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Contributors:

Benoît Cholet
Galen Fous
Ingrida Indane
Mihail Karpathioiu

Sheena McMahon
Stephan Schillinger
Vladimir Maykov

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Embodiment and Vision.

Starting from the Body to Broaden Insight and Transpersonal Horizon

Rossana Strambaci, Ph.D.

ITJ Editor Director

This time, we'd like to start from a theme that appears in several contributions: that is the issue of the human body. We would like to reflect on the energetic implications of the human body and on what the body of the human being really is, in all its facets.

The pandemic that we have gone through has called our attention to bodies: bodies that get sick or do not get sick, bodies about which it is necessary to make decisions, choices about health, which are full of social and cultural implications, not only for our lives, but also for the evolution of our specie and maybe for the Planet.

We think that the Body is not only a matter of fact, it's also intention, desire, will.

Let's assume that the corporeality we inhabit is informed of all the vibrations that affect not only its tight environment, but also its memories and connections having to deal with the non-temporal and quantum dimension. Let's assume that our corporeality has a link, a intelligent one, with those dimensions. If we pose this and – with technologies that we call *technologies of the Sacred* – we try to experience this connection, significant things happen. In fact, we have the possibility to verify that the connection with transpersonal dimensions is capable of reparative processes also on the body, on its strictly physical dimensions and on its affections, too.

This is, of course, just a hypothesis to be verified, but it's very suggestive for different confirmations that can be had at the level of subjective response. We are not in the field of quantitative verification, nor in the dimension of large numbers. These are ideas, clues, suggestions worthy of being investigated.

As always, ITJ tries to give substance to incoming ideas and so, in this Issue, we have the work of Galen Fous about The Body as an “analogue” (in this specific case, *Analog of Internal Tension*, that clarifies well how “in our heady Western cultures we are often divorced from our experience of our bodies”) and then the work of Mihail Karpathioiu about *Transpersonal Sexuality*, given that sexuality is one of the most significant expression of corporeality and can be considered a sort of hinge-manifestation.

The transience and fragility of the physical body leads us to the theme of degradation and death: in this regard, Sheena McMahon’s contribution about *Near Death Experiences* is very interesting. In turn, the theme of near-death leads us to the consideration of psychedelic practices as a gateway to the world of transpersonal, which is dealt with by the contribution of Stephan Schillinger.

On the ground of knowledge of the origins, we then have The Shamanic Extraction of “*Energetic Parasites*” by Benoît Cholet.

The issue is completed with two testimonies on gratitude and heroism, respectively by Ingrida Indane and Vladimir Maykov

We can conclude by considering, once again, the importance of our ability to choose. We can choose what kind of presence we are going to be on this Planet, what kind of incarnation.

Perhaps we can also imagine using our bodies to realize (or manifest, with a term that seems fashionable) a path of growth, evolution and integration.

Rossana Strambaci

Milan, December 2022

The Body as Analog of Internal Tension

Galen Fous, MTP

Transpersonal Sex Therapist, Author, Educator & Sex Researcher, Galen Fous lectures internationally at universities, grad schools and psychology conferences on Sexual Integration Therapy, Sexual Authenticity, the Psychological Dynamics of Sexual Fantasy, and Untangling Shame, Fear and Trauma from Sexual Desire. He is on the faculty of the Modern Sex-Therapy Institute where he offers CE approved classes for therapists.

He has a Master in Transpersonal Psychology from the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology.

His research is based on the analysis of over 8000 participants from his Discover Your Personal Erotic Myth sex-research survey, mapping the collision of fear, shame, and trauma with sexual development and desire.

Galen Fous is author of two books: *Decoding Your Kink – Guide to Explore, Share and Enjoy Your Wildest Sexual Desires* and *The Sharp Edge of Love – Extreme Sex, Mythic Passion, Primal Intensity*.

E-mail: galen@galenfous.com

Website: <https://galenfous.com>

ABSTRACT

In our “heady” Western cultures we are often divorced from our experience of our bodies. We live from the neck up in a whirl of disembodied thoughts, worries about the future, regrets about the past, harsh internalized judgments about ourselves, projected judgments onto others. The postures, gestures and tensions of our bodies at any given moment reflect the inner psychological conflicts and oppositions we may be experiencing in any moment. These internal tensions generate and recycle deeply held stories of our fear, shame, anger or grief. They can be reflected in the body’s gestures of being collapsed, shut-down, avoidance of eye-contact, restrictions in the voice, pain in the neck, shoulders or gut and other such physical reflections of these internal psychological conflicts. Developing body-centered practices to begin releasing

these physical tensions can lead to a deeper state of presence and ease in mind and body. We are either consciously embodied or unconsciously embodied.

KEYWORDS

Embodiment, presence, tension, somatic psychotherapy, conscious movement, breath, shadow, unconscious.

Our body's posture reflects important information about our unconscious, emotional and spiritual state.

Many of us have lost a conscious appreciation for a fundamental part of our human experience: our bodies!

In other words, we are barely aware that we live in a body exquisitely sensitive, communicative, mobile, graceful, erotic, emotionally expressive and alive from head to toe.

In this paper I hope to convey my own experience and insight about the relationship of the body to our emotions, unconscious psychological conflicts, embedded instinctual gestures, conscious movement, and presence. While this content is distinctly original and has been formed out of my own direct experience of myself and my work with clients, it is informed and supported by a variety of references, such as those noted throughout.

In our rationally based Western culture, we live to a great extent from the neck up. In this heady state we are often in a whirl of thoughts, judgments, stories, fantasies, anxieties about the future or regrets about the past. We often forget to breathe and be still, to feel, to move, to be present.

Our bodies are often under severe stress and tension, mirroring the inner psychological stresses and tensions we experience consciously and unconsciously.

There are times we disconnect from our body altogether to avoid feeling a painful experience we may be undergoing emotionally.

This disconnection from feelings is like losing our psychological and spiritual moorings.

"To lose our connection with the body is to become spiritually homeless. Without an anchor we float aimlessly,

battered by the wind and waves of life” (Anodea, 1996, p. 54).

In already stressful times, additional tensions can be created in the body and psyche by our cultural imperative to soldier on, in a stoic manner, in what’s considered a noble and responsible way. Until we break, or we break something else.

The body is an analog of our conscious and unconscious stress. We are either what we consciously embody, or what unconsciously embodies us.

Our emotions express through the body in specific, involuntary, instinctual, physical gestures. These physical gestures are choreographed from pre-programmed contractions or tensions of muscles and nerves. These inherently encoded gestures show up subtly to overtly as frowns, sneers, smiles, clenched fists, open arms, a knot in the throat and other involuntary movements.

The body is an exact expression of what we are feeling, consciously and unconsciously.

All the fears, shames, angers and sorrows that our public persona tries to hide or repress, are still being expressed within the body. When we are in a situation where we feel we have to hide our feelings, we are using

opposing muscular tension to try to hold back the body’s natural expression of that emotion.

The panorama of things that may be going on within us unconsciously, has a tremendous influence on the posture, tone and tension in the body at any given moment.

Most of us carry and are affected by internalized negative stories, projections and self-judgments that are playing out routinely in our unconscious. These negative elements were formed in childhood at critical junctures in our emotional and psychological development.

These unconscious beliefs about ourselves or others can generate strong emotions, when triggered by situations or other people that in some way represent that first trauma or emotional wounding. When we try to hide or withhold what we are feeling by “masking” those feelings behind our public persona, our bodies store these withheld and hidden inner stories/ beliefs/emotions as muscular tension in specific places in the body.

We learned in childhood how to cover up our feelings. We learned to “armor” our emotions and our bodies, to hide what was true, and defend against discovery of what we truly felt.

We may have experienced that showing our feelings in certain situations could meet with disapproval, punishment and rejection, or for some, more severe consequences.

Our efforts to hide or mask what we are feeling is a physical act. Tensions in the jaw, throat, shoulders, over the heart, the belly, can tell the same story as the tension-filled drama playing out in the unconscious.

A common story many of my clients express bears the unconscious message..." I'm not good enough or smart enough or attractive enough or brave enough."

These negative self-judgments are alive in our bodies, as well as our unconscious. The body is the physical version of the story and the dark emotions we might feel about ourselves. These self-judgments show up in our body as tensions and discomfort, if not pain. Our bodies can be physically traumatized daily by our inner self-judgments.

Accumulation of these tensions over many years may even bring the pain to disease level. Our bodies are fraught with dis-ease – muscular, neurological, bio-chemical tension.

This sensibility of the relation of the body to our unconscious stories and the

physical, emotional pain or disease they can create, is finally being addressed by emerging somatic psychotherapy approaches to healing and health.

In a recent study on the efficacy of the Rosen Method it is stated thusly,

Bodily problems such as muscle tension are assumed to reflect unresolved emotional problems, suppressed traumatic experiences, or excessive social demands. The treatment focuses on the body, which is seen as a "gate" to reach unconscious emotional causes of muscular tension. A typical therapy session is set up in a calm environment and begins with a short conversation, during which the therapist pays particular attention to the client's voice, body posture, and movements (Hoffren-Larson..., 2009, p. 996).

From birth, our bodies are encoded with hundreds of physical gestures to express what we are feeling in the emotional and unconscious aspects of our being. Smiling, frowning, crying, arms reaching out to be picked up, kicking our legs in anger, for example.

As we grow through these early stages of life, and experience emotional trauma or suffering, we develop a protective psychological armoring in an attempt to protect us from further trauma. This armoring happens in the unconscious psychological realm where the emotional trauma (wound)

and the protection strategy (shadow behavior) now reside. This armoring also happens in the body.

When we attempt to hide that we are afraid or anxious, sad, ashamed or angry, we are using counter muscular tensions and contractions to cover-up the instinctive gestures these emotions would normally express through the body. These counter muscular tensions are added to our unconscious physical gesture repertoire.

For example, a small child's arms instinctively open wide as it runs to its mother when the child sees the mother enter the room. This is a programmed body language that is not taught. It is instinctive. It is fearless. It is joyful.

When a child's natural exuberant, physical joy is traumatized, or isn't met with a loving, safe response, it will begin to hold these joyful, open gestures back. The child's unconscious protections will physically restrain the natural opening of the arms, or smiling brightly. This requires muscular exertion from opposing muscle groups to create a counter force against the instinctual gestures.

Over time, we accumulate scores of these restraints and tensions in our bodies to protect ourselves emotionally. We unconsciously hide what is true emotionally, literally

bury it in the body. The body, over decades, can become misshapen, rigid, muscularly armored, atrophied.

The physical and emotional aspects of our being are intimately connected. They are reflections of each other. The unconscious stores our judgmental projections about others and ourselves, and all the negative emotions associated with those judgments. It stores all the things about us that we hide or attempt to hide or deny about ourselves.

These internalized judgments can have a significant impact on our emotional and physical embodiment and well being, in any given moment.

It has long been understood that stress can cause the body to have physiological changes through the autonomic nervous system, the hypothalamic-pituitary pathway, the limbic system, the psychoimmunological response as well as other pathways that are currently being defined by researchers and theoreticians. It is logical to postulate therefore that anxiety and depression (or stress) will be important factors in the development of medical illness (Kent and Blumenfeld, 2011, p. 44).

Under acute distress, the emotions of unresolved fear, anger, sadness or shame can overwhelm the psychological and physical armor that hide them. The muscular ways

we attempt to appear “normal” break down. Involuntarily, the body slumps, a foot taps rapidly, we avert our eyes, our throat tightens, stomach knots, we tear, blush, stiffen.

These physical gestures of our emotional truth, all involve specific muscles, nerves and bio-chemicals. Parts of us in our unconscious try to protect and preserve our public persona and cover up things we don’t want others to know. This is done through counter muscular responses to hold back the true emotions the instinctual part of our unconscious is shaping our body into.

This generates tension in specific points in the body, where the emotion is being held back. The emotion literally gets stuck in the temporary stand-off between the “express” gesture and the “hide” gesture.

This is again reflected in the practices of somatic, psychotherapeutic approaches such as the Rosen method.

The therapist observes continually subtle changes in muscle tension, shifts in breathing, or other reactions, and responds to every change by touching the client or by responding verbally. During the process, hidden memories or emotions may come to mind, something that is assumed to provide valuable insights and assist the client in understanding the

connection between body and mind [Hoffren-Larson, 2009, p. 996].

Common tension points of stuck emotions, from my experience, are the shoulders, throat, jaw, neck, gut and over the heart. If we get to a place of extreme distress, in the circumstances of our lives, the power of these stuck emotions, like a wall of water accumulating behind a dam, can burst thru the unconscious “physical” efforts to block them.

In those moments, the body is flooded with this held back emotion and moves uncontrollably into the body’s instinctive expression of the emotion. Under these circumstances, the gestures come out in an excessive outburst. We may “fly” into a rage, “flip out” of our reason, “break down” in tears, “tremble” in fear, “shrink” in shame, or “shut down, disconnect and fall” into a catatonic depression.

These intense moments in our lives are often an explosion of a back-log of repressed emotion. They are released through exaggerated physical gestures. These explosions of emotion often have little to do with the immediate triggering event.

In the unconscious, our personal mythic stories are being played out. Many of our inner myths have a dark edge about the kind of person we REALLY are. The

message of these types of inner myths can be generally demoralizing. It can leave us rooted in fear, shame, anger and sadness.

When we say we do not love ourselves, or feel we aren't loveable, there are actually a number of parts of ourselves that may be speaking in the unconscious. For instance, there could be an underlying sub-persona with a critical judgment about our lovability. This type of sub-persona persona can be telling us we are so messed up, nobody will ever find us loveable. And another wounded sub-persona agrees and says, "I am not loveable."

We choose so many conscious and unconscious destructive paths from this inner dynamic. We may stop caring for ourselves, and others, often in escalating ways. We may lose any sense of balance around everything from hygiene, dress, eating, smoking, drinking, drugging, cynicism, irritation, procrastination or other.

One healing pathway to help resolve the inner conflicts we experience is to begin inquiring more deeply into our unconscious beliefs, personal inner myths and repressed emotions that may be driving our experience and behavior. This is especially important if we find ourselves continually hovering near the extreme edges of our emotions.

Talk or cognitive therapy may offer some intellectual insight and perspective. But the power of the emotional content of the internal issues we face are almost always more potent than our rational perspectives. Consequently, finding resolution of these types of tensions and conflicts may require exploring more emotion and body-centered approaches to healing core issues.

Some may find a spiritual pathway is the avenue to healing or resolution, as the issues may be understood not as social, psychological or physical, but as spiritual. But the spiritual view itself, depending on which one you may be influenced by, can inadvertently lead to a disconnection from the body as part of the spiritual belief itself. Contrast these two opposing spiritual views of the body.

Disembodied spirituality is often based on an attempt to transcend, regulate, and/or transform embodied reality from the "higher" standpoint of consciousness and its values. Matter's experiential dimension as an imminent expression of the Mystery is generally ignored (Ferrer, 1997, p. 8).

This body is not me. These eyes are not me. It is a mistake to identify yourself with this life span, to imagine that you are separated from anything else in space or time. You are everything at the same time (Lesser, 2005, p. 87).

I can say from my own experience that an embodied awareness is necessary for the full experience of life and even, at least while in this body, of the sacred or spiritual realms as well. It may be possible through decades of intense meditation or such to achieve a disembodied transcendent experience of the divine.

That approach really has no interest to me at all. I love the experience of being fully present in my body, and fully expressing my emotional being. This seems fundamental to the experience of life and perhaps critical to the long evolution of human consciousness.

Our nervous system seems hard-wired to integrate our body, our emotions and our consciousness. And the body in many ways stands on its own, as an integral but autonomous entity. Its consciousness is movement and action. It leads, follows, ducks, dodges, threatens, charms, runs or cowers. It is primal. It shows fear, anger, sorrow, shame, love or joy without self-consciousness.

As Jawer writes, “without our feelings and their impulse toward expression, consciousness and intellect would not exist”.

In Chap. 3, Jawer backtracks even further, exploring the neurobiology of feeling as the integration of brain,

body, and self, associating the “root of feeling” with the autonomic nervous system [ANS] and then moving up to the central nervous system and down to the enteric nervous system. What is significant here is his emphasis on the body as a single sensing and feeling organ: “the bodymind, complex as it is, acts substantially as one”. In other words, “the body knows itself-it feels” [Mayor, 2010, p. 654].

A powerful “healing” pathway can be to work directly through the body’s analog of an issue one is dealing with psychologically. While the emotionally charged, negative judgments we carry unconsciously about others and ourselves does shape the emotional and physical body, it is also possible to shift the emotions and the unconscious stories at any moment directly through work at the body level.

The body is a dynamic unified complex system. All of its parts are interconnected and interdependent. Body and mind work together. They are mutually influential and interactive. This is called psycho-physical functioning, the combined interactions of body and mind. Because of this interconnected functioning, psychological issues affect the body and, conversely, the quality of physical interaction has an affect on psychological functioning [Bowen, 2011].

