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Journal of Transpersonal Research[©]

Investigación Transpersonal

Scope: Journal of Transpersonal Research (JTR) is an internationally double blind and peer-reviewed academic journal that publishes papers in English, Spanish and Portuguese in all areas on transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy as well as other subjects related to this field. The journal emphasizes qualitative and quantitative investigations at the same time as relevant theoretical works. It is committed to advance knowledge and provide scientific evidence on transpersonal studies for the development of a wider evolution of humankind. Journal of Transpersonal Research welcomes contributions from all areas of transpersonal psychology and allied disciplines within the transpersonal paradigm such as medicine, education, philosophy, anthropology, religious studies, biology, social work, nursing, sociology, ecology, arts and public health.

Ámbito: Journal of Transpersonal Research (JTR) es una revista académica internacional revisada por pares mediante el método de doble ciego, que publica trabajos en inglés, castellano y portugués sobre psicología y psicoterapia transpersonal, así como temas afines con este ámbito. La revista está fundamentalmente interesada en investigaciones empíricas y trabajos teóricos relevantes. Está comprometida con el avance del conocimiento y con proporcionar evidencia científica en cuanto a estudios transpersonales se refiere, para el desarrollo de una mayor evolución del ser humano. El Journal of Transpersonal Research acepta artículos de autores e investigadores de todas las áreas de la psicología transpersonal y disciplinas relacionadas con este campo dentro del paradigma transpersonal como son la medicina, la educación, la pedagogía, la filosofía, la antropología, ciencia de las religiones, biología, trabajo social, enfermería, sociología, ecología, arte y salud pública.

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Empirical Studies

The Meaning of Spirituality from the Perspective of Transpersonal Psychotherapy A Qualitative Study

El Significado de la Espiritualidad desde la Perspectiva de la Psicoterapia Transpersonal. Estudio Cualitativo

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Abstract

A review of transpersonal literature shows that some of the key underpinnings of transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy still lack empirical corroboration. In an attempt to fill this gap, this qualitative study, following an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis methodology, seeks to unveil the meaning of spirituality from the perspective of five experienced transpersonal psychotherapists, along with how this understanding influences the practice of their profession. The results promote the understanding of spirituality as a journey of four stages: *Preparation*, *Discovery*, *Integration* and *Being*. The potential implications of this study surround the idea that one can generally only take another being as far as one has gone oneself. Finally, this work intends to invite all psychologists to re-evaluate the importance that spirituality has within their profession.

Keywords: transpersonal psychology, spirituality, psychotherapy, counselling, spiritual journey

Resumen

La literatura transpersonal demuestra que algunos de los fundamentos principales de la psicología y psicoterapia transpersonal aún carecen de corroboración empírica. En un intento para llenar este vacío, este estudio cualitativo – fenomenológico interpretativo – busca revelar el significado de la espiritualidad desde la perspectiva de cinco psicoterapeutas transpersonales altamente experimentados, además de revelar cómo esta comprensión influye en su práctica como psicoterapeutas. Los resultados promueven la comprensión de la espiritualidad como un viaje de cuatro etapas: Preparación, Descubrimiento, Integración y Ser. La relevancia de este estudio se relaciona con la idea de que uno generalmente solo puede llevar a otro ser tan lejos como uno mismo ha ido. Finalmente, este trabajo tiene la intención de invitar a todos los psicólogos a reevaluar la importancia que la espiritualidad tiene dentro de su profesión.

Palabras claves: psicología transpersonal, espiritualidad, psicoterapia, counselling, viaje espiritual

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Introduction

The field of transpersonal psychology is the one subfield of the science that has always been primarily concerned with the deepest dimension of the human experience – one that could be called spiritual or transcendental (Daniels, 2015). Interestingly, transpersonal theory has always been based on an appraisal of the human being that goes far beyond the physically-bounded and limited self (Lukoff & Lu, 2005). Thus, the central aim of transpersonal psychology is in itself an experience – the experience of *self-transcendence* – in which the individual selfhood, or *ego*, is transcended, and thereby individuals come into direct contact with the *deeper self* (Hartelius, Caplan, & Rardin, 2007). An aim that not only coincides with the ultimate goal of the spiritual quest, which Aldous Huxley (2009) described as “the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being” (p. 1) but could also be considered as the essence of true healing. Hence, there has always been an intimate link between transpersonal psychology and spirituality (Lukoff & Lu, 2005).

