰ "It is likely that the failure to find a satisfactory resting place for his libido in a human love object may often be the determining incident which turned his feet into the path which led to mystical conversion." Thoules, R.H. The Psychology of Conversion, from An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion, 1971, Cambridge University press.

^{161a} *Eros, isolated from its opposites (active love, or Agape), in its pure state, passive or ecstatic, passion is deadly, such as for Tristan and some of the great mystics.*" de Rougemont, D. 1940, p 376

¹⁶¹ de Rougemont, D. 1940

¹⁶² de Rougemont, D. 1940

^{163a} *It also brings the perception that this loving, holding quality is intrinsic to the fundamental ground of all existence.*" Almaas, A.H., 1996 p 344

nuptial or sexual interpretations. But I must emphasize that these are interpretations *of* an experience, rather than the experience itself.

The ego and ecstasy -- non-disclosure or obfuscation?

In my opinion, we have difficulty in knowing what to do with objectless experience, those experiences outside ego bounds. For instance, a person who touches upon the unitive, ecstatic experience even for a moment, a moment outside a constricting ego, may then interpret this as being especially chosen to be a Messiah, and insist that others recognize this to be true. While on a *symbolic* level I can interpret the Messianic calling as a psychotic re-visioning his world with redemptive imagery, psychiatric wards contain people who insist on the *literal* truth of it, and for whom the transformative possibility has been lost in a delusion. Sometimes these individuals realize that pathology lies in the attempt to disclose to or to convince others who obviously are not sharing the experience. I come to an important point; while I maintain that all human experience be open to investigation, I also discover that certain traditions require that they remain silent about their experiences. For example, for the Sufis, disclosure of their mystical experiences of ecstasy would disqualify them. "*For those who know do not speak; and those who speak do not know.*"¹⁶⁴ I can see how this principle of non-disclosure serves to protect against the experience being taken over and used by the ego, rather than being one of deliberate obfuscation.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ A Taoist aphorism which is very much applicable to Sufism, from the Tao ti Ching

¹⁶⁵ Ferguson writes of another association from the Greek, which lends weight to non-disclosure: "*Mystery, from the Greek word myein to keep one's mouth shut, hence a secret revealed to initiates.*" Ferguson, J. 1976, p 125

Lacan argued that all societies confiscate to some degree, that is that they allow or even encourage the invasion of the psyche, and that some societies even 'mutilate'¹⁶⁶ the psyche. The interest in mysticism in the current day could well be a counter to our pre-occupation with mirrors, the appearance of things, and the 'mutilation' spoken of by Lacan. For instance, I can see the mutilation of the corpse of Gloria in Kristeva's novel, "Possessions" as a defacing of the 'specular image', the identity of the false self that has already caused a mutilation of the capacity for Being. This reflects the line: *"On the surface, (the specular image) an intelligible lie, underneath the unintelligible truth."*¹⁶⁷ The comment from Charles Peguy: *"Everything begins in mysticism and ends in politics"*, echoes the same thought – that we maim by turning that which is essentially a subjective experience, into an objective one, and acquisition of the ego. It may be that it becomes a mutilation polarity, where one moves from not being seen for one's self, mutilation, to seeing for one's self, mysticism. I move now to examine some examples of the phenomenology of this 'seeing for one's self' of the mystical experience.

Examples of ecstatic experience - St John of the Cross and Bucke

I regard it necessary to include some examples of ecstatic experiences¹⁶⁸, and I have chosen those of two men, one a psychiatrist, Dr Maurice Bucke and the

¹⁶⁶ "All societies probably confiscate to some degree, but not all mutilate, as Lacan has argued." Berman, M. 1988 P 49

¹⁶⁷ From Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*.

¹⁶⁸ As a footnote to the discussion of ecstasy as mystical experience, I would like to point out that researchers on mysticism have concluded that ecstasy is by no means a universal experience among mystics, nor does it prove or disprove the authenticity of the experience. For example, although the French researcher Poulain delineated 4 stages of mystical experience that included ecstatic states, the French Jesuit, Joseph de Guibert (1877-1942), maintained that ecstasy was simply a consequence *"arising from the weakness of the human organism unable to stand such a powerful inflow of spirit without losing the use of its physical and psychological faculties. He concluded that this lack did not indicate that his experience was less profound than that of the person who lost the use of his external senses in ecstasy; it would simply mean that he was strong in body and in psyche."* Johnston, W. 1993, P78

other a monk, St John of the Cross, because they both include elements that are more or less universal, especially in regard to the criteria for true mystical experience, which I defined in chapter one. Dr Maurice Bucke, (1837-1901) a Canadian psychiatrist who reformed the institutions for the insane during the 1850's, had experiences of ecstatic illumination. All at once, without warning of any kind, he found himself *"wrapped around as it were by a flame-coloured cloud....Directly afterwards came upon me a sense of exultation, of immense joyousness accompanied or immediately followed by an intellectual illumination quite impossible to describe... I saw and knew that the Cosmos is not dead matter but a living Presence, that the soul of man is immortal,... that the foundation principle of the world is what we call love..."*¹⁶⁹ St John of the Cross (1543-1591) wrote similarly. For both men, these experiences were *transient*, as they did not continue perpetually, and *passive* in that they were not actively seeking these experiences. They also were endowed with a sense of knowing, of gnosis, *"I saw and knew"*, *"my spirit was endowed with understanding"*, and *ineffability*, as the experience was *"quite impossible to describe"*. It is noteworthy that both of these men continued to write and be involved in their communities, and thus fulfil my definition of *the lived life*. Both were motivated by *compassion*, to do this work, Dr Bucke especially in his psychiatric reforms. The quality of *joy* was present in *"a sense of exultation, of immense joyousness"*, for Dr Bucke, and St John of the Cross was filled with light such as its rays shone from his face,

In chapter six, I suggest that the psychological type of the individual would be one of that factors that would make them more or less prone to physical ecstasy. I speculate therefore, that lack of ecstatic manifestation might well indicate a particularly well-grounded psyche. It is significant, too, that in the Zen Buddhist tradition, (William Johnston, 1993, P78) even in the deepest spiritual experiences, physical ecstasy is virtually unknown. In Zen, as in other time-honoured disciplines, the emphasis on bodily preparation is strong.

¹⁶⁹ Bucke, M. 1993, pp 9-10

even although he was at the time imprisoned by the Church establishment for his work of reforms. Imprisonment is not the environment that one usually associates with joy yet the visions still came. St John of the Cross wrote;¹⁷⁰ *"I stood enraptured in ecstasy, beside myself, and in my every sense no sense remained. My spirit was endowed with understanding, understanding naught, all science transcending. The higher I ascended the less I understood. It is the dark cloud illuminating the night. Therefore he who understands knows nothing, ever all science transcending."*¹⁷¹

Inner wholeness and illusion

I now wish to return to the notion that it is through our dedication to unity and wholeness that we approach mystical experience, and I propose that Jung's idea of individuation is one way within our western culture that this can be done. An unexpected result of our dedication to inner wholeness and unity –this truly can come as a surprise – is that "all hell is let loose". Irina Tweedie, an English woman who sought the guidance of a Sufi teacher when in her 50's said, *"he made me 'descend into hell,' the cosmic drama enacted in every soul as soon as it dares lift its face to the light."*¹⁷² Caroline Myss, a contemporary writer on

¹⁷⁰ St John of the Cross, *Life and Works*

¹⁷¹ I can relate to his reference to the dark cloud, because I too had the experience of infinity as *darkness* rather than the *light* that I had been led to believe was the 'acceptable way', partly through hearing of peoples near-death experiences. (It is worth emphasizing that the darkness is both a phenomenological experience, as well as a metaphorical one) It makes me wonder if the near-death experience is nothing at all like the mystical one. This is particularly paradoxical for me, in that I felt as if I was near death myself! Yet, I see that for this experience to happen at all requires the death of the ego. Yet, *"Initiatory death proves the clean slate on which will be written the successive revelations whose end is the formation of a new man."* (Eliade p xiii) Perhaps it is simply a matter of ontological insecurity. This discussing is furthered by the idea that *"the life of man is (or, more correctly, ought to be) a process of spiritualization which reaches its climax with death. If this is so, what happens abruptly in ecstasy and sudden death may happen gradually in the aging process. There is the same inflow of spirit, the same expansion of consciousness; but the very slowness of the process makes integration easier."* Johnston, W. 1993 p 128

¹⁷² Irina Tweedie, *Daughter of Fire*, page xx

mysticism,¹⁷³ reports that *"In seeking union, we are asking to have all physical, psychological, and emotional "illusions" removed from our lives. Once this process of removal begins, we awaken an internal voice of authority that immediately begins to compete with every external authority in our lives, which can throw us into internal turmoil, or even "spiritual schizophrenia."*¹⁷⁴

Contemporary psychology at odds with mystical experience and the making of meaning

"Everything that is interesting happens in the shadows; we know nothing of the real life of the human race." Celine.

In relation to the illusion removal process, I hold that it is important that we consider what are the prevailing attitudes within the psychological professions. These professions, in my view, carry the role which was that of the priesthood in times past, that is, guardians and guides to the soul (psyche). However, I agree with Jung who cautioned that *"conventional religion and conventional psychotherapy both try, consciously or unconsciously, to deny their roots in the numinous. The sense of the numinous is all but lost upon modern Christians, and in psychology the mysteries of the soul are dismissed in favour of rationalistic explanations for human behaviour and problems."*¹⁷⁵ Jung goes even further to claim that *"the clinical practice of psychotherapy is a mere makeshift that does its utmost to prevent numinous experiences. The fact is that the approach to the numinous is the real therapy and inasmuch as you attain to the*

¹⁷³ *"I completed a Master's Degree in the study of mysticism and schizophrenia"* -Caroline Myss Ph.D., 1996, P 19

¹⁷⁴ Myss, C. 1996, P 268

¹⁷⁵ Jung, CW, Letters

*numinous experiences you are released from the curse of pathology.'*¹⁷⁶ Jung also made the statement that *"in his experience no one over thirty five was ever healed of her problems without acquiring a true religious attitude."*¹⁷⁷ Johnston emphasizes this when he says that psychologists will *"never understand the human psyche with all its altered states until they look carefully at the mystical journey towards wholeness."*¹⁷⁸ In my own opinion, a true psychological perspective, an adequate view of the soul, can be gained only when one begins with a framework that includes the numinous.

Jung was much influenced by the Gnostics, who, with their emphasis on self-knowledge, he thought *"were nothing other than psychologists."*¹⁷⁹ A prerequisite for this direct knowledge, or knowledge of the heart is a looking within, a self knowledge. Even Confucius, in 500BC was considering that *'in archery we have something like the way of the Higher Man. When the archer misses the centre of the target he turns around and seeks for the cause of his failure in himself'*. According to Jung, however, not only the origin of fault lay within self, but something else, the potential "sacred figures".¹⁸⁰

A place for the symbolic

Because working with a Jungian perspective involves an active use of the symbolic, it is important to my discussion, which revolves around direct experience, to address the idea of symbols and the symbolic in reference and

¹⁷⁶ Jung, CW letters vol 1

¹⁷⁷ quoted in Sanford, J. 1996, p 152

¹⁷⁸ Johnston, W. 1993 p 252

¹⁷⁹ Jung CW vol 9 ii par.347

relation to, and perhaps in contrast with, the phenomenological. Certainly, for instance, the contemporary philosopher Almaas is critical of Jung's analogical, mythological and symbolological approach which he feels is at odds with direct spiritual experience, a direct experience of the Self.¹⁸¹ He feels that "the phenomenological exploration keeps us in touch with the actual lived experience, while looking for symbolism and meanings tends to take us away from it,"¹⁸² though he does refer to the Sufi's and the Tibetans¹⁸³ whose symbols he considers "external experiences of a deeper mystery, which they not only hide but also reveal."¹⁸⁴ My view is that both phenomenology and symbolism are needed. It is here that I turn to Kristeva to support what I consider to be one of the most important processes in this discussion of the phenomenological (direct experience) versus the symbolic. Rather than view this as an opposition, Kristeva demonstrates that experience comes initially through the semiotic, and later becomes translated by means of the symbolic.¹⁸⁵

Individuation and beyond

Individuation as preparation for the spiritual experience

CGJung emphasized repeatedly that the process of individuation is purely a psychological rather than a spiritual one. Irina Tweedie, the Sufi teacher, agrees:

¹⁸¹ Rather, Almaas' approach is that "when it is directly apprehended, it is recognized as an ontological reality, the most important element of which is its phenomenology, that is, the quality of its actual perceived existence." Almaas, A.H., 1996, p. 460

¹⁸² Almaas, A.H., 1996, p. 460

¹⁸³ He does concede that "one may look at symbols differently from the conventional sense, and one may view the appearance of things as pointing to something deeper when this appearance is experienced in a vibrant and living way. In this case the symbol is not standing for something else, but is revealing a deeper reality." Almaas, A.H. 1996, p. 460

¹⁸⁴ Almaas, A.H., 1996 p. 461

¹⁸⁵ Ostow also claims that mystical experience is ineffable, because "it re-creates a pre-verbal experience, (semiotic in Kristeva's terms) (and) its goal cannot be expressed in language, except by allusion and metaphor." Ostow, 1995, 36

"Spiritual Sufi training is a process of individuation leading into the Infinite." ¹⁸⁶

Individuation is a preparation whereby the conscious and unconscious work together in harmony, the manifestation of which is a person who becomes a fully functioning member of human society. ¹⁸⁷

Becoming a functional member of the community is emphasised by mystical teachers within all the spiritual traditions. Many of the greatest figures in Jewish mysticism, such as Caro and Luria, also admonished careful observance of the law, and stressed that the two, observance of the law and mystical experience, are not mutually exclusive, ¹⁸⁸. Jung took care to define the difference between individuation and the mystical union, stating clearly that individuation prepared one for spiritual experience. ¹⁸⁹

Dissolution of boundaries

Here we come upon a major conundrum. The individuation process and that of mysticism particularly require and engender a state of dissolution of boundaries, and the 'fusion of the self with the not-self'. Dissolution of boundaries is also a feature of psychotic experience. ¹⁹⁰ Michael Washburn, in his analysis of the

¹⁸⁶ Irina Tweedie. Spiegelman et al, 1991, P119

¹⁸⁷ "The ultimate goal of Sufi training is to live a guided life, guided from within by that which is the Infinite, able to catch the Divine Hint and act accordingly." Spiegelman et al, 1991, 119

¹⁸⁸ This is similar to the Zen saying which says that enlightenment is an accident, but practice makes us accident prone.

¹⁸⁹ "The experience of God in the form of an encounter or 'unio mystica' is the only possible and authentic way to a genuine belief in God for modern man. The individuation process can 'prepare' man for such an experience. It can open him to the influence of a world beyond his rational consciousness, and give him insight into it. One might say that in the course of the individuation process a man arrives at the entrance to the house of God." Jung, quoted in *The Way of Individuation* by Jolande Jacobi.

¹⁹⁰ "Losing the barrier that protects the self from disintegration or fusion with the non-self is a common basis in psychotic experience. It is also a turning point where a psychotic experience could be diverted into a form of mystical experience. In all cases it is a sine qua non for coming to terms with that unbounded reserve of wisdom in the hidden depth of the collective unconscious. The unconscious is least accessible with rational modes of thinking. Hence the immense value of attempting contact by means of allusion, allegory, symbolism and other modes of communication". Spiegelman et al, 1991, P 95

self in relation to the numinous, the latter which he termed the Dynamic Ground, goes so far as to say that major development requires a '*regression in the service of transcendence*', which can appear to have psychotic features, if only temporarily.¹⁹¹ Dissolution of boundaries is something that is common to both psychosis and gnosis, but it is experienced in very different ways. Some people, through the confines of their own nature and circumstances, are unable to work with this dissolution, and therefore opt for a mode of life and belief that will keep them within safe bounds. Yet Jung speaks of those who adhere to the boundaries of their own concepts of rational control, and the tenets of their religion as those who cannot be reborn themselves and have to be contented with moral conduct, that is to say with adherence to the law, rather than personal spiritual experience and gnosis. In this way behaviour prescribed by rule is a necessary substitute for spiritual transformation. Jung gives parallel examples from St Paul, who distinguishes between the spiritual man (*pneumatikos*) and the carnal man (*sarkikos*), the latter of which must conform to the law, while the former can become free. Jung's view is that the Quran text says, in effect, that the legend promises rebirth to those who have ears to hear, but that those who do not will "*find satisfaction and safe guidance in blind submission to Allah's will*."¹⁹² I claim that both boundedness and unboundedness are characteristics of a healthy individual at all times. This is important to my argument that while

¹⁹¹"The experiences that characterize the regression in the service of transcendenceconstitute a highly unusual symptomatology.... It is little wonder that they usually have been subsumed under psychiatric categories, eg existential neurosis, dissociative psychosis and disintegrative psychosis. Nevertheless ...these symptoms [can be] redemptive rather than degenerative. Accordingly....I will try to show that these symptoms can be fit together as a coherent whole and that.... they can be seen to be natural expressions of human development as it arrives at the point of the transcendence of the ego." Washburn 1988 p 157

¹⁹² Spiegelman et al, 1991, P 13

enchantment and vivifying personal experience is that which we seek, we also need the boundaries of the personal ego through which to function in the world.

Regression in the service of transcendence

Although I will speak about The Dark Borderland of liminality in detail in chapter five, I need to mention here something of the experience of the death¹⁹³ of the ego, or when the ego is no longer able to dominate. Dreams which speak of this death are typical and archetypal, this theme of death, apocalypse, and restoration refer to the death of egoic dominance. Here the spiritual journey is a continuum of the psychological one. Yet there is a resistance to the idea of regression, or descent, in relation to the spiritual life, to spiritual experience. Harry Hunt says that this descent is largely to do with an exaggeration¹⁹⁴ of unintegrated *psychological* aspects¹⁹⁵, so is something that can be, at least in theory, avoided.

Is mystical experience desirable, after all?

As I have demonstrated above, people do seek to have mystical experiences, and in fact do have them. But, as I have also pointed out, there are specific circumstances that would make these experiences difficult. I therefore turn to the question as to whether mystical experiences should rightly be considered desirable, after all. St Teresa of Avila¹⁹⁶ taught that there is a kind of pride and

¹⁹³ "The oldest voyage in the world is from life to a kind of death, a death of the ego that the traveler may confuse with physical death, but it is a journey from the ego to the self." Sugarman, S. 1976, p61

¹⁹⁴ Hunt emphasises that self realization is not independent of psychodynamics. "There are 'meta pathologies', which are analogous on a higher developmental level to the traumas and deficits of object relations theory. Unless these modern widespread vulnerabilities can be dealt with, the various transpersonal approaches to self realization must eventually stir up more pain than the individual will be able to handle, even as contemporary anomie intensifies a sensed lack of presence and aliveness in society in general." Hunt, H.T. 1995

¹⁹⁵ For example: "Almaas (1998) states that the ultimate barrier to spiritual enlightenment is the inability to separate from one's mother, and the mother image within. For Almaas it is only a full acceptance of the suffering of early deficits in sense of self that allows a transmutation in to the essential qualities lost." Hunt, H.T. 1995

¹⁹⁶ Merton, T. 1971, P 122

human self-conceit in wanting by deliberate effort and technique to attain to an experience of the divine essence while bypassing the person of one's fellow human being (the Man-God, in her words) as though he were an obstacle. Merton¹⁹⁷ termed the love experienced in human relationships the "*love (that) is the epiphany of God...*" The consummate importance of the relationship with self, through self-knowledge and the relationship with the other, the neighbour, have been emphasized by many thinkers. In the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus often sounds like a Jungian analyst, and effectively tells his audience that to know oneself at the deepest level is to (already) know God. Clement of Alexandria, in *Paedagogus*,¹⁹⁸ also regarded the human experience and self-knowledge as primary. "*Therefore... it is the greatest of all disciplines to know oneself: for when a man knows himself, he knows God.*" This greatest of all disciplines is the process of individuation, the hard work of self-knowledge.

Individuation and the collective

During the individuation process, as a person develops consciousness, he becomes separate from the collective psychology of the people and culture around him. When a person becomes herself, she becomes a distinctive personality and no longer lives in a 'participation mystique' that is, an unconscious identification with other people, groups or collective movements. "*Thus individuation makes us as persons 'set apart'...such a person is able to relate to others as individuals (not collectively) and also has an individual sense*

¹⁹⁷ Merton, T. 1978 p112

¹⁹⁸ Clement of Alexandria, in *Paedagogus*, "*Therefore, as it seems, it is the greatest of all disciplines to know oneself: for when a man knows himself, he knows God.*" Quoted by Jung collected works vol 9 ii par.347

of morality founded on the Centre and is not identical any longer with the collective morality of the group or culture in which she lives."¹⁹⁹ The individual's life becomes directed by inner rather than outer imperatives,

Thus one withdraws ones projections and tensions are instead experienced within.²⁰⁰ This removing of projections is a major part of the therapeutic work of individuation. Not that individuation is dependent upon therapy or analysis. Someone wisely said, that therapy is all very well for those who can afford it - the rest of us have to make do with relationships. So it is through the salvational other that progress is made, that illusion is confronted.

The Hero's Journey, The Outsider²⁰¹

The Hero motif

My thoughts about The Outsider are primarily that there is a tremendous effort involved in *being* outside the mass culture, the prevailing paradigm, and this could be seen as placing oneself forever, so to speak, in the place of creative chaos, rather than in a perpetually already determined way of living. For the Outsider to live any other way is a form of death, of non freedom to be an individual. To return to Laing, to "*run the risk of either being destroyed by others, or of betraying what he knows.*"

¹⁹⁹ Stanford, 1996, p 161)

²⁰⁰ Jung, Collected Works 11 p394 on self-sacrifice

²⁰¹ " *If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.*" Thoreau

The hero motif in mythology is one way of living the life of the Outsider. The hero's journey is one of departure to some unknown frontier, fulfillment and return. This involves a sacrifice of some kind which results in a transformation of consciousness. This can be an inner or outer heroic quest, and involves something that the hero is ready for, a testing and demonstration of his preparation, although he himself does not know this at the time. This hero is someone who cannot serve the system as it is, and involves "not going over", in the words of Luke Skywalker. This is in contrast to aligning oneself with a programmatic life committed to a system. The Star Wars Trilogy is an appropriate mythology for today, in that the human hero refuses to be taken over by the machine, the technological era. I liken personal experience of the mystical first to that of the Outsider, who is outside the collective, and then secondly to the Hero's journey in that something of value is brought back from this exile and incorporated in the collective.

The Search for Meaning

At the beginning of this chapter I suggested that people are looking to mystical experience in order to find a sense of meaning. Yet the process of finding meaning is essentially paradoxical, in my opinion and experience; "*The Life I am trying to grasp is the me that is trying to grasp it,*" is how RD Laing expressed it.²⁰² Robert Avens said the same thing in a different way. "*The psyche is the projector and the projected in one.*"²⁰³

²⁰² quoted Berman, M. 1981, P 80

²⁰³Avens,R. 1984 p 23

I propose that it is in the *experience of being alive*, to use Joseph Campbell's phrase, that the greatest sense of meaning is to be found. In this sense "*...the experiential grows in importance as men and women search their inner lives for greater meaning.*"²⁰⁴

Beyond meaning - what we are looking for in 'enchantment'

I think that there is also the possibility that a theoretical meaning will be found which is not adequate to the experience; the philosophy or interpretation therefore needs to be adequate to the phenomenology. I believe that the making of meaning always involves personal engagement, that it is always something that involves the emergence of our own 'utterance', to use the words of Kierkegaard.²⁰⁵ For instance, if a system of thought seems to provide a framework of meaning, as in fundamentalism of any kind, it may well satisfy an ego desire for certainty but not a soul or psyche desire for truth, and for the relevance of one's own experience. In this way "*It is only the things that we don't understand that have any meaning,*" any deep-enough meaning.²⁰⁶ This is especially true of encounters with the numinous, and liminal experience in general. "*It is just the most unexpected things, the most terrifyingly chaotic things which reveal a deeper meaning.*"²⁰⁷ The words of Levinas give form to this idea: "*To have meaning is to be situated relative to an absolute that comes from*

²⁰⁴ Smart, N. 1996, P 298

²⁰⁵ "You are merely to give birth to yourself... It is a serious and significant moment ...when in an eternal and unfailing sense one becomes aware of one's self as the person one is." (Kierkegaard Either/Or) Kierkegaard continues that it is through communication and discourse that man is able to become - becoming requires the act of 'utterance'. To fail in this is to depreciate ones-self, to count one's self of little value, to bottle one's self up so that one becomes stagnant and lifeless.

²⁰⁶ Jung, CW9, P65

²⁰⁷ Jung, CW9, P64

that alterity that is not absorbed in being perceived. It is to possess an inexhaustible surplus of attention."²⁰⁸

Conclusion to chapter two:

In this chapter I introduced the idea that people are seeking a sense of meaning, and personal spiritual experience, and that this search is informed by a desire for unity and wholeness. I have argued that mystical experience is a natural flowering proceeding from the developing of personal wholeness through the process of individuation, and the achievement of the coniunctio of the soul with the ego.