More specifically, through conscious movement, touch and stretching

the body, we can literally “move” to a different state of mind by altering our body posture, and therefore feeling state.

Our emotions express through the body. If a client is “caved-in” from depression, supporting the client to open their arms out, expand their chest, or uplift their posture, can begin to produce a similar effect on their state of being or embodiment.

Bringing touch and movement and other body centered practices into the realms of clinical psychology is still controversial and taboo in most regards. In professional massage and other body-centered practices, there are precise boundary protocols for hands on engagement of the client’s body. However, most psychoanalytic practices that involve licensing have a taboo against the body and any touch between therapist and client.

Despite the trust imbued to licensed massage professionals, the psychological professions cannot seem to untangle its fear that inherent sexual impulses will interfere with care for the patient. This separation of the body from conscious therapeutic efforts seems sadly out of date, if not “out of touch” with reality.

Within the humanistic schools of psychotherapy, touch is generally an

acceptable therapeutic intervention [see section on paradigms], whereas in the psychoanalytic movement, it is widely considered a taboo (Shaw, 2003). However, a gentle combination of both schools of thought has been conceived by some (Kupfermann & Smaldino, 1987; Winnicott, 1975). In taking into account the mind-body connection in therapy, some assert that literal touch itself is not always necessary for a “holding environment” (Slochower, 1996; Vitger, 1984), whereas others contend touch has, or may have, its place and value (Carere-Comes, 2007; Fuchs, 1975; Hunter & Struve, 1998a, 1998b; Kupfermann & Smaldino, 1987; Shaw, 2003; Smith, E. W. L. et al., 1998; Totton, 2003; Wilson, 1982; Woodmansey, 1988; Zur & Nordmarken, 2004). Others have strongly argued against physical touch (Burton & Heller, 1964; Wolberg, 1967). Classical Freudian analysts posit the sexual drive as the individual’s primary motivating force and therefore link touch to sexuality (Gutheil & Gabbard, 1993) (Phelan, 2012, p. 98).

Developing a Personal Body-Centered Practice

I also advocate for individuals to explore their own path to relieving physical, emotional and spiritual tension.

Developing a personal body-centered practice doesn’t change the facts or circumstances of our life now, or our

past. It does not heal or resolve by itself the deep wounding or trauma that may call for a deeper level of healing. But learning conscious breathing, movement, touch, stretching or yoga practices, in my experience, have the potential to shift our emotional/physical embodiment in a given moment. This may be enough of a shift to allow us to move from being trapped in our depression or lethargy, or irritation to be more present.

Being present means we are not lost in our heads in stories and emotions about the future or past, or distracted, distressed and unable to focus. We are more alive and grounded in our body, our breath, and at least leaning if not moving towards a state of joy or peace.

Many of the inner stories we get lost in or consumed by are about what will happen in the future or what has already happened in the past. There is often nothing that can be done “right now” to resolve what we are locked onto. Yet these relentless thoughts are consuming precious moments of the life we want to be living.

All the judgments, worry, anger, fear, sadness or shame we may be stuck in, are keeping us in a disconnected state. We are not at our best to look deeply at whatever the issues may be, that are keeping us from being present. Nor are we able to enjoy, what may

be a deliciously fulfilling moment that might be right in front of us.

To illustrate some aspects of how a movement practice can help shift attention away from being in one’s head to a state of presence, I will give examples from a male client I have worked with.

R began seeing me to learn what was holding him back from the deep intimacy and physical connection he and his partner sought to have with each other.

He acknowledged that he felt terrible fear, shame and embarrassment about the awkward, unsyncopated movements in his body when he tried to intimately or sensuously touch, dance with or massage his partner.

In essence, he led with his fear, shame and embarrassment as his body state, rather than his masculine core. The masculine in dance or movement leads, advances and engages in a way that is compelling, but not bullying. The feminine follows. This is regardless of biological gender.

From our earlier discussions, I learned how R was ridiculed, criticized and beaten down by his father, starting in early childhood. He wasn’t “tough enough” or he was a “momma’s boy”. The father acted in the same critical, abusive manner towards R’s mother as

well. R developed a deep devotion to his mother, in a number of conscious and unconscious ways.

The experience of his father led him to make an internal vow to never treat his partners with anything that resembled anger. In fact, he went out of his way to make sure he never “hurt” a woman by showing his anger.

R’s relationships as an adult always revolved around him behaving like a sweet, anxious puppy around women. He had resolved as a boy to never treat a woman as his father had.

Additionally, the fear and unconscious belief he took in from his father that he was not good enough, strong enough, man enough or lovable enough, had manifested deeply in his body.

What he experienced in his unconscious beliefs showed up in his body. To a great extent, he was not consciously “in” his body. He was unconsciously “in” his body and it reflected the fear at the core of his inner life through his timid awkward movements.

The goal was to help him get back in touch with his body. I put some music on, with a good soulful beat. I had R sit on the floor and begin by just connecting to the music, taking long slow breaths, while sitting still. I suggested he start from there and let his body move how it wanted to move,

and see where it led. I gave him ten minutes alone to try to find what his body wanted to do uninhibitedly... to find his personal dance.

When I returned, R still sat on the floor. The music had a long slow groove. His arms were jabbing and punching the air in a herky-jerky motion with dozens of movements. He looked uncoordinated, gangly and out of rhythm. His head bobbed similarly. The rest of his body sat rigid.

I sat down back-to-back with R. At first, my intention was to use my body to guide R’s body into a slow, smooth synchronization with the beat. This is not an uncommon theory of somatic bodywork, that the therapist’s body has a resonance with the client’s that can synchronize in a way, to the clients.

Body centered theorists often use the concept of somatic resonance in contrast to that of projective identification, underscoring the experience of therapeutic identification and somatic resourcing through the therapists bodily experience to more fully inform the therapists process within the evolving somatic dyad (Cornell, 2009, p. 78).

My effort back-to-back, had no effect. R’s body stayed steady in its off-beat dance. I then tried to “listen” to R’s body, sitting still against R’s back,

letting his back muscles move mine in synch with his.

It was quite startling to feel the way his body was moving. I thought I might begin to feel some groove R's body was in. But all his movements felt random to me and not connected to the music.

It was of course quite meaningful to him. But it was as if invisible weights, harnesses and restraints distorted his body's flow and hampered his organic movements.

I was witnessing, I believed, a shadow counterpart to the natural movement of the body as it dances its personal dance. I define the "personal dance" as how the body will move when it begins to shed years of stored tensions.

In the first stage of this "shadow dance" the movements burst from certain parts of the body like a tripped spring. Other parts of the body may still remain frozen solid, taking longer to thaw, if it is possible to move these parts at all.

For some people who have been severely disconnected from their body for decades, this shadow dance isn't capable of being on the beat, in rhythm or graceful. With some effort and a safe place to explore, the least encumbered parts of the body can begin to uncoil and release. Chunks of anger, fear,

sorrow, and shame may come flying from the body in wild gestures.

With some intention and practice, these movements can begin to shift from unconscious, involuntary releases of physical tension to the conscious punching, swinging, jumping, convulsing aspects of the anger fear, sadness or shame they were trying to express when first withheld. With practice, these movements can become more like a slow-paced release of numerous stored emotions and physical tensions.

In more extreme cases these highly-wound inner tensions, when unresolved, may not be able to resist the explosive primal urges to blow our tops, punch the wall, slam our fist down on the table, shrink in shame, scream red-in-the-face invectives, or throw ourselves down on the bed in uncontrollable sobs.

Developing a practice to release these deep physical tensions in a healthy way, can allow us to be more present and grounded in our bodies.

About ten years ago I developed the conscious movement practice I use now for these stated purposes, I call MyYoga.

MyYoga is personal. It begins by initiating any movement in your body such as turning your neck to one side. The flow of movement is guided by

“listening” to and observing your body as you move. Whenever you notice a mild or greater strain in a part of the body as you move, you can explore various additional movements that may feel relieving to the spot. Adding the stretching, compressing or torquing of an arm, leg, or hip to the flow of movement of the neck, may offer a deeper release some of the tension in that spot.

MyYoga is related to the idea of the personal dance, but it is more intentional in terms of the focus on releasing muscular tension.

MyYoga is fluid. There are no pauses between postures you might explore and pass through. The flow of movement between each is seamless.

Besides being an all-over tonification and conscious connection to the body, it can work with precision when you locate a tension in some part of your body. MyYoga uses a wide range of self-directed movements and counter-movements, adding or subtracting parts of the body you are moving, and the speed, rotation, direction, torque and depth of the movements.

With the amazing number of parts of the body that can move, there is an infinite array of movements available. You can be standing, sitting, kneeling, or laying down. You can learn to home-in

on the precise movement and posture to reach even the most difficult places in the body where you feel tension. With some practice, you can start to feel the release of the tension in the muscles there.

Recall these are not only strains in the muscle. They can also be stored emotions whose natural physical expression has been physically held back. Using MyYoga to start opening these channels can support emotional release as well.

You will know how and where to move by “listening” to your body. Learning to be a good listener is a powerful act in itself, in all levels of communication, besides in the practice of MyYoga.

In MyYoga, as you move, keep all attention on “listening” to what you feel in your body. If you find your mind wandering off, come back to the intention to observe what you feel in your body, in any of the movements you are making. This focused attention on your body can lead to a conscious, stimulating, soothing connection to this amazing and significant part of your being.

Notice anywhere you feel something as you move. When you observe any strain or tension, experiment with that area. Slow the movement down, shorten strokes, rotations, go back and forth

in and out of the strain, in smaller and smaller movements.

You can further distill movements that stretch or compress the area. You can add counter-movements and torques with other parts of the body. Explore the area of tension further with micro movements. What decreases or increases the feeling of the tension? What movements stretch or compress it further. What movements leads to a sense of relief, a relaxing of the tension?

Just exploring your body this way is a powerful technique to allow deeper awareness and appreciation that you DO have a body. You can begin to sense how versatile, complex, expressive and informative your body can be, and how large a role it plays in your life. This felt sense of your relationship with your body is enlivening.

As best you can, never stop your movement during a MyYoga session. Let your movements be intuitive and spontaneous. You are not “thinking” about how to move, you are observing and feeling how your body wants to and can move.

Movement makes the body come alive. You begin to feel alive. Feeling

alive means you are feeling your body. Moving to this state of being also opens you to feeling your emotions honestly and authentically. You can begin moving past a stuck, disconnected feeling to one connected with your chosen intention and natural body-state of joy.

If you had been stuck in stories in your head beforehand that resulted in your body being in a state of worry, fear, sadness or anger, a movement practice can literally shift those feelings from within the body. In its place, you might find your body will have moved on to a state that is calmer, less tense, and your awareness will contain less worry and doubt. You may start to become aware of the feeling of being grounded or more deeply connected to your body.

This is the state of presence, as I define it. This is the state where unresolved or stirred up aspects of the unconscious are no longer dominating the feeling or emotional state, nor the shape of the body in the moment.

From this place of getting deeply connected and at ease in the body, one’s awareness, intention for the moment, the body and the unconscious can be in alignment and in harmony with the ever-present moment of now.

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An Examination of Near Death Experiences: Common Elements, Causes, Aftereffects and Empirical Studies Analysis

Sheena McMahon, Ph.D.

Sheena McMahon, PhD in Integral and Transpersonal Psychology and Professor of Psychology (Human Factors & Behavioral Neurobiology Department) at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

ABSTRACT

A Near Death Experience can be a profound and transformative experience. There does not seem to be any cultural or age-related boundaries to a NDE and while most experiences are positive, negative NDE's have also been reported.

In this paper the author will describe common features of an NDE, examine several empirical studies, neurological explanations, and discuss why the aftereffects of a NDE differ from medically or drug induced hallucinations.

KEYWORDS

NDE, aftereffects, thought, brain, drugs, consciousness, out-of-body experiences.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the elements of a near death experience (NDE), examine possible causes, and to discuss the potential aftereffects of such an experience. Greyson (2001), a psychiatrist and well-known researcher, describes an NDE as “a profound psychological event that may occur to a person close to death or who is not near death but in a situation of physical or emotional crisis”. Everyone in a life threatening situation does not experience a NDE, however they have been recorded in cultures all over the world. Age, religion, and race do not seem to play a part in having an NDE, however they could play a role in the interpretation of the experience. Even though every experience is unique they do seem to share some common elements such as feelings of peace and love. Although most experiences can be categorized as positive there are a small number of people who experience a sense of terror and dread. Many neurological causes for NDE's have been proposed, but there is no concrete explanation thus far. Experiencers also tend to have lasting effects such as changes in religious beliefs, attitudes, and practices. The cause of these transformative aftereffects is unknown. This paper includes a description of the common elements included in a NDE, an overview of possible causes, the

aftereffects that could follow, and an analysis of past empirical studies.

Cherie Sutherland examined changes in 50 participants following a NDE. Participants were recruited using various methods such as newspaper articles, media interviews, audience members at public speaking events, and third party referrals. Participants had to report having a NDE more than two years ago in order to participate. Data were collected through a 90 minute interviews. Interview questions were related to the participants' religious beliefs, attitude, and practices prior to and following their NDE. The study concluded that although experiencers may not have been religiously or spiritually inclined before having a NDE they did experience a shift towards spirituality after their NDE (Sutherland, 1990, p. 4).

Interestingly, the same common elements appear in both positive and negative NDE's (with different emotional undertones). Some of the common features are seeing tunnels, a bright light, loved ones who have passed, and having out-of-body experiences (Parina, 2000). Every experience is different. Experiencers (of a NDE) often describe their experience as being incredibly vivid, lucid, and different from any dream they have had. Many experiencers find it difficult to put their

experience into words. NDE's could also include a "life review" in which experiencers see how their actions have affected others (Lommel, 2001). In some cases experiencers can travel with the speed of thought, feel as if they are in another realm, can communicate telepathically, and make a decision to return to their bodies.

Possible explanations for a NDE can be grouped into three different categories: "[1] physiological or pharmacological processes accompanying the process of dying; [2] a psychological response to the perceived threat of death; [3] a transcendental experience in the same category as the mystical [peak] experiences" (Parina, 2000, p. 2). Some of these theories include stimulation of the hippocampus by endogenous endorphins, seizure activity in the temporal lobe, drug use (specifically ketamine), and the release of Dimethyltryptamine (DMT).

Carr proposed in 1982 that NDE's could be the result of stimulation of the hippocampus by endogenous endorphins. Natural opiates such as, endorphins and enkephalins are released during times of stress. Dying could generate this type of stress and therefore those natural opiates would be released. The release of these opiates could inhibit the hippocampus and lower the seizure

threshold within the temporal lobe. While the release of these opiates and seizures could mimic some of the features of a NDE such as an altered state of consciousness, shifts in perception, and vivid imagery experiencers do not report many of the other characteristics linked to a NDE. One of the features not experienced as a result of stimulation to the hippocampus is out-of-body experiences (Morse, 1989).

Some powerful dissociative hallucinogenic drugs, such as ketamine, can bind with a site on the N-methylD-aspartate (NMDA) receptor. This binding could lead to similar perceptions experienced during a NDE such as: feeling that one is separated from their body, vivid hallucinations, seeing a bright light, going through a tunnel, timelessness, and the perception that what one is experiencing is "real" (Jensen, 1989). This hypothesis does include all of the features found in a NDE, however the aftereffects of hallucinations while under the influence of ketamine to not match those following a NDE. After a NDE many experiencers make extreme changes including their religious beliefs and practices, changes in their personal relationships, and often feel a newfound sense of purpose (Greyson, 1987).

A near-death experience has also been attributed to the release of DMT.

DMT is produced naturally in the brain. It has been hypothesized that DMT is produced in the pineal gland and is released during profound experiences such as birth and death (Luke, 2005). DMT is also found in plants and has been used for centuries in shamanism (Schultes & Hoffman, 1992). This release of DMT can lead to hallucinations that tend to be spiritual in nature, however alien visitations and/or abductions have also been reported which does not coincide with the features of a NDE (Gallimore, 2016).

The most common group examined when studying NDE's is cardiac arrest patients. In an empirical study Parnia, Waller, Yeates, and Fenwick assessed 63 cardiac arrest survivors using Greyson's NDE Scale. In order to determine possible a cause physiological factors were extracted from patient's medical records. Patients were also interviewed while in the hospital and asked about their religious beliefs. Results showed that 11.1% of them reported memories (of dying) and most of those reported features of an NDE. There was also no significant difference in physiological factors when comparing patients who had an NDE verses the ones who did not. The study concluded that memories while being unconscious are rare and

having a NDE is even rarer. Although the study lasted one year and had a large sample size (for NDE studies) the researchers assumed NDE's would happen in combination with cardiac arrest. Authors also assumed the cause may be oxygen levels which were extracted from the patients' medical notes. No brain imaging was performed so neurological causes cannot be ruled out. Being that cardiac arrest is more common in older males and the study was only preformed in 1 hospital it cannot be generalized. No concrete explanation nor frequency could be established.