Evidently, the practice of psychotherapy has also been historically connected to the concept of spirituality, either directly or indirectly, in that it has always kept the individual’s innate search for *meaning* in its field of vision (Vos et al., 2019). A wide range of qualitative research findings (e.g., Dlugos & Friedlander, 2001; McCollum & Gehart, 2010) confirm the spiritual nature of psychotherapy and reveal important factors that spirituality can bring into it, including the psychotherapist’s ability to *be present*, the concept of *spiritual space* and the recognition of the *spiritual nature* of the human being.

Yet, transpersonal approaches to psychotherapy possess a specific set of characteristics that differentiate them from other approaches. Their underpinnings show that they were specifically developed with the aim of supporting clients in reaching and sustaining *higher states of consciousness* – or *states of self-transcendence* (Cortright, 1997; Hartelius, Rothe, & Roy, 2015). Essentially, a transpersonal approach differs from other approaches in that it seeks to contact and to awaken the client’s deepest sense of essence identity beyond the mind, which leads to the *disidentification* with the contents of the mind (Boorstein, 1980;

Sutich, 1996). Correspondingly, Vaughan (1979) described a process of psychotherapeutic transpersonal development, which goes through the process of *disidentification* and ends at *self-transcendence*. This process has already been supported by empirical findings (e.g., Lombard, 2014, 2017). Also, Rowan (2008) conceptualised transpersonal psychotherapy as having three faces: one looking at childhood and past experiences, another looking at the present moment, and the last one looking forward to the transpersonal and the divine. Most important, however, is the notion that the views, beliefs, assumptions, values and attitudes of the therapist in themselves constitute a principal ingredient in any transpersonal approach. This has been revealed empirically (Hutton, 1994) and has been supported by other transpersonal theorists (e.g., Boorstein, 1986; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993). Correspondingly, Cortright (1997) argued that it is the intention and spiritual aspiration of the psychotherapist – rather than the spiritual content of the sessions – what constitutes a transpersonal approach. When taking this viewpoint into consideration, it strikes as puzzling that no published research has ever tried to reveal these values, attitudes and assumptions at the basis of any transpersonal approach.

Further, in contrast to conventional approaches, transpersonal ones place an important emphasis in the *state of consciousness* of the therapist while working with the client (Cortright, 1997; Scotton 1985). The reason behind this is beautifully explained in Tolle’s (1997) representation of a psychotherapist as a log that is fiercely burning; when another log is placed next to it for a while and separated after, both logs will be burning with the same intensity. Thus, theoretically, the success of transpersonal psychotherapy depends on the psychotherapist’s experiential knowledge of the *spiritual dimension* (Boorstein, 1980); and, therefore, transpersonal psychotherapists need to have developed their own consciousness beforehand (Rowan, 2008; Vaughan, 1979). For, in the words of Ram Dass “what one man has to offer to another, is his being, nothing more, nothing less” (as cited in Boorstein, 1980, p. 21). From this follows the idea that *one can generally only take someone as far as one has gone oneself*, or again, in the words of Ram Dass (1974): “Psychotherapy is just as high as the psychotherapist” (p. 20). Surprisingly, this is another theoretical underpinning

of transpersonal psychology that lacks urgent empirical corroboration.

When reflecting on the importance that transpersonal psychology places on the therapist's state of consciousness, values, beliefs and attitudes, along with the historical and foundational link between spirituality and transpersonal psychology, it becomes evident that the way in which the transpersonal psychotherapist understands the meaning of spirituality inevitably influences his/her understanding of transpersonal psychology and, therefore, represents a foundational element within his/her practice. Surprisingly, despite the high demand for empirical corroboration of some of the most crucial underpinnings of transpersonal psychotherapy, no published research has ever focused on transpersonal psychotherapists from a qualitative perspective. Therefore, this present study seeks to fill this gap in the literature, by exploring the meaning of spirituality from the perspective of transpersonal psychotherapists themselves, while also investigating how this understanding of spirituality is integrated into their practice of psychotherapy. What does spirituality mean to these transpersonal psychotherapists? How do they integrate it into their work with clients?

Method

This research study is approached from a qualitative standpoint. An interpretative phenomenological analysis: IPA (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) research design was used to explore the concept of spirituality as understood, lived and experienced by transpersonal psychotherapists themselves.

Given that the understanding of spirituality has a profound subjective nature, the IPA approach offered many advantages that made it extremely suitable for this study. Its *phenomenological* nature puts the emphasis on the meaning that the lived experience has had for each participant. It is important to remark that the authors consider the deepest essence of spirituality – and of transpersonal psychology – to be an experience. Additionally, the *idiographic* focus of the IPA puts the emphasis on each particular participant. This resonates thoroughly with many aspects of the field explored because transpersonal psychology is generally concerned with the accumulative individual

account of people who have already gone a transpersonal path, rather than any kind of experimental analysis. Thus, research in the area of spirituality needs to be highly individualised. Lastly, the *hermeneutics* principle in IPA tries to uncover the meaning that every participant infuses in his/her experiences, in this case, the meaning that spirituality has for each participant.