I have demonstrated the ways in which the enchanting, numinous and ecstatic are a fertile margin through which the life of the psyche is animated. I have shown how fairy stories, personal and collective mythology and dreams are the vehicles of this vivification, and as such are ways in which Heidegger's concept of Being opens up and reveals itself. I have used the concept of the Greek God Dionysus to discuss the ecstatic function, as that which dissolves boundaries, and is outside the ego, and which can manifest either through mystical gnosis and even through the opening up of a psychosis.

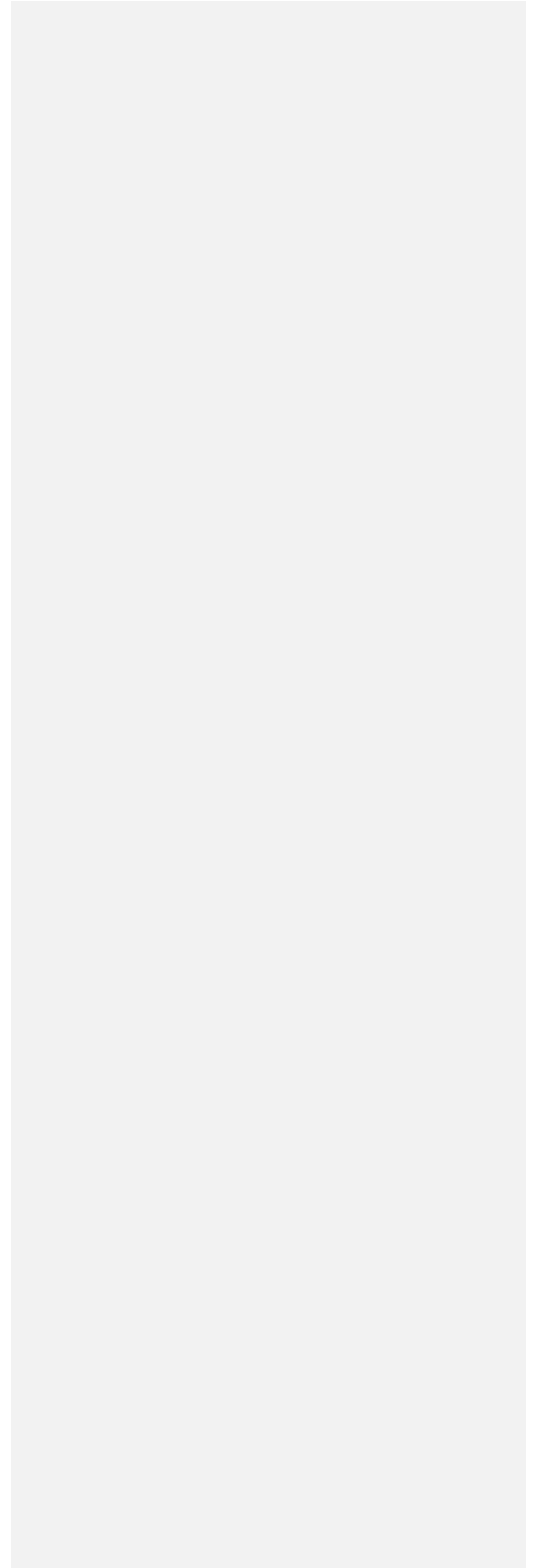
I see a very real danger, through the use of cognitive psychological approaches, that a rationalized stance is possible which leads to an abrogation of the self through the abdication of ecstasy: this I regard as essentially against the sense

²⁰⁸ Levinas, E.1985, P 13

of Being. Finally, I have returned to the discussion of the search for a deep enough sense of meaning as necessarily being beyond the capacity of the ego to understand, and this sense of meaning is instead approached through enchantment, myth, story, the marginal, liminal and numinous.

In the next chapter I will be discussing the psychology of religion through various perspectives, especially Object Relations theory, in particular the idea of God as a Transitional Object.

**Chapter 3: Paradise Lost – Religion, Object Relations Theory
and the psychology of mystical experience**



Introduction to chapter three:

I have found that one single schema does not allow for sufficient complexity to cover my ideas about psychosis and gnosis, so in this chapter, "Paradise Lost", I discover something of the psychology of the Judeo-Christian religion²⁰⁹. I focus on concepts that have been used within contemporary psychology to express a fundamental experience of separation, and how this fundamental assumption of separation frames our religious belief in regard to the need for restitution. I refer especially to Object Relations theory, and the idea of the Transitional Object (T.O.), and compare this theory with ideas from various spiritual traditions to determine if the idea of a basic fault is epoch specific or fundamental to the human condition. I will investigate the role of the idea of "God" as a Transitional Object in Western culture in relation to the desire for one-ness, wholeness, reunion and connectedness; I believe this is important to my discussion of mystical experience because both psychotics and Gnostics claim to achieve reunion through their experience. I also discuss another possibility: that this idea of God is a reaction formation against the unspeakable Other. Overall I intend this chapter to shed light on why the idea of unity and wholeness might be important to us, from both the analytic and spiritual perspectives. This chapter also gives me the opportunity to discuss how an Object Relations view (rather than a Jungian view, which I propose in Chapter six, for instance) adds to the overall understanding of mystical experience. I will also introduce the idea of co-creation especially in relation to the opposites of chaos and order proposed by Suares in his reading of the Quabala.

²⁰⁹ I do not intend this to be an exhaustive study, but rather to touch upon the points most relevant to mystical experience

Object Relations Theory

Philosophy, ascent and 'essent'

I begin by looking for some evidence of the philosophical underpinnings of the basic fault proposed by Balint which is one of the cornerstones of Object Relations Theory. While the dualism of Descartes could be held responsible for this, its roots can be found in Platonic thought. In Heidegger's opinion, "*In Plato...appearance was declared to be mere appearance and thus degraded. At the same time, an idea was exalted to a supersensory realm. A chasm...was created between the merely apparent essent here below and real being somewhere on high.*"²¹⁰ The implication here is that "mere appearance", that is phenomena or being 'here below', is a lesser experience than 'real being', which is situated somewhere else, outside the realm of human possibility. The chasm, is, in my opinion, the gap into which religion, specifically Western religion, places itself.

God As Transitional Object

Object Relations Theory was developed by Donald Winnicott, contributed to by Balint and others, and developed particularly by Klein, although its underpinnings were Freudian: a central pivot of this theory is that a Transitional Object is needed to mediate the gap which separates us from feeling good, whole, complete, fulfilled and not lonely. I propose, then, that our idea of God is the ultimate Transitional Object. Much of the perceived heresy of mystical experience comes from the fact that it is about direct experience, rather than the

²¹⁰ Heidegger. *An introduction to Metaphysics* p 107

God which organized religion gives us as a bridge by which the gap of alienation is managed. Mystical experience needs neither the formula nor the religion, because it is about direct, unmediated experience of Being, of essence. As said by the Sufi mystic, Kabir: *"If you want the truth, I will tell you the truth: Friend, listen: the God whom I love is inside."*²¹¹ A deistic notion, by contrast, serves to foster the idea of a Transitional Object, which is required in order to feel whole. Further, I propose that religion becomes necessary when the 'basic fault', (Balint) which is assumed to arise in the human psyche gets projected onto the external world, so as to create a corresponding gap or fault line, between heaven and earth, God and man. Thus the basic fault has become institutionalized through religion. I suggest that both true mystical experience and psychotic suffering can be a way of getting reborn out of this split; they hold out the possibility of closing down the gap and becoming whole. While the 'basic fault' and the need for the T.O., the teddy-bear, undoubtedly were observed by Winnicott, the question still remains as to whether this basic fault is innate and existential.²¹² Robert Johnson, the Jungian analyst and author, spends 6 months of every year in India, and has done for many years, because he maintains that he is able to experience a culture where this split is presumed not to exist.²¹³

Object relations theory

Donald Winnicott postulated that in order to deal with the terrifying possibility of not being loved by an erratic object of love, usually the parent, the child instead

²¹¹ Kabir, fifteenth century, version by Robert Bly

²¹² On the other hand, theorists such as Michael Fordham, postulate that *"Winnicott's notions about the space between the mother and the infant leaving room for transitional objects and transitional phenomena cannot be substantiated as a general phenomenon."* Fordham, M. 1996. p 198

²¹³ On video tape The Search for the Holy Grail

internalizes the 'badness' and projects onto the parent an unequivocal goodness. The inadequacies of the early holding environment make the child feel that she cannot just relax and be; she has to take things into her own hands, and make sure that she will be safe and well cared for. This orientation manifests in later life as a general distrust of reality. She learns to react instead of being, to manipulate things in an attempt to compensate for inadequate holding, as Winnicott observed... *"If maternal care is not good enough then the infant does not really come into existence, since there is no continuity of being; instead the personality becomes built on the basis of reactions to environmental impingement."*²¹⁴ If this position is not resolved, the religious ideation which would arise is that there is always a god on high, unequivocally good, who needs propitiating in order to tolerate the inherently 'sinful' self. The movement from this fixed position is achieved when the child can 'split', (Klein) and experience the parent as both 'good' and 'bad', and one's self as having the possibility likewise and not devoid of love on either count.²¹⁵

Dionysus, the T.O. and direct experience

As I have already introduced in Chapter two, in terms of the Western world, it is the late advent of Dionysus, the last god to be included within the Greek pantheon and therefore the least known and the most difficult principle to live,

²¹⁴ Winnicott, 1980, p 54, quoted by Almaas, A.H., 1996, p 342

²¹⁵ A logical progression here in religious ideation would be that 'God' is both 'good' and 'bad', and that the self survives anyway. This might seem like a simple idea, but the Book of Job ponders the question deeply as does Jung's "Answer to Job". I refer yet again to Soares and the symbolic understanding of the Hebrew alphabet. According to him, these letter-symbols have always provided a code demonstrating a non-deistic interplay between the opposites, primarily in the psyche of man, but also in the cosmos. To go even further, what we have come to translate as *Satan* in Genesis "is a continuity in existence which resists its own necessary destruction." [See Chapter seven Killing the Buddha] Soares, C. 1992, P 192 In this sense, even "God" is "a continuity in existence" which we consider to be permanent and unchangeable, but which needs to be destroyed. This point is so important that one of Qabala's most fundamental postulates must here be insisted on: YHVH is not a deity and the real mystery which is totally impossible to understand is, simply, existence. Just as the Aboriginal people say, "Yorro Yorro, everything standing up alive". Or the idea of *Nirvana* – devoid of a subject and object relation.

which gives us the possibility of direct experience of the 'transcendent', of the numinous, "*experiencing that deity within one's self*"²¹⁶, rather than placating an outer deity (the T.O.) in order to feel good and whole. Yet I believe that the ecstatic quality of joy, of feeling satisfied within one's self, and therefore of not projecting fulfillment onto an external object, is still a most difficult principle for a Westerner to live.

Other religions not based on basic fault

Other religions do not utilize the idea of a basic fault and T.O. For instance, we are told in the Creation hymn of the Rig Veda that no one knows how the Creation happened, and that possibly even the One does not know.²¹⁷ This to me is an illustration of a culture where the need to know, and the need to ascribe to the gods at least, the ability to know, is absent. The idea of a T.O, who knows, is also absent. I suggest that mystical experience, that is of personal knowing, can be considered a further stage in the evolution of religion as a whole, where direct experience replaces the T.O.

In approaching this question of whether the idea of a basic fault or gap which the T.O. is intended to bridge, represents something that is fundamental to the human condition or is epoch-specific, I am impressed by how the very structure which language takes in a particular culture actually forms and informs the psyche, or, conversely, represents experience within that culture. To demonstrate this, the Chinese character for *jen* - one of the first of five cardinal

²¹⁶ Sanford, J. 1995, P106

²¹⁷ *From Commentary on the Rig Veda* Quoted in Briggs, J. and Peat, D. 1989, P 11

virtues in Confucian thought - is a composite of two characters, one for man and the other for two. It stands for the conjunction of one person with another. In Confucianism the separation and isolation, which we assume to lie in the basic fault, never exists.

Religion as transference

Is the Universe friendly?

According to Julia Kristeva, *"If we look at it in a fundamental psychological way, religion operates in much the same way as a transference. It gives voice to a blocked, inherent and terrifying meaning."*²¹⁸ Through religion we are able to address fundamental desires and illusions. Christianity, as I have shown, allows for projective identification with the father.

Kristeva, for instance, discusses *"the relation between religion and hallucinatory wish fulfillment."*²¹⁹ Kristeva proposes that *"In reading about famous mystical experiences, I felt that faith could be described, perhaps rather simplistically, as what can only be called a primary identification with a loving and protective agency."*²²⁰ I take up this statement in reference to how each of us individually experiences the semiotic as the body of mother, as the fundamental ground of incarnation. I suggest that how the mystic interprets the experience of unity and one-ness, whether in joy, distrust or even terror, have the last analysis, to do with one's experience of what Kristeva terms the semiotic. In that mystical experiences are primarily of the body and at a preverbal and presymbolic level, I

²¹⁸ Julia Kristeva, J. 1998. p3

²¹⁹ P x Otto Kernberg, in the Preface to *In the Beginning was Love*, by Julia Kristeva, J. 1998, p3

²²⁰ Kristeva, J. 1998, P 24

believe that this is inescapable. Here I think of Einstein's big question, "Is the universe friendly?" In my understanding, he was able, through his intellect and intuition, to propose a theory, that of quantum physics, which challenged the foundation of scientific thinking to the core, but he was unable, on an ontological level to endure the implications of this in chaos theory. Therefore he said: "*You believe in a God who plays dice, and I in complete law and order.*"²²¹ I propose that when certain levels of oceanic feelings arise, with it comes a terror. I suggest that it is the body-ego, to use Freud's term, or the semiotic, to use Kristeva's, which registers this ontological fear. I understand T.S.Eliot to be speaking about this level of fear in *The Dry Salvages*, from the *Four Quartets*:²²²

"The backward look behind the assurance

Of recorded history, the backward half-look

Over the shoulder, towards the primitive terror."

I believe that it is only through a sufficiently safe holding environment that the most profound non-ego states can be endured and experienced as the faith that Kristeva proposes. Ostow²²³ and others such as Hunt and Almaas²²⁴ suggest that mystical experiences can only become truly gnostic when attachment to the mother, which Kristeva would see as occurring in the semiotic, is finally resolved.

²²¹ Albert Einstein in a letter to Max Born. Quoted by Stewart, I. 1989.

²²² Faber and Faber, *Mcmxlv*, p 29

²²³ "...the sensation of union represents regression to an archaic mental function, facultative for the mystic, obligatory for the psychotic. The mystic would seem to be trying to reinstate his earliest sensations of unity with his mother, the state of mind that exists before the process of differentiation that we call separation-individuation...in fact to undo that differentiation." Ostow, M. 1995, p18-19

²²⁴ "Almaas (1998) states that the ultimate barrier to spiritual enlightenment is the inability to separate from one's mother, and the mother image within. For Almaas it is only a full acceptance of the suffering of early deficits in sense of self that allows a transmutation in to the essential qualities lost." Quoted by Hunt, H. 1995

Transference, counter-transference and mystical experience

Andrew Samuels expands upon the idea that the therapy situation, where transference and counter-transference take place, itself is mystical. He says, "*In the countertransference experience, the image is being made flesh. Where that means that the Other ...is becoming personal...I would conclude that an analyst's countertransference may be further understood by regarding it as a religious or mystical experience.*"²²⁵ Samuels goes on to say that it is important to continue a dialogue within psychoanalysis "*to make sure that analytical mysticism has a context and does not expend itself onanistically and nihilistically.*"²²⁶ Samuels also connects the experience of ecstasy with the knowledge of the meaning of life as it is explored in therapy. "*Similarly, in Chassidic mysticism, reference is made to a quality known as Hitlahabut, or ecstasy.*" Buber held that this quality transforms ordinary knowledge into a knowledge of the meaning of life. For the Chassids, *Hitlahabut* expresses itself bodily, in dance. As Martin Buber says, "*In dance, the whole body becomes subservient to the ecstatic soul.*"²²⁷ Samuels claims that "*analysis is a kind of dance, and ecstasy is not an inappropriate word to describe some of the emotions generated....*"²²⁸ it would seem then that transubstantiation,²²⁹ where something is transformed, is accompanied by a release of energy which can be defined as ecstatic. Carolyn Myss describes the moment of forgiveness, of being able to forgive, as ecstatic. This suggests to me that forgiveness is achieved outside the ego. This discussion of therapy is important as I believe it places

²²⁵ Samuels, A. 1989. p 166

²²⁶ *ibid* P 167

²²⁷ Buber 1931, p35

²²⁸ Samuels, A. 1989. p 166

²²⁹ For more on transubstantiation see Preparation for Mystical Experiences, and Liminality

therapy as a mystical experience involved with the making of meaning beyond meaning which is by nature numinous and ecstatic, both for the therapist and the client.²³⁰ While Symington, for instance, has proposed therapy as the new religion, I believe that this is going too far, and in fact is totally off track, because while religion exists as a transference, therapy works *by means of* transference.

Mystical experience as reaction-formation, sublimation, and compensation

Particularly if religion and spiritual experience is sought as a reaction formation to the existential and personal difficulties of life, if it is a sublimation of thwarted desire, it is likely that all that is not found in one's life will be projected into the spiritual life. I see this projection as a translation of locus from the psychological to the spiritual. In this way, spiritual experience is sought as a balm, indeed perhaps as an easy option, to a troubled psychological life, both consciously and unconsciously. If this seeking is done as a *conscious* compensation, the seeker may be better prepared for the demands of the spiritual life. If done *unconsciously*, the difficulties encountered by an already fragile ego may well be quite a shock, sufficient to induce psychosis; that is, instead of finding oneself comforted, one is expected to do the hard work of self-examination! In discussing the Islamic mystics, the Sufis, Spiegleman says "*We in the West have no idea of what the spiritual life implies in reality. Spiritual life is hard and rough.*"²³¹ I suggest as a paraphrase, that Individuation is hard and tough, and the nature of the preparation of Individuation can make the difference between an outcome of psychosis or gnosis. I have discussed the need for preparation on the

²³⁰ I refer back to Levels of Mystical Experience, the Aha for instance, and epiphanies

²³¹ Spiegleman et al, 1991, P128

psychological level being a prelude to the experience of the spiritual, rather than something that can be bypassed, in Chapter Two.

Reunion and Regression

At this point I need to clarify a very important point in which psychosis and gnosis differ, in relation to the desire for, and experience of, wholeness and unity. Some, such as Berman²³² and Mortimer Ostow, say the desire for unity and wholeness as expressed in both mysticism and psychosis reflects a wish to return to the security of the womb, to revisit a one-ness with mother, or the ever-elusive (ideal) father.²³³ They see this desire to return as a regressive tendency. In part, I agree with this position, particularly in relation to the psychotic, when the desire to *return* to an undifferentiated state is a denial or circumvention of the demand to become and be a separate individual. For the mature mystic, however, who has already carried the burden of individuation I see this return as one of integration, in the way that chaos theory posits the existence of chaos, followed by integration at a higher level, followed by chaos, ie the movement in and out of 'the real.' I discuss this in more depth in the chapter Killing the Buddha.

Neumann²³⁴ addresses this problem of regression by distinguishing between two kinds of mysticism: namely 'high' mysticism, and 'oroborus' mysticism. He

²³² "Situations of intense relatedness – romantic love, psychosis, mystical experience – involve a "regression" to wherein it is impossible to distinguish where Self ends and Other begins." Berman, M. 1988, p 38

²³³ "Mystical experience is built upon two simultaneous regressions: one is the yearning regressively to unite with the image of the parent of early childhood; and the other is the regression of ego function to an unrestrained tendency to synthesize and integrate, so that the individual loses his sense of individuality and seems to merge into the universe. The ego regression permits the illusion of the reunion". Ostow, M. 1995, p 22

²³⁴ Neumann, E 1969, p 399

designates the oroborus mystic as infantile, as arising from an undeveloped psychological condition. He says that the oroborus mystic *"yearns to return to, to be gathered into, the maternal womb. His desire is to do away with the creative principle, which begets form, conflict, and suffering, and to achieve beatific non-existence in the divine womb of nothingness..."* Neumann then goes on to describe *"high" mysticism, "leading to nothingness - whether it be called godhead, void, or nirvana - by no means represents a regressive process where the ego is dissolved. The mystics' own accounts often suggest this quite erroneously, because the experience of departing from the old ego-position encouraged such an interpretation."*²³⁵ The importance of his definition is that one form of mysticism, the oroboric, relates to projections of un-worked-through psychological issues which we could see as psychosis, while the other displays a very different attitude of responsibility and relatedness to the world.

Seeking Of Religion as Reaction Formation

I have already mentioned in passing that the seeking of religion can be a reaction formation, that is, that whatever is so greatly desired in another arena of life but is unattainable, or is prohibited, becomes projected onto the screen of religion. A Sufi example is of a young woman who 'took the veil'²³⁶ in pursuit of a religious form and structure that could obviate her inner need to attain individuation the arduous way. The 'religion' she was seeking was a reaction formation to the underlying conflict of opposites. She was aligning herself with the good' in order to avoid the 'bad'. Fundamentalist religions (and systems) appeal to people for

²³⁵ Neumann, E. 1969, p 403

²³⁶ Spiegelman et al, 1991, p98

whom splitting²³⁷ has not been achieved to a sufficient degree where the tolerance of 'good' and 'bad' within is possible. So these systems rely on the projection of badness onto other 'unenlightened' systems, the Devil, demons, entities and evil spirits, or 'undesirable' groups.²³⁸ In this way religion is seen as a short-cut to wholeness, but the practice of religion in this way becomes a guarantee of one-sidedness. A conflict and paradox-free life seems to offer a paradise where discomfort, fear, and worry do not exist. Although such an existence retards the development of consciousness, many of us prefer it. We resist the effort required to become conscious of our own internal tensions and conflicts, preferring instead to assign them to the world in which we live through projection. As Jung commented: "*Very often behaviour prescribed by rule is a substitute for spiritual transformation.*"²³⁹ And in 'reality', (the real - Lacan) there is no substitute. The Tao, the inner way of direct experience, the rule of 'the real', (Lacan's term for that which is beyond signification, see killing the Buddha) is then lost but the void that is left is approached in many ways. Yet I propose that in perpetuating a projection of the good/bad split, religions which contain this ideation, while perhaps keeping the individual within a sort of psychic safety, also prolong a period of dependency where the individual is protected from a coming of age when the good/bad split, the heaven and earth, the above and below are dealt with as internal components rather than projections. An aphorism from the Tao te Ching²⁴⁰ expresses this idea thus:

²³⁷ | refer here to Winnicott and Klein, as discussed above, where good and bad are able to be experienced within, rather than projected without.

²³⁸ Spiegelman et al, 1991

²³⁹ Jung, Vol. 1, 236-7

²⁴⁰ Tao te Ching 1992

"When the Tao is lost, there is goodness.

When goodness is lost, there is morality.

When morality is lost, there is ritual.

Ritual is the husk of true faith, the beginning of chaos."

The Forces Of Genesis

Participation mystique

In Chapter two I have already discussed *participation mystique* in relation to being individuals who can participate, and even cause change in, their environment, as do the aboriginal people. However, I need to make a further distinction between psychosis and gnosis in the psychological processes that may be involved. Ostow cautions that *"By approaching God closely and influencing him, one can begin to think of doing magic, including hurrying the advent of the Messiah....Many psychotics, too, believe that they can magically influence others and the world around them."*²⁴¹ While Ostow is concerned about psychosis, and is certainly speaking of a real possibility for delusion, I argue that the act of participating in Creation is one of mystical experience. Levinas,²⁴² for instance, speaks of "the irruption of God within Being". Being a co-creator is the theme that Suarez posits as well, certainly from an inner psychic position. In his proposition, the Creation-centred theology focuses on God needing man as

²⁴¹ Ostow, 1995, P 24

²⁴² "But man is also the irruption of God within Being, or the bursting out of Being towards God; man is the fracture in Being which produces the act of giving, with hands which are full, in place of fighting and pillaging. This is where the idea of being chosen comes from, an idea which can deteriorate into pride, but originally expresses the awareness of an appointment which cannot be called into question; an appointment which is the basis of ethics and which, through its indisputability, isolates the person in his responsibility." Hand, S. 1989, p 202

much as man needs God, of the one not really being possible without the other, much in the same way that Winnicott speaks of there not being a mother without a baby. A co-creationist stance does away with the need for a Transitional Object, and is more compatible with the notion of individuation, in my opinion. Contrary to Ostow, who cautions that this sense of “influencing God” is a delusion, I have the sense that for psychotics, co-creation, rather than Fall/Redemption may be one of the major ways of gaining access to wholeness and ‘being.’ The quantum physics principle of the observer and the observed being influenced by each other gives a scientific interpretation of this principle.