Many experiencers report making drastic changes in their lives as a result of their NDE. These changes are often referred to as aftereffects. Experiencers could find it difficult to incorporate what they have seen or experienced into their everyday lives. Experiencers often have a shift in values, attitudes, interests, and changes in their personal relationships (Greyson, 1987). Some of the experiencers' family members or friends could find it difficult to understand or to believe the experiencers perception of the event. This could put a strain on relationships and/or cause the experiencer to distance themselves from loved ones. In contrast, it could cause the experiencer to be ostracized by loved ones. Experiencers may have

a particularly hard time adjusting after their experience if it was a negative one. They may have increased anxiety, fear and depression. If the experiencer's religious beliefs were different from what they experienced during their NDE it could be hard to incorporate and rationalize the difference [Greyson, 1987].

Although there is a great deal of literature in regard to explaining what a NDE is and the elements of an NDE no solid cause has been established. Nor has explanation of the transformative aftereffects such as changes in religious or spiritual beliefs that often follow an NDE. NDE's are very difficult to study because it is hard to predict when someone will have one. It is also impossible, in my opinion, to recreate a NDE on command. The studies mentioned above claim that elements of an NDE can be mimicked by stimulating different parts of the brain [temporal lobe] or by drug use, but they only contain one or two elements of an NDE not the entire experience [according to Bruce Greyson's NDE scale]. While the use of ketamine does include most if not all of the features of a NDE it does not have the same aftereffects reported by NDE experiencers. More empirical

studies about the NDMA receptor are needed to better understand how the symptoms of ketamine can mimic or cause a near death experience. Also, more research is needed about the lasting effects of having a NDE and how they differ from hallucinations or other anomalous experiences. In addition, most of the studies I have read use a phenomenological approach and the participants are cardiac arrest patients. While I do believe that is a good approach, I think it would be beneficial to look at another population from a different angle. Using a grounded theory approach could provide a possible description of these transformative after affects and possible causes for them as well. It is also important to mention diversity when reviewing these empirical studies. Diversity has many definitions and often changes with individual motivations [Plaut, 2015]. While diversity could mean including minorities that is not all that is included in the concept. In general, diversity is a variety of cultures, ages, sexes, and races are included. Without representation from each group the results would be skewed and cannot be generalized to the general population.

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Transpersonal Sexuality

Mihail Karpathioiu

He was born in Rhodes and was strongly influenced by his parents, who had a higher education, love for the arts, science, and philosophy. Since 1990 he has been one of the first to get involved with self-awareness approaches in Greece. He has worked and taught in world-class spiritual centers: in Greece, Istanbul and India and collaborates with the Totum Health medical center in New York with distinguished doctors on psychosomatic health issues.

He is the founder of the Center for mental health, “Humanology”, and the founder of transpersonal educational approach – “Synthetic-Psychotherapy of non-duality”.

He has been trained in a multitude of subjects, including Transpersonal Psychotherapy (Eurotas ECCA), Mental Health Counseling in Somatic Psychotherapy (Hellenic Institute of Neurophytotherapy and Character Analysis), crisis management of marriage and divorce (National and Kapodistrian University), training in Gestalt Psychotherapy (Gestalt Institute of San Francisco), trauma treatment with Somatic psychotherapy (Hellenic Institute of Neurophytotherapy and Character Analysis) and has specialized in the Treatment of developmental trauma with the NARM model, etc. He is the author of nine self-awareness books, such as *Sexual Alchemy* or *Couples Therapy*.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Mihail Karpathiou, Center for Transpersonal Psychotherapy, Learning, and Assessment, Humanology Center, Avn Vas. Sofias 66, 11521, Athens, Greece.

E-mail: info@humanology.gr

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the role of sexual relationships as well as sexual energy, which is considered the “Primal Energy”, in human lives. The body is governed by electrical operations, including the electrical charging and tension of genitals and their electrical discharge. The kind of the achieved orgasm can lead to a person's spiritual awakening. However, the prohibitions of the social and parental environment often lead to the inhibition of impulses in the child, creating damage to the child's energy system. A person's mental and sexual attitudes are reflected in his relationship with his own body, which constitutes the mirror of the soul and sexuality. For instance, sexual inhibitions affect the autonomic nervous system functioning, altering the balance between the sympathetic and the parasympathetic system. As a result, most people use sex as a release from internal tensions. On the other hand, defensiveness and repression of desires may lead to psychological emasculation, which can be perceived as the destruction of sexual energy. Defenses are built by the subjugation of the forces of sexuality and love. A defensive state means no space for love, because the person feels that he is in a state of war.

This paper contributes in the understanding that the “Primal Energy”, sexual and biological, affects the psyche and behavior of the individual and has the potential to be transformed. Through a healthy cultivation of this energy, a person can create more harmony on the planet. This energy can become the means to self-awareness, where the individual will be led from self-awareness to “I am myself”, and from “I am myself” to awareness of his spiritual self.

KEYWORDS

Sexual relationship, orgasm, internal tensions, electrical operations, nervous system, inhibition of impulses, emasculation, defensiveness, sexual energy, sexual inhibitions, relationship with the body, release, defensive, state of war, space, love.

Introduction

A sexual relationship is like water and fire. Water and fire are two elements that depending on their use can be either damaging or providential to our life. The energy of libido is ultimately the only possible energy to bear life at a biological level and if we use it internally and with wisdom, it arises our "superior". Thus, if we develop it properly, it can give us longer life and heal not only ourselves, but also to people that surround us [Karpathiou, 2014].

What must be originally taken into account is that sexual energy is the "Primal Energy", which contains the essence of life. Even in ancient Greek cosmogony, love symbolizes the force that created the PAN, meaning the "everything". Eros was the driving force that brought Gaia into contact with Chaos. Through this union, Heaven, Matter, Universe and Cosmos, were created. If one looks back in time, one can only realize that throughout the civilized world of antiquity, there were various mystical orders, which kept and shared their knowledge only to a selected group of people. This is Sexual Alchemy, a method of spiritual awakening during the sexual act. This method, in the East and especially in China, remained accessible only to the Emperor and was passed from the father to the chosen son.

However, there have been many records of female masters in sexual alchemy, who have gone down in history, as this is a technique that best expresses the female nature. The concubines, the prostitutes, the maids, were trained to introduce men into the secrets of the transcendent love. The art of alchemical love-making contained a key element for men: The stopping of ejaculation. But stopping ejaculation should not be confused with stopping orgasm. The method of sexual alchemy provides a unique and superior kind of orgasm, which is called the valley orgasm which is repeated during the long sexual act and occurs with the parallel openings of man's energy centers. The orgasm becomes a total event and embraces every cell of the body. The intensity is so great that it leads to a spiritual awakening... When two lovers are in deep sexual orgasm, they melt into each other. The woman is no longer a woman. The man is no longer a man... They become just like the yin and yang circle. Now, like a circle, they vibrate together and pulse as one. Their hearts are no longer separate. They have become one melody, one harmony. They become the most harmonious melody ever existed! [Karpathiou, 2014].

The psychiatrist psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich is considered the father of somatic psychotherapy and

the founder of an important turning point in the historical development of psychotherapy. Reich was a student of Freud from 1920 to 1934 and between 1926 and 1933 he gradually developed his therapeutic method, which he called "Character Analysis" and "Neurophytotherapy", aiming to treat mental and psychosomatic illnesses associated with the autonomic nervous system.

At the same time, he develops the theory of orgasm. He argues that education has a direct influence on the natural flow of the human being and adapts it to social "musts", determining when to eat, when to play, when to sleep. These "musts", restrictions, prohibitions and the prescription of moral principles, create damage to the child's energy system. They translate into internal tensions that create a muscular rigidity, which blocks the smooth movement of energy in the body. If sexual energy could move freely, there would be no physical reaction. Krauss, a pathologist in Berlin, at the same time as Reich's experiments, discovered that the body is governed by electrical processes, i.e., a "current" in constant motion, from the highest potential to the lowest: electrical charging and tension of genitals and their electrical discharge. This charge-discharge logic

led Reich to see that there is a unity in mental and physical functioning. And in his experiments on the autonomic nervous system (which is divided into sympathetic and parasympathetic), he discovered the proximity of the action of the sympathetic to anxiety and the parasympathetic to the pleasurable sensation of relaxation and release in the Circle of Life. The prohibitions of the social environment and parents-even in the most subtle ways of manipulation, such as an angry or frustrated look-imply the inhibition of impulses in the child and the non-expression of emotional genuineness (Reich, 2015). Education in childhood about controlling the anal sphincter can create unresolved issues, such as the notion that sex is dirty. A person's mental and sexual attitudes are grounded in its postures. Stiffness in the neck, ankles, knees, hips or shoulders reveal difficulty in pleasure, while, for example, the ability to bend the body excessively backwards betrays a lack of strength of character (Lowen, 2001). The inhibition of impulses causes the body to contract muscles, reduce the range of breathing and alter the sympathetic-parasympathetic balance.

It is a condition called shielding and is the chronic response of the individual, at a physical level, to threatening stimuli,

both internal and external, as he tries to maintain a sense of fake control and fake calmness. Shielding creates a flood of energy and causes the individual to experience emotional dysphoria and organic dysfunction. Through the supervision of an experienced and specially trained therapist, a gradual revelation of the individual takes place. The length of time it takes for a person to be exposed depends on many factors, such as the resistance of the blockages, the causes of their existence, the ability of the skilled therapist to make contact and the relationship that the therapist has with the person being treated. Reich divided the body into seven levels he called rings, which include muscles, organs, parts of the neurons and vessels of each area.

In living organisms, defences are an innate biochemical response, as in animals which, when threatened, will either freeze, fight or run away. In humans, however, defences are built by the subjugation of the forces of sexuality and love. When there is constantly a defensive aggressive attitude, because either our life or our self as a psychological being is threatened, then the body is in constant turmoil and produces hormones that create imbalance and physical tension. This tension is expressed as stress or pain or illness in some part of the body. And this defensive state becomes

second nature. A defender has no space for love, precisely because he feels he is in a state of warfare. But the forces of sexuality and love cannot be blocked by the various defence mechanisms, only pushed in the wrong direction, thus creating a mask, a facade that hides our true self and our deepest negative emotions and characteristics. These elements, energetically, sustain the mask, as our mask represents the effort to protect ourselves from recognition of the truth. But this mask is simply our defence and creates an illusion of protection. Revealing and acknowledging our negative emotions and our addiction to them weakens our mask, since the only truth that can set us free is the total acknowledgement of the truth of the negative aspects of ourselves (Pierrakos, 1999). If a person does not communicate with his pain or does not allow the pain to communicate with him, he will create a distorted image of himself and his spirituality and will have mixed emotions, fear of joy and enjoyment of life. Sex is man's strongest instinct; sex is the most driving energy in man. If man is granted complete freedom and spiritual cultivation in sex, then no one can control him. It will be impossible to be enslaved. Think: when one wants to subdue an animal, what does one do? He castrates it, destroys its sexual energy. The difference

between a castrated animal and an uncastrated animal is enormous, we all recognize it. The same happens with man - only man, is castrated through guilt. This results in behaviour far more destructive than the equivalent in animals, because on the one hand it makes man submissive to authority; narrow-minded and dogmatic, while on the other it makes him insanely violent towards everything he cannot control, but also towards everything beautiful and joyful in life. We only have to look at the evolution of societies, where the psyche of people has been "grafted" with religious doctrines based on sexual castration, usually psychologically, but sometimes also literally, as it happens to the weakest creatures, little girls and women. The repression of sex and the non-qualitative cultivation of the energy that characterizes it is the basis of all human slavery. It is impossible for man to be free if he cannot truly surrender to the natural flow of his sexual energy. If you make people fear their genitals, then they will fear the whole world. Sexual restraints and fear make a man act against his real interests and desires. Sexual repression has the general effect of weakening any tendency to question authority [Reich, 1972].

The fascists know how to play a double game well: on the one hand they suppress sexual freedom, while on the

other hand they excite the imagination and stimulate the minds of people with unsatisfied desires, emphasizing sexual substitutes [Reich, 1975]. This manipulation leads to sadism, militarism, but also to the intense brutality that can be encountered even on the street, when the repressed impulse overflows, becomes emotion, emotion becomes passion, passion becomes madness. If we observe a person's life, we will understand that the period in which he begins to gain autonomy and to shatter beliefs and stereotypes that keep him confined is the period of his teenage years. What changes then in man, on a biological level, is that sexuality is awakened in him to a very great extent, which creates profound reactions.

Rebelliousness, creativity, change, the drive towards the new and higher social and personal visions are formed in children in the peak of their teenage years. For, although the sexual energy that exists in every child is distorted and burdened by guilt complexes and fear, having been subjected to extreme manipulation by every socio-religious system for thousands of years, it nevertheless retains its potential and manages to assert its purpose, even under adverse conditions. Ask yourself, then, what the cultivation of all this potential and its placement in a healthy social context, with

love, companionship and freedom as reference points - imagine what forces would be released as these qualities were extended to the whole of society [Karpathiou, 2014].

Sexual pleasure, although it is the cornerstone of our existence, has at the same time suffered - and continues to suffer - the most violent and insane rage against it. Why? Because a man who has cultivated his sexuality properly, and not through a pseudo-liberation, acquires the means to obtain pleasure, joy, energy and spiritual clarity. Through these qualities, man finds the energy to contemplate freely, to free him from lethargic bondage and to rebel against everything that limits him. Either this limitation comes from man to man or it is a system of beliefs and actions with which the individual has been endowed by the system. When man has now conquered this possibility of freedom, he goes his own way. He has the courage to enter the unknown, despite his fears, and this gives him a sense of spirituality. He does not seek a beautiful prison, contenting himself with the promises and rewards of the system, his director or an expert "guru", as does a dogmatic follower. The man who has conquered freedom finds meaning in his own life and does only what he personally needs and not what others expect of him. In other words, he tolerates no form of authority, like

a hypnotized submissive. He can and does follow his own path completely, a path of creativity and courage that will make him an autonomous personality, beyond the instinctive needs of the herd of men and their elementary tendency to grouping and a leader.

Only if man allows himself, through a deep sexual orgasm, to melt into his partner, to forget his identity, to lose his boundaries and to let sex be his first step and become love, meditation, love, freedom, will he be able to experience the great orgasm that attunes him to the Whole and to existence. If not, a dysfunctional phenomenon will be established and that is common ground [Karpathiou, 2014].

We are our sexual behaviour. As your personality changes, so does your sexual behaviour. And vice versa: as your sexual behaviour changes, your personality changes and you are transformed into your authentic self. The fulfilment of the individual will not be given through an attitude of sexual proficiency and hyper-functionality, but through the total acceptance of one's own disorder. Quality orgasm will not come about by resorting to various techniques, but through a way of life that will flood you with consciousness. As long as your sexual approach is motivated by the approval of others, as long as you inflate your ego, the sexual

act remains a performance where you hide yourself and hide from it. A prerequisite for a healthy expression of sexuality is your relationship with your body, because that is where sex and personality meet, and one of the roles of the body is to be an instrument of the sexual impulse. The body is the mirror of the soul and sexuality.

The happier you feel in your life, the more sexual satisfaction you will be available to receive. Your maturity to surrender to the flow of the current of life and love is the factor that determines your orgasmic quality, not various techniques (Lowen, 2001).

Most people use sex as a release from tensions, both mental and organic. Ejaculation does not necessarily imply orgasm; it is something completely different for the average person. It looks, usually, like something like a sneeze, like a loss of energy. But orgasm is a completely different state. During orgasm, the body allows the energy produced by the sexual act to move and magnify within itself and like a wave, like an electric discharge, to vibrate its entire being, to become

a dancing pulse of energy that is reflected in every cell of its being (Karpathiou, 2014).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the decisive point is to allow the orgasm to blossom as a fully awakening phenomenon and not as a mechanistic reflex. A prerequisite for a healthy expression of sexuality is people's relationship with their body, because the body constitutes the place where sex and personality intersect. Sex must become eros, and eros must produce love, and love must become the means to freedom. But to fulfill this alchemical formula from sex to freedom, the first step is to accept sex completely. It is vital to stop creating moral structures through doctrines and religions, because they act as shackles. The only immorality is the lack of self-awareness. Shielding creates a pool of energy which has negative effects on an emotional and physical level. Individuals must lose their armor. Only then, they will become flexible, full of calmness and awareness, only then, it is possible for the essential morality to flourish within them.

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The Forbidden Wisdom: Revelations of Psychedelic Practices in Ancient Religions

Stephan Schillinger

Stephan Schillinger is passionate about spirituality and psychology, he writes books and offers personalized support, nourished by more than twenty years of spiritual development. Today he puts his different lives (athlete, director, writer, mystic and explorer) for the benefit of a wider audience. Through a therapeutic approach based on listening and benevolence, in the form of individual consultations, workshops and retreats.