Participants

The idiographic focus of the IPA demands a *homogenous* sample (Smith et al., 2009). Thus, participants were recruited by the following *inclusion criteria*: all participants are transpersonal psychotherapists who have at least five years of professional experience. All of them were members of one of the two most widely recognised societies of psychotherapy in the UK: BACP or UKCP (Table 1).

Table 1. Participant Information

Pseudonym	Gender	Professional experience	UK Membership status
Alan	Male	15+ years	BACP accredited
Anne	Female	15+ years	BACP accredited
Joel	Male	15+ years	BACP accredited
Liam	Male	10+ years	UKCP accredited
Mary	Female	15+ years	UKCP accredited

Data Collection and Analysis

The method for data collection used was semi-structured interviews. This method allowed a focused agenda with some freedom for further dialogue during the encounter, by providing an added flexibility that allowed the pursuit of different topics or areas that were not fully considered beforehand. The data was analysed in accordance with the IPA analytical framework (Smith et al., 2009). Initially, tentative notes, comments and interpretations were kept within the transcripts, which continued to develop and finally grew into emerging themes. Next, connections between themes and across participants were investigated, until these were harmoniously arranged in a way

that their relationship to one another felt congruent.

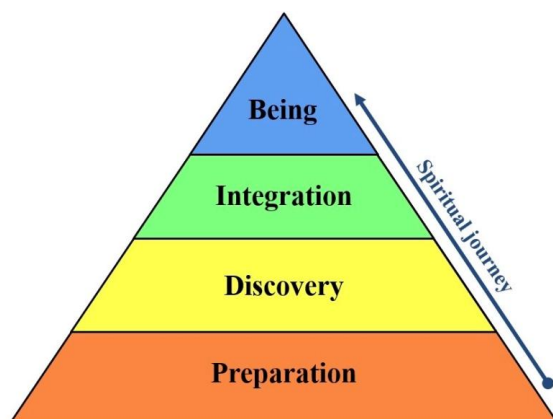
Results and Discussion

The themes presented in this section illustrate the different *stages of spirituality* as analysed from the participants' interviews. Interestingly, the notion of spirituality as a journey is the one primordial underlying element behind it:

Anne: Life is a spiritual journey!

The four stages of the journey are: *Preparation, Discovery, Integration* and *Being*; all connected to one another in a hierarchical formation (Figure 1). In this respect, transpersonal psychology supports the idea of spirituality as an inner journey (Boorstein, 1986), sometimes using the ascent of a mountain as an explaining metaphor (Assagioli, 2007).

Figure 1. The Four Stages of the Spiritual Journey



Stage 1: Preparation

The stage of preparation is the first stage of the spiritual journey, in which the necessity of coming into terms with one's past difficulties – a kind of psychological healing – strikes as apparent. It seems that life challenges pushed participants into the spiritual journey:

Anne: I had a diagnosis of cancer when I was 32, I discovered a malignant melanoma... and it frightened me as you can imagine, at that age.

In all of the participant's accounts, there are evidence of feelings of fear and unfulfillment – even when things were great on the outside – preceding their serious involvement in the spiritual path. Curiously, psychological suffering has always been a central element within many spiritual traditions; one example is the strong emphasis that Buddhism puts on the concept of suffering. The healing potential hidden in suffering has also been revealed empirically: Hardy (1979) and Taylor (2012), for example, found that major psychological transformation is often caused by periods of intense turmoil, depression or despair. Thus, there seems to be a deeper purpose to suffering and crises than commonality tends to consider. Ram Dass used to claim that '*suffering is part of our training program for becoming wise*'. Yet, for this healing potential to become manifest, the suffering needs to be encountered at deeper levels:

Liam: The people who probably go a little bit deeper into themselves are the people who suffer, the people who face some challenging times in life and who have been forced by life to look at themselves.

Alan: Sometimes, you know, painful work that needs to be done. [...] you need to have addressed your own childhood, you need to have addressed your own obstacles, you need to have addressed at one point your shadow side.

It seems that the acknowledgement and acceptance of oneself as a whole – including one's shadow – has been an important pre-requisite for the spiritual progress of the participants. Accordingly, Maslow's (2013) *hierarchy of needs* considers the fulfilment of the most basic of human needs as a pre-requisite for self-actualisation. Therefore, psychological healing seems to precede self-transcendence. Correspondingly, Vaughan (1979) and Kornfield (1993) agree that attributes of healthy spirituality are also attributes of psychological maturity.