Co-creation

The proposition which I will develop here, which does not involve the idea of God as a Transitional Object, is that we are co-creators with ‘the eternally real.’ When a person begins to enter the whirlwind of the creative/destructive energies which Soares describes as the forces of genesis, every complex in the person is activated, every shadowy aspect. The greatest danger occurs, says Soares, when one has seen the abyss that separates the inner opposites and sets about to bridge that space; on one side is ego-consciousness and on the other what is not-known. This confronting of the inner opposites is an inescapable part of individuation, as we have already seen in chapter two. When I finally give up the illusion of defending my ego self, a supernal peace ensues, and a great deal of effortless energy is available, according to Soares. By being the place in which the opposites of creation and destruction work together, I become part of genesis, a partner in creation, a *creatura* as the Gnostics used to say, rather than

the *pleroma*, or that which lies beyond our understanding. Jung sounded like Heidegger when he said, *"In the final analysis we count for something only because of the essential we embody, and if we do not embody that, life is wasted."*²⁴³ Thus relationship with infinity implies a gnostic rather than doctrinal experience. Zohar sees this through...*"a quantum mechanical view of consciousness (which) allows us to see ourselves...as full partners in the processes of nature, 'both in matter and of matter.'"*²⁴⁴

The archetypes of genesis.

I wish to develop the idea of creation further, namely that as well as being 'co-creators', we are also the location of creation itself. I hold that it is important that I put forward the idea that disorder and chaos accompany emerging ego consciousness as is imaged in creation myths, as I believe this provides a model by which we can understand the re-creation of the psyche in both gnosis and psychosis. As Jung said, *"New psychic contents commonly rise out of chaos, which is the sine qua non of any regeneration of the spirit and the personality."*²⁴⁵

I hold that we have within us the polarities of static permanence (an ego-centred narcissism) and radical change (gnosis). That is, that life itself is dependent upon interplay between the two, not an eradication of one. I agree with Soares idea that the creative chaos as provided for us in the metaphor of Genesis is an archetype of transformation, that it is part of "creation". Soares says that the "revelation" inherent in the Genesis story is actually about self and that we must

²⁴³ Jung. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* 1961 p 325.

²⁴⁴ Zohar, 1991, P27

²⁴⁵ Jung CW 12,96

*"instruct our sense-based thought to yield to the disruptive pressure of timelessness and to the necessity of allowing its immanence to blend with its opposite and still keep itself alive."*²⁴⁶ Soares clarifies this by saying that a direct apprehension of something is required of us, not a doctrine or a teaching. Any tendency to static permanence²⁴⁷ prevents the possibility of Revelation, of the experience of the numinous. The numinous strikes a person with awe, wonder and joy, but may also evoke fear, terror, and total disorientation; as co-creators we are the site of both static permanence and awesome possibility. I believe that this site is that of mystical experience and is equally available and experienced in, psychosis and gnosis.

*The vital action of the archetypes is to release the human psyche from its cocoon of defensive narcissism. In this way, the archetypes have the function of the symbolic in Kristeva's ideas, in which she claims that it is through the development of the symbolic that narcissism is overcome, and that through the symbolic the threat to the ego is contained.*²⁴⁸ *Using this model, we need the "tension of the opposites" in order to enter into Being.*

I will discuss scientific theory in another context in Chapter seven, but here I wish to introduce the idea that archetypes are also mediated by Quantum theory: As

²⁴⁶ Soares, C. 1992, p 128

²⁴⁷ Anticipating the tendency to determinism he says: "It is important to learn that our urge towards static permanence goes very deep...Any static factor in our minds eventually jeopardizes the flow of newness, freshness, which is the special quality of human genesis. The cause of fear is easy to see: one does not want to be disturbed; therefore one calls good anything which is the mind's container, and calls evil everything which will endanger the maintenance of one's armour of certainties." Soares, C. 1992, p 128

²⁴⁸ Soares says "In other words, we are forever placing ourselves in opposition to, and in conflict with, the vital action of the archetypes, at the very origin of our psyches; and in so doing, we continually propel ourselves into a contradiction that becomes more and more intense. We are the containing elements of the archetypes, as well as the resistance to what they contain. We are at the same time life and that which encompasses life, providing the resistance enabling life to manifest itself. Whenever this resistance gets too strong the life force cannot get through to us." Soares, 1992, p 133

Zohar²⁴⁹ and Singer²⁵⁰ say, it also allows a creative relationship of partnership. Or, as Prigogine claimed *"reality.. is revealed to us only through an active construction in which we participate."*²⁵¹ This has enormous implications, because it no longer allows us to be removed from creation, so to speak, but partners in it.

Conclusion to chapter three:

In this chapter I have discussed several different psychological approaches to the idea of God as the basis for religion. I have presented the Object Relations Theory in which I place God as the ultimate Transitional Object or teddy-bear, based upon the Object Relations idea that we all possess a basic fault which needs to be repaired and an inner gap which needs to be bridged. This positing of God as a T.O is important to my overall discussion because the T.O can then be seen as a substitute for personal spiritual experience, and a projective screen onto which inner conflicts can be played out, rather than the resolution of opposites within as required by individuation, for instance. I have also discussed the possibility that the idea of God is a defence, a reaction formation against the Unspeakable Other, which we paradoxically desire but cannot have. I returned briefly to the idea of Dionysus, the most recent God of the Greek pantheon and therefore representing the most clumsy of our capacities, as that which invites us into direct experience and therefore that which eliminates the need for a Transitional Object to enable us to endure both separation and union. Rather

²⁴⁹ "full partners in the processes of nature, 'both in matter and of matter.'" Zohar, 1991, P27

²⁵⁰ "We are not helpless before the chaos, the *Mysterium Tremendum*, but rather we have matured to a point where we can become a sort of junior partner with the unknown God. We move in the same rhythms as all creation, because, after all, we are part of creation - we are *creatura*, as the old Gnostics used to say, in contrast to the *pleroma*, the fullness that lies beyond our understanding." Singer, 1990, P 220

²⁵¹ Prigogine, *Order Out of Chaos* p 293

than subscribe to the idea of God as the provider of a now lost Paradise, I have argued for the possibility of a continuous 'repristination'²⁵² through co-creative energies as provided by the metaphor of Genesis. I have utilized Suares radical reading of the Quabala as the metaphoric creative and destructive forces of an inner and continued genesis to demonstrate both mystical experience itself and the creative/destructive experience of psychosis.

In the next chapter I turn to a discussion of historical attitudes to mystical experience, and the relationship between the phenomenology and interpretation of mystical experience.

Chapter Four: Mysticism And History

²⁵² Jung, CW, Vol 9,I, pp. 236-7

“It is the customary fate of new truths to begin as heresies and to end as superstitions.” (Thomas Huxley, “The Coming of Age of the Origin of Species”.)

Introduction to chapter four:

In this chapter I discuss some of the historical attitudes in the West to mysticism and mystics, and how this attitude differs today, and the implications of this change. I look at the phenomenology of and interpretation of mystical experience in different cultures and eras, and compare and contrast them with current attitudes. I consider that what is thought of as psychosis today has been thought gnostic in the past. I speak more specifically about heresy and orthodoxy as complementary yet opposing forces, because I believe that this is important to understanding our attitudes when discussing psychosis and gnosis. I argue that the proper way to examine mysticism is to examine the times that produced it, and the specific individual involved, rather than the content of the experience alone.

Mysticism, whether thought of as gnostic or psychotic is related to time and circumstance, that is, to context.

In my view, mysticism is a reflection as well as an expression of the time and circumstance that produced it, rather than of an absolute.²⁵³ Taking this contextual position resolves some of the confusion as to what has been historically considered to be unquestionably of gnostic value and now is being revised as psychotic.

²⁵³ The music historian Allen talks about the way in which we evaluate the music of the past in the following statement, but I claim that this position can equally apply to a study of mysticism. He proposes that “*we abandon the ‘single lofty point of view’ (about) music [mysticism], in order to find a pluralistic method by which we may deal in a scientific way with different arts of music [experiences of mysticism] in different eras, with different peoples made up of different individuals.*” Allen, W.D. 1962, xxvi

Firstly, a brief historical overview

I now discuss how different periods in history have framed a different context in which the mystical was viewed. I have already discussed how in Greek times, Dionysus brought the ecstatic into everyday life. However, since then, as the patriarchal religions gained in power, the old ways of Dionysus, which centered on the feminine, diminished and were finally lost, especially under the Roman emphasis on law and order. The mystical found a place in medieval times through Alchemy; right to the time of Newton, himself a well-accomplished alchemist, Alchemy provided the goal of the Philosopher's Stone, which was achieved through the great opus or mystical labour. The fourteenth century mystic, author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*²⁵⁴ is unknown, but he/she was writing for the first time in the common vernacular and with a new emphasis on the individuality of the soul, and its own capacity for direct knowledge. By the end of the 17th century mysticism had lost the significance which it had for those such as Hildegard of Bingen in the fourteenth century; Aldous Huxley mourned this loss of vitality by saying that *"where there is no vision, the people perish; and that if those who are the salt of the earth lose their savour, there is nothing to keep the earth disinfected, nothing to prevent it falling into complete decay. The mystics are channels through which a little knowledge of reality filters down."*²⁵⁵

The Gnostics

In order to demonstrate how the lens through which we view phenomena contributes to the expression of that phenomena, I present several models which differ radically from our own in regard to the assessing of numinous experiences

²⁵⁴ *The Cloud of Unknowing*, 1971

²⁵⁵ Aldous Huxley, quoted by Jung CW 14 p376

in general. The first is that of the Gnostics of the first and second centuries.²⁵⁶ They speak of the division of people into classes, which represented different modes of being which could exist side by side. The first was called the *hylic* class, derived from the Greek word *hyle*, meaning matter, fleshly, or earthly. The second was called *psychic*, and referred to the soul or mind. The third state or class was the *pneumatic*, *pnuema* being the Greek word for air, wind or spirit. The people in this category are the bridge between the temporal and the eternal. So the Gnostics had a form which enabled the formless or the numinous to be among them; the *pneumatic* class were not religious in the senses that we would refer to the clergy, but were individuals whose natures led to a particular way of being. Jung's proposal of the four psychological types is a framework that also allows for this possibility, and I discuss this in chapter six. What I am arguing here is that the idea of personal spiritual experience was established as a norm and allowance was made for a wide variety of expression.

Comparison between Jewish and Christian mysticism.

In my opinion, there is a difference in how mysticism has been regarded within Judaism in comparison with Christianity. For the Jew, social responsibility in this life is a primary goal, there being no concept of heaven, so 'escape' of any kind is to be frowned upon. The Christian belief, however, encourages an abrogation of the flesh and belief in the superiority of a heavenly and by inference "spiritual" existence rather than a fleshly one, and a premature escape, a "taking of the gates of heaven by force", even although I would regard this as inviting the

²⁵⁶ The source for this information is Singer, J, 1990

possibility of psychosis, is desired and encouraged. This heavenly emphasis was taken by Christians to demonstrate piety in an incontrovertible way in the past, even although we might revise this opinion to reflect hysterical conversion today. So we can see that behaviour follows belief, at least to some extent, and to judge something from outside that belief system is to attribute a different meaning.

The difference in experience in Jewish and Christian mystics could also be related to the importance to the individual of being part of the collective and their attitude to social responsibility. In this way, for the Jewish mystic to be pulled out of the collective could have engendered a great deal more reluctance and fear than for the Christian.

Was the prophet Ezekiel a deluded psychotic or an example of being filled with divine knowledge?

Our contemporary attempts to analyze mystical behaviour throughout history have mostly taken one of two paths: the visions are either taken literally, or on the other hand regarded as a representation of the psychic landscape of its author. For example, the Jewish theologian, Ostow examines the writings of the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel in the light of Freudian psychoanalysis. Although the category of prophecy rather than mysticism per se is discussed by Ostow, the distinction is arbitrary, in that many mystics have also been prophetic, or more precisely, prophecy is one of the possible expressions of mysticism. Ostow concludes that Ezekiel was a *“marvelously gifted yet profoundly disturbed man, haunted by a pathological dread of feminine sexuality, and by a profound*

ambivalence towards a dominant male figure whose features he normally displaced onto his God".²⁵⁷ In my opinion, this diagnosis of disturbance, pathology, displacement and delusion places in the modern mind a pejorative and dismissive attitude about the psychological, religious, and cultural climate of the times. This attitude does not allow for the possible symbolic, cathartic, or sacrificial position this man may have carried within the community as a whole. While these pronouncements on Ezekiel may be psychoanalytically correct from the Freudian perspective, they seem to me to be unnecessarily reductive in a way which denies the stature attributed the man at the time and the meaning which his experiences were given. Ostow goes on to concede that "*Ezekiel's temple vision may carry us further, into a deeper understanding of the collective psyches of those religious cultures that were eventually to canonize him.*" (Ostow, 1995, p112) I hold that that which is deemed important in any age is as significant as the event itself. In other words that the context in which these people lived, as well as the importance given to the particular phenomena, are as important as the phenomena itself. Context is as informative and interpretive as content, and should stand alongside both the literal interpretation and the personal interior content. The implication of this is that meaning changes with time and context, and that which could be judged as psychotic from outside that paradigm, could equally validly be judged as gnostic within it. Further, in the manner of quantum physics, where the observer is recognized as contributing to

²⁵⁷ Ostow, M. 1995, p 90

the observed phenomena, "as a man is, so he sees," ²⁵⁸ in William Blake's words.

Mysticism and the Inquisition

Here I present a further factor required to understand the history of Christian mysticism. Depending on which side of the orthodoxy/ heretical swing, mystics have been treated differently. I suggest that a mystic at the time of Hildegard of Bingen, (1098 to 1179) perhaps as a religious in one of her communities, would have experienced an enviably (and rare) supportive environment. At the hands of the extreme orthodoxy of the Inquisition which followed shortly after, (mid 1200's to mid 1500's) she would have met with certain death, along with any other person who was held to have any experiences or views outside of a very narrow range. Both the true gnostic experience, and the overtly delusional would have suffered the same fate; history shows that St Francis was opposed by the Pope, Meister Eckhart was pronounced a heretic, Blake was considered mad by his conventional contemporaries. Perry asks,²⁵⁹ *"Is our problem, perhaps, to be found more in our conception of what is normal than what is called sick?"* Perhaps this is truer than we would like to think today. My point is that the attitude of self and others towards these experiences is clearly as important as the phenomena themselves.

²⁵⁸ Quoted by Robert Avens, R., 1984, P4

²⁵⁹ Perry, J.W.1974,P 109

Heresy and Orthodox

In this section I will demonstrate how the historical heresy/orthodoxy polarity positions the mystic within (or without) social and religious structure. I will also discuss this polarization of heresy and orthodoxy in relation to inner experience.

Conservatism of the orthodox and heresy of the mystic

One of the lessons of history is that the more solidly a culture identifies itself with its tradition and becomes conservative, the sharper grow its distinctions between inside and out, between what does and does not belong to it, and the more it fears deviance. The problem with this trend from the standpoint of the mystic is that, from my perspective, deviance is a natural, rather than an unnatural, attempt to compensate the culture's biases.²⁶⁰ It is a natural law within the psyche that one-sidedness gives rise to compensation, since the psyche has an impulse to introduce the potentials that have been left out of the pattern of integration, the unlive life. When a culture congeals in its structure and grows defensive, it does what the paranoid individual does; it identifies with the archetypes of order and develops an inordinate fear of deviance or outsidedness, which it sees as disorder and chaos. I suggest the calcification, the congealed structure of our present society is so rigid as to seem immovable and those very people who could be the innovators are not given the real support to live and fulfill their destiny, and for them the possibility of suicide becomes very real. I see this as exactly the opposite of the meaning of the anomie of Durkheim.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ If we are to take Winnicott's emphasis, deviance is a most natural and necessary development in adolescence. Winnicott, D (1971) *Playing and Reality*. London: Tavistock Publications

²⁶¹ Durkheim 1897

That is, yes they are 'normless', but it is this very 'normlessness' that is their greatest gift to the society which rejects them.

As a general rule, the rise of mystical and "heretical" experience is preceded by the application of fundamentalism, when orthodoxy applies its values with a heavy hand. This is true whether we are talking about an individual psyche, or the collective. A civilization that denies the mystic invites the very rebalancing of polarities which it is trying to repress.

The numinous self is always heretical

Beyond question, the fear of persecution for religious heresy has driven mystics into solitude. The anticollective nature of the experience and their frequently typologically extreme introversion may also explain why so many mystics preached contempt of the world and flight from the world. Neumann defines the relationship of the numinous self with the collective by saying that *"Since experience of the numinous is always experience of the self and the 'voice' which brings revelation, the ego affected by it comes into conflict with the dogma and agencies of the dominant consciousness... The creative-mystical experience is by nature opposed to the dominant religion and the dominant conscious contents of the cultural canon - that is to say, it is in principle revolutionary and heretical."*²⁶²

In my view, one of the greatest difficulties for the mystic is that, paradoxically, a strong sense of self (whether this is thought of as ego-oriented or not) is required

²⁶² Neumann, E. 1969, 386

to endure the disruption of the mystical state which is itself experienced outside the ego, as we have seen already, for instance in the definition of mysticism in the Introduction. Another way of phrasing this is to say that we provide our own internal orthodoxy in the form of the superego and ego, and our own heretical experience through mysticism. Therefore, individually we invite the possibility that our own orthodoxy will drive our own inner mystic into unreachable solitude. This to me is one of the perilous possibilities where the denied or foreclosed creative impulses turn against the self as psychosis; it is much easier to endure repression by an outside orthodoxy, than by our own fear-provoked tyranny.

The forgotten feminine

I see yet another way of seeing the mystical self as heretical, and which relates to the forgotten and repressed feminine principle²⁶³ in our western societies. So often 'masculine' qualities of law and order, discrimination and division are invested in the maintaining of an orthodox position. Yet it is the feminine principle which wants to bring things together and make connections, to merge, to say 'yes'. Mostly, in the West, the feminine goes underground, and is expressed through such things as witchcraft, alchemy, alternative medicine (itself a heresy created by medical orthodoxy) and forms of mysticism. In chapter five I recount the ancient Sumerian myth of Innana, in *The Descent to the Goddess*. This story, which came out of a matriarchal society, speaks of the heroic underworld journey that the feminine makes in order to redeem the topside world. By unconsciously deferring to the masculine principle, we as a society drive the feminine principle into less legitimate expressions, both within the society and

²⁶³ I speak here in Jungian terms, ie that feminine as a principle, rather than any reference to gender.

within our own individual psyches. It is not by co-incidence then, that during the Inquisition anything mysterious and of the feminine (including most literally, women) was systematically destroyed. I mention this here so as to highlight the many ways in which we conspire to inhibit, devalue, destroy or maim the mystical potential when this potential threatens an orthodox position. I hasten to add that this suppression of the mystical body of the feminine principle is as much intrapsychic as it ever was (or is) extrapsychic.²⁶⁴

The body as the heretical experience

The body can be thought of as feminine just as spirit can be ascribed to the masculine (for example, 'our father which is in heaven'), as I have already mentioned in the chapter "On the Way to the Wedding", in relation to the specific application of the coniunctio of spirit and matter. In this sense the body itself is heretical, illness is a subtle heresy and the (orthodox) medical system is overburdened and perplexed by the delinquent bodies of its populations which do not conform to its standard of health. I speak here of the Freudian idea of hysterical 'conversion' as a component of physical illness as much as purely (if there is such a thing - the orthodoxy would have it so) non-psychosomatic illness. Just as the hysteric (unconsciously) thumbs her nose at an environment which has not allowed the more legitimate expression of her love, at an orthodoxy which has made it clear that her desires are not attainable within its order, so does the physical body of the one cut off from her spiritual roots. I

²⁶⁴ I could go into this in much more detail, especially in relation to the famous case of Freud's, that of Shreber. He was a high court judge who became psychotic, and much of the well-documented material of his 'delusions' consists of his bodily experience of becoming a woman, and his experience of the feminine. I believe this was a literalization on his part of the necessity to metaphorically develop the feminine principle in his own being as well as his external life. It is worth remembering that his father was the author of a pedagogical regime of the most punitive and patriarchal kind that continued to be popular in Germany until very recent times.

speak more about hysterical conversion, and illness of the body subsequent to, or concomitant with, mystical experience in chapter five.

Phenomenology and Context

I now progress to discuss how context and interpretation have influenced how the phenomenology of mysticism has been viewed throughout history. Clearly, the consciousness with which any phenomena are observed gives rise to different outcomes, different interpretations, different structures. The “consciousness with which they make their observations”, as Zohar commented,²⁶⁵ makes a difference to the outcome and the interpretation. Smart claims that the phenomenological may arise from contextuality and built-in interpretation, rather than from an inner basic distinction. “*Context flavours phenomenology. So the claim that ‘mysticism is often or everywhere the same’ must not be taken too literally.*”²⁶⁶ I go so far as to say, as does Katz, that *all* experiences are interpreted.²⁶⁷

Phenomenology and interpretation²⁶⁸

I have already emphasized a need to study context (both historical and personal) as much as the phenomenology of experience in order to make a determination between psychosis and gnosis. Now I will look further to determine between phenomenology²⁶⁹ and interpretation.²⁷⁰ I have already established that

²⁶⁵ Zohar, 1991, P 33

²⁶⁶ Smart, N. 1996, P 169

²⁶⁷ Katz, S. 1978

²⁶⁸ “The Phenomenological method enables us to discover meaning within our lived experience..., it permits consciousness to understand its own preoccupations.” Levinas, quoted by Kerney, R. 1984, P.50.

²⁶⁹ “A phenomenological analysis of consciousness leads very quickly to the realisation that consciousness is for the most part not self-reflectively aware.” Brooks, R. 1991, p.43

²⁷⁰ Henty Corbin (1903-78) the French Islamic scholar, has written on Avicenna, and other illuminationist philosophers. “His phenomenological method is a further development of Heidegger’s phenomenology. The true phenomenon for

interpretation is less a function of detached observation than of intimate involvement. As an example, Smart criticizes Otto saying it was wrong to underpin his phenomenology with later Kantian paraphernalia.²⁷¹ This criticism, of course, could be leveled at any mystic or scholar who relies on philosophy to phrase their work. In my opinion, it is indisputable that different language is used to describe the same phenomena of mysticism within the major traditions, that is, that language itself is interpretive: For instance, when a mystic says that she experiences a 'dazzling darkness', this is descriptive language which to me speaks of phenomenology - I do not know which religious tradition, if any, she subscribes to; if she sees her soul in a marriage with Christ, this is interpretive and we can take a pretty sure guess at what her theology will be. I find it noteworthy that my studies of the so-called delusional material of psychotics also reveal an elaborate *theological* structure, with redemptive and Apocalyptic themes, in other words an elaborate *interpretation* which serves their own particular purpose.²⁷² John Weir Perry, a Jungian therapist who has brought us great insights into the redemptive possibility of psychosis discovered likewise.²⁷³ Thus I conclude that the *interpretive* aspect of accounts of both mystical and psychotic phenomenology holds great import and meaning.

Corbin is *spiritual experience*, i.e., an event of the soul which by definition is not open to common sensory observation and which can be shared only by those who participate in similar spiritual experiences. *Phenomenology as a proper interpretation and understanding of the phenomena, is inseparable from the mode of being of the interpreter.*" Avens, R. 1984, p131

²⁷¹ Smart, 1996, p177

²⁷² The purpose to which the psychotic puts this interpretation is one of metaphor, by which the Paradise of a pristine uncontaminated self is regained through a process of elaborate redemptive imagery

^{273a} *Of the twelve cases ... that I have studied in depth, three of the four men, and six of the eight women experienced frankly religious, messianic callings.* Perry, J.W. 1974, p71.

I present another example of phenomenology and interpretation in relation to the 'oceanic feelings' which are often part of mystical experience, this time from Freud. Freud had some comments to make, in 1930 in 'Civilization and its discontents'. He reports that in a letter to him, Romain Rolland described "*a feeling which he would like to call a sensation of 'eternity', a feeling of something limitless, unbounded – as it were, "oceanic"*". Freud made clear that this feeling is, to his understanding, a purely subjective fact, not an article of faith. He claims that it brings with it no assurance of personal immortality, but is a source of energy that is seized upon by the various churches and religious systems. Freud ascribed mystical experiences to being outside the ego, in the id, and this relates to what I have already discussed in the previous chapter in regard to mystical experience being outside the ego. In other words, the ego interprets according to known systems, and the id experiences phenomenologically.

The place of personal experience

In the context of mysticism and history, I take the position that it is always the phenomenology of personal experience that is primary, regardless of what period in history they represent, or what specific psychological condition. I put forward the idea that we should continue to develop our understanding of, rather than the doctrinal interpretation of, the mystical process and its phenomena, in a similar way by which the knowledge of God is contributed to by all the students in the Jewish Midrash,²⁷⁴ that is, it is always coming into being and never reaches a

²⁷⁴I am suggesting that that the totality of truth is made out of the contributions of a multiplicity of people: the uniqueness of each act of listening carries the secret of the text; the voice of Revelation, in precisely the inflection lent by each

final conclusion. I situate my own experience of mysticism, and the long incubation of it into my life and writing in this way. Jung spoke of it thus: “*The living spirit grows and even outgrows its earlier forms of expression.*”²⁷⁵ ²⁷⁶ I remind the reader that I presented the idea that the making of meaning is something which continually outgrows itself, as I discussed in Chapter one.

When Williams, the author of *The True Wilderness*,²⁷⁷ stated, “*What I have been forced to attempt is to describe only those places where I myself have lived and belonged,*” he is, in my opinion, speaking about his own personal phenomenology rather than interpretation, and the primacy of that individual experience over a theology.²⁷⁸ Ideally, every great tradition *should* present man with “*the constant encounter between himself and an infinitely greater objective scale of reality.*”²⁷⁹ Ideally, we *should* be able to find a place both within and without the symbolic order. However, “*systems of explanation illuminate up to a point and then falsify.*”²⁸⁰ Orthodoxy so often opts for the map (safe, known) instead of the territory (unsafe, unknown), for the travelogue instead of the trip.