ABSTRACT

Anyone who ventures on a spiritual path is led to consider the possibility that nature emanates a Mysterious Universal Intelligence, which populates our world, which is everywhere, and which inhabits all living beings. It is perhaps the realization of this universal conscience, and the capacity to keep permanent contact with it, which would be a definition of the word "spirituality".

KEYWORDS

Spiritual traditions, religion, awakening, psychedelic renaissance.

“Man has created gods; the contrary remains to be proven” [Gainsbourg].

The anthropomorphization of the divine, as in the religions, the tendency to confer an intentional and spiritual nature on the elements, in the animism of the shamans, had a function of facilitating access, communication, and understanding of the spiritual dimensions.

If it is commonly accepted that all spiritual traditions, and especially religions, are each fingers pointing in the same direction, paths leading to the same summit, or facets of the same diamond, the secret reason for this similarity is much less.

Could it be that one and the same cause is at the origin of the most obvious common point between all ancient traditions? This commonality is the possibility of spiritual awakening, taking various names across places and ages. Samadhi, Ataraxia, Salvation, Satori, Nirvana, Illumination, Epiphany, Revelation, Kenosis, are all concepts, with as many nuances, to designate what we could understand as the realization of a transcendent, divine, and transformative reality.

As to the origin of this astonishing convergence, many scientists and scholars have been positioning

themselves for more than 50 years in favor of what the most influential religious historian of the 20th century, Huston Smith, once called “history’s best-kept secret”.

2000 years before the appearance of the prophet who may have turned water into wine, the city-states of Ancient Greece were competing each other with their own religious initiation: Mystery Cults. The most famous lasted nearly 2500 years, was the Eleusinian Mysteries.

The cult attracted the brightest minds of the time, including most of the Roman emperors [Cassius]. To keep his experience a secret, and avoid the death penalty, he risked revealing the details [Filonik 2013], Plato used cryptic language to describe his initiation and his allusions to the Eleusinian Mysteries had a huge influence [Gagné 2009; Burkert]. He describes the “blessed sight and vision” he witnessed “in a state of perfection” – the climax of his initiation into “the holiest of Mysteries” [Plato]. Like all visitors, Plato was permanently transformed by what he experienced at Eleusis, after drinking a beverage called Kykeon which specialists have tried to elucidate composition for decades [Muraresku].

After a sip of this elixir, each initiate received the honorific title of *epoptês*,

the meaning of which comes close to “one who has seen, observed, who has been a witness”. At the heart of these mysteries was “an immediate or mystical encounter with the divine”, involving “an approach to death and a return to life” (Muraresku).

Other personalities like Socrates, Sophocles, Aristotle, Epicurus, Plutarch and Cicero were initiated there (Tonelli 2015; *Ancient History Encyclopedia*). The latter reports that in his time, the mysteries of Eleusis exerted their attraction “to the most remote confines of the world” (Cicero). Considering the aura of these figures, what can we think of the influence that this experience of *death before death*, probably with the help of the most powerful psychedelics known, could have had on the Greco-Civilization? on which ours is based?

Aristotle once said the initiates came to Eleusis not to *learn* something, but to *experience* something (Aristotele)¹. For Sophocles – one of the most famous playwrights of the time – the world was divided between those who had set foot in Eleusis and those who had not. Cicero – the great orator and statesman of the first century BC – states in *Traite des lois, livre II*:

Among the many exceptional and divine things your Athens has produced and contributed to human life, *nothing is better than those [Eleusinian] Mysteries*. For by means of them we *have been transformed from a rough and savage way of life to the state of humanity, and have been civilized*. Just as they are called initiations, so in actual fact we *have learned from them the fundamentals of life*, and have grasped the basis not only for living with joy, but also for dying with a better hope (Cicero).

How can one describe, as other than oneself, that which, when one saw it, seemed to be one with oneself? This is no doubt why in the [Eleusinian] Mysteries we are forbidden to reveal them to the uninitiated (Plotinus).

I think it is an undeniable fact that Christianity was born of a mystical practice that lasted 2,500 years. That practice was centered on the absorption of a drink based in particular on ergot, from which is synthesized what we know today as LSD.

This is what it is about when the greatest religions and their esoteric branches speak of “secret”, and of all the lexical field which comes close to it when the word God comes into

[1] See also Regis (2015), p. 122: “The initiatory rites push conceptual knowledge into the background in favour of iconic visions that lead citizens to suspend their judgments in favour of revelations that need no explanation”.

play. Impenetrable, ineffable, simply because we deformed the terms through writings for two thousand years, where “understanding” can only occur through direct experiment.

Before the Mysteries of Eleusis, the founding texts of Hinduism already mention, in the form of hymns, a sacred beverage allowing direct access to the divine: Soma. Several centuries before them, the Avesta, the central text of Zoroastrianism, gives a central place to an entheogenic plant called Haoma, with which it is possible to converse during its ingestion, from which Soma will later derive.

Psychedelic Renaissance

After the worldwide prohibition campaign led by the United States in the 1970's, a new movement emerged, carried by humans declaring their sovereignty, their freedom to ingest what they wish, and their inalienable right to explore their consciousness with these tools of nature. This is what we call the «psychedelic renaissance» which has been taking place for almost twenty years.

“Psychedelic societies” are now being formed in order to work for a better acceptance of these consciousness-

revealing substances, with a view to their future legalization. This legalization has already taken concrete form in several cities in the United States, and is underway in several other countries, including Canada and Australia.

In France, the major pioneer of this renaissance is a psychiatrist and psychotherapist, Dr. Olivier Chambon, author of numerous books on psychedelics. Through his transpersonal and post-materialistic approaches² he invites the reader to follow the rediscovery of entheogenic substances, first from the scientific and therapeutic angle, then from the inseparable spiritual dimension in his brilliant book *L'Eveil Psychédélique* [Chambon, 2021]. The latest therapeutic advances are reported in his latest book *Les Nouvelles Thérapies Psychédéliques: des Experts Témoignent* [Chambon, 2022].

An ever-growing number of studies, mention the promising effects of several psychedelics (notably LSD and Psilocybin, the main molecule of “magic mushrooms”) on depression, addictions, and post-traumatic stress³. Thus, several quality documentaries now make accessible and restore the

[2] <https://opensciences.org/about/manifesto-for-a-post-materialist-science>

[3] <https://www.lucid.news/psychedelic-medicine-beyond-ptsd-depression/>

hidden truths about these substances demonized by popular culture⁴.

Defining & Measuring the Danger

However, not all prohibitions being irrational, or devoid of argument, it is advisable to establish a distinction, in the prohibited products, between those which also contribute to the narrowing of consciousness, or to anesthesia of our perceptions and our discernment, and those that allow just the opposite when used properly: psychedelics.

Studies⁵ have contributed to this discernment by defining, according to four criteria, the "dangerous" nature of a substance:

- Its addictive power;
- The harm it causes to its consumer (physical and psychological);
- The harm it causes to society;
- And, finally, a very simple coefficient, resulting from the relationship between effective dose and lethal dose.

These studies allow us to separate the chaff from the wheat within the most consumed illegal substances. At the top of the various rankings resulting from these studies, we invariably

find: alcohol, heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine.

At the bottom of the ranking, we find, with the same regularity according to the studies, LSD and psilocybin. These last substances, according to the counter-culture but also the scientific world, find, by coincidence or not, their place in the category known as "psychedelics" (which *unfolds* or *reveals* the psyche).

It is here – evidenced by their age-old consumption in shamanic practices – that we encounter their spiritual dimension, and their effect on consciousness. The least "dangerous" substances are also those that give access to transcendent, spiritual or mystical experiences. They promote a widening or deepening of the field of consciousness, instead of a narrowing, like many legal substances. Likewise, they are far less addictive.

Many substances present in nature are not part of these studies, simply neglected, because less known or less accessible, and probably innumerable. This is particularly the case for DMT [N,N-diméthyltryptamine], which is nevertheless present in almost

[4] Among them: Journey to the Ends of the Spirit (Netflix); Have a good trip (Netflix); DMT the spirit molecule (Youtube); Other worlds, by Jan Kounen (Youtube).

[5] "Drug harms in the UK: a multi-criteria decision analysis", by David Nutt, Leslie King and Lawrence Phillips, on behalf of the Independent Scientific Committee on Drugs. *The Lancet*.

all living things, from humans to rodents [Barker et al. 2013]⁶, including a large majority of plants [Torres, Repke 2006]. The quasi-omnipresence of this molecule still questions to this day, as much as its function. However, researchers discovered that DMT is a potent psychoplastogen, capable of promoting rapid and sustained neuroplasticity that may have wide-ranging therapeutic benefit [Ly et al. 2018], and promotes neurogenesis [Morales-Garcia et al. 2020].

My personal view on this last question – shared by many consciousness explorers – is that the function of DMT is closely tied to spirituality and is a catalyst of the spiritual experience. So to speak, experiences aimed at recognizing the reality of what we may call the “soul” and other dimensions, as real, and, depending on the dose and intensity of the experience, as much more “real” and tangible than what we consider ordinary reality.

The experience of DMT [which we produce naturally in our bodies, at the level of the pineal gland and the lungs] [Gomes et al. 2014], allows us to enter what most of the experiencers call an alternative reality – or, to put it more accurately, a superior reality, in the

sense that it encompasses, and contains ours. Our reality, ordinary, then appears as an emanation, an offshoot, a creation of this original dimension, at least the founding of ours.

The nature of this creative dimension [because everything is constantly being created there] is the subject of much speculation among its explorers. The term explorers can make you smile since it spontaneously conjures up, in our minds, images of the last century, in the colors of green jungles, dangerous savannahs, mysterious seas, steep landscapes and distant countries. It is not a question, here, of going far, but within and beyond, without moving from our seat.

The Destination and the Way

Psychedelics and entheogens are not so much the path as a glimpse of the destination, which anyone could indulge in at varying levels of intensity, with infinite caution. To arrive at your destination without the path of meditation, whatever its form, is both perilous and futile. It would be like parachuting a 3-year-old child from the top of Everest, with no preparation or equipment. Apart from the obvious danger that this image

[6] “LC/MS/MS analysis of the endogenous dimethyltryptamine hallucinogens, their precursors, and major metabolites in rat pineal gland microdialysate”.

evokes for the reader, its purpose is to alert the child to the fact that he won't understand anything of the value of his experience, and will probably have only one desire: to return to the warmth in his room. He will have been given, in a few seconds, what adults take years to prepare, without ever getting out of the way. Psychedelics and entheogens are neither the goal nor an end in themselves. They are the tools, which make it possible to show the way towards the final destination, they are the key that opens The Door which gives on what one cannot conceptualize or understand, but only to live. And we are all, in the face of this, children who are eager to explore the world.

For probably 99.9% of humans, the destination is never reached. For a large majority of us, the destination lies in denial, flight, or at best in the reassuring clearing, halfway between dogma and religion. The destination does not evoke the soft comfort of alpine pastures or the green forests of the Himalayan foothills. Without being hostile, it is simply not conducive to humans.

Once the jump is made, whatever entheogenic or psychedelic tool is employed, something can no longer be ignored. A second sun is placed in the sky of our existence, it is not physical, but spiritual. It warms us and allows the life of something that could not live in its absence.

The path to those substances that leave no doubt as to the «divine» nature of existence – or in other words, the existence of universal intelligence and intentionality – should, for those who wish to «die before death», to be done with immense precaution and long preparation. This is a mental health issue. It seems to me crucial to paraphrase, here, the adage of Paracelsus: “Everything is poison, nothing is poison, it is the dose that makes the poison”. Between the suggestion of these two limits would be the spiritual awakening that has been discussed about for millennia.

From the collapse of identity induced by *Bufo alvarius*, the dissolution of reality into a synesthetic symphony experienced with LSD, the visit of the great universal library under the guidance of an extraterrestrial thanks to the psilocybin contained in magic mushrooms, or the encounter with a polymorphic maternal entity presenting itself as the creative intention of all that is, and whose impulse is love, which ayahuasca allows, these four experiences are radically different, like four cardinal points. Like four facets of a diamond which has an infinity of them, all meeting in its center.

At all times, men have tried to report in words the content of these experiences; attempted to

institutionalize and organize them. From shamanism were born the mystery cults of ancient Greece, destroyed by the religions of the Book, freely inspired by the latter, barring access to direct experimentation, imposing clerical intermediation, the exclusive depositary of the dogmatic interpretation of the entheogenic experience of a few prophets, having mobilized considerable crowds. From the dogma of these religions, cutting off access to the infinite source of universal teaching which cannot be exempted from the direct experience of the master plants, a dead end arises.

Like a heart that contracts and expands, and thus allows circulation, like the seasons following one another in an infinite pulsation, the cycle of day and night, of the sun and the moon, humanity is coming to the end of a

contraction. The cure is there, right before our eyes. It takes the form of a few molecules, which, used with the right intention, open our eyes.

On a more human scale, I fundamentally believe that, just as an unintegrated, unconscious trauma traces the path of a lifetime of suffering leading to illness and premature death, a positive event of equal intensity can reverse the trend. and lead to healing.

It is a question, here and now, of injecting spirit into matter, humility into dogma, intuition or art into scientism, the feminine into the masculine, conscience in ignorance, light in the darkness, love in fear. It is about preparing us for the encounter with an entity that our current level of consciousness cannot conceive. And who awaits us with infinite love.

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The Shamanic Extraction of "Energetic Parasites"

Benoît Cholet, MJ.

Benoît Cholet is a French journalist who was specialized in the evolution of music and in the analysis of the music business. Feeling the call to become a great traveler, he started to explore Africa and India, but finally focused on Latin and South America. After his discovery of the shamanic tradition of the Mazatec people in Mexico, he decided to change his life and dedicate it to deeply meet shamanic traditions of the Americas. He was lucky enough to spend years doing field research with shamans from different indigenous culture from Latin and South America.

He is the author of two books, *Les parasites énergétiques* and *Les virus de l'esprit*, from the series "From shamanic medicine to spiritual liberation" tome I and II, to be published in 2023 by De tout & du Tout.

E-mail: benoit.cholet@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This article presents part of the conclusions of a field research of several years with shamans from the Mazatec and the Huichol people of Mexico, the Quechua, the Aymara and the Taquilenos people of the Andes, the Shipibo and the Kishwa people of the Amazon, and meetings with leaders and shamans of the Ashaninka, the Puyanawa, the Kayapo and the Shuar people.

It aims to inform the reader about the shamanic point of view regarding health and the causes of illness whether physical or mental.

One aspect of the social function of shamans is the practice of "shamanic medicine". This set of therapeutic techniques, sometimes called archaic, primitive or ancestral, obtains surprising results, including in certain cases where Western medicine has failed. In this article, we will describe one of the phenomenon that it claims to take into account and which we have called "energetic parasitism" as well as the system of cure put in place by shamans to solve these cases which has been called "shamanic extraction".

KEYWORDS

Shamanism, shamanic medicine, shamanic extraction, soul retrieval, shamanic purge, energetic parasite, energy parasite, parasitic energy, energy body, spirit, energy entity, trauma, addiction, relationship problems, forgiveness.

The "Shamanic Medicine"

A shaman is a human being who masters a trance technique that enables him to interact with immaterial spirits for a specific purpose. He will thus contribute to solving in the invisible a problem which has manifested itself in matter and which has been submitted to him by a patient or a community.

In practice, the functions of shamans within their communities may vary from one culture to another, from one tribe to another, from one shaman to another... but there are many points common to all shamanisms, which today makes it possible to speak of shamanism in the singular.

Most shamans practice what is known as shamanic "medicine".

This "medicine" is called "energy medicine": its field of intervention, the "world of the spirits", is invisible and immaterial. The use of the word "energy" in the context of spirituality, popularized by Henri Bergson a century ago, will be adopted in this article, while remembering that this is of course not the type of energy that science can measure and quantify. Spiritual energy can somehow be thought of as the "immaterial-matter" that constitutes the unseen.

The "Shamanic Extraction"

"Shamanic medicine" considers that illnesses, whether physical or mental, are the consequence, the manifestation of a spiritual problem.

This problem can be twofold:

- The first is the presence in the spirit or soul of the patient of an intruder, an invasive energy entity which we will describe as an "energetic parasite".
- The second is the absence of a part of the patient's spirit or the blocking of access to this part. This is called a "loss of soul".

The Romanian historian of religion, Mircea Eliade, had made this observation as early as 1946 when he wrote:

For medicine men [...] as for the shaman [...], disease is either the abandonment of the body by its soul or the possession by a foreign soul, a "spirit" or a "demon". The magico-medical technique consequently comprises two methods: 1° to expel the "spirit" and 2° to seek, to bring and to make reintegrate the soul of the patient in his body (Eliade, 1946).

This double observation corresponds to what the anthropologist François Laplantine called illness "by excess" or "by default".