Alan: I think true psychological growth has a spiritual aspect and spiritual growth has a psychological aspect.

Another facet of psychological healing is the development of one's healthy psychological identity. The concept of *ego*, as used in transper-

sonal literature, points to the individual selfhood to be transcended. Yet, paradoxically, the healthy development of one's ego seems to be a requirement for self-transcendence:

Anne: We have to be a somebody before we can be a nobody. In other words, we have to have a certain amount of ego strength in order to be able to then transcend or move beyond ego.

Interestingly, this predicament is indeed relevant in their work as psychotherapists. For ultimately, psychotherapy needs to be flexible enough so as to help clients at the particular stage of the journey in which they find themselves:

Anne: If you start teaching a client who is very vulnerable or very wobbly egoically to meditate, then you are going to lose them really [...] they don't have the benefit of that healthy attachment!

Hence, the danger of confusing a *pre-rational* stage of consciousness (Wilber, 1995) with self-transcendence – what came to be known as the *pre/trans fallacy* – has been appropriately acknowledged within transpersonal psychology (Rowan, 2008). Evidently, the healthy development of the ego is central for the preparation stage of the spiritual journey; for, failing to do so could generate some *pseudo-spiritual* obstacles:

Alan: Spiritual growth needs to keep the psychological side incorporated, otherwise you can go off your feet and into spiritual realms that you lose contact to reality. You also are then in danger to delude yourself.

Concerning the preparation stage, it seems that the participants' difficult experiences played an important role, if seen from a higher perspective, by forcing them to face their own past and current issues.

Stage 2: Discovery

Following the essential tasks of preparation, *discovery* eventually became a possibility. It seems that, one way or another, each of the participants embarked on a new kind of exploration – self-exploration – which took them to unknown places.

Liam: Who am I really, deep down? [...] the most human questions [are] about existence, the nature of consciousness [...] these are the nitty-gritty of what it means to be human.

Liam seems to hint that there is a deeper meaning to such existential questioning. Interestingly, the method of *self-inquiry* – asking: who am I? – was the main technique taught by Indian sage Ramana Maharshi. For, when one focuses intensely on such question, the mind becomes still and the door of discovery opens up, as 'Truth awaits for eyes unclouded by longing.' Then one realises:

Alan: We are more than our thoughts, we are more than our emotions, we are more than our body, [...] we are a space of consciousness.

Anne: 'We're not human beings trying to be spiritual, we are spiritual beings trying to be human' [...] [We need to learn to] look more deeply, to what we are all about inside.

These statements reveal the importance of contacting the depth within oneself, and the simultaneous discovery of *that* what we are all about inside, as the *truth* towards which transpersonal psychology – along all spiritual teachings – points to (Caplan, Hartelius, & Rardin, 2003). Inevitably, such realisations represented profound turning points in the participants' lives, marked by a sense of purpose, of liberation.

Joel [tearful]: I had the most incredible sense of: 'you have a right to live, and you have a right to be here.'

Alan: It means discovering, coming into contact with your potential, your talents, your self-worth [...] a sense of direction, purpose, inner depth, inner richness, and wisdom.

Generally, research findings acknowledge the profound changes that come as the result of experiencing glimpses of awakening, including shifts of perspective, feeling of liberation, peace, purpose and the discovery of a deeper sense of self (e.g., Lombard, 2014; Taylor, 2012; Taylor & Egeto-Szabo, 2017). Our analysis supports these findings but emphasises the profound shift in the

way in which individuals see themselves as the deepest core of inner transformation.

Alan: I then came in contact with the idea of God's presence in us [...] There is something true, something universal, something healing, something loving in the depths of my being – which is part of me. It's not just God up there. [[pointing to the sky]]

As Jesus put it, “the kingdom of God is within you.” (Luke 17:21), or the truth of *tat tvamasi* at the core of Hinduism. In that same way, transpersonal psychology is “a psychology open to our sacred place in the cosmos” (Caplan et al., 2003, p. 150). In fact, another element of self-realization seems to be the recognition of an *unseen Order* as an intrinsic part of the Universe (James, 1985):

Liam: There is a force that is guiding [us] [...] Probably one of... or even the most important one thing is that knowing that there is something bigger... that I'm connected to something bigger... that it's not just me.

Interestingly, this realisation came to our participants along with the understanding that this Order can guide them, which most essentially is the fundamental principle of surrender: *Thy will be done*. Clearly, as Liam explains, “everything changes” once one understands this, because “it's [no longer] you that does life, but it's life that does you, really pretty much!”