Personal experience and the Orthodox

I emphasize here that the individual and his/her experience, can have a hard time finding a place within the collective. Luther, the great leader of the Reformation, spent his entire life rejecting rigidity in the church and in smaller

person's ear, is necessary for the truth of the whole...The multiplicity of people, each one of them indispensable, is necessary to produce all the dimensions of meaning; the multiplicity of meanings is due to the multiplicity of people. p195
The Levinas Reader, by Sean Hand

²⁷⁵ Jung, CW 538

²⁷⁶ I am not arguing for, or against, the notion of evolution of consciousness in the collective sense which is beyond the scope of this work, but for personal evolution and individuation.

²⁷⁷ H.A.Williams. *The True Wilderness*, Collins Fount Paperbacks 1965, He was born in 1919, educated at Trinity College Cambridge and ordained into the priesthood

²⁷⁸ Williams is a theologian. Williams, H.A. 1965, p 9

²⁷⁹ Needleman, 1980, P 53

²⁸⁰ Williams, H.A. 1965, p 10

issues, such as rules of uniformity in spelling. Yet he suspected that others would not be so scrupulous in respecting the individual.²⁸¹ Luther's concern about the future of his, at the time, radical ideas, finds a reflection in what Charles Peguy said, and which Lacan has developed: "*Everything begins in mysticism and ends in politics.*"²⁸² Just as this movement from the mystical to the political can occur within a society, so it can also take place in the individual psyche; we can become more interested in following our own 'ceremony' and 'law' rather than being constantly open to re-formation or renewal. This ceremony-following is political in that it is system-based, rather than phenomenology-based. I pause to comment that individuals such as John Weir Perry and R.D.Laing came to the conclusion that it was this fixed state of certainty that constitutes the pathology of psychosis rather than the chaotic confusion of the psychotic break.

Personal development within orthodoxy

Renewal can, however, take place within an orthodox system, as I have already demonstrated through the notion of the Hero's Journey in Chapter two. Here I give the example of a woman who has dreams and fantasies of freedom, of escape and the living of a new life. She projects this onto her marriage and thinks that leaving her husband would effect this change. Her therapist, however, advises that it is also possible to achieve this within herself, that her desire for a new beginning is most fundamentally a desire for change, for

²⁸¹ "It is so easy for ceremony to grow into law, and once the laws are laid down, they affect our conscience. They obscure and undermine the pure doctrine, especially when those who come after us are coldhearted, unlearned, and more interested in following the ceremony than in overcoming their own materialistic frame of mind." Quoted Haile, H.G. 1980, p 349, no origin cited

²⁸² Lacan Ecrits

metanoia within herself. This principle of renewal can be applied to any religion, or any system.²⁸³ More importantly for the individual, I maintain that this constant renewal of the psyche though the heresy of the inner mystic can take place even although the inner orthodoxy, the ego, is still in place.

Conclusion to chapter four:

In this chapter I have discussed some of the historical attitudes in the West to mysticism and mystics, and how this attitude differs today. I looked at the phenomenology of and interpretation of mystical experience in different cultures and eras, and compared and contrasted them with current attitudes. I used the example of Ezekiel to show how what is thought of as psychosis today was thought of as gnostic in the past. I discussed the idea of heresy as direct experience, and orthodoxy as dogma, as complementary yet opposing forces, both within society as well as within the individual. I concluded that the proper way to examine mysticism is to examine the times that produced it, and the specific individual involved, rather than the content of the experience alone. However, I still maintain that phenomenology, that is uninterpreted personal experience, is still of primary importance for the ontological process of coming into being and the making of meaning.

In the next chapter *The Dark Borderland*, I discuss the concept of liminal space, betwixt and between, as a necessary transition that introduces an individual to a

²⁸³ Jung is "convinced that it is not Christianity, but our conception and interpretation of it that has become antiquated... The Christian symbol is a living thing that carries in itself the seeds of further development. It can go on developing; it only depends on us..." CGJung, *The Undiscovered Self*.

experience of self which is not based upon ego-identity. The experience of liminality can be so disconcerting that the individual fears for his or her sanity.

Chapter 5: The Dark Borderland

"Rather than what is pathology in mysticism, we ask what is mystical in its intent in psychosis?" (John Weir Perry, 1974, P 96)

Introduction to chapter five:

In previous chapters I discuss different ways (list these) of approaching the psychosis/gnosis question, and in this chapter I examine the idea of a Dark Borderland to investigate further the idea of liminality, or marginality. This phrase is my own metaphor, which I liken to the dark forest in myths and fairy stories, where anything can happen, and something does happen, after which nothing is ever the same again. In every tradition there is some metaphor for this transitional space, including the Night Sea Journey²⁸⁴ of initiatory necessity. Often darkness is a feature of these metaphors, which I take to mean that the journey is both difficult and out of ego control.

I discuss liminality as the metaphorical condition of betwixt and between, which is experienced by both the psychotic and the gnostic, and present a comparison between St Teresa of Avila²⁸⁵ and Hildegard of Bingen, and a contemporary

²⁸⁴ The night sea journey is an archetypal motif in mythology, psychologically associated with depression. Jung had this to say about it: "*The night sea journey is a kind of descensus ad inferos—a descent into Hades and a journey to the land of ghosts somewhere beyond this world, beyond consciousness, hence an immersion in the unconscious.*" Jung, *The Psychology of the Transference*, CW 16, par 455.

²⁸⁵ I here provide a short biography of St Teresa, essential elements of which I will refer to in this discussion. St Teresa of Avila was born in Avila, Spain, in 1515, one of 10 children, and her mother died when she was 15. Her personality was extroverted, her manner affectionately buoyant, and had had the ability to adapt herself to all kinds of persons and circumstances. Before her mother died, she was especially attached to her cousins, and gave some thought to marriage. In 1535 she entered the Carmelite monastery in Avila, against her father's wishes. The following year she received the habit and wholeheartedly gave herself to prayer and penance. Shortly after, she became seriously ill, failed to respond to medical treatment, and 1539 became so seriously ill that she fell into a coma and was thought to have died. After 4 days she revived, but was paralyzed in the legs for 3 years after that. During the next stage of her life, which lasted 18 years, she had transitory mystical experiences, but was held back by a strong desire to be appreciated by others. Nevertheless, by the age of 39, she began to enjoy a vivid experience of God's presence within her. However, the experience of these favours, and her conduct, which was more relaxed than was thought proper according to the ascetical standards of her time (she required of a novice the she "eat well, laugh well, and sleep well"), she attracted much criticism.

Her friends thought her favours were the work of the devil. Yet she found an ally in Francis Borgia, who in 1555 heard her confession and told her that the spirit of God was working in her, that she should concentrate on Christ's Passion and not resist the ecstatic experience that came to her in prayer. Nevertheless, she had to endure the increased distrust of her friends as the divine favours increased. In 1558 her director, Baltasar Alvarez SJ caused her great distress by telling her that others were convinced that her raptures and visions were the work of the devil and that she should not communicate so often. Another priest acting temporarily as her confessor, on hearing her report of a vision she had repeatedly of Christ, told her that it was clearly the devil and commanded her to make the sign of the cross and laugh at the vision. Yet she went ahead to found the Discalced Carmelites (literally, no shoes, to indicate the vow of poverty on which the order was founded) and was commanded to write her autobiography by her confessor so that he could make a judgment on her spiritual state, with which she reluctantly complied. She went on to found other convents and male orders. In her

woman in order to demonstrate similarities and differences between psychosis and gnosis in mystical experience. I then discuss the transition of midlife as an example of liminality, which occurs for everyone, and which all individuals pass through, more or less successfully; namely the three phases of separation, liminality and integration. I discuss Sufi methods as providing a structure that intentionally engages the liminal, and apparently deals with both a psychotic or gnostic outcome with equal facility. Finally, I discuss the Christian concept of the Dark Night of the Soul as a sojourn within liminality, and discuss ways in which this could be experienced delusionally as well as transformatively.

Spiritual pathology

Further to my argument so far that spiritual process can look psychotic, I wish to discuss further the notion of spiritual pathology. Harry Hunt suggests that spiritual pathologies, or metapathologies as he calls them, *"can look psychotic or borderline, at least in their thematic and suffering, but they need not include actual clinical disability"*.²⁸⁶ The transformation implicit in spiritual experience can appear so radical at times that the usual ways of assessment are not valid. However, as David Lukoff points out, if the person's ability to handle everyday commonsense levels of functioning is not severely disrupted, *"the individual's*

travels through Duruelo in 1569, she met St John of the Cross at the first convent of the Discalced Brethren. They collaborated in bringing about a great improvement in the spiritual condition of the religious community. On Nov 18th, 1572, while receiving Communion from the hands of St John of the Cross, she received the favour of "the spiritual marriage."

She continued writing, *The Way of Perfection* and *The Interior Castle*, the latter being considered her consummate work. Much of her time was taken up with the religious politics of the time, and the establishment and maintaining of the Discalced order.

St Teresa died in 1582.

The authority for this short biography of St Teresa comes from her autobiography, *Libro de la Vida*, and The Teresian Carmel website.

²⁸⁶ Hunt, Heidegger and Mysticism p 4

unusual beliefs and experiences are not of diagnostic significance."²⁸⁷ As I have indicated previously, my whole contention is similar: that peculiar ideas and experiences do not signify a psychosis, *if* the person is functioning well enough in their lived life.

I do not want to make distinction-making between psychosis and gnosis appear to be too facile; rather, I believe that in mystical experiences this can be difficult. Perry asks a most pertinent question: *"Rather than what is pathology in mysticism, we ask what is mystical in its intent in psychosis?"*²⁸⁸ Likewise, Boisen, who was hospitalized for a psychotic episode and then became a minister of religion, suggests, *"many of the more serious psychoses are essentially problem-solving experiences which are closely related to certain types of religious experiences."*²⁸⁹ Notably, however, the DSMIV does not mention the possibility of psychotic episodes with positive outcomes, even when they contain mystical features. I believe that by not recognizing this possibility, the psychological and psychiatric professions are missing a whole therapeutic range of potent movement within their patients.

Comparison of St Teresa of Avila with a contemporary psychotic

I want to turn now to making further distinctions between psychosis and gnosis, and here provide categories whereby a distinction can be made between recognized mystics, specifically St Teresa of Avilla and Hildegard of Bingen, and a woman client of my own who was diagnosed as psychotic yet had mystical

²⁸⁷ The Diagnosis of Mystical Experience with Psychotic Features. David Lukoff, D. 1985, vol 17, no2

²⁸⁸ Perry, 1974, P 96

²⁸⁹ Dodds, 1951, p61

experiences. I also refer to the research of Kenneth Wapnick²⁹⁰ and David Lukoff²⁹¹ who have done clinical studies on the comparison of the mystic with the psychotic, and psychosis with mystical features, respectively. I am not entirely satisfied with comparing someone contemporary who can be assessed within our current psychological framework, with someone who was reified by a specific religious milieu. However, I would have equal unease about reifying the life of a contemporary mystic, mostly because it is only after one's death that the whole of the life can be seen. The living mystic's life is still full of possible possibilities, to use the same expression I used in *Killing the Buddha*. The psychotics life is likewise unfinished, and full of possibilities.

I wondered if you needed to give a brief case study of each of these before then taking the reader through a discussion of different aspects relevant to a comparison between them.

Adjustment to daily life

I have already mentioned on page 58, that I consider the lived life, the ordinary daily life to be where the mystic demonstrates the ability to live in two worlds. My psychotic client, who I mentioned before, had wonderful visions and dreams, not unlike those of Hildegard.²⁹² However, she was unadjusted to ordinary life and retreated into her own inner private world, a reality in which others could not participate. She was unable to work, and relied on others for such basic needs

²⁹⁰ Wapnick K, vol 6, no 1, 1972

²⁹¹ Lukoff, D. 1985, vol 17, no2

²⁹² See *Illumination of Hildegard of Bingen*. Text by Hildegard of Bingen with commentary by Matthew Fox. 1985. This includes some of her paintings as well as some of her writings.

as shopping and providing meals. By contrast, St Teresa and Hildegard kept integrating their inner experiences with daily living: they both led happy lives in community with other people and succeeded in doing an enormous amount of work. For instance, Hildegard was a musician, composer, writer, social reformer and the functioning head of her religious order.

Inner and outer life

I think that it is significant that my psychotic client had her first revelatory experiences as a result of taking mind-altering recreational drugs - her experiences could be thought of as a bad trip that never ended. My assessment of her situation is that she did not have the ego-strength to integrate such a sudden and premature breaking through, and had no way of making it symbolic. If we take the lives of St Teresa and Hildegard by contrast, their sojourn in the liminal was gradual and sustained, although even then these experiences shook them to the core. Consequently, there is an organic growth in the psychic life of the mystic who becomes more and more a distinct person. I emphasize that the essential element is integration: Wapnick comments that "*the mystic provides the example of the method whereby the inner and the outer world may be joined, the schizophrenic the tragic result when they are separated.*"²⁹³ Jung,²⁹⁴ too, felt the need of family life and professional work to keep him in touch with reality when he was in liminal space; like Teresa he had to keep integrating the emerging data

²⁹³ Wapnick, 1972

²⁹⁴ There has been speculation as to whether Jung's integration did have psychotic features. For instance, in a book by Ronald Hyman, *A Life of Jung*. The reviewer of this book said: "*This has been variously described as psychotic, as a creative illness and a midlife crisis but, whatever it was, it seems to have been a paradigmatic journey through the dark night of the soul. Jung emerged with new confidence, enormous charisma and ideas which were to constitute the bulk of Jungian psychology.....*" (Dark Knight of the Soul. Article in *The Weekend Australian*, March 18-19 2000, Review by Jean Curthoys, of *A Life of Jung*, by Ronald Hayman, 2000, Bloomsbury)

of consciousness into daily living, and without this, by his own assessment, he might well have become psychotic.²⁹⁵ I suggest that the mystic and psychotic actually travel the same road, or spend time in the liminal, but not at the same speed or in the same order.

Self awareness and the ego

I want to argue that sometimes the ego is unable to sustain itself in the face of great change, or a thrusting into liminal space; even such seemingly innocuous experiences as meditation can, perhaps, be difficult to integrate, because of the inclusion of material from the unconscious. Some people cannot handle what arises for them during, or as a result of meditation. Washburn cautions thus: there are times when *"regression in the service of transcendence aborts and degenerates into regression pure and simple. This is the supreme risk of the Way, which accounts for the many resemblances between madness and mysticism. Both the madman and the mystic have been cast upon the sea of the prepersonal unconscious. The difference is that the mystic's ego is seaworthy whereas the madman's is not. Thus, the mystic arrives safely at the other side of the sea, finding, thereby, safe Ground from which integration can be achieved, while the madman capsizes and falls into psychosis."*²⁹⁶ As an example, Marion Millner²⁹⁷ mentions a young analysand who had discovered how to become aware of every muscle in her body. This could be compared with the meditation practice of concentrating on one's breathing, which is one of the time-honoured

²⁹⁵ I am not suggesting here that Jung was either a mystic or psychotic, although both have been proposed: For instance, Aniella Jaffe wrote a book entitled, "Was Jung a Mystic?", and Ronald Hayman, "Dark Knight of the Soul".

²⁹⁶ Washburn, M. 1988 p184

²⁹⁷ Millner, M.1987, p 67

preparations for mystical awareness in the spiritual traditions. Millner goes on to say that she “*began to speculate whether (the young woman) had not perhaps stumbled into experiencing certain phases of mystical consciousness as a result of this work on herself, but on a very precarious basis because of not yet having firmly established that ordinary consciousness which is bounded by the awareness of separateness.*” Although a strong ego can also be used as a defence (and a psychosis, according to Lacan), my experience is that at least a person with a sufficiently developed ego can be “found”, whereas my psychotic client was buried under the weight of her symbolic imagery. This is also reminiscent of the emphasis that writers such as Neumann, June Singer, and Nathan Schwartz-Salent place on the development of a strong-enough ego, which implies an awareness of separateness, and the weight of personal responsibility for one’s own life.

I have spoken of the preparations of the ego *for* the encounter with the numinous, but another consideration is the condition of the ego *after* its mystical experience. Normally, and perhaps ideally, the ego, transformed by the experience of the numinous, returns to the sphere of human life, and its transformation includes a broadening of consciousness. But there is also a possibility that the ego will succumb to the attraction of the numinous and, in the words of an Hassidic maxim, will burst its shell. This catastrophe can take the form of death in ecstasy, mystical death, but also of sickness, psychosis, or serious neurosis. Here the ego is psychopathic; the encounter with the numinous

does nothing to transform this, and the personality is not integrated but further fragmented -- my psychotic client did not accept life in this world, and even nihilistically and willfully alienated herself. Neumann says of this state: the *"devouring, disintegrating, enfeebling, and diabolically cunning character which he projects onto cosmic nature is what overpowers him from within."*²⁹⁸ This repressed shadow is projected into the world, which is then seen as evil or *maya*; this projection on to the world is one of psychosis and never of gnosis. I have discussed this subject of identification with evil in Chapter 4 in relation to the shadow projections, as will again on page 183.

Articulation and the symbolic

Rather than being lost in the liminal world, the progress of integration requires articulation. Marion Millner's patient had a great deal of difficulty in describing how she felt, and thus created *"a rigid barrier between the describable and the indescribable"*.²⁹⁹ Here lies one of the tender points of distinction between psychosis and gnosis, namely the split between articulate and inarticulate levels of thinking. I believe this rests upon Kristeva's idea of the semiotic chora and the development of the ability to think symbolically. Millner says of this same patient: *"It certainly seems that her inability to recognize separateness had also resulted in a block in that recognition of duality which makes it possible to accept that a symbol is both itself and the thing that it stands for, yet without being identical with it."* Hildegard and St Teresa were extremely articulate, and certainly gave

²⁹⁸ Neumann, E. 1969, 400

²⁹⁹ *ibid*

utterance, to use Kirkegaard's expression. Hildegard particularly experienced visions of enormous symbolic complexity, which she wrote about, illustrated, and interpreted as ways of revivification for the soul, or psyche. My psychotic client wrote only a most rudimentary account of her number theories, and was unable to bridge the gap to communicate what these theories meant.³⁰⁰ Thus the articulation of the inarticulate, through symbols and the awareness of the tension of duality as part of a safe passage through the liminal process, is necessary for and demonstrative of, integration.

For the mystic, the ordinary data of consciousness are not rejected, but rather endowed with a new meaning, a new expressiveness and vivacity. The states of ineffability, of the formless, are given form through all kinds of work, especially through the work of writing and conceptualizing, ie the symbolic. We could say that the major wellsprings of creative work lie in the mystical experience, and especially in the drive to make of its inexpressible character something that can be expressed and communicated. This expresses an attitude towards life, rather than a creed. An inability to utilize the symbolic,³⁰¹ rather than take things literally through one's ego, leads to inflation.³⁰²

³⁰⁰She had an idea that everything could be added up in numerical form, all events of past and future, and that she could both predict what would happen, and influence what would happen through her number system. I believe that this patient's images were capable of becoming revivifying to her, but that she needed to be sustained over an extended period of time in a safe therapeutic environment in order for this passage from liminal space to be completed.

³⁰¹ "In Meister Eckhart's mystical thought, the receptive intellect is depicted as virgin, that is, virgin of all images, for to be attached to images as to a property renders the mind stupified, dull, and almost psychotic." Avens, R. 1984, P 101

³⁰² Jung's point is that emotions, or for that matter everything that we call "our experience" can be used as material for soul-making provided we learn to watch the flow of experience instead of identifying ourselves with it. Avens, R. 1984, P 81

Inflation and en-theos

I have already discussed the possibility of inflation in chapter six, but I wish to provide a further distinction between inflation and enthusiasm. It is often said that the mystical experience is one of enthusiasm, of *en theos*, (following Plato) of being filled with God. Inflation, on the other hand, is related to psychosis and means to be filled with air – generally hot air! Robert Johnson said: *"Inflation means to be blown up, to have your ego puffed up, to be arrogant."*³⁰³ *An inflation is always of traumatic proportions; in fact, it is a small psychosis."*³⁰⁴ An inflation can take hold when a negative self-image at the ego level presents itself, (and is a similar predicament to not having sufficient ego-separateness) along with a compensatory overblown self-image at the fantasy level.³⁰⁵ The compensation for this weak ego-image can express itself through grand mythological images and delusional roles. These delusions include seeing oneself as a hero, a saint, one chosen for special experiences or leadership, or even as being capable of extreme negative power.³⁰⁶ The young woman client who I have mentioned believed that her thoughts caused world disasters, and on the other hand believed that she possessed, through a unique understanding of mathematics, the ability to save the world. She was identifying herself with the hero-images as

³⁰³ I think of the word arrogate, to take that which is not rightly one's own

³⁰⁴ Johnson, 1987, P 49

³⁰⁵ I base my discussion on the work by Nathan Schwartz-Salent, *Narcissism And Character Transformation The Psychology of Narcissistic Character Disorders*, 1982 Inner City Books

³⁰⁶ Marie Louise von Franz gives the example of Charles Manson, who *"was absolutely convinced that he represented Satan and the Antichrist"*. Von Franz, M.L. 1997, P 64,

if the image was a description of her ego, rather than as a metaphor of an inner ability by which she could be saved from a destructive inner regime.³⁰⁷

An example of a mystic who moved from a position of inflation to one of en-theos, was Angela of Foligno, who in her early life desired “the fame of sanctity”, an ego-appellation, only to be seized later in life by “*a divine change which took place in her soul*”, which truly changed her life.³⁰⁸

Not to be forgotten in the appearance of an inflation is the possibility that a strong inrush of energy may be the manic phase of a bipolar condition, that is inflation rather than en-theos. I can only speculate that occasionally the mystical experiences of some of the mystics of the past have been due to such mania. I do not mean to say that these stages of mania do not have salvational possibilities for the individuals experiencing them, but that the rest of their daily life, the lived life as I have been referring to it, generally fails to sustain them in a sense of their expanded self, especially in the depressive phase. In this way, they emerge from the liminal space with empty hands.

³⁰⁷ Of the twelve cases of psychosis which Perry studied, three of the four men and six of the eight women experienced frankly religious, messianic callings. Perry, reminds us that “*The image should be taken as a source of energy, not as a description of one's ego; as it is put to work the energy is channeled into life. Inflation, however, stops the flow by arrogating this energy to the ego itself, or better said, to its self-image.*” Perry, J.W. 1974, P 67

³⁰⁸ Angela of Foligno (1248-1309) Thirteenth century Umbrian mystic. ‘*During the whole of my life I have studied how I might obtain the fame of sanctity,*’ she remarks naively.But once she had emerged from the period of wrestling with the world her visions do not at all conform with the idea of hysterical illness. On the contrary she says that a divine change took place in her soul, and she appears as one of those whose ecstasies renew them for normal life. Ferguson, J. 1976, p 13

Delusions

I have already spoken about delusions as disqualifying one from true mystical experience. However, I do not think that this does justice to the salvational possibility of delusions. Delusional ideation can serve a function in the transformative journey of the psychotic. Though Perry argues that psychotics may have a wrong relationship with the powerful forces at work.³⁰⁹

Jung, in his extensive exploration of psychosis, described the compensatory role of delusions in attempting to rescue the personality from a pathological one-sidedness; also, he saw in delusions the attempt of the pathological complex to destroy itself. Thus, delusions can be the movement toward health, away from the one-sidedness which engendered the delusions. The one-sidedness is the pathology, not the delusions.³¹⁰ In both the process of individuation and mysticism, the emphasis on duality, the enduring of the tension of the opposites, rather than one-sidedness is a counter to this tendency.

The ordinary and the extra-ordinary

We perhaps believe that the great mystics occupy themselves with the vaster cosmic things, but they usually talk about small things, matters close at hand,

³⁰⁹ "Sensitive souls receive the impact of these activities from the psychic depths. They may become mystics, who, if they can formulate their vision for their culture, may in turn become prophets; further, if their vision can command leadership in their society, they may become messiahs, who then form new societal structures. Any of these may pass through psychoticoid states on the way to their transformation. However, those who do not have the gift or the cognitive wherewithal to synthesize, integrate and communicate their experience may become trapped in the psychoticoid state and become indeed psychotic when they realize their isolation and drop into panic. The unfortunate ones then experience their transformation "delusionally", meaning simply that they have a wrong relationship to it, by identifying with, rather than being nourished by, the powerful forces at work. The process as such is in all probability a natural one..." Perry, J.W. 1974, P111

³¹⁰ Needleman takes the delusion in this way: "The real enemy is man's tendency is to give his trust to what is only a part of the mind or self, to take the part for the whole, to take a subsidiary element of human nature as the bringer of unity or wholeness of being." Needleman, J. 1980, P 40

personal issues of food and nature, justice and kindness in daily affairs. By contrast, my client talked only about her visionary life, as if it was the only reality, and things such as care of her body, or daily engagement with others, were of no interest to her. Luther,³¹¹ by contrast, regarded the most important thing in his life as being *epikeia*, or gentleness, saying that the development of gentleness through engagement with daily affairs required a heroic attitude.³¹² Hildegard and St Teresa were both loved for their vivifying engagement with others in the details of daily convent life, as well as, certainly for Hildegard, with the world at large.