In the first case, the healing delivered by the shaman was called "shamanic extraction", and in the second case "soul retrieval". If Siberian shamanism focuses more on soul retrieval, and Amazonian shamanism on extraction, both techniques are often linked, as mentioned by Christina Pratt author of *An Encyclopedia of Shamanism*:

There is a traditional relationship between soul retrievals and extractions. Soul loss creates a hole in the patient's soul which leaves the individual vulnerable. Spirit intrusions and other illness-inducing energies can enter that hole. Therefore, it is often necessary to take out what has filled the hole in the soul before placing the soul part back in it (Pratt, 2007).

In this article, we are going to focus on what is extracted during a shamanic extraction, what we have called "energetic parasite".

The "Energetic Parasites"

Before being considered from an energy point of view, the parasites of the physical world were defined and analyzed by science. Thus, in 1971, the specialist in parasitology H.D. Crofton proposed the following definition:

Parasitism [from the Greek παρά / para, "next to" and σῖτος sitos, "wheat, bread"] is a biological relationship between two living beings where a protagonists - the parasite - take advantage of a host organism to feed, shelter or reproduce (Crofton, 1971).

From a shamanic point of view, an "energetic parasite" is a living energy entity, a parasitic energy, capable of feeding on a certain type of energy produced by people when they are in a particular "state". This state will

produce a quality of energy that is actually food for a particular type of "energy parasite". The "energetic parasites" are energy parasites fond of the energy we produce when we are in states of suffering: physical, emotional, psychological or spiritual pain, generated as well by our fears, our traumas, our resentments, our sorrows, our hatreds, our addictions...

Shamans explain that in order to enter a person's energy body, the parasite needs there to be some kind of energy fault, hole, leak or imbalance, which can be created by emotional shock, an accident, a fear, a memory, an attack, an intoxication, a pain... This imbalance will cause the person to enter a particular state which will attract this or that parasite. The parasites will then attach themselves to the energy body of this person and will begin to feed on the substances they like. Some of them will be able to embed themselves inside the energy body and take up residence there. Others will content themselves with remaining on the surface as if they were waiting for a wound to bleed to drink its blood.

Made of energy and therefore invisible by definition, not all "energetic parasites" are seen by all shamans or all energy therapists. Many will be able to feel them, identify them, locate them, detect them, without having a clear and precise vision of them. To some,

"energetic parasites" can look like a concentration, a ball, a knot or a cluster of bad energy, a traumatic memory, a parasitic energy, a blockage or an abnormal problem in a person's energy body. For shamans, they are energy entities, energy "critters" of different sizes: they often have an animal form, most of the time strange, like some kind of aquatic-insectoids or mollusk-mites... They are the most numerous, but shamans also see them in the forms of terrestrial animals, more or less prehistoric lizards, diabolical entities, monsters, black clouds, worms, larvae...

Knowing that, from a shamanic point of view, we are dealing with living beings will make us understand many things. Indeed, they will have the basic behavior of many living beings and will mainly seek to feed, develop, protect themselves and possibly reproduce. Since the parasite feeds on energy, the first effect of its presence will simply be a loss of energy in its host. Shamans say that after a while their presence can create physical or mental illnesses. Each parasite feeds on a certain amount but more importantly a certain quality of energy that is produced in a specific state of the person: the very one that originally attracted the parasite. Once the parasite takes hold, it will try to make his host produce this same energy, in other words, it will try to cause him to return to this same "food

state". To do this, he will manipulate us into providing him with his food.

It is a behavior that has also been observed in "material" nature, notably by Professor Robert Poulin who became interested in this subject and who wrote in his 1994 study titled *Meta-analysis of parasite-induced behavioral changes*:

Many parasites can modify the behavior of their host, to the advantage of the parasite (Poulin, 1994).

To manipulate us, the "energetic parasites" will be able to act on our thoughts, our emotions, our feelings, our actions, our memories... They will force us to produce their food, and the more it is produced, the more we will be under their control. Driven by hunger, they will push us to relive states of ill-being, pain, fear, anguish, resentment, hatred, shame, humiliation, guilt... If they are attached to a traumatic event in a person's life, they will ensure that the memory of this event is always more vivid, or on the contrary, that it is completely concealed so that their host lives with his discomfort without being aware of its origin. They are thus some of the voices in our heads, and specially the the ones of our traumatic memories, our addictions and our painful relationships.

From a shamanic point of view, we are not parasitized by a single parasite,

but by a multitude of these "critters", more or less large and with more or less serious influence. Indeed, shamans explain that the presence of "energetic parasites" can be compared to a spiritual illness that will cause the onset of physical and mental illnesses.

In shamanic societies, parasites have already been identified for a very long time, and many ethnic groups will thus have one or even several appropriate terms in their vocabulary depending on the type of parasite in question. For example, among the Mongols they are called "buzar" and are said to cause disharmony in a person's energy. In Mexico, the Huichol people call them "aka". In Peru, some of them are known as "virunsha" a word from the Cocama language, translated into Spanish as "virote" ["dart"] or "maldad". In South America it is also often referred to as "susto", a Spanish term meaning "fear" or "shock". In Chinese medicine, they are considered energy nodes called "kouei". In Sanskrit, some equate them with "bhutas" a word that is translated by "entities", and one of the eight branches of Ayurveda, called "bhuta-vidya", can be considered Indian medicine of energy entities. In the Arab world, we find their characteristics in certain "djinn" but there are also "sheitan", a word originating from Ethiopia which means: "devil, demon, evil spirit".

Paradoxically, their existence is mentioned in very few works dealing with shamanism, and the use of the word "parasites" is still rare.

Jean-Patrick Costa, specialist in Amazonian shamanism, is right when he speaks of:

pathogenic agent
foreign body
living entity that clings to the patient.
[Costa, 2001]

More technical, Michael Harner, creator of the Fondation for Shamanic Study (FSS), speaks of

harmful intrusive power.
[Harner, 1980]

Christina Pratt called them "Energy Intrusion":

Energy intrusions can cause weakness, malaise, localized pain or discomfort, illness, or death depending on the type of energy intrusion and how long it has been in the patient's body. [Pratt, 2007]

Many other names are sometimes used: "bad energies", "bad spirit", "negative charges", "somatic memories", "heavy energies", "energy nodes", "implants", "toxic energies", "bad air", "evil eye", "evil spirits", "parasitic energies", "encysted psychic energies", "grubs", "critters", "worms", "energy impurities", "evil spirits", "energy blockages", "emotional memories", "energy arrows",

"obtrusive entities", "crystallized energies", "possessive entities", "psychic parasites", "thought forms", "entities"...

The "Shamanic Extraction" of the "Energetic Parasites"

Shamanic extraction can be compared to a form of "energy cleansing". We also use the words clearance, purge, expulsion... In an article called *Extraction*, published in the book *Shamanism: an encyclopedia of world beliefs, practices, and culture*, Trisha Lepp writes:

Extraction is the practice of removing a spiritual intrusion from a person and neutralizing it. The basic idea behind this practice is that the intrusion causes psychological or physical illness, and removing the intrusion effects a cure in the patient. [Lepp, 2004]

Many shamanic techniques can be used for this process. We can classify them into two categories, external techniques and internal techniques.

External techniques are similar to those we use to do housework. A shaman can thus sweep the body of his patient with the branches of a particular plant, an object representing a form of power such as a feather, a stone, a crystal, an egg (as among the Mazatecs in Mexico or the Kichwas in Ecuador), a metal (like lead in the Maghreb), a small animal (like the cuy in the Andes), melted wax (like in the

Altai), a liquid (sacred water, specially prepared alcohol...), smoke (from tobacco, copal, sage, palo santo, bison grass), an odor, a flame (from a torch or a candle)... These cleaning power tools will then be passed, applied, placed, blown, rubbed or moved over the patient's body as a whole or at the particular place where medicine has located a parasitic intruder.

The technique of shamanic suction or "chupa" illustrates the phenomenon of extraction well, since the shaman will suck up his prey with his mouth before neutralizing it and spitting it out.

The "shamanic purge" technique is also an extraction technique. The world famous Mazatec shaman Maria Sabina describes it in these terms:

The disease comes out when the sick person vomit. They vomit disease. They vomit because it is the will of the mushrooms. If the sick don't vomit, I vomit. I vomit for them, that's how you expel evil. (Sabina,1994)

When the purging is performed by the patient, he becomes truly "actient" in the terminology of transpersonal psychology.

The internal techniques all begin with an awareness, a realization or a consciousness arising of the cause at the origin of one of his problems by the patient-actient himself. The patient

may sometimes have had this awareness upstream of the shamanic treatment, thanks to some "work on oneself" carried out alone or accompanied by a therapist, a psychologist, a psychoanalyst, a psychiatrist... When this is not the case, he can be informed during the shamanic treatment by the shaman himself or by a spirit present during the session who will ensure that this information reaches him. From a shamanic perspective the parasite itself is caring this information for those who can read it: they came with the trauma, they create the illness but they have a key to the cure.

Awareness of the original cause of the presence of a parasite can have the power to get rid of this parasite. If this is not the case, several internal techniques, often spontaneous during a shamanic work, can be used by the patient-actient, such as "forgiveness". It can be asked for, granted, or even self-assigned, and a combination of these three forms may sometimes be necessary.

There are many cases where awareness, external healing or internal healing will be enough to extract an "energy parasite". However, it is most often the combination of these three actions that will allow the definitive expulsion of an "energy parasite".

Before concluding, it is important to note that the "energy parasites"

described in this article are not disembodied souls, "flyers" as described by Carlos Castaneda, or archons as described in Gnostic texts.

Trisha Lepp also noticed that:

The idea that evil spirits are the source of personal or communal disease predates the germ theory by several millennia. [...]. The theory of possession by evil spirits or demons, and the possibility of exorcising them, is a direct descendant of these earlier concepts of disease-causing, intruding spirits. (Lepp, 2004)

Most transpersonal therapies or energy healing technics actually work on extracting "energetic parasites",

often with good efficiency even if the parasites as seen by shamans are not clearly named or identified as such.

From a shamanic point of view the spiritual world, spirits and "energy parasites" are a concrete reality which shamans work within on a daily basis. Awareness of the existence of the phenomenon of "energetic parasitism", even perceived as a metaphor, seems to be a crucial and enlightening information to help therapists and their patient-actients in the healing processes that they implement. It might be viewed as the shamanic contribution to the transpersonal psychology area.

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Tempest in the Heart

Ingrida Indane, MA

Psychologist, artist, educator, international workshop leader, supervisor. Holder of EUROTAS Certificate of Transpersonal Psychotherapy since 2008. Founder and director of Transpersonal Education Institute in Latvia, Board member and Executive director of EUROTAS. Student of Ubiquity University PhD Program "Integral Transpersonal Psychology". Studied arts, pedagogy, psychology, psychotherapy, arts therapy, family constellations. Buddhism and Shamanic therapeutic techniques learned individually from private teachers.

ABSTRACT

Today we live in a weird and controversial time. We are glad that there is no war in our country yet, but we feel its threat very close. We are also concerned about the ecological condition of our planet and the impending catastrophes. Globalism provides both security and fear. We have a tremendous amount of information available to us, and yet it is complicated for us to choose what to believe and what not. There is democracy in our country, but many can no longer distinguish it from permissiveness and irresponsibility. Psychologists, teachers, and doctors urge us to think about ourselves and others, but we often choose only one of these options. We often see danger where it doesn't exist, but we do not see real jeopardy next to us. However, we are free and love our freedom. This freedom can be best appreciated by those who have experienced war, poverty, occupation regime, and life in an authoritarian state. These people retain memories of their experiences in every cell of their bodies until the end of their life. This contribution is inspired by two great books: *George Orwell's 1984* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

KEYWORDS

Democracy, freedom, occupation regime, authoritarian state, books, forgiveness.

Introduction

The end of World War II in the spring of 1945 didn't bring freedom and delight to the Latvian people. Latvia, at the time, was occupied and forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union, which nearly 40 years later, President Ronald Reagan, justly called the "Evil Empire" [Reagan, 1983]. Nevertheless, life in occupied Latvia continued. People learned to say one thing and mean another. They never knew if there was a traitor, myrmidon, or whistle-blower among them, whose mendacious information to the KGB might result in long years of deportation, or worse, to the death camps of the Soviet Union. In addition, many anonymous messages accusing innocent people of deeds they had never committed were reported to the KGB. These messages could serve as an adequate reason to sentence people to lengthy imprisonment or even death.

The English writer George Orwell [1903-1950] was such a man. The sharp satire against communist ideology in his novel "Animal Farm" allowed Orwell to eliminate poverty in his own life for the first time. For the second time, such success was brought about

by "1984". It was one of the books that, together with Aldous Huxley's "Wonderful New World" and H.J. Welsh novels "Time Machine", "World War" and "The Invisible Man" from British contemporary prose classics became very famous. The novel "1984" was a loud protest against the nightmarish future, the fragile status of truth, and freedom of speech in the modern world [Satori, 2021]. Orwell's predictions largely came true during the Soviet communist regime. While reading this novel, my memories and stories of my family in the Soviet Union came alive and made my heart beat faster. "Never again" was my gut level reaction to these feelings. For almost 30 years of my life, when I felt trapped in a vast prison where the truth about history was called lies, and democratic freedom in the Western world was called slavery to money and fame. Intelligence was stupidity or mental illness; the conquerors were liberators, which was how history was rewritten. The Soviet government ruled by instilling fear. It was a powerful weapon in the hands of the communists because everyone wanted to live. That time caused significant trauma to the minds of those who have experienced it¹. It is

[1] During the Soviet occupation, 57,765 people from Latvia (about 2 million inhabitants) were deported to the concentration camps in Siberia [retrieved from the website of the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia: <https://okupacijasmuzejs.lv/en>, 2nd January 2023].

nearly impossible to heal this trauma. Can we forgive it?

In Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, Prospero was able to forgive his perpetrators [Shakespeare, 1965]. Forgiveness heals and strengthens. However, is it always necessary to forgive? And is it possible to forgive not only on your behalf but also on behalf of your ancestors?

My Story

It was an early morning of August 1984. This year was true to its stigma in my personal life. The sun had just risen over the streets of Riga. My husband and I were still sleeping soundly. The previous day had been full of excitement. For the first time in several years, we had entrusted our little daughter to her grandparents for a whole week. We planned to travel to the Carpathian Mountains and have beautiful holidays together! The night before, we had been packing our travel bags until late at night. We had already bought our train tickets, and our trip was to begin that day, in the afternoon.

We were awakened by the loud ring of our doorbell. I opened my eyes, looked at the clock - it was only five in the morning. "Who could be there", I tried to make out, "maybe something bad happened?" I put on my bathrobe and tried to arrange my hair in the

mirror. The doorbell repeated more and more persistently. After a while we heard loud knocks; someone pounding aggressively on our door. I got scared. My husband and I looked at each other in confusion. My husband got up and went to open the door. Behind the door, there were three people in the dark stairwell - a woman and two men in civilian clothes. "Is this Indane's apartment?" one of the men asked. "I'm from the prosecutor's office", the woman explained harshly in Russian, fluttering in the air with a small ID card. "These are my colleagues from the KGB. We have a warrant to search your apartment". Announcing this, they pushed my husband and me aside and entered the apartment in long strides. The words "KGB" made our blood run cold. Everyone in our country knew what it meant to face this organization. KGB was an absolute merciless power that no one would dare contradict. Moreover, if anyone was against the Soviets, any contact with KGB personnel could mean big trouble for themselves and their relatives. And we hated the Soviet regime for sure.

My husband, daughter and I lived in a small rental apartment near the center of Riga. The uninvited guests were already in our tiny kitchen, where there was hardly room for the five of us. Although our one-room apartment only had stove, one sink with cold

water in the kitchen, and a WC in the stairwell shared with the neighbors, we were happy. Not every young family could afford to live separately from their parents. One important reason for not living with our parents was a different attitude towards the existing political situation, especially for me. I was a 22-year-old freethinker and rebel. I was sure that the Soviet Union, this vast empire of lies, would collapse one day and that we should do everything possible to make it happen sooner. My friends were hippies, freedom fighters, and experienced dissidents much older than me. With the help of some Western friends, we made plans to reclaim freedom for Latvia. My parents warned me, advised me not to engage with these people; they were convinced that it was impossible to destroy the unjust and invincible Soviet regime. They were afraid of losing their job, getting in trouble with KGB, and even going to jail for raising a daughter with anti-government views. I was angry with my parents, and I blamed them for their fear and hypocrisy because I knew very well that they too hated the Soviet regime. Back then, I certainly didn't understand why they were so scared. However, I also felt fear when the KGB people were in my apartment. One of the men started knocking on various parts of the kitchen wall and asked: "How long have you been living here?

When was the last time there was a repair?". We replied that we have lived here for only two years and have not repaired anything. The crumbling walls also showed that they had not been fixed for at least ten years. It seemed that the man was no longer interested in the walls, as it appeared that there was no hiding place for illegal items. All three scary guests entered the room.

The woman immediately sat down at the desk and began searching our drawers. "Do you know these persons?" asked the woman and mentioned several people's names. Yes, we knew these people. They were all our acquaintances or friends who were outright opponents of the Soviet regime. My husband worked together in a frozen fish warehouse with some of them. He was ten years my senior, had studied philology. He aspired to becoming a talented writer, however, his stories were not published because they were not "in line with Soviet thinking". Therefore, to provide the family with food, he had to sort frozen fish in the warehouse. It didn't seem so bad at all - sometimes, he managed to take some fish home. He hid these icy treasures under his shirt and passed through the security post. Then we had a feast home - I salted the fish, and we would have a delicious breakfast for several days. The problem was not a lack of money, but that almost

nothing was available in stores - they were nearly empty. Good fish was a considerable rarity. From the warehouses, the products were sent to the "Big Brother" - the capital of Soviet Union, Moscow - and nothing was left in Latvia. Our grandparents' stories about how Latvia looked before the war when it was still independent came to my mind. They told me that people were prosperous and free in independent Latvia. However, in Soviet times the past was described exactly as in Orwell's novel. "It was a dark, dirty, miserable place where hardly anybody had enough to eat and where hundreds and thousands of poor people had no boots on their feet and not even a roof to sleep under [Orwell, 1961, p. 72]". History was actively transformed to make young people believe in the beautiful life that the Communist Party has provided them.

"Yes, I know some of them", my husband openly admitted. "They are my colleagues". However, I claimed I did not know anyone of the mentioned persons. "Go to the kitchen, sit and wait", the woman ordered. "And don't talk". We went out into the kitchen, and the door closed behind us. I saw anxiety and confusion in my husband's eyes. What is going on? What are they looking for? And then it struck me what they could find, and my heart began to beat like the drums of a crazy shaman.

During the Soviet regime, one of the most common forms of resistance was distributing illicit literature. These were any books, magazines, or articles that did not glorify the union of the Soviet republics as an ideal social system but told the truth about the ruthless regime and the cruel reality of the Soviet government. Literature, which encouraged people to think independently, was also dangerous to have on hand. Ordinary people were not supposed to think. The Soviet regime and the KGB were to do the thinking and dictate to the people what to think. People had to accept and integrate these thoughts unconditionally. Orwell accurately anticipated this government motivation: "And if all others accepted the lie which the Party imposed - if all records told the same tale - then the lie passed into history and became truth" (1961, p. 34). The regime needed to manage the past and present to maintain power in the future. Therefore, all Soviet people were forbidden to read such literature, and its distribution to the public was a serious criminal offense. "IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH" - it is impossible to describe this situation better, as Orwell (1961, p. 26) has done.

I will never forget sitting in the kitchen that August morning. As the KGB staff rummaged in my room, my thoughts had raised a real storm in my mind

and heart. Not long ago, one of the people named by the woman from the prosecutor's office had given me a thin folder with a secret list of literature and contacts where that literature could be obtained. Such a list was distributed among people who trusted each other to access books that told the truth about history and present times. The list was typewritten on thin sheets using carbon paper. It included such authors as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Helena Blavatsky, Yevgeny Zamyatin, and many other books banned during the Soviet time. They were mainly in Russian and could only be read from obscure photocopies. The originals were rare, but our dissident friends from Russia helped us get copies. And of course – there were also George Orwell's "Animal Farm" and "1984". It was an actual list of Great Books! My husband had no idea I had such a list. A few days before this incident, driven by my intuition, I had hidden this list in a small gap between the upper surface of the oven and the ceiling. I was sure they would find the list, and in my mind, I tried to find an answer to their possible questions about how it got there. However, nothing came to my mind. I felt like my head was about to rupture.

The agents searched our apartment for an hour or two. The door to the room opened, and they asked me to

enter. My husband was told to stay in the kitchen and wait. I entered the room. The apartment was in total disarray. Almost all the books from the shelves were scattered on the floor. The drawers were open, the clothes from our daughter's cot were torn off, and the mattress was turned upside down. Both men seemed to be resting from their work. The woman was still sitting at the table and had my address book in front of her. Her face looked arrogant and smug. "You told me you didn't know these people, but you have their phone numbers in your address book! How to understand that?" the woman asked domineeringly, looking me straight in the eye. I hadn't thought about that sitting in the kitchen. I was only worried about the list of books, but I didn't see it anywhere. I tried not to look at anyone, and my mind started working at high speed. After a moment of silence, I began to mutter, "Yeah, you know... there was such a thing... just please don't tell my husband... sometimes after work he came home late, and I wanted to find out what he was doing... I was jealous, so I secretly wrote down those co-workers' phone numbers from his address book... I wanted to call them to find out. Just please don't tell him, he'll be very angry with me!" I took a quick look at the woman and realized that she did not believe my lies. "Just PLEASE don't

tell my husband I did it!" I continued in an increasingly desperate voice and almost began to cry.

At last, the woman probably realized that she would not hear anything from me about these phone numbers and changed the topic of the conversation. "Where do you work?" she asked matter-of-factly. I replied that I worked as an artist at the Institute of Sciences, Department of Archaeology. "Institute of Science?" the woman almost screamed. "There's nothing for you to do there". After this harsh sentence, she ordered me to return to the kitchen and called my husband into the room. Even though my work at the Institute of Sciences was in jeopardy, I felt great relief and joy. They hadn't looked at the top of the stove! They had not found the list of literature!

My husband later told me that he was asked if he had met foreign sailors, if relatives lived abroad, and so on. Fortunately, none of these questions applied to him, so it wasn't hard for him to answer.

Finally, the uninvited guests were about to leave. Looking furious and frustrated because they had found nothing, they left. They ordered us to come to the prosecutor's office to sign our testimonies two hours later. It was a little over nine in the morning, and we realized that we could still

catch the train. When we were alone, I stepped on the chair, took my book list from the top of the stove, and showed it to my husband. He was a little surprised, but we were both happy that everything had ended so well. We opened the stove door, placed the list there, and burned it. The papers burned with a bluish flame, but the Great Books themselves remained intact in a secret place for people who could evaluate them.

We were lucky. We put some order into our apartment, signed our testimonies at the prosecutor's office, and in the evening, we were caught our train.

After some time, I found out that the person who distributed these forbidden books was not so lucky. He was arrested, interrogated, and finally placed in a special department in a psychiatric clinic, where people whose thinking didn't comply with the Soviet Regime were "treated". When he was finally released from the hospital, he really could no longer think logically. The medication had done its job. A similar fate befell many dissidents. Those who were not deported to Siberia during Stalin's rule were "treated" in a psychiatric hospital or re-educated in KGB cellars.

After recently reading Bradbury's story "Fahrenheit 451" [1975], the conversation between Montag and

Beatty about a man whose books had been burned really struck me. When Montag asked what happened to the man, Beatty replied that he was taken to a crazy house because he had been insane: "Any man is insane who thinks he can fool the Government and us [p. 38]". I found many similarities between the Orwell and Bradbury novels written in the anti-utopian genre and warning of a future in a totalitarian regime where thoughts are suppressed and history is modified. Bradbury's novel "Fahrenheit 451" was not forbidden in the Soviet Union, while Orwell's "1984" was considered anti-government literature. It was probably because Bradbury's future society was described as naively happy and equated with the US consumer society, one of the objects of hatred by the Soviet regime. By contrast, Orwell's future social system was based on fear, similar to the communist regime.

Mums' Story

Although I knew the consequences of not obeying the Soviet regime, I did not understand why my mother was so angry about my activities and why she did not like my friends, who were in any way involved in the resistance movement. Then she told me her story.

My dad – your grandfather, had never served in any army [Soviet or German],

nor had he been politically active. Therefore, my parents thought he had nothing to fear. But they were wrong. Life turned out differently.

A black spot on my memory map stirs up a horrifying night in 1946. At the age of 11, I experienced events that left indelible scars in my soul. We were awakened in the dead of the night by an unexpected loud knock on the door. It signaled imminent danger. Two strangers dressed in black stormed into the apartment and rushed into the bedroom. They ordered my dad to get dressed and follow them immediately. We all were horror-stricken. I still remember the stare of despair and hopelessness on my mom's face. In a few minutes, they were gone. We received no information about the reason for the night's unfriendly visit and were left in a total quandary.

My dad was convicted and deported to the city of Vorkuta in the far north of the USSR. We never knew what his "crime" was. It was more than 40 years later that, quite by chance, I learned that the only cause for my dad's arrest and deportation had been an anonymous message which read: "Enemy of the people".

Within a few years, inhuman conditions, starvation, and cold turned my dad, previously a strong,

healthy man of 40, into a miserable, feeble, grizzled old man, scarcely alive and of no use for any job.

That fatal night ruined not only our future dreams but also devastated our everyday life. My mom had a heart attack and couldn't continue her work. We were left without any means of subsistence. My elder brother and I not only had to attend school but also had to help earn money to make ends meet. We went to the country during summers and helped farmers in gardening and working in the fields. We experienced tough times, but we did our best to survive, and we managed. Sometimes, at present, while brooding over those past events, I think and feel that it must have been a Guardian Angel who took us under his protection.

As mum told this story, her voice sometimes broke, she paused, and her eyes seemed to get wet. I asked my mother if she had forgiven the person who betrayed her father. She was silent for a moment and then said quietly, "It can be forgiven... it is only possible through the Christian faith".

The Concept of Forgiveness

When thinking about forgiveness, several questions arise: does forgiveness involve forgetting, can forgiveness prevent punishment, or

does forgiveness require repentance? [Dudkina, 2008, p. 14]. These issues have long been widely discussed in various religions, philosophies, psychology, and literature. For example, Viilma Luule (2001), an Estonian healer, medical doctor, and writer, has dedicated much of her life to this topic. Her books describe a spiritual approach to psychosomatic problems caused by destructive emotions – fear, anger, hatred, and an inability to forgive oneself or others. Luule contrasts feelings and emotions to the rational mind. The author claims that the activity and rationality of the mind are desirable and attractive, but they have their limits. This limit is humanity, beyond which man becomes a machine. A car can be beautiful, functional, or valuable, but it neither has a heart nor feelings. The healer explains that restraining one's emotions turns a person into a machine [Luule, 2001, p. 13]. Such are the heroes of Orwell's (1961) novel "1984". Having lost all human feelings and emotions, the system's servants tried hard to turn all people into "machines". In this context, it was not possible to honestly ask for forgiveness or to forgive, so this story ends tragically.

"They can't get inside you", Julia had said. "But they could get inside you. "What happens to you here is forever, O'Brien had said. That was a true word.

There were things, your own acts, from which you could not recover. Something was killed in your breast; burnt out, cauterized out". [Orwell, 1961, p. 290].

These words make us think of those who betrayed their fellow human beings during the Soviet regime. These mainly were weak, tired, and fear-stricken people whose sole purpose was to survive. The KGB officers offered them various benefits if they agreed to cooperate and provide information about relatives, friends, and neighbors. Only a few of them decided to become *rapporteurs*² to gain power; the others were just scared to refuse. They were victims of the regime and did not see any possibility or sense in resisting. They had already become "machines" themselves.

Shakespeare

In Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, forgiveness is given under certain conditions. Prospero only decides to forgive his enemies once they are under his control [Mowat, Werstine Ed]. The former Duke of Milan, whom his brother had betrayed, could only forgive when he had regained his land and received a humble request for forgiveness. Faced with the threat of death and a storm

at sea caused by Prospero, brother Alonso had experienced enough fear and suffering. This experience makes him repent for his treacherous actions and ask to be forgiven:

ALONSO: Thy dukedom I resign and do
entreat
Thou pardon me my wrongs
[Mowat, Werstine Ed, p. 153]

Although Prospero is willing to forgive his brother in his heart, he only shows it partly and initially refuses to call Alonso his brother:

PROSPERO: For you, most wicked sir,
whom to
call brother
Would even infect my mouth, I do
forgive
Thy rankest fault, all of them, and
require
My dukedom of thee, which perforce
I know
Thou must restore.
[Mowat, Werstine Ed., p. 155]

However, the essence and compassionate nature of Prospero is best reflected in these lines of Shakespeare's play:

PROSPERO: Hast thou, which art but
air, a touch, a feeling
Of their afflictions, and shall not
myself,

[2] *Rapporteurs* - people who reported to the KGB what their relatives, friends, and acquaintances thought of the Soviet regime [author's remark].

One of their kind, that relish all as sharply
Passion as they, be kindlier moved than
thou art?

Though with their high wrongs, I am
struck to th'

quick,

Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
Do I take part. The rarer action is

In virtue than in vengeance. They being
penitent,

The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further. Go, release them,

Ariel.

My charms I'll break, their senses I'll
restore,

And they shall be themselves.

[Mowat, Werstine Ed., p. 147]

Prospero was aware that his brother and his servants were like him - with their strengths, weaknesses, and ability to feel pain and suffering. He was aware of the scourge of hatred and did not want to keep evil in his heart. Prospero was both a ruler and a magician who mastered the alchemy of the soul. He knew how to rule over people and the spirit world. Prospero had gained his knowledge from highly valued books. Contrary to the tyrants described in Orwell's novel "1984" who transformed the language into a primitive "newspeak", and the fire-raisers in Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451", whose mission was to burn all the relevant literature, Prospero valued his books more than his kingdom. He was grateful toward Gonzalo, who

had secretly delivered some of these treasures to him.

[Shakespeare, 1956, p. 535]

When Prospero regained his dukedom and forgave his abusers, the tempest in his heart subsided. It is possible that the "tempest in his heart" was much stronger than the storm Prospero incited at sea with his magic. After a storm when we realize that we are all connected and dependent on each other, peace comes much easier. At the end of the story, Prospero understood that he could get home only with the help of his brother. He was not afraid to ask for that help. That's why Shakespeare put the following words in Prospero's mouth in the epilogue of the play:

Since I have my dukedom got
And pardoned the deceiver, dwell
In this bare island by your spell,
But release me from my bands
With the help of your good hands

[...]

Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardoned be,
Let your indulgence set me free.

[Mowat, Werstine Ed., p. 170-171]

About Forgiveness in The New Testament

One of the best-known concepts of forgiveness is defined in the Gospel of

Matthew in the New Testament. The New Testament teaches forgiveness from the heart, and it seems that it is easier for Christians who follow this doctrine to forgive their abusers. Jesus Christ taught us not only to forgive but also to love our enemies:

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? (Matt. 5:43-46).

We need to have indescribable heart-wisdom and empathy to love our enemies - people who have hurt us and our loved ones. What did Christ mean by such love? How can we love people who have killed, raped, taken away our homes, lied, and betrayed? Many of us will say that this is the fault of the totalitarian system. However, any system is made up of humans. We can understand the motivation of these people; we can even forgive, but not forget. The love mentioned by Christ seems to be possible only by divine and enlightened beings. To forgive, Prospero had to wait for the remorse of his

abusers. Only when they finally asked for forgiveness themselves, Prospero forgave them. (Shakespeare, 1956).

In terms of history, we all know how deeply the German people regret and apologize to humanity for the fascist genocide. On the other hand, we, the people of the post-Soviet countries, have not heard anything similar from Russia, which was the main cradle of the Soviet regime. Many Russian politicians and patriots of the Soviet Union still declare that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the worst thing that could have happened. In 2005, Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia, announced: "The collapse of the USSR was the largest geopolitical catastrophe of the century". (Украинская Правда, 2005; Regnum, 2005). For the older generation in the Baltic States, it remains a source of fear - the complete opposite of forgiveness and love. The author of the book "Forgiving and Not Forgiving" Jeanne Saffer (2000), claims that it is not always necessary to forgive. She says many of her patients, who had suffered severe abuse, were relieved to learn that they might not forgive. Saffer explains that the question "Does this person deserve to be forgiven, and am I able to do it?" should not be taboo. (Saffer, 2000, p. 203-204).

In this context, it would be easier to understand the teachings in Matthew's

Gospel about judging others: “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get”. (Matt.7:1-2). Each of us has, even unknowingly, at some time, harmed our fellow human beings. The protagonists of the novel described by Orwell, similarly to the KGB servants, believed that serving the system was the right thing to do. In Shakespeare’s play “The Tempest”, Antonio was convinced that he should become Duke of Milan and therefore was ready to kill his brother Prospero. By delving into the motivation of every person who has done something wrong, we can always find aspects that are not just evil. We are only people with our own light and shadow, desires, needs, and passions. Understanding this makes it easier not to judge.

I recently asked my mom. “Has Christianity helped you to forgive finally?” “Yes, definitely”, Mom replied. “Both Christianity and my conviction that there are higher powers that we humans cannot understand”. We were sitting in the park next to the house where she had lived as a child and from where her father had been taken to Siberia. Then mum told me a story about this house.

Mum’s Second Story

It was the final year of World War II.

This is my recollection of what I had to endure at the age of eight.

The day had passed uneventfully. Dusk was falling. People were returning home from their daily activities. There was no foreboding of danger nor any signal for an eventual air attack. A little before midnight the sirens started howling. It meant that Soviet airplanes carrying loads of incendiary bombs were approaching to perform their evil deeds in our town. Like thieves, they usually showed up in the dead of night to kill people, burn down their homes and attempt to destroy their culture.