Psychosis and shamanism and the vision carrier

I believe that it is significant that within our Western culture, experiences and processes which we interpret as psychotic would in other cultures be taken as evidence of the initiation of a shaman.³¹³ We have no sufficient framework in which to hold, develop and sustain such people. It is beyond the scope of my discussion to include this important and particular manifestation of those who maintain a Dark Borderland existence. Suffice to say that the aboriginal and other tribal people appear to know how to do this: the shaman was thought to have been initiated by life itself into shamanism, not due to any personal fault or

³¹¹ I use a most prosaic example in Luther, as the Lutheran Church has had little use for mystics. Luther, however, modeled his life on the Beguines, who followed 100 years after Hildegard of Bingen, and I have been impressed, while reading his own words, at how mystical he was, and how very grounded in daily life.

³¹² He drew upon his Augustinian training to develop the quality of *epikeia*. It became his recognition of indeterminacy in human affairs, and of the precious uniqueness in each set of human circumstances. He attempted to translate Paul's use of the word in the Epistle to the Philippians and he considered Latin equivalents, *equitas*, *clementia*, *commoditas*, "then confessed he could find no better German word than *gelindikeit* – 'gentleness.'" (Haile, H.G. 1980, P 346) He was fond of the Ciceronian aphorism, "extreme justice inflicts the greatest wrong;" *epikeia* shunned extremes. He placed great value on experience in worldly affairs as our best teacher of gentleness, then added, "*of course, such moderation does call for heroic and singular men.*" (quoted Haile, H.G. 1980, p347, from *Tischreden*. 6 vols. Weimar: Bohlau, 1906-51, 290, 5-6)

³¹³ Perry, J.W. 1974, P 39

favour³¹⁴, and was given respect as the keeper of liminality, (like the *pneumatic* class in Gnostic belief) of betwixt and between, a role which he played for the whole community. It seems to me that modern day therapists meet clients who have been seized by life in this shamanic way, and that they have the possibility of truly seeing these people; instead of normalizing them, enabling their madness to have a function.

'Recollection', liminality and psychosis

I suggest that it is significant that madness was not always thought of in terms of a departure from norm, a pathology. Plato, as a forefather of modern psychology, tells us that Socrates spoke of a madness that conveyed a wisdom higher than the wisdom of the world;³¹⁵ this madness is the cure rather than a disease, and being 'duly out of his mind' is that which effects the cure. Socrates' praise of madness was part of his doctrine of "recollection": when the soul is born into the world it is inclined to forget its previously acquired vision of the divine light of heaven and must enter into these extraordinary mad states in order to retrieve what it has lost. I understand this doctrine of recollection to be referring to the liminal space, from which we return renewed.³¹⁶

Plato was speaking of the non-rational psyche in what we think of as heightened states of consciousness more than he was of diagnosed psychosis, but I propose

³¹⁴ "In most tribal cultures, it was understood that the shamans or medicine men did not themselves make the choice to follow the path but were chosen by the spirits through some near death experience that took them out of the normal perspectives of mundane society, leaving them with a different vision of life and death. The experience might have been a severe illness, chronic pain or disability, an almost fatal accident or period of insanity." Orr, E.R., 1998, p33

³¹⁵ In the *Phaedrus* Plato describes a "madness superior to the sane mind", in a person who "is truly possessed and duly out of his mind," who can be "made whole and delivered from evil, future as well as present, and has a release from the calamity which afflicts him."

³¹⁶ St Teresa of Avila, used the term recollection in this Platonic way: "I did not know how to proceed in prayer or how to become recollected, and so I took much pleasure in it and decided to follow that path with all my strength." From *Libro de la Vida*, her autobiography.

that we can approach psychosis in the same way, and that this very change in attitude, wherein respect is given to the liminal, could well change the anticipated outcome. For some people do emerge from a liminal episode "weller than well," as Laing put it, with a newly quickened capacity for depth; their psychosis has been transformed into gnosis. In this way the psychosis has acted as a compensation. On the other hand, some people have experiences of awesome depth, but when they reemerge, they close out their vision and become shut down.³¹⁷ I suggest that many people are spending the rest of their lives on a drug to keep their soul and its vision dampened down. It is all too easy, in my opinion, for those in the mental health profession to hide behind DSM IV definitions, perhaps of 'mystical features of psychotic processes', and avoid the difficult personal task of knowing how to meet and endure this paradoxical possibility. The meeting itself, on the part of the therapist, is the demand to stand in liminality as I will show below in relation to the role of Hermes in liminal space.

The three stages of change - separation, liminality and integration

Previously in this writing I have provided various metaphors for those undergoing marginal experiences, such as *The Outsider*, and *The Hero*. I now take up another paradigm by which we might understand the process of both individuation and mystical experience; it is convenient to delineate three stages, namely *separation, liminality and integration*.³¹⁸

³¹⁷ Perry asks, "What goes wrong when someone becomes a visionary, looking into the heart of his cosmos and of his fellow beings around him, only when he is "sick," only to become blind, constricted, and timid, understanding nothing, when he is ... 'well' again?" Perry, J.W. 1974, p 6

³¹⁸ Here I follow Murray Stein in his book 'In Middle', Dallas, Texas, Spring Publications, 1983

The first stage is one of separation, when we recognize the passing of an identity built on the ego's association with the persona and the emphasis on the external. The deep anxiety experienced during this period is due to this separation from one's previous identity. It is also normal to mid-life, suggest writers such as Speigleman, Stein and O'Connor,³¹⁹ to go through such a period of separation, when the need to be reflected by external achievements and approbation is questioned.³²⁰

This separation is a preparation for the second phase, which is liminality,³²¹ a state of betwixt and between, the threshold between the conscious and the unconscious. This phase of 'undoing' occurs on the spiritual path, but it also gives us hints of when and how a psychosis might arise. Liminality is an ambiguous, unclear and uncertain time, where dreams, vivid intuitions and fantasies compel change. We could say, for instance, that the developing of the fourth function is a time of liminality.³²² Liminality, is the territory of Hermes in Greek mythology. The therapist or spiritual guide takes on the role of Hermes, aiding the ego in coming to terms with deep transformational change. Hermes' primary function is to connect the gods and humanity through communication. I liken this to the analytic discourse, and, ultimately, to transubstantiation.³²³

³¹⁹ O'Connor, Peter, A. Facing the Fifties, (2000) Allen and Unwin

³²⁰ *"the central task ...is to recognize the passing of an identity built on the ego's association with the persona and the emphasis on the external."* Spiegelman et al, 1991, p74

³²¹ The Latin word *limen* refers to a doorway or threshold, the state of being betwixt and between. *"This stage of liminality is psychologically created whenever the ego is unable to identify any longer with a former self image, or persona."* O'Connor, P. 2000 p 147

³²³ See page 48 for further discussion on transubstantiation.

Mid-life as liminality

I have already told the Zen story of the young man who travels to find the pearl of great price. (page 167) This story is echoed in the Jewish tradition which demands that no one shall be allowed to study the Kabbalah who has not reached the age of forty-five. Other mystical traditions require initiations, trials and tests to prove the individual's strength and commitment to a way that may require confronting the dark shadows as well as the light; adequate preparation is crucial, lest gnosis become psychosis.

I return, then, to the notion of a natural transition in mid-life, of which the first stage is a separation from one's former fixed identity, and the second is an experience of liminality, and the third phase is one of integration.³²⁴ So, to summarise this approach, separation from former identity leads to a state of confusion which ideally then proceeds to a new level of identity. I will now discuss how the Sufis work with these three stages.

The Sufis

Sufism, the esoteric form of Islam, has for many centuries, certainly before the 9th AD, purposefully followed practices that pursue the direct experience of God through mystical experience. I specifically refer to the Sufi practice in Egypt among Arab people.

³²⁴ "the formation of an expanded identity which arises out of this process". Stein, 1983, p 22

Sufis world-wide are well known for their rigorous preparation for the spiritual life, with retreats, fasting, whirling dances, and retreat experiences. The aim of these practices is to wean the ego from identification with the individual's previous life, and to prepare the whole being for numinous experiences. The arduous process of deconditioning from former thought patterns constitutes the first phase of separation from the collective. Translated into the West, this means analytic and therapeutic work. Balancing the inner and outer world, in-tuition, inner experiences through meditation, expanding consciousness through carefully structured retreat experiences gradually develop the seeker to the point where the integrating process of individuation occurs. Then the 'power of love, or being a lover' is cultivated.³²⁵ Finally the 'mystical experience of Oneness and Nothingness' is awaited. It is important to note that in Sufi practice, individuation is a prerequisite to the experience of mysticism,³²⁶ so Jungian³²⁷ work is a particularly useful type of preparation. Throughout this whole process, the Sufi aspirant has to take his place in human society, in his family and his job. This act of being embedded in ordinary life is a major safeguard against many of the pitfalls encountered; narcissistic preoccupation, inflation, premature or psychotic experience.

³²⁵ Rumi, the great Persian Sufi says: "Wherever you are and however you feel, always tend to be a lover."
⁴²¹ "Thus we can say a modern Western Sufi has to go, first of all, the psychological way of individuation. But then he has to transcend the frontier at which Jung stopped and which is the limitation of psychological understanding. Sufis are psychologists and experts of the human psyche, but above all they are mystics. Their goal is not individuation but the realization of God". Spiegelman et al, 1991 p25

³²⁷ 'For Sufi students Jungian Psychology is very helpful, because it is a system open to transcendence and what Jung called the "Numinous".' Spiegelman et al, 1991, p25

The Sufi writers and teachers emphasize that the next stage, of liminality, is one both of psychological pain and the opportunity to experience a heightened awareness. Both the mystic who has sought this encounter, through dissolving individual identity, and the psychotic who has been taken unawares, touch the same dimension. The Sufi teacher' Pir Vilayat notes that the difference is that the mystic can integrate the experience, while the psychotic does not; the old personality structure has dispersed, usually because it faced a situation beyond its scope, and a new one is not being created.³²⁸ The mystical experience is an overwhelming event as Neumann mentioned above; its subject cannot come out unscathed. It entails a transient sense of loss of boundaries that nevertheless seems eternal; there is feeling of merging of what was once a self into that which was non-self. That non-self is experienced with numinosity, with a sacred quality that is non-describable and joyful.

We now progress to the third stage, that of integration of that which has been touched upon in liminality. For some, this merger and loss of boundaries is a dissolution, a symbolic death without integration. Without the joy of rebirth into the greater Self and a communion with it, this can be an overwhelmingly frightening experience, which results in a fear based withdrawal. For some, boundlessness turns into the exaggerated boundaries of a psychosis.

³²⁸ "The old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms." (Nadine Gordimer, *July's People* New York Viking Press 1981)

As I have already shown, there are few models in the West for a guided and intentional progression, especially the stage of integration; instead, the whole process often involves a marginalisation, the experience of being an Outsider. In Egypt, however, where Sufi groups abound, these experiences are made bearable because the individual is supported by a Sufi group, where these difficulties are understood. In Egypt, many individuals who are going through mental crises, (we may choose to include them in psychiatric diagnostic categories or regard them as peak experiences) join 3 million other adherents and go into Sufi groups, where some teachers are astute enough to differentiate between the frankly psychotic and the potential mystic.

The Egyptian public, according to Spiegleman et al, on the other hand, often does not differentiate between what we would consider psychotic and that of true mysticism; it may tolerate much psychotic behaviour as being due to spiritual forces: The Egyptian words "Majthoub", meaning being pulled towards the Divine, and "Majnoun" meaning being insane, are similar in sound, meaning and appearance.³²⁹ I suggest that this is another example of a significant linguistic representation which reflects and affects the psyche of the people - it is an example of how the psychosis is culturally contained. I suggest that this tolerance of liminality and 'abnormal' mental states on the part of society in general may create a lesser need for psychiatric institutions, indeed may provide a socially supportive system that prevents outright psychosis.

³²⁹ Spiegleman et al, 1991, P101

I suggest that many opportunities for the continuing process of integration, for transcendence, are actually aborted in the West, because of lack of suitable understanding and context. At the core of this discussion is the never to be forgotten search for meaning and purpose which pervades the human experience itself; even psychosis, or maybe particularly psychosis, is loaded with meaning.

The Dark Night of the Soul and loss of meaning

I have referred to The Dark Night of the Soul before in this work; I consider it to be another way of discussing the dark borderland of betwixt and between, of liminal space. St John of the Cross also called it the night of the senses, and in his definitive works, "The Dark Night of the Soul", and "The Living Flame of Love" he celebrates the soul's journey through this difficult time. He describes it as being the stage of purification one reaches after many lesser trials have been endured, before making a leap to deep spiritual awakening.³³⁰ Part of the purification is separation from the collective, so I believe that the Dark Night of the Soul represents what I have been calling liminality; that is, that the individual has left his previous identity as part of the group, but has not yet found his new sense of an expanded sense of self. Because so much suffering -- the depression, madness and extraordinary isolation mentioned by Myss -- can be part of the mystical process, I believe that it is useful to say that when it is a true

³³⁰ Carolyn Myss articulates the stages of preparation, which include separation from the "tribal or group mind that are necessary in order to form a fully conscious bond with the Divine. At each stage come experiences of exquisite mystical transcendence as well as feelings of depression, madness, and extraordinary isolation unknown to ordinary human experience." Myss, C. 1996, P 269

Dark Night experience, the individual does not look outside himself for a cause to blame, but rather develops a mode of acceptance and endurance. He realizes that the crisis is within. If the person is engaged in projecting onto outside agencies, is blaming and feeling hard done by, there is much untransformed shadow work yet to be done, and the likelihood of delusional ideation where others are thought to be the cause of his or her suffering. I have found this point alone to be a useful distinction when dealing with clients, between psychosis and gnosis, between a Dark Night experience, and an extended delusion.

My belief is that The Dark Night of the Soul is a time of deep shadow work, which as we have seen is largely to do with the unconscious parts of self which are 'in the dark', so to speak. During the 'Dark Night' of St Therese of Lisieux (1873-1897), the Christian symbolism, which formerly nourished her life fell to pieces. She was left with the ultimate archetype: emptiness, nothingness. This is what Neumann is referring to when he defines immanent world-transforming mysticism is *"that of a mystic who passes through all the phases of mystical introversion and attains to nothingness but returns from it in a creative state i.e. with a positive attitude to the world."*³³¹ For St Therese of Lisieux, with the loss of symbol came the loss of meaning: she no longer saw meaning in the great story of Christianity upon which she had built her life. This is very paradoxical, in that the very search for meaning of the deepest kind leads to loss of meaning.

³³¹ Neumann, E. 1969, P398

I have noticed that clients who have a strong symbolic framework, a religious adherence, for instance, often feel that they have lost their faith at this point. But in my view it has nothing to do with faith, but rather with the fertile ground of liminality, which feeds the psyche rather than the ego. People coming to therapy from all paths of life, often describe a loss of meaning which they find profoundly disturbing.

To illustrate my point that "God" is more likely to be found in the "darkness" of non-ego, rather than the "enlightenment" we so keenly pursue, I remind the reader that it is through the inferior function, through the Dark Night, even through the shadow, that we approach 'God' or 'the real', or it approaches us.³³² Mystics speak of the numinous experience as one of 'darkness', both as a visual metaphor³³³ as well as feeling totally 'in the dark', not knowing.

Descent to the Goddess

A discussion of the Dark Night would not be complete if I did not introduce the Persian myth of The Descent to the Goddess,³³⁴ because it provides us with a guided tour of the process whereby an initiate of the spiritual life makes a necessary descent into the dark underworld. The story involves the Queen of heaven, Inana who descends to the underworld to the goddess Erishkagal in

³³² *"He is more present in darkness than in light. He is nearer in time of desolation than in time of consolation. So the concrete advice is: Stay with the darkness. Go through it. Don't run away! And through all this you will grow from childhood to maturity; for your faculties will expand, making you more and more capable of receiving those sublime communications which come from the darkness of God."* Johnston, W. 1993, P 252

³³³ When discussion the changes in perception generated by theta waves in the brain, Michael Persinger and his researchers report that subjects experience "blackness": *"In addition to demonstrating enhanced power within the theta band over the entire brain.....Most individuals experienced as "blackness" and various imaginal spaces for which they employ terms that have usually been religious states and shamanic traditions. The feeling of quiescence and resolute harmony are common experiences."* The Neuropsychiatry of Paranormal Experiences, Michael Persinger, PhD, C Psych Appearing in the Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience 13:4, Fall 2001 P 520

³³⁴ Descent to the Goddess, by Sylvia Brinton Perera, Inner City Books

order to find her lost sister.³³⁵ This Sumerian story is the oldest known myth, thousands of years old, yet as I interpret it, this descent entails the gathering together of the undervalued and dissociated parts of self (represented by the lost sister) by being stripped bare of all the accoutrements of the persona, in the underside (unconscious) world. In the subsequent ascent to the topside world, Inana, in a healed and transformed state, is honoured for her exceptional qualities of rulership and wisdom. This myth introduces all the elements of individuation, of light and dark sides, of descent being required before essent (which I use here as meaning 'coming in to Being', following Heidegger) and even ascent is possible. That this myth is relevant to the individual psyche undergoing transformation today, says to me that the struggle enacted is existential rather than cultural or epoch-specific. Certainly, this myth of Inana has been of comfort to many clients who are undergoing the deep depressions of liminal periods, and Dark Night experiences. It is a metaphorical tale of extraordinary power in the modern psyche, where we have so few stories that carry the enchantment, the Numinosity which is necessary to make a difference in the making of meaning.

³³⁵ The descent into hell is also related to the ascent of the soul, as discussed by Robert Avens. "Miller emphasizes that the Latin word *inferos* in the expression *descensus ad feros* is from *in-fero*, meaning "to carry inward, "to "gather in." The "journey into hell is "descent into the imaginal," and hence it is actually "the ascent of the soul," providing the ego "a perspective from a soulful point of view." As universally exemplified in the myth of the hero, the descent means, not extinction pure and simple, but a confrontation with danger (watery abyss, cavern, forest, etc.) resulting in the acquisition of the "pearl of great price." Avens, R. 1984, P 80

Illness of the body and mystical experience –cause, consequence or concomitant

Deprivation and mystical experience

One of the ways in which the Dark Borderland of liminality can be experienced is through deprivations of various kinds. Deprivations of comfort of the body, whether through intentional suffering such as a sweat lodge, fasting, firewalking, or through unintentional suffering such as occurs in times of war - experiences which are essentially liminal - are known through history as times where the numinous can open. Viktor Frankl provided one example, in a concentration camp during World War Two, St John of the Cross when imprisoned by the Church, another. I also propose that deprivation for the ego can provide certain conditions where one is more open to liminality. Robert Johnson³³⁶ has suggested, for instance, that psychologically speaking, those most prone to mystical experiences are likely to be “unfathered”, that is, to have the father absent from their lives in some way. I cannot attest to the statistical validity of this, however, the lack of ego satisfaction in an adequate earthly father could, I suggest, be translated into the desire for a “heavenly” one. I prefer to conceptualize this in terms of Lacan’s ideal father, rather than in theological terms because it is replacing a lack of ego-satisfaction with a symbolic one. Johnson goes on to say that unfathered individuals develop a capacity to be alone and a resilience, which helps them to endure what the mystical experience brings.

³³⁶ In video presentation entitled The Search for the Holy Grail 1991 Hopkins and Wong

Illness a *prelude* to mystical experience

One of the life events which can precipitate an individual into liminality is the experience of physical illness. Illnesses of the body can also be a prelude to mystical experience.³³⁷ An example of someone who began her life as a mystic through a crisis of illness was Margaret Prescott Montague, an American mystic (1878-1955). She was recovering from an operation, and had been in a state of acute mental depression. Her bed was wheeled out into the garden. As she lay there, for the first time in her life, she “*caught a glimpse of the ecstatic beauty of reality*”. The experience was so overwhelming that she could not afterwards remember whether it was gradual or sudden. “*I saw no new thing, but I saw all the usual things in a miraculous new light - in what I believe is their true light. I saw for the first time how wildly beautiful and joyous, beyond any words of mine to describe, is the whole of life....*”³³⁸

Illness of body a *consequence* of mystical experience

Hildegard of Bingen had the reverse experience, of becoming ill as the result of her overpowering experiences, which I have already discussed on page 42. She was 56 years old when her mystical visions occurred and she became ill “*because of ... bodily weakness*”, and for the next 10 years she was “*shaken by countless illnesses*”, although she continued to write.³³⁹ However, I propose that the illnesses may not have been due to the mystical experience itself, but to her struggles with the validity of her experience within the framework of her

³³⁷ “*Illness is often a catalyst of spiritual transformation and the ‘dark night’*” Myss, C. 1996, P 276.

³³⁸ Ferguson, 1976, p 123

³³⁹ Hildegard Of Bingen, 1987, p 5

ecclesiastical life, and her difficulties in putting her own experience forward.³⁴⁰ I think that we need to allow for the possibility that illness in regard to mystical experience could be hysterical conversion. Freud claimed that hysterical tendencies are found in an exaggeration of the erotic type, and are likely to manifest in those for whom love is the cornerstone of life,³⁴¹ and mystics often focus a great deal on love – maybe eros rather than agape. I would speculate that love and desire, (in the ways discussed by Freud, Lacan and Kristeva,) are at the centre of Hildegard of Bingen's hesitance; that is, her desire to love and to be loved (by God), and the fulfilling of that love through mystical experience, collided. I can put this another way, in the terms of heresy and orthodoxy, to which I have already devoted chapter 4: namely, that mystical experience can be seen as the (doubtful) gift which puts the experiencer out of favour, and a whole new relationship with the (ideal) father needs to be achieved. I believe that this is the crux of coming to terms with mystical experience, regardless of whether one thinks of it as a theistic or atheistic experience, ie I hold that the *psychology* is the same, and that the *theology* creates an obfuscation, although not a deliberate one. In Hildegard's case (and Mechtilde of Magdeburg³⁴² 100 years later, and many others, including, perhaps, Joan of Arc and Simone Weil) the possibility of being cast out of the church which she rightly suspected could

³⁴⁰ According to the commentary by Matthew Fox "...she struggled for years with the "I can't" or "I shouldn't" or "Who am I to..." feelings that she had been taught. She relates how often she was confined to a sickbed because she succumbed to this covering up of her talents and her voice and how her conversion - which was in fact a decision to write her visions for the larger community - brought about a physical energizing and got her, literally, out of bed." *Illumination of Hildegard of Bingen*. 1985. P 13

³⁴¹ According to Freud, love is not so central for other types, for instance control is central for the obsessive type.

³⁴² Mechtilde of Magdeburg, a Beguine mystic and lay woman who would follow 100 years after Hildegard, was also advised that she was uneducated and theologically illiterate and ought to keep quiet about her spiritual insight. "...I am forced to write these words regarding which I would gladly kept silent..." Quoted from Sue Woodruff, *Meditations with Mechtilde of Magdeburg*, (Sante Fe: 1983), p 18

be a result of speaking out about her visions, (she could not have been unaware of the Church's doctrines on heresy) the possibility of being declaimed as a heretic, would have been so terrifying (after all she had built her whole life upon the Church), that illness rather than proclamation could have seemed a possible although not conscious alternative. I return to my assertion that the illness would be a form of hysterical conversion, where the complications of love could be avoided. This was what I was alluding to in *The Body as Heretical Experience*, where the body itself is the site in which the heresy resides, both as the semiotic and through hysterical conversion.

To continue, I propose that Hildegard's psycho-physical struggle is archetypal, and that it is through writing that she achieves the symbolic. I claim that this has several implications: first, that it is through creative output that we integrate the numinous experiences, regardless as to how they originate; second, that in achieving the symbolic the numinous experience can safely become part of normal daily life. I make use of Kristeva's notion here, that the semiotic is the primary experiential aspect of being, through which, I suggest, the mystical experience is mediated, and therefore is the means by which the symbolic is discovered, as a translation of the experience into the making of meaning.