Having heard the howling sirens, the inhabitants of our house hurried to the basement, which served as the air-raid shelter during the war. In a few minutes, the space was filled up not only with people of all generations but also their pets and livestock. The menacing roar of the “death machines” was not long in coming. It was imminent...

The commotion in the shelter was growing. Prayers, crying, and wailing mingled with the sound of bursting bombs and the crackle of fire burning outside. In the middle of this cacophony, a rooster’s sudden crow resounded in the basement. Our rooster, Peter, whom my aunt had managed to take to the shelter, announced that a new day was dawning.

When the bombing finally stopped, we were able to leave the shelter. As I was standing in the yard of the house, I looked down the street, hoping to catch a glimpse of the neighboring places which had been an integral part of our street. The sight was heartbreaking: instead of the block of orderly dwelling houses, there were smoking and still blazing heaps of ruined buildings that, only a day before, had been homes and shelters for many families. This sight made my blood freeze and got engraved in my memory, heart, and soul for the rest of my life. Even now, whenever I think or talk about those ancient events, they revive in my memory, and I can still feel and see the flames writhing around the fragments of broken furniture and household fixtures.

I turned around and saw our house – a two-stored red brick building; it was intact. It seemed miraculous. Some soothing words heard during the last night in the shelter crossed my mind. An elderly lady who was the house owner tried to console the terrified people telling them that when the house was being built, a special incantation (“fire words”) was cast in its foundation so that the house would never be burnt down. The prophecy had come true. And see - even now, more than 70 years later, the house is still there looking just the same as it did in the 1940s!

After listening to this story, I began to think about “fire words”, my mum had mentioned. These are the words known to ancient wise healers that prevented houses from burning and death in the fire. Could such words also protect against the burnout syndrome of the soul that makes a person weak, lets to surrender, hate and not forgive others? In any case, I know at least one person who has such “fire words” in her soul, and I will tell a bit about her in the next chapter of my essay.

Lydia

Almost all Latvians, especially the older generation, know the name Lydia Dorinina-Lasmane (*Lidija Doroņina-Lasmane*). I was fortunate to meet Lydia and visit her in 1982, shortly before her third arrest and deportation, to a political prison camp in northern Russia, Mordovia. I remember sitting in the kitchen of Lydia's house until late at night and drinking tea. Lydia told us about her experience during her previous arrests and deportation, and we dreamed together about Latvia's freedom.

Lydia was born in Latvia in 1925. She remembers that she was taught to love her homeland, culture, past, and people at school, but not the foreign powers and governments that have changed frequently throughout history. In an interview with Iveta Mediņa, secretary

of the Latvian Occupation Museum Society board, Lydia remembers: “After the war began, my relatives, my neighbors, my schoolmates, and their parents were shot. My homeland had become a battleground for two foreign powers”³ [Medina, 2020].

“May 9, 1945, was a terrible day for us because we had to fear the robbery, rape, and murder of soldiers in the ‘liberator’ army”, tells Lydia, who was not fluent in Russian at the time. She later learned the Russian language in the deportation camp. She was imprisoned with members of the Russian intelligentsia – wonderful people who taught her the Russian language and literature. [Kasparans, 2018].

Lydia’s first conviction in 1947, along with other family members, was for supporting national partisans. The Military Tribunal sentenced Lydia to 5 years in the East Correctional Labor Camp and three years in prison. She was diagnosed with tuberculosis and had difficulty recovering. In the Vorkuta camp, Lydia met her next husband, Mikhail Dorinin, a representative of the Russian aristocracy. In 1970, Lydia was sentenced to involuntary treatment in a psychiatric hospital and two years in prison for reading forbidden literature and “spreading deliberately

false information that discredits the Soviet state and public order”. For the third time, the Supreme Court of the Latvian SSR sentenced her to five years in a camp in Mordovia and three years in a camp in the Altai Mountains. The reason was anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation [Medina, 2020].

Lydia’s life story is not as unusual as her own attitude towards what happened. When journalists now ask her if she has forgiven her abusers and the servants of the Soviet regime, she replies:

We do not know where evil comes from. This beast lives in each of us and can break out at some point. To the warden of the prison comes a woman to ask for the opportunity to see her imprisoned husband. The warden rapes her first and only after it allows her to see her husband. In the evening, the warden goes home in peace, loves his wife and children. There is a struggle between good and evil in each of us, and it is our duty to control the beast within ourselves. [Kasparans, 2018].

Lydia forgives her abusers because God has told her to choose the path of forgiveness. “What would I do with my terrible hatred if I could not forgive” she notes. [Kasparans, 2018]. Lydia’s words remind me of what was written in the Gospel of Matthew: “Then Peter

[3] Fascism and communism [author’s remark].

came up and said to him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven" [Matt. 18:21-22].

A year ago, Lydia celebrated her 95th birthday. Despite 14 years of deportation to Siberia and her hardships during the Soviet regime, Lydia is still alive and radiating a bright, quiet love. When asked what makes her happy now, Lydia replies that one of her pleasures in free Latvia is the opportunity to read good books because, during the Soviet occupation, she was accused of storing and distributing anti-Soviet literature. She is also pleased with the regained freedom of religion, the opportunity to work in her church [Kasparans, 2018].

Conclusion

Both Shakespeare's play "The Tempest" and Orwell's novel "1984" are undoubtedly relevant today. Both these Great Books tell the story of

inhumane abuse, betrayal, falsehood, and its consequences. While writing this essay, I accidentally found an article by the well-known Latvian pianist Vestards Shimkus (Šimkus) on the Internet. Shimkus compares the current government's laws to the "newspeak" described by Orwell [Šimkus, 2021]. It doesn't matter if the text is simplified or too complicated - there will be a misinterpretation in both. The question arises - why is it important for today's government that society cannot adequately perceive the issued laws?

The effects of a "storm in the heart" can be varied. Vincent, the protagonist of Orwell's book, is forced to surrender to the totalitarian system, and his spirit is shattered. On the other hand, Shakespeare's hero Prospero, with his knowledge and magical abilities, surpasses his enemies and forgives. The same as with the crimes of totalitarian regimes and deportations, the answers may vary from case to case. Only the heart in which the storm of betrayal and abuse have subsided can forgive.

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Heroism

Vladimir Maykov, Ph.D.

Vladimir Maykov is a pioneer of transpersonal studies in Russia. Since 1990, he has developed and taught more than 15 teaching and training programs in transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy.

He founded an international publishing project to publish transpersonal psychology texts in Russian and has edited about 100 books for this project. He is senior research associate at the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Chair of School of Spiritually-oriented Psychology at the Moscow Institute of Psychoanalyses.

He is founding President and Board member of the Russian Association for Transpersonal Psychology and Psychotherapy, Board member of EUROTAS, and founder of Transpersonal Project – organization for promoting the whole spectrum of transpersonal knowledge (www.transpersonal.ru).

In 2007-2011 he worked as the scientific consultant and personal adviser of E.M. Sagalayevs in his TV documentary project *Mystical Journeys with Eduard Sagalayev*. He is also film director.

ABSTRACT

The objects of the research are all humanities and psychological reasons at rating of films. The question is raised as to why the most top-grossing films in the world belong to the genre of fantasy, science fiction and adventure. The different views about the reasons of the blockbusters popularity are analyzed in connection with J. Campbell ideas of monomyth and the journey of the hero. There is the assumption that these reasons are related to the psychotherapeutic effect of "heroic films".

The obtained results give us new opportunities to understand how the mass culture influence mechanisms and popular modern psychology and psychotherapy practices and trainings do work from the viewpoint of contemporary human sciences. The method and research methodology are based on the genealogical approach to the cartography of the hero's journey, connecting him with the ancient-shamanic chart of reality. This approach is complemented by comparative analysis of contemporary experts' works at mythology and folklore. The main contribution of the author in research of the subject is a hypothesis about the preliminary typology of three different kinds of the hero journey, which have different textual, semantic and historical base. The introduced ideas about heroism as the kind of primordial psychotherapy provide new opportunities for understanding of film rating formation and the mechanisms of mass media and mass culture influence. The classical map of *Hero's Journey* (Campbell-Lukas-Vogler) is uncompleted. It works rather well, but only in a certain (mythological) domain which is unreasonably spread over by numerous followers as universal structure for whole human life. The integral cartography of the hero's journey is connected with the ancient shamanic three-dimensional chart of reality with special emphasis on the four-quadrant middle world (human or existential domain). So, there exists three different kinds of the Hero's journeys – Mythological (Submitting life energies), Existential (Growing Up), and Spiritual (Waking Up), – that have different textual, semantic and historical base, structure and meaning

KEYWORDS

blockbuster, film rating, hero's journey, mythology, monomyth, archetype, fairy tale, primordial psychotherapy, heroism, Hollywood.

If you open the list of top-grossing films in the history of world cinema, you will see that so-called “modern” (since 1980) films prevail there, and the first ten places are held by movies in style of fantasy, science fiction and adventures, starting with *Avatar* (charges more than 2 billion dollars, the 1st place) and finishing with *Transformers: Age of Extinction* (charges of 858 million dollars, the 10th place).

The list of the first hundred top-grossing films in the world demonstrate that the movies of fantasy, science fiction and adventure style prevail again, but several psychological films have appeared as well: *Mamma Mia!* (The 73rd place) and «1+1» (*Untouchable*) (the 97th place). In the list of the second hundreds of films there are more 8 non-fantasy ones: *Fifty Shades of Grey* (102nd place), *The Sixth Sense* (111th place), *Bachelor party 2: From Vegas to Bangkok* (the 142nd place), *The Bodyguard* (the 169th place), *Pretty Woman* (the 174th place), *The Wolf of Wall Street* (the 188th place), *Sex and the City* (the 199th place) and *Django Unchained* (the 200th place).

But the struggle for the spectator between psychological films and fantasy, adventure films has been already lost. In list of the third, the

fourth and the fifth hundred of films we find no more than 20 movies that don't belong to fantasy, science fiction and adventure genre (www.kinopoisk.ru).

The vast majority of these [top-grossing films] was made in Hollywood which in this sense can be considered as the world's largest production corporation of human imaginations and their circulation in the society. Some kind of divisions of Hollywood which respectively are responsible for children and adults are the Disneyland that realizes imaginations of children and Las Vegas that produces the desires, games and entertainments of adults: idols and symbols of mass culture, pop stars and hits of fashion and electronics. People come to Las Vegas to party, to play, to burn their life, to snatch a large sum and to enjoy the power of money.

It is easy to calculate that, when ticket price was \$10, the number of people who watched *Avatar* was equal to 200 million and it was 5 times greater than the number of people who watched «1+1» (*Untouchable*). However, if you take only the first hundred films, the number of people who have watched “fiction and adventure” is hundreds of times higher than the number of people who have watched *Psychology*. It is important that the target audience of the top-grossing

films includes all groups: men and women, adults and teenagers. If the film – that is a dominant art of our modern time, shows us mainly science fiction and adventure – so it means that there are some reasons why the cinema needs it.

If we, as spectators by our sympathies, largely vote for such films, visiting them the most active, then it means that we need it for some reasons!

In this article we will try to shed light up on the possible reasons of such statistics and reflect up on the mysterious cinema attractiveness.

A Brief History of Blockbuster

The situation described above has risen in the cinema rather recently. In the good old days when people watched a variety of fantastic, animated, existential-psychological and adventure movies, without giving obvious preference to any genre and satisfying their various requirements through this variety. In the mid-seventies of the last century this balance has been broken by the appearance of the movie of S. Spielberg *Jaws* in the screen (in 1975). The movies which created a furor and, as a result, grossed big cash desk, began to be called blockbusters (from English blockbuster – a powerful bomb, an air bomb). Since the beginning of the

21st century blockbusters became the name for popular and lucrative works as in literature so in pop culture in general.

“The story has to cause a knockout in the reader”, – Julio Cortázar has once formulated the literature credo, and he was the magnificent storyteller. With opening of “the era of blockbuster” Hollywood constantly strives “to send to a knockout” the spectacular. Hollywood has stood on an endless trajectory of increasing the overtopping of sensation level: “cool,” “cooler,” “even cooler”, “absolutely cool”, “incredibly cool”, “the coolest”, “supper cool”, “so cool, that is impossible to describe”, etc.

According to research made by V. A. Podoroga, the core of blockbuster is an Eye-turner. And the real Eye-turner is the Action such as a Catastrophe. In this aspect the blockbuster differs from auteurism that understands the human world not as the eye-turner but as a destiny. In Hollywood blockbusters there is a big importance of crucial technology of direct impact which destroys the distance and entices the spectators to feel the catastrophe (Podoroga, 1999). However, already in the top of first hundred top-grossing movies we find many films unrelated to the disaster genre: adventure, fantasy,

cartoons and psychological films. Therefore, in addition to the direct impact of technologies through eye-turner and catastrophe there “should be other reasons for explaining cash international success of these films”.

Among the common reasons of such success, according to a Harvard Business School Professor A. Elberse, there is compliance to the criteria of so-called four-quadrant movies. These are movies that are equally suited to four groups of spectators: men, women and people before and after 25 years. These “universal” movies usually have simple and straightforward story line, which describes the struggle of good against evil. They have to present action scenes, comedy, romantic story and actors-stars. Children or young people have to be present among the heroes. Such movie stories have to imply the possibility of further sequels [Elberse 2013].

Of course, the compliance to these criteria is important for box office success. However even more important key to the reason of the movies’ popularity at gross audience can be found in the analysis of creation history of *Star Wars* – chronologically this is one of the first blockbusters. Partially their success is explained by magnificent special effects (and also marketing), however

the director J. Lucas considers that escalating popularity of the saga is caused by the principles by which the narration is organized. According to him, the creation of characters and the storyline of *Star Wars* were promoted by the book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* [The Hero with a Thousand Faces] by the famous mythologist J. Campbell.

In the book, Campbell claims that all stories consist of some general components taken from legends, fairy tales, dreams and cinema which may be connected. The monomyth or “the hero’s journey” is the cornerstone of all these stories. As far as such principles are universal for all people so it explains the reason why such stories are loved by and perceived by all humankind, regardless of the country, culture and religion [Campbell, 1991; 2008].

In 1974, Loukas inspired by cosmic operas such as *Flash Gordon* serial, samurai movies by A. Kurosawa and the book by J. Campbell’s, he began to work on *Star Wars*. Having read Campbell, he actually rewrote already made-up script. In 1976 there appeared the same name book-novelization by A.D. Foster and J. Lucas talking about events “Episode IV: A New Hope”. Producers of the 20th Century Fox were afraid of a movie failure at the box office and

decided to issue the book earlier to estimate its success. In 1997 Loukas got the special award *Hugo* for this novel at the Congress of the World community of the science fiction.

The first movie came out on May 25, 1977 called *Star Wars* with a budget of 11 million dollars and became one of the most popular at the time. In addition, the film won 6 Oscars from the Cinema Academy.

The film was a huge box-office success, and this fact actually saved the company 20th Century Fox from threatening bankruptcy at that time. When the doubts of the payback of the project disappeared, the first film got the name *A New Hope*, and soon it was followed by two sequels, appeared in 1980 and 1983.

In 1997, 20 years after the first film came out the original trilogy was redesigned with the addition of computer special effects and came out again. In the second rollout of the films' box-office collected respectively 256.5 million, 124.2 million and 88.7 million dollars. The film was redesigned again with renewed special effects and recreated scenes with significant changes – in a Special Edition in 2004. In spite of the fact that many people considered the attempt to recover 20-years old film which had been broadcasted many times on video and on TV – as a failing

attempt, the spectators' crowds were coming and coming. In 2012 the right to produce *Star Wars* was bought by The Walt Disney Company, which planned to produce one movie every year, starting in 2015. Indeed, why to cut the goose that lays the golden eggs?

Why “The Journey” and Why “The Hero”?

But if the movies success, as Loukas claims, is connected with compliance of their structure and script to ancient prototype of the human narration, such as myths and fairy tales, then what are the advantages of the structure which was called by Campbell “monomyth” or “the hero’s journey” over the other possible structures of media products? Throughout all history of humankind there is observed a certain connection between getting to know something new and any travelling. We can say that the travel is some kind of archetype of getting to know something new. Therefore, the majority of human stories have the outline or a script involving a travelling.

In 1949 Campbell who had been investigating for a long time the world myths published the foundation of the fact that in the core of all mythologies there is a “monomyth”, i.e., the main myth, which is general for all mythologies [Campbell, 1991]. The core of the myth is the story

about the hero which begins, as a rule, with the wonderful birth. Campbell, commenting on this moment in the six-hour movie *The Power of Myth*, says that “each birth is a miracle” and refers to works of his friend, S. Grof who is the founder of transpersonal psychology, in whose works the influence of birth experience on psychological structure of the personality is investigated [Grof, 1985].

But in myths the miraculous is emphasized, as a rule, also by the fact that circumstances of the birth are unique. Let’s say, not only the birth, but also conception was miraculous as, for example, Immaculate Conception of Christ. The great Tibetan teacher Guru Padmasambhava was born already enlightened in a lotus in the center of the lake. And then, in ancient narrations there is a story about the childhood of the hero and about wonderful events which happen to him at this time. Then the hero has special teachers.

Then he hears a call and, follows it, leaves the familiar world and goes to unknown. There he fights against enemies and wins, gains supernatural capabilities and, finally, comes back home.

Campbell always said that his interest in mythology was connected with the fact that myths – “it is about us”. One of his books was called the same, “Myths

which we live in” [Campbell, 1972]. The monomyth, according to Campbell, is the central myth which organizes all our life. And we are under the influence of this myth natured on the mother’s milk. And we follow those scenarios which we have received since the early childhood about the one who I am, about how to behave in a critical situation; what to do to when we hesitate; what to do when we pass barriers and “red lines”; when we go on a trip and when this world becomes too narrow for us, and we need to go beyond its limits; that is, we follow all this fundamental knowledge which we have absorbed through cartoons, fairy tales, legends, through the teachers, through all stories of humankind.

In some sense, our life is ruled by the monomyth and it is controlled by it: if we know these structures, if we have passed “the hero’s journey”, then we are free and we can use them. If we don’t know them, then they use us. And having watched *Star Wars*, then we, without understanding why, go to the next Hollywood stall, we buy shirts, laser swords or the magister Yoda figure. And through this act of symbolical exchange, we join and become partly similar to heroes of *Star Wars*. Or we buy stylish black glasses, a black raincoat, and somehow, we become similar to Neo and his team from *Matrix*, through

it we feel like we are the saviors of humankind who emancipate people from the power of matrix.

The advertising works the same way. It promises us to reestablish the contact with the sacral world through the act of symbolical junction to perfection by means of purchasing its attributes: "Purchase Pepsi, and you will become the superman". Or: "Purchase this sanitary towel, and you will be perfect always and in everything like this princess dancing in clouds".

According to Campbell, "the way of a mythological adventure of the hero it is usually an extension of a formula of any ceremony of transition: solitariness – initiation – coming back. The formula can be called the core of the monomyth. The hero ventures to go from the world of daily occurrence to the unpredictable and supernatural area: there he meets fantastic forces and wins a decisive victory: from this full of mystery adventure the hero comes back with the capability to bear the benefit to his compatriots" (Campbell, 1991). According to such scenario next heroes were acting the: Gilgamesh the ancient Sumerian, Moses at Jews, Theseus, Heracles, Jason, Odysseus at Greeks, King Arthur at Celts etc. Such scenario was played in numerous literary novels and movies.

The analysis of 500 the most top-grossing films shows that over 90% of these movies are based on fantastic heroic story, so, not only informative and entertaining aspects at cinema can attract us but the desire to join heroic can attract as well. I assume that it is connected with the fact that such movies work as therapy, activating our connection to heroism. Observing the work of some great psychotherapists demonstrates that they convey to clients their knowledge and confidence that all problems have solutions and it is possible to find the way out from any cages.

Let's say, according to the founder of logotherapy Victor Frankl the main thing in human life is "the will to meaning". Simultaneously there is a fact which works in his approach that he is a hero who has survived and has helped many other people to survive at concentration camp (Frankl, 2006).

If a person committed in his life what can only be described as heroism, then unlike the hero, he is the one who knows and is capable. This knowledge and capacity to implement can't be passed by intellectual way, but it can be as a support and motivation for the others.

Predecessors and Analogs of the Monomyth in the Humanities

The hero – as the core of history – is not the invention of Hollywood, it is

much more ancient. At the same time there is a structural connection between antiquity and the present. According to Campbell, myths live and act right now, replacing each other. As what was once upon a time as a mystery of the king Arthur, a story about Tristan and Isolde, Perseus's travel and his fight with the Jellyfish and reunion with Andromeda – all these are related to our everyday life. The monsters were replaced by atomic bombs, terrorism, mass epidemics. The ways of movement were changed. But myths continue to act. For the ancient person the myth was always the reality. And what is real for us today then for our descendants will be perceived as the myth of the XXI century.

Campbell was quite often criticized for excessive tempt to generalize. They said he tried to superimpose the monomyth on any epos, regardless the distinctions which highlighted the national color. Undoubtedly, not all the myths – are the myths about heroes. There are also myths cosmogonic – which are telling in metaphors about creation and destruction of the Universe, there are myths about gods and their fight among them, myths about the chthonian monsters – the beings who lived before the beginning of the world and are hiding now in mysterious depths. But there is no mythological system without myths about heroes. The other characters,

creatures, even gods circle around the hero. His travel consolidates the mythical world in a whole. And almost always the journey of the hero contains three phases and the most part from 17 elements described by Campbell.

As important argument in favor of importance of these searches serves the fact that long before Campbell the similar ideas were stated by O. Rank whose book *The myth about the hero's birth* has been for the first time published in 1909 [Rank, 2014], and in his book *Birth Trauma* published in 1924 many ideas of S. Grof about perinatal cartography already pre-existed. [Grof, 1985]. K. G. Jung in 1912 in the work *Symbols of Transformation* assumed that the figure of the hero represented the archetype existed from immemorial custom [Jung, 1977]. And heroic character of mythology had universal character because of the unity of human race as the species because more or less people tended to satisfy the same needs which A. Maslow divided on primary and secondary ones. The need of the human being to obtain the integrity can be emphasized as a special meta requirement and its signs are manifested as existential melancholy, feeling of incompleteness of life and searching of God; and the metaphors are "Lost Paradise", the desire to be back to "Golden Age". Sometimes the mentioned above

requirements can invalidate any primary ones – such as the food, the sleep, the sex etc. These periods are characterized by the consciousness changed state when the spirit goes through a thorny way to find the selfhood, to find the true and integral oneself, every time going through new levels of the truth of unity.

In 20 years prior to the edition of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* V. Y. Propp who is the Soviet specialist in folklore had published the book *Morphology of the Folk Tale* (Propp, 1968). He had allocated 31 elements common to all scenarios of the fairy tale, and 7 roles common to all fairy tale characters. There were numerous adaptations of the ideas of “the hero’s journey” for writing the novels, in creating the TV programs, in developing pre-election companies and in designing the psychological trainings (Gilligan, 2016). Already in recent time, following in the footsteps of Campbell and Loukas, some kind of “guru” of screenwriters of Hollywood, has become K. Vogler according to his drafts there are created 99% of the Hollywood scenarios nowadays (Vogler, 2007). There were numerous developments of these ideas for promotion of goods, leadership development and psychotechnologies of the success. All of them somehow rely on fundamental Campbell’s structure (Rudzitis 2009).

In general features the Hero’s adventures scheme corresponds to the main stages of initiation process and reproduces various forms of transition ceremonies (rites de passage). A. Van Gennep (2019) emphasizes 3 of them:

- *the separate one*, it shows the person’s detachment from the group he belonged to before;
- *the liminal one* or stage “to be on the verge”;
- *the revival one*.

The main goals of initialization challenges are:

- to get a new role that assumes an exit from hitherto habitual state;
- to destroy a former social role that in the myth is symbolized by real leaving, flying away, when the Hero wanders and peregrinates. He hears a call which is followed by the warning of danger of death, threats or – on the contrary, a call which promises the wealth, glory and other benefits.

There are two options: either to respond to the call, or to reject it; and this is the beginning of leaving, detaching from everything that was the dearest and habitual for him.

At the liminal stage, there is the overcoming of borders and boundaries, there is the experience of unusual,

intermediate state happens, which is actually transition. In ritual way there is an absence of any state and it is marked by a blindness, invisibility, nakedness, ridiculous clothes (a donkey leather), dirtiness, silence, prohibitions and restrictions (related to the sleep, the laugh, the food, the drink, etc.), there are injuries and other kinds of challenges. As V. Turner said, the neophytes in the ceremonies of initiation or majority age can be represented as nothing possessing ones (Turner, 1969).

The third stage – is the revival (a transfiguration, a salvation, a magic escape) which accomplishes with the apotheosis of puissance and power of the hero. He gets some unusual capabilities and force, the beauty, the imperial dignity, the right to marry to the tsarevna; he becomes the god or the glorified governor. As J. Campbell has exactly noticed, the main achievement of the hero on the myth was the “freedom to live”, besides that his individual destiny was inseparably linked with destinies of the world: he brought a wonderful transformation, a salvation to the world and that was happening over and over and it was cyclic. The innovation of the world comes every time with each new hero, like the spring rolls this earthly round. Partially desacralized, the

“mini” version of the heroic myth is presented by the magic fairy tale.

The structural likeness of diagrams by J. Campbell, V.Y. Propp, A. Van Gennep and V. Turner is observed enough obviously (in this article we aren't engaged in the detail comparative analysis of these diagrams, including the analysis of important distinctions because this is the subject of special research). Proceeding from an existing all-humanitarian trend we can come to conclusion that there is proper evidence distinguishing basic functions of the monomyth and creating psychological topology of the hero's journey. Besides, there is all-round amplification of the heroic myth and magic fairy tale, and their enormous popularity, their timeless and their commonality show the psychological nature of this phenomenon.

There is a presence of deepness which we can see in those nightmares and problems we constantly face in our life, in those symptoms which we have and in those illnesses which we have. And if we don't perceive our connection with the deepness either on the level of sense, or verbal message, or cultural relation otherwise this connection can be revealed on the level of the body, illnesses and tensions. There is always a message about some larger, unrestricted world that is our base,

but this world hasn't revealed to the right degree in our habitual world yet.

If we consider the myth about the hero as an allegory of person inner development, or as overcoming of fears and searching our own place in the life, then the structure of the monomyth is very useful. This reminds us what mistakes we do in our spiritual journey. But as soon as we begin to interpret the monomyth word for word, then we risk having wrong results.

Campbell's Critic: not One, but Three Heroic Journeys

Also, the fact is that the scheme of Campbell-Lukas-Vogler is uncompleted. It works rather well, but only in a certain [mythological] domain which by numerous imitators is unreasonably spread over as universal structure for whole human life. However, the mythical one is only a part of the human world.

As we know, the most ancient human world chart is the chart of shaman cosmos which consists of three worlds: lower, middle and higher ones. This chart is over 50 000 years old, and it is primary classification scheme of humanity and it presents in all our principal classification schemes. These are - the Body, the Words and Mind in the Buddhism; Shiva, Brahma and Rama in Hinduism: the Truth, the

Good and the Beauty in the human world; pre-rational, rational, post-rational in modern psychology and the cellar, the house and the attic in each house.

Therefore, where Campbell and his followers see and describe one mythical journey, there is possibility to find and describe three heroic journeys – mythical, existential and spiritual, corresponding to three main levels of the person defined in all charts of reality since shaman ages. In the same way as Campbell has found charts of mythical journeys, where he defines the monomyth – as an essence of world myths, fairy tales and folklore, we can see the charts of two others journeys in the world culture and spiritual traditions.

It would be possible to develop further these distinctions in levels and to describe five or seven basic "heroic journeys", corresponding either to five chakras of Tibetan yoga, or to seven chakras of Indian yoga, or 9 levels of spiral dynamics etc. It would be possible to define in the journey of each level its outer, inner and mystic aspects, as it is done in a number of world spiritual traditions. And the matter is even not to increase the further specifications, but to get rid of a total reductionism to mythical one that exists in the modern mass media culture which has become

the standard for modern cinema and television. The detailed reasoning of these ideas and development of this project demands careful further work. However, the already carried out distinction allows making several important conclusions on various meanings of different heroic journeys.

The sense of the mythical journey is to go beyond the limits of the myth, generation or tradition. If you have done a heroic mythical journey, then you are recognized and you have the face. Besides, the psychological meaning of a victory over monsters is an achievement of control over the destructive passions and negative emotions which destroy human life. Experiencing crisis, plunging into unconscious, finding out, transforming and lifting to conscious level in a modified form the injuring, frightening and menacing information (those monsters which don't allow to get to treasure and the mythical hero fights against them), living through it and investigating it, we deprive the destructive force which has broken the natural flow of our life, and finally it can bring to complete healing of chronic psychological and physical problems which reasons have not been revealed because they weren't organic.

The meaning of an existential journey is in overcoming the existential situation connected to human being

finiteness and finding the integrity. This is the acme of ancient Greeks or individualization according to K. G. Jung. According to M. Eliade, "the person can't become true self, without having resolved a row of hopelessly difficult or even dangerous situations, that is he is exposed to "tortures" and "death" and after he awakens to a new life where he has changed essentially, he becomes "regenerated" one. In fact, human life represents a number of challenges, "deaths" and "revivals" which make a chain of psychospiritual crises, a chain of the stages to ascent the True Self [Eliade, 1998].

The meaning of the spiritual journey is the release from human limits, in "an exit from a matrix" and finding an enlightenment in spiritual traditions. K. Wilbur, approving a divine human nature, specifies that despite our remoteness from a cosmic source and from our divine essence, the awareness of that connection is never completely lost [Wilber, 2001]. The impossibility to return to the source and to overcome the limits of our "Self", leads to chronic depression states, and attempts to compensate this "shortage" by means of drinking habit, drugs and other psychotropic drugs which can deaden the pain of the desperate person just for a short period of time [Grof, 1994; Krippner, 1988]. The birth of transpersonal feeling of unity with the

nature, people, God and all things gives to the person a feeling of confidence, peacefulness, wellbeing, the renewed point of view on the current problems and bigger feeling of the purpose and sense in life – inasmuch every element has a huge value being a unique part of the unity. All this motivates us to treat the spiritual crisis as a wonderful possibility of spiritual transformation and it can completely facilitate the realization of its healing potential.

In Hollywood and other places where the cinema, the novel, TV show and other entertainments (The Disneyland, Las Vegas, Bollywood etc.) are produced i.e., where heroes act, the producers still don't take into account the big space of internal territory, the plurality of "the hero's journey" and their multidimensional psycho-topology [Maykov, 2005; Maykov & Kozlov, 2007].

To Become the Hero: Blockbuster as Mass Therapy and as Virtual Journey to Deepness

So, we assume that there are not only one, but three heroic journeys and every of them have its structure and its charts. And the reason of the fact why there are three heroic journeys consists of that the person since the most ancient times has three main aspects of performance [Maykov, 2016].

One of the aspects is mythical, and it is described by the Campbell journey of the hero. And it is linked to the fact that there were hundreds of people generations living before us, there was a history, tradition and culture, and in some degree all of them forced on us. And if we want to become free, we need to realize all this and, in some sense, to overcome it, otherwise we will be hostages of myths and archetypes, and they will be revealed through us just as they were revealed through Hitler or through Stalin, seizing the nations. The majority of "mythological" novels of the 20th century (*One Hundred Years of Solitude* Gabriel García Márquez, *Josef and His Brothers* Thomas Mann, *The Man Without Qualities* of Robert Musil, the well-known novels of Kafka, the saga of Marcel Proust *In Search of Lost Time*), – they are about the journey into the universal deepness to get this freedom.

The majority of movies which the spectacular likes are about the same things (*Star Wars*, *Matrix*, *Game*, etc.).

Another aspect is the existential one and it is related to our finiteness, initially it divides the world on "I" and "not – I" that is the existence of "me" and "others". As soon as the world disunion appears, at once there is a thirst of integrity, at once in this

situation all our problems appear and a way to the solution of these problems upraises as well.

Right here this situation sets an extremity situation, and respectively, an awareness situation. For this reason, in spiritual traditions it is always told: remember about the death, remember about the value of human birth, remember if in this life you don't make the most important, the following life can't be favorable for you. That's why it is important to remember that this life – is the best place for work, for realization, for development of all capabilities, for performance of your mission and here is the precise existential emphasis.

In this sense existentialism as human dimension, initially is as human state – and it is as old as the human being existence, because this is something that has begun much earlier than in the 19th century, when Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Shestov, Berdyaev, etc. performed and it proceeded in the 20th century when Sartre and modern existential phenomenological philosophy and psychology performed.

The existential hero is a person who knows his extremity who follows the destiny consciously, who wants to become holistic one. And therefore, in some sense the structure of an

existential journey incorporates everything that is in the mythical journey, but there are also many new dimensions which are described in numerous existential, philosophical tractates, journeys etc.

And, at last, the third heroic journey is connected with another dimension which is in each of us, the transpersonal or spiritual dimensions.

And this dimension doesn't belong either to existential, or to mythical, it exists at least 50 000 years from the moment when the shaman world of spirits emerged. And the essence of this journey is remarkably expressed in the movie *Matrix*: this is the understanding of how the factory of the Universe is arranged, and how to overcome those limits. Neo together with Morpheus has understood the Matrix device, and the Matrix isn't imperious over them anymore. He has already completely overcome all the limits of the illusory world and he knows his mission – to be an awakener for the others.

Therefore, the essence of spiritual heroic journey is to become completely free. And the structure of a spiritual journey is demonstrated in biographies of the Tibetan Saints and in mystical books of the world religions describing the highest spiritual experience.

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