Conclusion to chapter five

In this chapter I approached the Dark Borderland to investigate further the idea of liminality, or marginality. I discussed liminality as the metaphorical condition of

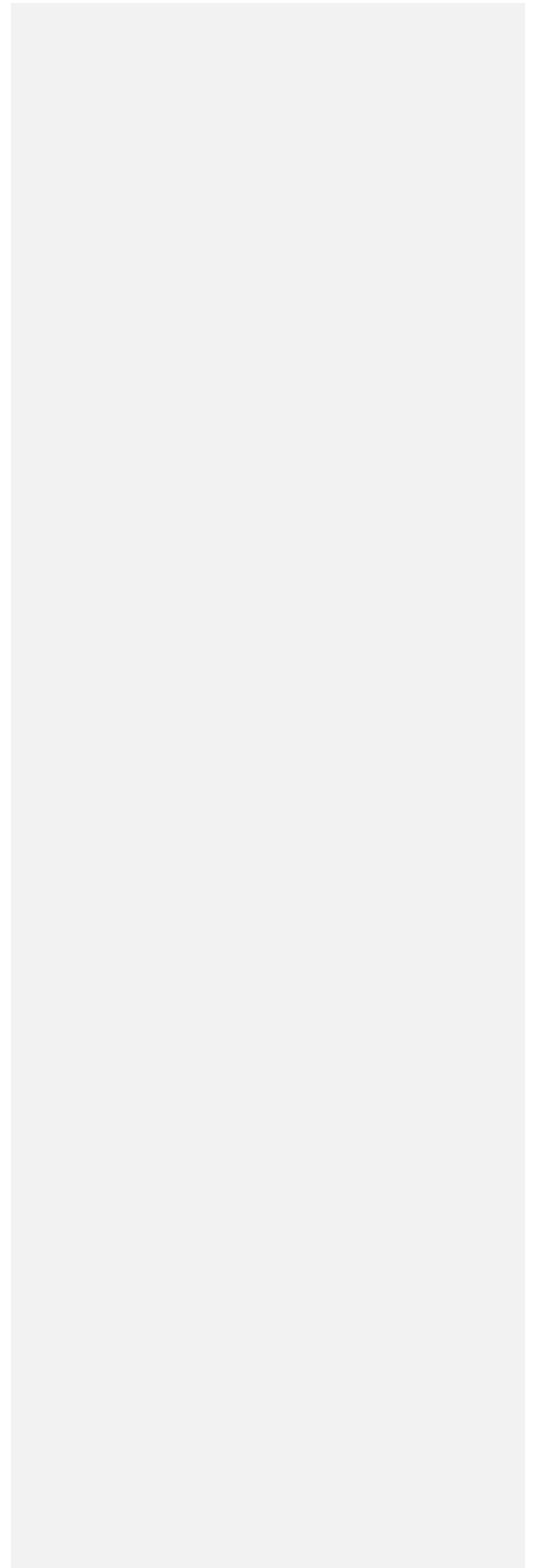
'betwixt and between', which is experienced by both the psychotic and the gnostic, and presented a comparison between the early Christian mystics St Teresa of Avila and Hildegard of Bingen, and a contemporary woman in order to demonstrate similarities and differences between psychosis and gnosis in mystical experience. I then discussed the transition of midlife as an example of liminality, which occurs for everyone, and which all individuals pass through, more or less successfully. The methods of the Sufis provide a structure that intentionally engages the liminal, and I discussed how this apparently deals with both a psychotic or gnostic outcome with equal facility. Finally, I mentioned the Christian concept of the Dark Night of the Soul as a sojourn within liminality.

Here rather than summarise what you have covered in this chapter, it would be better to summarise your argument, especially the last point you make about the role of creative output in the integration of numinous experience, translating the essentially semiotic into the symbolic. This seems to be such an important point arising out of your exploration of liminality that it should come through in your summary.

In the next chapter I turn to Jung's theory of the constitutional types to discuss mystical experience in relation to personality differences.

Chapter 6: The Coat of Many Colours³⁴³

³⁴³ My chapter title here alludes to the Biblical Old Testament story of Joseph who was sold by his brothers into slavery in Egypt because of their envy of his coat of many colours that had been given to him by their father. Thinking analytically and symbolically I understand this coat to be referring to an individuated person, one who displays a full range of the capacities of being, all colours of the psychological spectrum. That Joseph was a visionary and a dreamer who was then given respect and status within Egyptian society underlines my theme in the second part of this chapter, that from this multidimensionality a natural flowering of the so-called mystical results. In this case, he is not destroyed by others, nor does he betray what he knows, as I discussed in Chapter 2.



Introduction to chapter six:

In this chapter I will look at mystical experience in the light of personality type. My reason for doing so is that I believe that the paradigms we have for assessing the normal and the aberrant, in this case what is true knowing and what is delusion, are not subtle enough. The result of this lack of subtlety is that experiences and behaviours which could be seen in a broader context where pathology is not presumed, are instead confined within paradigms which automatically assume pathologies. I will focus on the extent to which the particularity of an individual's psyche affects whether and how he or she will have numinous experience. I use Jung's concept of the psychological types to highlight differences as to how the shadow and the inferior function relate to Individuation and spiritual experience. I regard this concept as relevant because what may be judged as psychosis, or certainly borderline manifestation, could instead be seen as the activation and development of the inferior function.³⁴⁴

In my opinion, this whole approach can be taken even further than it has been thus far. I will also demonstrate that what Neumann and others have termed *homo mysticus*,³⁴⁵ referring to an innate mystical potential in mankind,³⁴⁶ is a natural consequence of the development of the inferior function. Jung himself described this development as the Transcendent function. This extension of my argument in regard to the psychological types is important as it provides a

³⁴⁴ "The activation of the inferior function, especially in the beginning, can be clumsy to the extent of appearing to be psychotic." von Franz, M.L. 1971, p 44

³⁴⁵ "To what degree is the mystical a universal human phenomenon, and to what degree is man *homo mysticus*?" Neumann, E. 1969, P 375

³⁴⁶ I have discussed this more fully in chapter one.

paradigm through which clumsy and even psychoticoid states can come to be seen as transitory and developmental. I regard this new application of Jung's typology as another way of approaching what Washburn defined as "regression in the service of transcendence".³⁴⁷

Jung's psychological typology

Jung (and many others before him who had observed a similar structure) had the idea that there are 4 main ways of perceiving phenomena, which are Feeling, Thinking, Intuitive and Sensate and these are all present in all individuals to varying extents. The types are further delineated in his psychological typology through the categories of Introvert and Extravert, and Perception and Judgement. It is not my purpose to go into Jung's typology in depth, but to follow his idea that it is through the Inferior Function that wholeness is finally mediated. The development of the inferior function he described as the Transcendent Function because in his view the inferior function is the vector through which we achieve individuation and wholeness.

In his schema, one of the functions is dominant in the personality –for example the feeling function – and in the course of one's education and early life another two are exercised and developed, which he termed the auxiliary functions. This leaves the fourth, or inferior function – inferior because it is the least known and least used, and also because we feel inferior³⁴⁸ because the ego does not

³⁴⁷ See Washburn, chapter 7.

³⁴⁸ I remind the reader of my point that spiritual experience is not of the ego, which I have already discussed in Chapter Two. Marie Louise von Franz took this view also. "*The inferior function often contains the religious feeling, the deepest quality of soul...*" von Franz, M.L. 1971, P 44

dominate here. The inferior function is the polar opposite to the primary function: For a dominant Thinking type, Feeling will be the inferior function; for a dominant Intuitive type, Sensation is the inferior function; for a primary Feeling type, Thinking is inferior; for a primary Sensate type, Intuition is inferior.

Jung's Typology, the four functions

In order to illustrate how the inferior function and the spiritual connection,³⁴⁹ or the "numinal accent", as Jung put it, operate within the psychological types I will provide a brief synopsis.³⁵⁰

The individual whose **Feeling function** is primary experiences through subjective evaluation and has a very differentiated scale of feeling values. The inferior function in a feeling type is Thinking. A person with an inferior Thinking function might well look for ready-made ideas, as the effort of thinking all for himself is yet to be developed. Ideas can be incredibly exciting, and break open immanence, as Levinas says.³⁵¹ Yet such people can become tyrannical, stiff and unyielding, and in that way not quite adapted. Fundamentalism³⁵² particularly, can be their way of guarding against their own inferior thinking, or, as

³⁴⁹ "The ecstatic state is usually connected with the inferior function." von Franz, M.L. 1971, P 44

³⁵⁰ The further differentiation of Introvert, and Extravert to these types create both introverted and extraverted thinking, for instance, but I feel that I can make my point without this differentiation, as interesting and important as it may be. Suffice to say that extraversion is characterized by interest in the external object, responsiveness, and a ready acceptance of external happenings. Introversions is concerned with the internal subject, and has to prove that everything rests on personal decisions and convictions, rather than influence by another. Sharp, D. 1987

³⁵¹ Levinas discusses that the "actual study of the written or oral" word, which he refers to as obedience to religious tradition, but which I extrapolate, following Freud and Lacan, as the possibility of all language, "breaks open immanence." Hand, S. 1989, p190

³⁵² I am referring here to any fixed way of perceiving things, a doctrine which provides ready made answers for every occasion, not just religious fundamentalism. In my view the New Age movement, can, in this light, be seen as a new fundamentalism.

I extrapolate, of protecting against the numinous.³⁵³ Thus the undeveloped thinking protects against the possibility of terrifying meaning. But because this faculty is so undeveloped, thinking arouses much emotion; "*rather than their having ideas, ideas seem to have them.*"³⁵⁴ They either read anything and everything because any idea will excite them, or not at all because they protect themselves from being overwhelmed by ideas, and consequently losing sight of themselves: Ideas exert an enormous influence upon them, assuming an autonomous and numinous quality.

The polar opposite to the feeling type is the person with primary **Thinking function** who forms logical conclusions, who orients him or herself through the intellect. The inferior function for the Thinking type is Feeling. The hidden feelings of the thinking type are expressed as wooden, unsubtle versions of conventionality, or even childishly.³⁵⁵ Marie Louise von Franz suggests that all sudden conversions, all radical *metanoia* are due to the sudden eruption of the inferior function³⁵⁶, that which has hitherto been disavowed, unlived and left out of one's experience. The inferior feeling function from which one has protected ones self, partly by projecting it onto others, or attributing it to one's enemies, finally cannot be contained any longer. In my opinion, the reading of novels, the watching of movies of the kind where relationships are the primary motif, and

³⁵³ Suares said that the purpose of all established religions is "to prevent, to remove from the mind, the perception of the immediate all-pervading mystery." Suares, C. 1992, P 209

³⁵⁴ von Franz, M.L. 1971, p124

³⁵⁵ von Franz gives the example of Voltaire, who fought the Catholic Church throughout his life. On his deathbed he asked for *extreme unction* "and took it with a great upwelling of pious feeling". I'm sure his contemporaries thought him quite mad! Yet I would say that his experience was one of gnosis, rather than psychosis. von Franz, 1971, P 51

³⁵⁶ Von Franz, 1971, P 51

soap operas can provide an education for an individual with an inferior feeling function, just as fundamentalism can do for an inferior thinking function. While a person with highly developed and differentiated feeling function might think this engagement childish or even an insult to the intelligence, to the individual with inferior feeling this gaining of feeling second hand (c f gaining ideas second hand) can be truly inspirational. I would go so far as to suggest that narcissism, and the extreme form of narcissism, that is autism,³⁵⁷ can be seen as an extremely unived (and feared) feeling function. In this instance, the ability to empathize is apparently lacking and the range of feeling possibilities seems to be extremely narrow. However, my experience as a therapist has shown me that even such psychotic states as these can move to something much more expressive. While this example goes beyond the discussion of personality type and inferior function per se, it does provide a useful demonstration of the extreme end of the continuum of feeling function.

The primary **Intuitive function** types tend to be most sensitive to subliminal stimuli,³⁵⁸ and they pick up on things that other types miss completely. Historically they are the seers, prophets, shamans, poets, artists and mediums in a society, those who I would place in the pneumatic class of the original Gnostics. My supposition is that the one-sided expression of intuitive individuals, without the corresponding development of their inferior sensate function, often

³⁵⁷ The extreme shut up states in adults and autism in very young children seem to me to be an exaggeration of what Kirkegaard speaks of as a "*monotonous existence*." Symington thinks that "*autism is another way of describing an extreme form of narcissism. It is clear to me that autism is narcissism.*" Symington, N. 1993, P104-106

³⁵⁸ "*The intuitive types tend to be more sensitive to subliminal stimuli.*" von Franz, 1971, P 45

leads to apparent aberrations which we would call psychotic, yet I would say that this is a developmental process and not psychosis. For instance, when an intuitive stretches in the sunshine with marvelous enjoyment, or abandons himself to the rhythm of dance, he experiences his inferior function, the sensate. It is through this unfamiliar experience, which has not been incorporated into consciousness, that there can be a breaking open of immanence. I believe, therefore, that bodily-experienced ecstasy is an extension of inferior sensation. Thus I see experiences of sexual bliss, as in Tantric practices, as being particularly profound for these individuals. The most powerful experience of the numinous for the intuitive would surely tend to involve the body, the sensations, from which he is typically disassociated.³⁵⁹

A person whose primary function is the **Sensate Function** is dominated by things in the factual world, and information gained through the body and the senses,³⁶⁰ rather than through the intuition or feelings. The inferior function here is Intuition, which the individual guards against assiduously. The inferior intuition might well manifest as a *“charming air of inconsistency... (or of) a naïve attachment to religious involvements, or a childish interest in the occult or sudden*

³⁵⁹ As a case in point, Heidegger's friend Medard Boss asked him why he ignored the phenomenology of the body, and he answered, *“because it is the most difficult thing.”* (Craig 1988, quoted by Hunt 1995) I extrapolate from this remark that Heidegger's primary function was Intuition, as many philosophers are, and that his inferior function was the bodily, the sensate, and therefore the most difficult thing. In this context it is noteworthy that his long-term relationship with Hannah Arendt was not, by his own admission, sexually consummated. Even more noteworthy is that after his therapy with Medard Boss, in his later writings, his language becomes *“simple and poetic. It is as if he has recovered the speech of the soul. In his own words, thinking is the “recollection of Being and nothing else... such thinking results in nothing. It has no effect. It suffices it's own essence, in that it is...For it lets Being – be.”* Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” *Philosophy in the twentieth Century*, p 298 quoted by Avens 1984, p 12

³⁶⁰ Needleman is speaking of mystical experience through the body, through putting aside everything at the level of rational consciousness in *“a state of openness, a purity of attention (so that) we can receive the food of truth through sensations in the body...”* Needleman, J. 1980, p209

spiritual insights.”³⁶¹ For instance, he might see something on television and suddenly grasp a symbolic possibility and is flooded with a sense of meaning. I have observed that such sudden spiritual insights, however small they might appear to be (especially by other types), can upset the carefully documented world of the sensate person to such an extent that he can doubt his sanity. In my experience, when intuition is found as an inferior function its manifestation can appear to be paranoia, as the intuition invariably manifests in its least developed, pessimistic way with portends of disaster. I think that in our society it is people with the delusions produced by clumsy inferior function intuition who are most likely to be judged as psychotic. However, in my opinion, this is an incorrect judgment. Far more helpful is the view that such expression is a developmental process that, with help, the person will “grow out of.” I have certainly experienced this many times with clients. For example, as this inferior intuitive function is first activated, the person typically interprets the images and delusions as literally true. This inability to see things symbolically is one evidence of psychosis, within the DSMIV model of interpretation. Yet with insights, experience, and active engagement in such activities as dream work, the study of symbolism or myths of other cultures, the individual can *utilize* these impressions, rather than be overwhelmed by them.³⁶² While I have seen these developments occur during the therapeutic process, I emphasize that the therapeutic environment is not the only one in which these developments can take place.

³⁶¹ Sharp, D. 1987, p 58

³⁶² Kristeva demonstrates that experience is initially through the semiotic, and later becomes translated by means of the symbolic. I discuss this in chapter 2.

Individual psyche and the numinous

Jung was convinced that the phenomena of mystical experience was an expression of the collective unconscious but not in an absolute sense in that this expression is mediated through the personality structure and is therefore relative. Neumann goes so far as to claim that a mystical phenomenon is *“always dependent on the man to whom it manifests itself; the epiphany of the numen is dependent on the personality’s stage of development, and the scope of the revelation in which the numen can manifest itself is contingent on the scope of the personality which receives the revelation.”* (Neumann, E. 1969, p 394) I have already discussed this point of view in relation to Jung’s typology, but I believe that there are further subtleties involved in what Neumann refers to as “the scope of the personality.”

The Shadow and the Numinous.

Another of Jung’s concepts is useful in discussing the relationship between the personality and the numinous, and that is the concept of the Shadow.³⁶³ Briefly, I take the position that if we have much Shadow work yet to do, the contact with the numinous will become a screen onto which we project the dark face, the dark and troublesome ‘demons’. Like Almaas,³⁶⁴ I would argue that if the psychological work is already done, if the Shadow is already dealt with, and a

³⁶³ For Jung the Shadow comprises unconscious, unlied potential, of both a positive possibility which is engaged through creativity, and negative potential, basically that which has been shunned by the ego; both have the potential of being activated by the process of individuation.

³⁶⁴Almaas, A.H. 1996. Although Almaas uses Object Relations Theory terminology and structure, his basic premise is that the deficits of an early holding environment must be addressed in order that the fundamental ground be experienced as benevolent. (p 344) To use Jung’s terminology, I translate this as meaning that the fifth function, the Quintessentia, or the Transcendent function, is essentially an experience of benevolence, and it eludes one until the inferior function is activated and the Shadow work is done.

premature movement towards transcendence as a reflexive movement away from suffering is not made, there is no crisis.

The fourth function and the shadow

I wish to address the kind of difficulties which might be encountered in the fourth function/shadow interface, how the mystical might therefore appear dark. Jung cautioned that the shadow, as a negative impulse, appears in the inferior function.³⁶⁵ If we speak medieval language, or the language of projection, we can say that *"the devil wants to destroy people and will always try to get you by your inferior function. The fourth door of your room is where angels can come in, but also devils!"*³⁶⁶ This gives further understanding of the sometimes bizarre (to the ego) behaviour which can occur when the un-worked through aspects of shadow are activated. There is an inrush of energy when the inferior function is acknowledged, or perhaps even more relevantly, when it is neither acknowledged nor actively worked on. When the shadow comprises those aspects that are obscured by our desire to present ourselves in a way that is acceptable to ourselves and to others, it is easy to see why it sneaks so easily into the inferior function, and *is* part of the inferior function. Dealing with the ignorant and destructive parts of ones self is dealing with one's shadow, and is necessary for wholeness and spiritual experience, lest the spiritual experience become a magnification of the shadow. The traditional religions, with their prohibitions of behaviour, encourage the repression of the shadow. As the mystic writer William Johnson notes: *"Desolation and darkness belong to, and*

³⁶⁵ "It is typical enough that the shadow, the negative impulse, sneaks into the inferior function." von Franz, M.L. 1971 p 87

³⁶⁶ von Franz, M.L. 1971 p 88

*are built into, the mystical process.... In the mystical life the shadow part of our personality rises to the surface of consciousness.... And the mystic may feel the same despair... They may experience the unresolved conflicts, the unfinished business of childhood – the tears not shed, the anger never released, the fear not expressed, the curiosity not satisfied....*³⁶⁷ But I would suggest that it is very useful to think of spiritual experience as arising from the unknown depths of oneself, from the as yet unlived and completely unknown capacities, through the development of the inferior function and its attendant shadowy aspects. The raising of the importance of the inferior function is inevitably accompanied by a lowering of the superior or primary function, much to the consternation of the ego. The ego can be so overwhelmed that the threat of breakdown occurs, or even a more serious psychotic break or impulse to suicide. Yet, if we allow that numinous experiences are not of the ego, the most likely avenue to approach these experiences will be where the ego is least in evidence, that is the inferior function.³⁶⁸

Wrestling with (or for) the angel

According to Jung it is the inevitable contact with and experience of the shadow that stimulates the individuation process, because it opens up and brings new movement. In this sense it allows for renewal. Ultimately, the experience of

³⁶⁷ Johnston, W. 1993, P 252

³⁶⁸ I suggest that what Freud refers to as the unconscious in the following statement could well be encompassed by Jung's schema of the inferior (and primarily unconscious), function: "*The unconscious, the real center of our mental life, the part of us that is so much nearer the divine than our poor consciousness.*" Freud, S, 1920, The Psychogenesis of a Case of Female Homosexuality, Standard Edition, 8, p 165

gnosis is about "opening".³⁶⁹ Guggenbuhl-Craig speaks likewise: *"But he must wrestle with dark uncanny forces in himself and in others. It is only through ever-repeated confrontations with shadow that he can fulfill his task. He cannot, like the Biblical Jacob, spend just one night wrestling with the angel to win his blessing. His struggles for the blessing must last a lifetime."*³⁷⁰ Soares adds that we are also wrestling with archetypal forces, and whoever wrestles with them is rewarded with a blessing, the blessing from life itself rather than from a deity. The interplay between the closed system and fixedness of the narcissistic, self-absorbedness and the movement toward the chaos of the opening of gnosis is a life-long process, rather than a onetime event, and this constitutes the renewal.³⁷¹

From the Jungian psychological perspective the work of transformation begins with the inferior function and the shadow, the parts of oneself that are rejected and undervalued. The shadow acts unconsciously, and tries to limit consciousness. The undifferentiated energy of the unconscious is only dark and frightening when it manifests through the shadow, so our work is to become conscious of the shadow.³⁷²

³⁶⁹ I refer here to Jacob Needleman who proposes a state of being where the individual is no longer torn by the opposites, is not *"enthusiastic, nor rejecting - but only open."* He claims that the ultimate aim is *"to become open."* This is the opposite of the shut-upness of the narcissistic position, and the condition of sin according to Kierkegaard.

³⁷⁰ Guggenbuhl-Craig, 1971, p 155.

³⁷¹ When a person begins to enter the whirlwind of the creative/destructive energies which Soares describes as the forces of genesis, every complex in the person is activated, every shadowy aspect. Soares says that the "revelation" inherent in the Genesis story is actually about self and that we must *"instruct our sense-based thought to yield to the disruptive pressure of timelessness and to the necessity of allowing its immanence to blend with its opposite and still keep itself alive."* Soares, C., 1992, p21

³⁷² I observe that the contemplative process, as engaged by those who pursue a spiritual and meditative discipline, has much in common with psychotherapy. In both cases one is painfully and inescapably brought face to face with one's shadow. This discussion of shadow is exceptionally important for the spiritual seeker, as any premature claim to (or access to) the numinous can activate and magnify the dark aspects of psyche in such a way as to either become or appear to be psychotic. One way in which we have learned a lot about what I call premature access to the numinous is

The fourth function, the Inferior Function

Touching the inferior function³⁷³ can resemble an inner breakdown at a certain crucial point in one's life, usually in midlife, but often this crisis is postponed for a lot longer. The inferior function "*has the advantage, however, of overcoming the tyranny of the dominant function in the ego complex.*"³⁷⁴ Thus this movement has the potential to move the individual from a fixed and dry position. Approaching the inferior function imposes a kind of discipline on all individuals, as this is a development which does not come easily. It is a labour through which we discover that which is cut off.³⁷⁵

People are very susceptible and easily influenced when it is a question of their inferior function. My observations as a therapist indicate that the energy of the inferior function is inevitably experienced as from outside of one's self, which is true enough if we take this as meaning outside the ego. For a person with inferior thinking function, this could be the simple difficulty of claiming one's own original thoughts as one own, rather than looking for validation through someone else's system of thought. For a person with inferior feeling function, this could be an experience of a feeling being projected towards them by another or bestowed

through the experimentation with psychotropic drugs, especially LSD. I'm, speaking here as much about their use in the medical context as any other. Sometimes people became permanently psychotic as a result of the use of LSD; as one man put it, "you see things that haunt you for the rest of your life". My understanding of this is that a doorway was opened before he had the psychological experience and balance to find an adequate context for these experiences, and as such a drug-induced psychosis is no different from any other etiology of psychosis.

³⁷³ "You do not have an inferior function, it has you". C.G.Jung

³⁷⁴ von Franz, M.L. 1971 p 73

³⁷⁵ This labour is so important that "*an activity not used is guilty of its own inactivity.*" von Franz, M.L. 1971 p 133

upon them from some impersonal source. Since the inferior function is unconscious, one can easily make judgements which seem to others appallingly inadequate, clumsy or ill advised. In a notable example of this, Marie Louise von Franz said that every German she knew who supported Nazism “*did so on account of his inferior function*”, in this case usually Feeling.³⁷⁶

The inferior function and the transcendent function

The most important issue to my argument is that our most unlived and undeveloped function, because it is out of the control of the ego, also allows access to the numinous which is also outside the control of the ego. Robert Johnson has said that the inferior function is always “*one’s God connection. He can come no other way. We have him effectively barred on every other front, but we can’t keep him out with the inferior function because we have no control there.*”³⁷⁷ I believe this is a crucial point, that an experience of the numinous comes through the parts of us that are least facile, in which we are clumsy, truly ‘slouching towards Bethlehem,’ as Yeats put it. In this way something that to someone else may seem hardly worthy of the effort, or even ridiculous, may be a valiant expression of the unlived life. Marie Louise von Franz gives the example of “*extraverts who fall into their primitive introversion (and) walk around looking very important, assuring everybody that they are having deep mystical experiences about which they cannot talk.*”³⁷⁸ An introvert, to whom mysticism and a lifetime of self examination had made this experience commonplace, could

³⁷⁶ “Every German I knew who fell for Nazism did so on account of his inferior function”. von Franz, M.L. 1971 p 82

³⁷⁷ Johnson, R. 1987, P59

³⁷⁸ von Franz, M.L. 1971 P 69

be quite amazed at this, to him, gauche behaviour. This adds a new perspective on what is true mysticism – that is, that which might appear facile may be very real, or transformative, to the individual.

This is important in the discussion of how the influx of energy can either become psychosis or gnosis. My contention is that the midlife advent of the inferior function can look like psychosis at its worst, and foolishness at its best. Likewise, if the influx occurs too early in life, for instance when the primary function is not yet well developed, and the education of the auxiliary functions not yet begun, I believe that what is likely to manifest is a difficult and prolonged dark passage, most likely to be diagnosed as a psychosis. An old Zen story illustrates this point. A young man is in search of a Pearl of great value. He ascends to a cave in the highest mountain after a journey of great peril. When he finally reaches the cave in which the Pearl is to be found, he finds a fierce-some fire-breathing Dragon, which prevents every attempt to snatch the prize. Deeply disappointed, he is advised to return to his life, till the soil, marry and raise a family, and to return when he has achieved these things. When he returns to the cave many years later, after an easy and very short journey, the Dragon hands him the Pearl without even being asked. This allegorical tale says to me that one can be too young, whether chronologically or psychologically, and so invested in ego values that the pearl-approaching process, which is essentially through the inferior function and therefore non-ego, will be met with every possible hardship and 'opposition' of the shadow and inferior function, and will be invested with

psychotic features. When life has been more fully lived, and the auxiliary functions developed, these oppositions disappear or work in one's favour, so that gnostic features result. So I conclude that the *timing* of the 'descent' into shadow and inferiority is an important factor influencing the degree of suffering, and outcome as psychosis or gnosis.

Dealing with the fourth function - the transcendent function

The fourth function is primarily a problem because it can't be developed head-on in a concrete, egoic, outer way, as we have already seen, but rather through creativity³⁷⁹ and development of the imagination, through writing, poetry, painting, dancing. Jung found that active imagination was practically the only means for dealing *consciously* with the fourth function. We also know that for certain people, the creative process is the only way of staying 'sane' all through life, as has been suggested about the writer James Joyce.³⁸⁰

Ideally, when one reaches the stage of dealing consciously with the fourth function, a middle ground is achieved and all four functions become instruments of expression and can be used as an artist would use all the colours on her palette to suit the occasion. For example, within the function of language one could argue logically, write poetically, use metaphor powerfully and evoke descriptively, all with equal facility as needed. Previously this individual might have relied primarily on the use of logic.

³⁷⁹ Winnicott noted that "it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self." Winnicott, D (1971) *Playing and Reality*. London: Tavistock Publications

³⁸⁰ Lacan was particularly interested in how creativity, that is, manifesting the unmanifest, could forestall psychosis, or become an alternative to it. He called this the third possibility to psychosis and neurosis. (See Grigg 1997) I have engaged in this discussion further in the chapter *Killing the Buddha*.

According to Jung's schema, in the middle ground, the fourth or inferior function comes to a fifth thing, the *quintessentia* or the philosopher's stone. The quest for the philosophers stone was the great opus of the Alchemists, from whom Jung borrowed these terms. The gaining of the Philosopher's Stone is a metaphor which describes the consolidated nucleus of the personality which is no longer identified with any of the functions and, one is 'the still point in the turning world'. I contend that the *quintessential* is mysticism, in its purest form. When the middle sphere is achieved it is like the state achieved by the Buddhist masters.³⁸¹ This constitutes a radical change in perspective, whether achieved through the process of therapy³⁸² or through the mystical experience.

Conclusion to Chapter Six:

I have argued that that which could be judged as psychotic may in fact be the fledgling inferior function stumbling around without the help of the ego, and falling upon the numinous by chance. In this case, the manifestation of psychotic features could instead be viewed as a developmental process and therefore a temporary condition.

³⁸³Thus, whether unconsciously or consciously, we fear or find most difficult the development of the inferior functions least valued by the collective. The collective is unlikely to attribute gnosis to such functions (eg intuition). Whether

³⁸¹ As Laing says "*I have seen the Bird of Paradise, she has spread herself before me, and I shall never be the same again.*" Laing, R.D., 1990, p 90

³⁸² Freud, in the *Introductory Lectures*, equates the goal of mystical practices to bring about the transformation of personality to that of psychoanalysis in which knowledge leads also to transformation.

³⁸³ A further point is that as an extraverted thinking society we tend toward prejudice not only as to which primary function is the most desirable, (the thinking function), but which manifestation of the inferior function challenges its supremacy the most (the intuitive function).

this judgment is made by the collective itself, (ie from without) or via the superego (ie from within) is beside the point, as the prevailing paradigm is upheld in either case.

I also conclude that the quality of the experience of the numinous also depends on how well the auxillary functions, the second and third, are developed, as to how well these experiences are integrated or modified in a way which does not swamp the individual. For instance, while ever able to explore new frontiers of the spirit, the intuitive also needs the focusing abilities of sensation and thinking in order to actualize them. The natural tendency of the intuitive is towards possibility rather than actuality, toward the potential life rather than the lived life, so the balance of these other faculties of sensation and thinking forestalls any tendencies toward psychosis. Further, given Jung's schema, I propose that those most easily integrated encounters with the numinous would be those experienced by individuals with well developed auxillary functions, one of which is intuition, rather than as a dominant intuition.

Finally, I conclude that there are important implications for therapy as a result of this perspective of the activation of the inferior function, namely that a too hasty diagnosis of delusion or psychosis could well impede the most heroic opus of the individual toward wholeness.

In the next chapter, *Killing the Buddha*, I pursue the idea of foreclosure, following Lacan, and develop the idea that mystical experience is an attempt to create 'meaning beyond meaning'. I liken mystical experience to the chaos which is inherent to and ascribed to heresy, and the foreclosure which Lacan attributes to psychosis, to any process which prevents access to 'the real'.

Chapter 7: Killing the Buddha: Chaos Theory, Foreclosure, Psychosis and gnosis

"If you meet the Buddha on the way, kill him." Zen saying.

Introduction to chapter seven:

I am diverging here into chaos theory to speculate further as to how and why chaos and order are experienced within the psyche. It is my intention that this seemingly unrelated subject give some further definition between gnosis and psychosis. To do this I develop Lacan's idea of "foreclosure". Using some of the fundamental principles of chaos theory, I undertake to demonstrate that all theories and all paradigms of knowledge act as a foreclosure, but that chaos theory offers the (almost impossible) possibility of a source of meaning which lies outside the symbolic order. This is a development of ideas which I have already touched upon, such as "meaning beyond meaning."

The effect of scientific theory on consciousness

All paradigms of knowledge, whether scientific, political or psychotherapeutic, effect how we see ourselves. *"Throughout history we have drawn our conception of ourselves and our place in the universe from the current physical theory of the day."*³⁸⁴ This is not to say that all knowledge is derived from physical theory, nor that it is historicist, but rather that it is a specific framework within which we pursue our enquiry into existence.

Freud thought and created his theories within the scientific paradigm in writing his 'scientific psychology.' He went to great lengths to appear scientific in his arguments, that is to stay within the paradigm, although whether he was successful or not is debatable. He set out to discover in the human psyche laws

³⁸⁴ Zohar, 1991, P 2 quoting from "The world which science presents for our belief" Bertrand Russell at the turn of the century. Bertrand Russell, A Free mans Worship, in *Mysticism and Logic*, p 45

and forces which would mirror those in the physics and chemistry of his day.³⁸⁵

I suggest that the models which we use to explain to ourselves how things got to be the way they are, are fundamental to how we experience ourselves inwardly and outwardly. That is, that systems of knowledge shape how we think and how we structure our society. Religious faith, for example, is shaped by the dogma of the religion itself. We behave differently if we think the world is flat, than if we have a round earth theory, to use a naïve example.

In looking at eras in history it would appear that philosophy, religion and science have been linked, in fact prior to the 16th century they were much more closely associated than today.

The evidence is growing that chaos theory and analytical psychology are describing similar dynamics, albeit in different realms.³⁸⁶ These dynamics constitute chaos reintegrating at greater levels of complexity. Jung said that psyche and matter are two different aspects of one and the same thing.³⁸⁷ And again: *"There is no difference in principle between organic and psychic formations. As a plant produces its flowers, so the psyche creates its symbols."*³⁸⁸ Prigogine, the father of chaos theory, discusses the coming together of our own insights about the world around us and the worlds inside us as a satisfying feature of the recent evolution in science that we have tried to

³⁸⁵ Zohar, 1991, P 156

³⁸⁶ Van Eenwyk 1997 P 13

³⁸⁷ Jung, CW 8 par 418

³⁸⁸ Jung, from his essay, *Approaching the Unconscious* in *Man and His Symbols*.1964

describe.³⁸⁹ *"I came to see that the rules of the game were much the same, no matter what field you look at"*, he said.³⁹⁰ Chaos theory can be seen as a metaphor for something that has preoccupied humankind from its beginning. For what was once attributed to supra-human elements - gods, giants and spirits can now be seen as a function of the relationship between energy and matter.

Everything that we regard as the knowledge of the world is organizationally closed. Whatever the theory says about reality is not in fact that reality, because any theory is an abstraction of the whole and therefore is, in a sense an illusion. Though scientific theories may be quite useful illusions, Bohm reminds us that the user of a theory should always be starkly aware of the theory's inherent limitations.³⁹¹ This echoes the phenomenological critique against the positivism first proposed by Auguste Comte, which recognizes only positive facts and observable phenomenon, and rejects metaphysics, the unconscious, theism, and anything mysterious.

Nietzsche did not have to proclaim that God is dead, because science had already killed him. Classical, deterministic physics had already transmuted the living cosmos of Greek and Medieval times, a cosmos filled with purpose and intelligence and driven by the love of a God for the benefit of man, into a dead, clockwork machine. Nietzsche made many references to science, and the limitations which reason created. In "Thus spoke Zarathustra", he speaks of his

³⁸⁹ Holland, 1998

³⁹⁰ Holland 1998

³⁹¹ Briggs and Peat, 1989, P 200

own phenomenological approach; "I speak only of the things that I have *experienced* and do not only offer events in the head."³⁹² In his proclamation "I teach you the Superman", he is making a plea for the leap which would take one out of the shackles of reason, out of the limitations of the paradigm, out of a 'foreclosed' system.

I propose to show that the ideas of quantum theory, specifically the developments of chaos theory and fractal geometry relate to the possibility of a new view of ourselves, collectively and individually, and that this view allows for radically different possibilities from the determinism of Freud's time. That the tendency towards wanting to create a theory which posits certainty is inherently very strong is illustrated by the fact that Quantum physics itself is divided into two branches: The "Deterministic", or the "universe of law and order" of Einstein,³⁹³ and the contrasting branch of Chaos Theory, "does God play dice." I will continue to link determinism with foreclosure as I develop my argument.

If we are not to be caught up in a deterministic, self-referent, narcissistic and entropic system, there is a great need for a re-visioning of our world. According to Benoit Mandelbrot, fractal geometry is not just a chapter of mathematics, but one that helps Everyman to see the same old world differently.³⁹⁴ The mathematics of fractal geometry were first proposed in the 1920's, but it was only

³⁹² Nietzsche, 1964, p 12

³⁹³ "Ironically, Einstein, who had opened the door to quantum physics, was unable to see the implications of quantum theory and to recognize its possibilities, because he could not accept the idea that the foundation of reality could be governed by chance and randomness." Singer, 1990, P 59

³⁹⁴ McGuire 1991

with the advent of sophisticated computers in the 1980's that Mandelbrot and Julia sets displayed their beautiful iterative patterns. The relationship between theory and form was clearly visible. Perhaps as Robert Stetson Shaw says, '*You don't see something until you have the right metaphor to let you perceive it.*'³⁹⁵

[Briefly, scientists find the laws of fractal geometry govern much of the natural world, producing patterns that repeat themselves on smaller and smaller scales. The structure of a fern is explained by fractals, and clouds, river deltas and mountain ridges are characterized by repeated shapes on an ever larger (or smaller) scale.]

Suares and others who interpret the language of the letter-numbers of the first five chapters of the book of Genesis present us with the idea that these literal biblical stories are an abstract formula or metaphor for the reality of cosmic energy, rather than the opposite and accepted view that these stories about Adam et al are the concrete story. The age of determinate physics was also the age when the Creation story was insisted upon as being literally correct. Foreclosure in its broadest sense is a way of forestalling the approach of these cosmic energies. As Suares comments, "*The traditional reading of the Bible is the result of intellectual subjugation to psychological demands. The book of Genesis when read according to custom therefore appears in the form of a story relating the facts and gestures of such people as Adam, Eve, Cain, Able, and so*

³⁹⁵ van Eenwyk 1997

forth, but whose names when read in the light of the cabalistic code reveal that they are abstract formulas of cosmic energy focused in the human psyche."³⁹⁶

The medieval Hermetics or alchemists mingled Gnosticism, Christianity, and theologies from Egypt, Babylon and Persia. They believed in creation from a pre-existing chaos. Yet the Greeks, beginning with Democritus, proposed that everything by its very nature is predetermined. Nothing is left to chance. The determinism that characterized the paradigm of classical physics influenced other disciplines as well. Chaos was the word most dreaded by the physicist of the past, because it represents that which exists not only beyond the known but beyond the knowable.

Examples of anomalies abound in science which, when examined by science itself, actually constitute the collapse of the prevailing paradigm, and the instatement of a new one. Discovery begins with the recognition of anomaly that makes it appear as if nature has somehow violated the paradigm that governs normal science. The scientist has moved away from the old paradigm and entered a liminal area, beyond which a new paradigm may be waiting to be born.³⁹⁷

Newton's goal, at the end of the 17th century, was a "*structuring of the world in so absolutist a manner that every event, the closest and the most remote, (fit)*

³⁹⁶ Soares, 1992, P 55

³⁹⁷ Singer, 1990, P 55

neatly into an imaginary system."³⁹⁸ [It could be that the chief source of Newton's desire to know was his anxiety before and his fear of the unknown.] Reflecting this is a statement which is the epitome of classical certainty and determinism, by Pierre Simon de Laplace, one of the leading mathematicians of the 18th century, in his *Philosophical Essays on Probabilities* submits an ideal where nothing could be uncertain; and the future just like the past would be present before its eyes.³⁹⁹

Within this kind of system the erratic was treated as a side issue, an unpredictable and therefore unimportant kind of marginalia. Now scientists are more willing to look directly at the irregularity. And they accept Mandelbrot's challenge: to scrutinize, rather than dismiss, the apparently formless; to investigate the morphology of the amorphous.⁴⁰⁰

Chaos theory⁴⁰¹

It is not within the scope of this essay to discuss the principles of chaos theory except in the most cursory way. The definition of chaos theory itself, 'lawless behaviour governed entirely by law' gives some idea of its paradoxical nature. The 'aim' of turbulent chaos is integration, inclusion or wholeness. Yet, as Michael Barnsley, a mathematician studying chaos, has written about fractal

³⁹⁸ Berman, 1988, P 247-248

³⁹⁹ Stewart, 1989, P 10

⁴⁰⁰ Gleick 1990 P 25

⁴⁰¹ Definition of chaos (Royal Society, London 1986) "Stochastic behaviour occurring in a deterministic system." *Stochastic means random. Deterministic behaviour is ruled by exact and unbreakable laws. Stochastic behaviour is the opposite: 'lawless and irregular, governed by chance. So chaos is 'lawless behaviour governed entirely by law. Stewart, I. 1989 p*

geometry: "You risk the loss of your childhood vision of clouds, forests, galaxies, leaves, feathers, flowers, rocks, mountains, torrents of water, carpets, bricks, and much else besides. Never will your interpretation of these things be quite the same." (quoted in Gleick 1990) Like a naive childhood drawing of a cotton wool cloud, the laws of physics which we use to describe our world both explain and misrepresent its existence. What we think of as a cloud is the signifier of what a cloud is in "the real."

A: violent order is disorder:

and

B: A great disorder is an order.

These things are one.

This statement, in the style of the Zen koan, or the self-referent paradox, could equally be speaking about the essential nature of the physical world as seen by chaos theory, as the nature of the creative process in the human psyche. To use Lacan's term, the violent order of foreclosure sets a counter-reaction which is psychosis to create balance. Chaos goes from unity-chaos-unity, suggesting that there is a fundamental principle where certain things are unified within the psyche, but that this very equilibrium creates the potential for a negative entropy which calls for chaos to engender life or liveliness, so that new elements can be added and a new order of complexity created.

Poincare revealed his insights about his own creative process in a lecture at the Societe de Psychologie in Paris. His personal pattern of scientific discovery seemed to be one of initial frustration, confusion, and mental chaos followed by unexpected insight.⁴⁰² This chaos followed by insight is similar to what happens in the therapeutic hour as well. The psychotic episode is an exaggeration of this chaotic space on the way to insight. Poincare was breaking away from the scientific paradigms in which he was educated, and it is the chaos, the discontinuity⁴⁰³ of this reorganisation, which enables a new order to emerge. He saw this as an inner world version of the outer world chaos theory which he was developing.

Chaos theory itself functions like a symbol in the domain of science: it transforms perspectives and unlocks forms of inquiry previously thought inaccessible. Fractal geometry is revolutionary in that it presents us with a new language in which to describe the shape of chaos. Fractals, says the science writer Jeanne McDermott, 'capture the texture of reality.'⁴⁰⁴ The iteration which characterises fractal geometry suggests that stability and change are not opposites but mirror images of each other. 'With a fractal, you look in and in and in and it always goes on being fractal,' says British painter David Hockney. It's a way towards a greater awareness of unity.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰² Briggs and Peat, 1989, P 192

⁴⁰³ "Psychic development, unlike the learning process, is not an even, linear, or constant progress, but a series of phases marked by cataclysmic beginnings and endings, death and new life, regressions back and leaps forward, clashes of opposites and resolutions into synthesis-all this is the natural language of the emotional psyche." Perry, 1974, P 8

⁴⁰⁴ Stewart, 1989, p 242

⁴⁰⁵ Briggs and Peat, 1989, P 198

Chaos theory is contributing to a new world-view, with its own distinctive epistemological, moral and spiritual dimensions. Prigogine said that "Whatever we call reality, it is revealed to us only through an active construction in which we participate."⁴⁰⁶ While Plato tried to distance himself from "participating consciousness", Quantum physics and chaos theory insist that I am part of the experiment which I observe. It is evident that in the arena of perception we have reached a realization of perception analogous to the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle. We do not observe the physical world. We participate with it.⁴⁰⁷

If, on the other hand, we are alienated from reality we will have to reconstruct it through the incorporating of chaotic elements, as I will demonstrate in the next sections in the case of Shreber. Shreber's case of psychosis- a man of high intelligence and a high court judge, who wrote a lucid account of his experiences - particularly interested Freud, and later, Lacan. Chaos theory gets close to the real genesis of individual human existence because it both observes and allows for a phenomena of uncertainty, leaps of growth in a discontinuous manner, the tensions of opposites as a creative rather than destructive principle, and chaos as the *prima materia*. These phenomena are as relevant for the psyche as for the physical world. I will proceed to examine this relevance in the field of psychoanalysis through the notion of 'foreclosure', as proposed by Lacan.

⁴⁰⁶ Prigogine, I., 1984, p 293

⁴⁰⁷ Talbot, 1993, 94

The development of Lacan's ideas on foreclosure

Lacan's critique and expanding of Freud's work has brought psychoanalysis many useful insights. The story of Lacan's development of ideas on foreclosure begins with three words Freud used, namely *Verdrangung* (repression), *Verwerfung* (rejection and repudiation and later, by Lacan, foreclosure) and *Verleugnung* (disavowal). Lacan was aiming to differentiate between psychosis, which operates by way of foreclosure, and neurosis, which operates by way of a repression. The third category of Freud's, disavowal, represented the means by which perversion operates, and does not concern us directly here.

Foreclosure began as a legal term, which is significant in itself, as it is the law which prohibits in some way, but it entered the domain of linguistics when the French linguists Jacques Damourette and Edouard Pichon speak of foreclosure where something is precluded from being possible.⁴⁰⁸

A foreclosure is a double bind, which represents an alienation. Russell Grigg gives the example: Mr Brook is not the sort of person who would *ever* complain. The *ever* flags the foreclosure. Mr Brook is thus denied the possibility of ever complaining.

According to Grigg, what is foreclosed is not the possibility of the events ever coming to pass, but the very signifier, or signifiers that makes the expression of impossibility possible in the first place. The speaker lacks the very linguistic

⁴⁰⁸ Grigg, 1997, p1

means for making the statement at all. Lacan adopted the term in 1956 in his last seminar on psychosis as a definition of the notion of *Verwerfung*. Before this, psychoanalysis was thought to be largely able to treat neurotics, but not psychotics, because the structure of psychosis had not been understood. Lacan established that the understanding of the nature of foreclosure is central to an understanding of the psychotic process.

With the work of Lacan the mechanism⁴⁰⁹ of foreclosure and the structure of psychosis were understood in a new way, one that gave the psychoanalytic treatment of psychosis a more secure basis. Further and more important, is that the problems that foreclosure raises are central to psychoanalysis in general. Even more central to my argument is that there is nothing to rule out the possibility that foreclosure is a normal psychic process, as Lacan develops in Seminar III.⁴¹⁰ In other words, we all, to some degree or other, repudiate, reject and preclude the very possibility of the existence of certain things. This is done by way of the absence of the signifiers, through language, which would enable us to say “not that.” Following Lacan, that which is absent from discourse is also absent from the unconscious, in that the unconscious operates like a language.

To differentiate between the foreclosure associated with psychosis itself, and that

⁴⁰⁹ The extent to which the paradigm of science shapes my particular world is reflected in linguistics: so many words that I use in the analytic context are words which are ‘borrowed’ or appropriated, from science, such as ‘mechanism’, ‘dynamic’, ‘system, device, ‘structure’. I wince at the automatic (linguistic and unconscious) bias that this creates. As I attempt a ‘morphology of the amorphous’, what language is available to me? Even the ‘extravagant hyperbole’ of the archetypes as spoken of by Jung, and as demonstrated in Suares’ reading of Genesis 1:1, quoted later on page 14, creates a particular form. Perhaps the ‘epiphanies’ of James Joyce come close to exemplifying the ‘other side of language’ of Lacan. The purpose of language, he says, is to evoke, not inform.

⁴¹⁰ Grigg, 1997

of a normal psychic process, Lacan proposed that what is foreclosed in psychosis is the name of the father, a key signifier that anchors or quilts signifier and signified. Thus Lacan argued that it is only when what is foreclosed is specifically concerned with the question of the father, as in the case of Shreber, that psychosis is produced. I have mentioned this in my discussion in Chapter Four when I discuss the collective psyche and the prevailing paradigm.

In Lacan's Seminar XXIII, 1975-76 the general theory of foreclosure is applied to both neurosis and psychosis, a general theory of the symptom. This step effectively generalizes the concept of foreclosure. The delusional metaphor of psychosis is one response to this foreclosure; the symptom-metaphor of neurosis is another.

When Lacan said that there is a third possibility to the psychosis and neurosis possibility, through close and impassioned attention to the creative processes, in James Joyce's case, through writing, he is saying in effect that although the tendency may be there, the outcome is not predicted. Not only is this reflecting a chaos theory approach, but the engagement with chaos, through creativity, prevents an outright psychosis. In Joyce's writing, there are many 'epiphanies'⁴¹¹ that do not make much sense, which (appear to be) enigmatic and meaningless fragments outside of discourse and cut off from communication, but which are experienced as 'sudden spiritual manifestation'. Enigma contains

⁴¹¹ By epiphanies, James Joyce meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech, or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself. He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments.' From Stephen Hero, Jonathan Cape, London, 1956, p 216, quoted by Grigg, 1997

certainty, chaos contains order, absence of meaning becomes ineffable revelation.

Foreclosed, then means to be lying outside the limits of what can be judged to exist, yet reappears, as Lacan describes, 'in relations of resistance without transference', or, again, 'as punctuation without text.' (Lacan, *Ecrits*, p 388) Lacan also argues that there is a domain, which he termed 'the real' which subsists outside symbolism, which constitutes what is external to and radically foreign to the person and the person's world. It is this which is foreclosed. The real, that impossible kernel of being, can re-enter an individual's world through semiotic language, gesture, nuance and musicality, as in James Joyce's writing as already mentioned, and as described by Kristeva.

The case of Shreber

When Charles Peguy says that everything begins in mysticism and ends in politics, we could equally say, everything begins in chaos (that of chaos theory) and ends in the foreclosure which foreshadows psychosis. Everything begins in that which is outside the symbolic order and ends up being subsumed within it. What I am trying to say is that when Shreber creates his own code language, he is trying to break open immanence in the same way that Saures actually does in the words of fire of the Qabala. I wish to use the phenomena of the enigma to explain this thought further. The enigma arises because the expectation of

meaning that the signifier generates is radically disappointed.⁴¹² In effect, what is foreclosed, ultimately, is access to a disordered universe, 'for our own good', (borrowing Alice Miller's phrase) so that instead we have the enigma of a paradigm, whether that is a religion or a scientific theory, which arouses the expectation of meaning, which is radically disappointing. True, the meaning is not extinguished completely but the traces which remain are not sufficient to prevent the invention of a private metalanguage, hallucination, delusion and other devices to restore that which has never been found. In a sense we are all the three-legged stools which Lacan refers to⁴¹³, who function well enough without the fourth, but the absence shows up at a certain crossroads in biographical history, and one is confronted with this lack which always existed, like a phantom limb. The notion that this is a foreclosure of castration, or of the name of the father, is to me an insufficient exploration of the intent and understanding of this process. In that the masculine, or phallic way has been denied him, through foreclosure, the other route for Shreber is through the feminine, and through feminization, which he attempts through the experience of jouissance in his own body. Although in Shreber's case this is a psychotic exaggeration, it is also the way of the mystic, where direct experience, rather than hallucination, is experienced. For the person who takes up the feminine position also takes up the masculine or phallic, and it is through this feminine jouissance that ethical relations to the Other are begun. This is what women have but know nothing about, according to Lacan. It is the embodied sense of

⁴¹² Grigg, 1997, p 11

⁴¹³ in Seminar III page 203

that which cannot be spoken.⁴¹⁴ In Shreber the barrier to jouissance is surmounted and jouissance is no longer located outside his body. It is ascribed to a divine Other who seeks his satisfaction in Shreber. Kristeva, posits the existence of the *chora*, a pre-verbal space inhabited by sensation, accessible to the mind and outside time, and therefore outside the symbolic order. It is in this space that the gap is bridged between the foreclosed and the world of communication, as in Joyce's writing. Kristeva introduces a supplementary dimension to the Lacanian model in the form of a transitional sensory space termed the semiotic, occupied by sensation and images. This is a *maternal* space, outside of the demands of time and the demands of social code. She argues that Lacan did not place sufficient emphasis on the maternal. It is, according to the schema of Kristeva, in the semiotic that Shreber re-visions and re-enchants his world. Further, Kristeva argues against cognitivism, whose conception of knowledge lies only in the mind, not in relation to the other, and against fundamentalism which denies the play and enjoyment of liberty. Like Kristeva, I see the 'safe' ground of cognitivism and fundamentalism (of any kind) as inimical to freedom; they exclude the semiotic chora as a source of vitality and integration.⁴¹⁵

The religious language which Shreber and the majority of psychotic people use, (Perry) and the religious figures who people their world are an attempt to reach a regenerative energy for which the language of religion is the closest

⁴¹⁴ Lacan, *Encore*, pp 61-66

⁴¹⁵ Smith, 1998

approximation, a symbol for something else. Colin Wilson, in his book "The Outsiders", discusses the lives and struggles of many who have suffered the imperative of a life outside the symbolic order. He includes Satre and Camus, Boehme and Kierkegaard, D H Lawrence and James Joyce, Dostoevsky and H G Wells, Kaffka and Hemingway, Henry James and Nijinsky, T S Eliot and John Stuart Mills, Nietzsche and Herman Hesse, Blake and Vincent van Gogh, Rilke, Tolstoy and Whitman, yet not Shakespeare, Keats and Dante who he describes as being "apparently normal and well-adjusted". "What symbols," he asks, "what metaphor can an Outsider use which express his triumphant emergence from the impossible struggle, if not religious metaphors of the day? I think that part of the pain of a current day Outsider is that we are lacking in available metaphor, symbols which carry any weight that is adequate to bear the infinitely heavy significance of these experiences."⁴¹⁶

Lacan remarks that psychosis occurs with particular frequency when the father has the function of a legislator, whether as one who actually makes the laws or as one who poses as the incarnation of high ideals.⁴¹⁷ For Shreber, being a law maker himself, the action of his own superego added to the laws of his pedagogue father. My contention is that unless we take the position of the heretic outside the symbolic order, the very system that we live in incubates this tendency to psychosis.

⁴¹⁶ Wilson, 1965, p 211

⁴¹⁷ Grigg, 1997

Out of Eden -foreclosure and chaos theory

The chaos branch of quantum physics has the view that the foundation of reality itself is an unfixed, indeterminate maze of probabilities.⁴¹⁸ Dualism is dissolved in the simultaneous nature of matter being both wave and particle, not an either or. This is a confrontation that prevents us being too fundamentalistic, even in science. ' Quantum indeterminacy..... is a powerful metaphorical way of perceiving reality.'⁴¹⁹ This Indetermination is approached through the writing of Soares in a completely different field, that of the Qabala. Ultimately we come to realize that consciousness is a discontinuous phenomenon. Qabala is a training of the mind that makes it so subtle and pliable as to allow it to pass through the mysterious doorway of human genesis and enter into the sphere where life-death and existence carry on their inter-play. Jointly, on both sides, the most precious gift of life is at stake; the principle of Indetermination, which allows all that can to become.⁴²⁰ It is only through chaotic Indetermination, rather than foreclosure, that we approach freedom. It is at the face of its very self, in its very deepness, that chaos is totally fecund. Abundant, prolifically fertile.⁴²¹ It is this fertility which Shreber activates in his delusional state. In this sense I am celebrating psychosis as an extraordinarily creative attempt to regain Eden, as Soares uses this concept. In that we are all, to some degree psychotic (R.D.Laing)⁴²²(Perry)⁴²³ because we all, to some degree operate within a

⁴¹⁸ Zohar, 1991, P 12

⁴¹⁹ Zohar, 1991, P 12

⁴²⁰ Soares, 1992, P 77

⁴²¹ Soares, 1992, P 81

⁴²² What he initially said of the 'labeled schizophrenic,' he later said; '*In fact, we are all only two or three degrees Fahrenheit from experiences of this order.*' Laing, R.D. 150, p 46

^{423a} The fact of the matter is that in all of us, only a hairsbreadth below the level of conscious rational functioning, there is quite another state of being with an altogether different view of the world and an altogether different way of growing to meet it. And that state of being, or that world, since it is experienced in terms of images and symbols, metaphors and

foreclosure, this chaotic regeneration is a necessary risk. Another way of saying this is that heresy, any kind of heresy, says “do it yourself”, whereas orthodoxy, any kind of orthodoxy, says “we’ll do it for you”. One is about direct somatic, phenomenological experience, while the other is about fear of the same and about finding a substitute for it.

Within the Judeo-Christian tradition it is significant that the words in Genesis 1 which are translated from ‘good’ in colloquial Hebrew denote a fixed certainty. This reveals the deep craving of the psyche for a state of static existence, which it sees as good. The story of the tree of good and evil is about our desire for the known, and our fear of the unknown, that for which we have no signifier. The story of the tree of good and evil and the eating of the forbidden fruit is about being the initiator of your own life. The serpent is a magical snare where fear sees birth as sin, freedom as disobedience, nobleness as ruin.⁴²⁴ Here The Fall is into entropic chaos. Even more provocative is Suares contention that *Satan* is a continuity in existence which resists its own necessary destruction, which deteriorates into rigidity and self –preservation, in other words a refusal to affirm life. Psychologically, it is a confinement in structures that hinders the flow of life-death in the mind.⁴²⁵ This is what William Blake called ‘satanic self-hood’ or, in Jung’s terms, a ‘monotheism of consciousness’, which assumes that human life is best lived by denying all that is not amenable to neat logical categories. It is

myths, is considered mad and worthy only of banishment from the sane world of common sense. We find ourselves being very fussy about allowing it to appear only on certain terms.” Perry, J.W. 1974,P 6 “We all have this madness as part of our makeup.” Perry,J.W. 1974,P 7

⁴²⁴ Suares, 1992, p 120

⁴²⁵ Suares, 1992, P 192

this heritage in which we all participate in to a greater or lesser degree merely by being born into this particular culture, and it is the paradigm within which Shreber's life was worked out, and the framework in which Freud proposed his theories and Lacan developed them.

The tree of the knowledge, in the original Hebrew words relating to this tree, convey intense movement, that of a whirlwind destroying all that is obsolete. Access to this, then, is what is being foreclosed.

Suares, in his reading of Genesis 1:1 in the light of the letter-numbers of the Qabala, writes what could easily be taken as a Hymn of the Universe in the same vein as that of the scientist –mystic-priest, Teilhard de Chardin, who speaks of the forces of mighty universal cosmic energies and celebrates their destructive as well as their constructive powers in the Mass.⁴²⁶ Before I quote Suares, it is worth remembering that this is the verse that is usually translated as: "In the beginning 'God' created heaven and earth." (King James version)

⁴²⁶ Chardin, 1961

"Containers of existences, existences in their containers.

Universe containing the existences, containing its own existence. Upspringing of life, intermittent pulsation invisible, not thinkable; life always new, always present, never present.

Creation!

Vertiginous movement that transcends all conception.

In the hidden depths of movement is the secret of existence.

And this movement is the custodian of all possible possibilities. Existence, projection of life, negation of existence...

Without resistance there could be no birth.

This is the becoming."⁴²⁷ "In the beginning", says Lazlo the scientist, "there was chaos, instability, inflation and radiation."⁴²⁸

Energy in expansion: that is the definition of space according to Qabala.⁴²⁹ The psychotic episode, and life in general is an attempt to reclaim Eden, where the balance of forces is revived, where the earthly and cosmic energies fertilize each other. The original state is one of all the possible possibilities, ie chaos. The realization of all the possible possibilities⁴³⁰ this is the state of Adam and his Esha, (Eve). All organic structures have a necessary quality of resistance which deteriorates into rigidity and self preservation, or entropic chaos. Evolution, according to Qabala, is a series of simultaneous destruction-construction of resistances, the biosphere being an interplay between structures and

⁴²⁷ Soares, C. 1992, p 78

⁴²⁸ Lazlo, Evolution: The Grand Synthesis.

⁴²⁹ Soares, C. 1992, P 91

⁴³⁰ Soares, C. 1992, p 115

unstructured energies.⁴³¹ In this language, foreclosure is the means by which an entropic chaos is enacted. This is in contrast with the darkness which is swarming with all that *could* be, and its living power transcends all human thought.⁴³²

Physics and Metaphysics

History has shown us an uneasy relationship between 'physics and metaphysics.' For example, Descartes' metaphysical commitment to mathematics, his invention of analytical geometry, the formulation of his famous "rules of reasoning" – all this occurred in the months and years following a gnostic illumination that came to him on the night of November 10, 1619. The experience can be compared to the ecstatic illumination of the mystic. It is likely that his concept of "intuition", one of his rules of reasoning - which he defined as a kind of direct and unclouded perception of the truth, and which was then to be followed by "deduction" - was the formal translation of his mystical experience into the world of abstract philosophical analysis.⁴³³

There are many ways of struggling with the direct and naked knowing, which "must" sooner or later be clothed with a system of thought, which then becomes "foreclosed". This process of using a somatic insight to dislodge an old system has occurred many times, in science and religion most notably. The heretical soon becomes the established view, which then reacts with fear to that which

⁴³¹ Soares, C. 1992, P 89

⁴³² Soares, C. 1992, P 88

⁴³³ Berman, M. 1988 P 248

made it possible in the first place, even although the new rigid system depends on the mystical insight now being rejected. It would seem that chaos theory at least provides us with a model which allows for the constant of discontinuity, of radical intuition, of order-chaos-order.

The emperor's new clothes

Every culture, by definition, constructs its own code or grid. It may be arbitrary, it may vary widely from culture to culture, but any culture can be counted on to defend its own particular grid, because it believes and on one level, it is correct that if the grid is compromised in any way, psychic integrity will be lost and the entire culture will go down the drain.⁴³⁴ No society can tolerate heresy, and certainly not the greatest heresy of all, namely the assertion that its cultural grid is lacking in any particular, transcendent validity.⁴³⁵ Thus feminine jouissance, ecstasy and direct experience are considered a heresy because they break through the symbolic order. Can it be integrated into symbolic order, does it regenerate and enliven symbolic order? Yet we need the phallic structure of supposedly continuous existence. The not-duped-er, in seeing through the lie that we live, the foreclosure, makes a serious error. This alludes to the story of the Emperors clothes. Recognizing that the emperor is naked is not a good thing for the symbolic order. The on-going order of things requires that we see the clothes on the Emperor. Otherwise the door opens to chaos.

⁴³⁴ Berman, 1988, P 78

⁴³⁵ Berman, 1988, P 80

Historically, mystics, as those who live within feminine jouissance, are misfits; they are aware that the phallic order has a hole in it. The response to this is in symptomatic ways. Feminine jouissance can be a way of opening into ethics, that is the fundamental relationship with the other. If the response is not an ethical one it is a psychotic one.

The mystic also sees that ultimately there is no such thing as subject. That is, the name of the father is not foreclosed, that realization is contained or supported by something Other. The implication of this is that the solid duality of you and I is illusory. This relates also to quantum physics where observer and observed both influence each other and therefore are inseparable. Foreclosure is an emphasis on the container, rather than the contained, and this is therefore a tendency to one arm of the polarity. The Qabala knows that YHVH is not a deity but an immanence which can become alive and active when the two vitalities in us, the container and the contained, fecundate each other.⁴³⁶

Killing the Buddha

There is a Zen saying, "If you see the Buddha coming down the road, kill him." My contention, following Lacan, is that the foreclosure which reaches an exaggerated form in the genesis of psychosis is actually a feature of normal psychic development, and one which every person deals with on the way toward what Jung termed individuation. This particular double bind that we are all in, however, this collective pre-psychosis, is about both desiring and fearing our own

⁴³⁶ Soares, 1992, P 43

freedom, that is freedom within and without the symbolic order. Quantum freedom is a far more terrible thing than our faith in the power of reason would have us believe, says Zohar.⁴³⁷ If I believe in freedom at all I cannot be a determinist, and I do see that the Emperor has no clothes. When I act out of habit, or certainty, I do not act out of my freedom, nor do I exercise my creativity. If I meet the Buddha on the way I have met a foreclosure which prevents me from living, which makes impossible the possibility. So, I must 'kill' him, so that the realisation of all the possible possibilities is possible once again. If I do not 'kill' him, I am already 'killed' by him.

Suares reminds us there is no transcendence other than our intimacy with the unknown as the unknown. Seeking it is to avoid it.⁴³⁸ Finding it, ie the Buddha, is an even greater loss. The Buddha represents that which is beyond our ability to conceive, the signifiers themselves are missing. The Buddha, or literalising of that which cannot even be represented, is a determination in a context which is Indeterminate. The killing of the Buddha is so that we do not trap ourselves in the equivalent of a psychotic hallucination. The Buddha or YHWH are not deities. Any deistic notion serves to remove the disturbing realization of an all-invading immediacy. That which is (not signified) is beyond our frame of reference, we have not even allowed it the possibility of existence. As Heidegger says, however, nothing is not a nothing, but a something. ('Pure Being and pure Nothing are therefore the same', he quotes from Hegel. This proposition is

⁴³⁷ Zohar, 1991, P 163

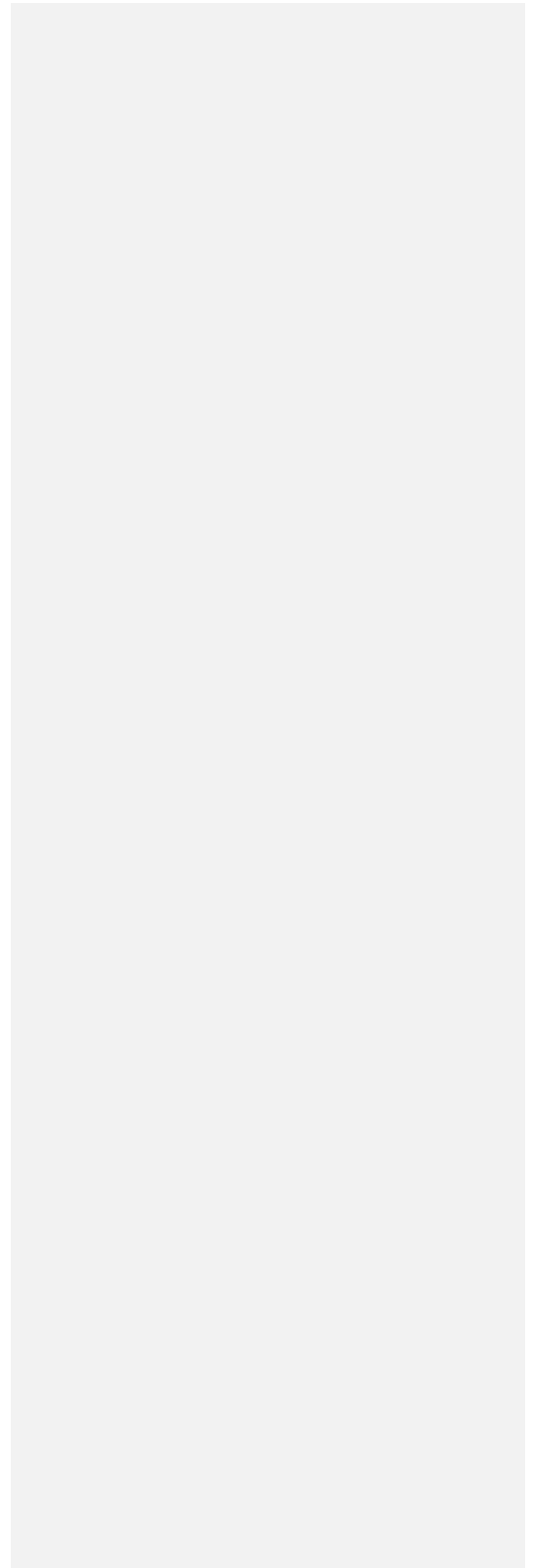
⁴³⁸ Suares, 1992, P 59

correct, he says on p 108, Basic Writings, 1978, Krell, London). Hume suggested that certain things are comprehended by a leap of faith, and intuitively grasped. My suggestion is that one of the ramifications of the gradual infiltration into the collective psyche of the Indeterminism of chaos theory, will be that we will have a paradigm that allows for the Unknown, and the Unknowable, without a foreclosure, which would free us from the impulse to turn it into the (delusional) Known.

Conclusion to chapter seven:

I have shown with this development of Lacan's idea of foreclosure, that we are subject to a collective psychosis. Using some of the fundamental principles of chaos theory, I have shown that all theories and all paradigms of knowledge act as a foreclosure, but that chaos theory offers the possibility of a source of meaning which lies outside the symbolic order. This is important for my overall argument because I claim that the making of meaning requires that we go beyond that which is signified, that is, we become capable of mystical experience.

Conclusion:



My methodology in approaching my subject "Mysticism: Psychosis and Gnosis" was to follow Jung when he proposed that the best way to move toward a difficult question involving the unconscious is by a ritual circling. This is what I have done in the preceding seven chapters in my quest to understand mystical experience, specifically through the presumed polarities of psychosis and gnosis: I have circled around my subject from many points of view, by way of illuminating both the experience itself, and how it comes to be resolved in the making of meaning and even in attaining a meaning beyond meaning. As I proposed in the Introduction, this plural approach has enabled me to discover many truths rather than one truth, and therefore a definitive conclusion is not possible. I am particularly wary of imposing upon myself and my reader a false resolution, lest in so doing I imprison something which I have presented here as multidimensional into naïve simplicity. This is a good strong paragraph but you must have come to some conclusion re the relationship between psychosis and gnosis and mysticism. It would be good after your summary of the chapters if you could return to this essential question and restate the many truths you have articulated. The summary of the chapters whilst restating what you have covered in a very useful way, doesn't provide a final summary of the many truths you have identified and their implications for therapy.

In Chapter One I observed that many people have spiritual experience, but that this is not necessarily fostered within our Western Judeo-Christian hierarchy. I believe that the ruling of the Council of Nicea in 325 AD enforced a doctrine

which in effect created a prohibition against personal spiritual experience. In order to clarify what constitutes mystical experience, I demonstrated that all individuals will find a place on a sliding scale of mystical awareness, but few will find themselves living the life of a mystic. While I proposed that therefore everyone, is, in principle, a mystic, I also acknowledged that the effort of waking up and staying awake is beyond most individuals. For those who do begin, however, I presented the paralyzing possibility of an abortive attempt toward the mystical life which can result in madness. In order to discuss some of the rigours which the life of a mystic might entail, I have looked at some of the methods used for the preparation of mystical experience, namely rational dialectic, ethical preparation, disciplines of the body, and the use of drugs and intoxicants. I pointed out that we may do many of these things without the intention of becoming a mystic but suggested that nevertheless the living of these principles brings forth an enhanced life. I introduced the radical and curious idea of artificially induced mysticism, which seems to circumvent the time-honoured view that mysticism is something which requires arduous preparation.

I provided a framework for defining the mystical by following William James', namely that these experiences are noetic, transient, ineffable and passive. But since, in my opinion, these same qualities can be attributed to the psychotic experience, I added the categories of compassion, joy and the lived life. I then compared and contrasted the experience of the psychotic 'delusion' with that of 'true' mysticism. In beginning to determine whether an experience might be

understood as either psychotic or gnostic, I proposed that the phenomenology of mysticism cannot stand alone as a means of distinguishing true mysticism from psychotic delusion, and that an understanding of context is needed also. So where does the issue of context get picked up again? It would be good to pick up this theme and see how it links in to your other chapters.

In Chapter Two In “On The Way to the Wedding”, I looked at why personal spiritual experience, especially mystical experience might be so compelling to people today. This chapter enabled me to demonstrate the ways in which the enchanting, numinous and ecstatic are a fertile margin. I posited that mystical experience is a polar opposite to, and a compensation for, the dryness of economic and psychological rationalization, and as such is an enchantment that revivifies the individual. I proposed that mystical experience is an inner imperative towards being, in the Heideggarian sense. I put forward Jung’s idea of individuation as a method of working with the psyche, which allows for the development of the ecstatic principle in a way that guards against psychosis. I then discussed the possibility that both gnostic and psychotic experiences are legitimate ways to vivify the personal experience (towards being) outside of the collective consensus. I used the metaphor of the Hero’s journey as a way to present the process of validating experience outside of the collective consensus, and the bringing back of this experience into the collective. Finally, given that I

suppose that the search for meaning is what motivates an individual, I discussed possible ways in which meaning is made in our lives.

In Chapter Three I proposed a psychology of the Judeo-Christian religion. I focused on concepts that have been used within contemporary psychology to express a fundamental experience of separation, and how this fundamental assumption of separation frames our religious belief in regard to the need for restitution. I referred especially to Object Relations theory, and the idea of the Transitional Object (T.O.), and compared this theory with ideas from various spiritual traditions to determine if the idea of a basic fault is epoch specific or fundamental to the human condition. I investigated the idea of "God" as a Transitional Object in Western culture in relation to the desire for one-ness, wholeness, re-union and connectedness. I also discussed another possibility: that this idea of God is a reaction formation against the unspeakable Other. Overall I intended this chapter to shed light on why the idea of unity and wholeness might be important to us, from both the analytic and spiritual perspectives. This chapter also gave me the opportunity to discuss how an Object Relations view (rather than a Jungian view, which I propose in Chapter six, for instance) adds to the overall understanding of mystical experience. By investigating the Object Relations Theory, which I demonstrated is born out of the Fall and redemption theology of the Christian religion, rather than representing a fundamental human condition, I discovered a basis for our

persistent desire for union and for what some have as a regressive fusion in mystical experience.

In Chapter Four I discussed some of the historical attitudes in the West to mysticism and mystics, and how this attitude differs today, and the implications of this change. I looked at the phenomenology of and interpretation of mystical experience in different cultures and eras, and compared and contrasted them with current attitudes. I considered the possibility that what is thought of as psychosis today has been thought gnostic in the past. I spoke more specifically about heresy and orthodoxy as complementary yet opposing forces, because I believe that knowing both sides is important to **the attitude we take to** our discussion of psychosis and gnosis. I argued that the proper way to examine mysticism is to examine the times that produced it, and the specific individual involved, rather than the content of the experience alone.

In previous chapters I have been discussing different ways of approaching the psychosis/gnosis question, and in Chapter Five I approached the idea of a Dark Borderland in order to investigate further the idea of liminality, or marginality. I discussed liminality as the metaphorical condition of 'betwixt and between', which is experienced by both the psychotic and the gnostic, and present a comparison between two early Christian mystics, St Teresa of Avila and Hildegard of Bingen, and a contemporary woman in order to demonstrate similarities and differences between psychosis and gnosis in mystical experience. I then discussed the

transition of midlife as an example of liminality, which occurs for everyone, and which all individuals pass through, more or less successfully. I discussed Sufi methods as providing a structure that intentionally engages the liminal, and apparently deals with both a psychotic or gnostic outcome with equal facility. Finally, I discussed the Christian concept of the Dark Night of the Soul, as representing a time-honoured sojourn within liminality.

In Chapter Six I considered why certain people seem particularly prone to mystical experiences, or what I have recognized as mystical experiences, and have them with apparent ease. I was curious to know if some people who did not report having mystical experiences were having them in such a seamless and ordinary way as to not recognize them as extraordinary. I found the model of Jung's Personality types an accessible way to discuss differences in experience. The idea of the inferior function being the least developed aspect of the psyche and not the property of the ego, gave me opportunity to speculate as to how the numinous might be activated and approached, not just for certain individuals though their intuitive faculty, but for everyone on their way to individuation. This suggested that that which was least skillful could also seem clumsy and even psychotic at times, has provided me with one model of both (temporary) psychosis and gnosis as normal developmental processes.

In Chapter Seven I diverged into chaos theory to speculate further as to how and why chaos and order are experienced within the psyche. It is my intention that

this seemingly unrelated subject give some further definition between gnosis and psychosis. To do this I developed Lacan's idea of foreclosure. Using some of the fundamental principles of chaos theory, I demonstrated that all theories and all paradigms of knowledge act as a foreclosure, but that chaos theory offers the (almost impossible) possibility of a source of meaning which lies outside the symbolic order. This is a development of ideas that I have earlier touched upon, such as meaning which exists beyond meaning.

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