After such profound discoveries, most participants had the necessity of *re-defining* what spirituality meant to them, as if they were brought to different vantage point from which they could re-evaluate their spiritual beliefs and/or faith. For, as Liam puts it, religion is basically “a codified way of implementing your spirituality,” or in other words: religions are *conceptual frameworks* (Vaughan, 1979). Interestingly, after glimpsing liberation, each participant gravitated towards the framework that resonated deeper with their own understanding of spirituality:

Alan: It meant re-learning a spiritual language. Because, obviously, my image of God was still coloured by a judgmental figure. [...] So it was helpful to learn about spirituality in different languages, so to speak. [Finally,] I stayed in

the Christian tradition, but obviously in a very different way.

In fact, this also proved valuable in their own practice as psychotherapists, for they understood that clients also need to find the right spiritual framework. In Assagioli's (2007) analogy of the spiritual journey as the ascent of a mountain, he likens religion to the “maps, information and descriptions passed on by those who have already been there” (p. 32).

Stage 3: Integration

The Zen concept of *satoriasa* fleeting glimpse of one's ultimate reality, is most interesting when considering that it will inevitably end. As Kornfield (2001) explained, “no matter how compelling the vision, how profound the initial sense of freedom and grace, a process of maturation must follow” (p. 111). It is exactly this *process of maturation* that is the main concern at this stage. Two sub-themes emerged from the data: *spiritual discipline* and *self-awareness*.

Spiritual Discipline

St. Theresa once wrote that “the demand of the splendid favors of awakening granted us is that they be embodied” (as cited in Kornfield, 2001, p. 117). Hence, *spiritual discipline* as here introduced, refers to the practices that support the participants' integration of spirituality into their daily lives:

Alan: For me, it also means developing a spiritual practice: [...] fine-tuning your life by continuing form of meditation, reading, prayer, worship, singing, –whatever your practice is – and integrating it in your life.

Shapiro & Walsh (2003) defined meditation as “a family of practices that train attention and awareness, usually with the aim of fostering psychological and spiritual well-being and maturity” (p. 70). This study supports that definition and emphasises its potential to strengthen one's inner connection to Divine Reality. Many research studies (e.g., Haimerl & Valentine, 2001; Sedlmeier et al., 2012) show increases in measures of self-

actualisation, self-realization, and self-transcendence as fruits of meditative practice.

Jesus' parable of the sower (Mark 4:3-9) offers a good analogy to explain the meaning of spiritual discipline, for the benefit of the participants' spiritual practices seems to be in relation to the degree of support that they offer in increasing the fertility of their inner grounds. Correspondingly, Hutton (1994) found that transpersonal psychotherapists perform some kind of formal spiritual practice on a daily basis, at least two times a day.

Self-awareness

The development of the skill of *self-awareness* is another revolutionary step in the stage of integration:

Alan: It's an illusion to [think] that we can kill that ego, that we just need to meditate enough and then it will [disappear] [...] The process is like the iceberg: the lower the waters, we may become more aware of what's going on, the games we are playing, the wounds we have.

Essentially, the participants' accounts seem to suggest that there are two different levels of self-awareness. The first one is probably the one that conventional psychology is mostly concerned with: the acknowledgment of one's emotional state.

Anne: Just practising giving space to what one is feeling in the moment; recognising that we can be with our breath, but we can also be with what's happening in the environment as well.

Indeed, *mindfulness* is defined as "purposefully and nonjudgmentally paying attention to the present moment" (Giluk, 2009, p. 805). Yet, there is a second and deeper level of self-awareness, which differs from the above in one small aspect; as Kornfield (2008) explained: "Wisdom knows what feelings are present without being lost in them" (p. 127):

Anne: Spirit to me is that ability to be able to be with our feelings as well as being able to move beyond them, it's that thing about non-duality – being with, but also being able to transcend.

This kind of self-awareness has also been called *self-remembering* by the spiritual teacher Gurdjieff. Also, there seems to be a strong association between this type of self-awareness and the most important inscription at the Oracle of Delphi in ancient Greece: *Know Thyself*. Scientifically, this deeper level of self-awareness has been called *transcendent awareness* (Friedman, 2002). Unfortunately, empirical research on *transcendent awareness* is, to the best of our knowledge, non-existent.

Stage 4: Being

Finally, spirituality in its deepest sense, seems to be *something* that the participants *are* at their deepest cores. As such, it becomes part of everything that they do, whether 'spiritual' or 'not-spiritual', whether personal or professional. The Hindu saying that '*sadhana is everything you do*,' points to this same idea: 'Warning,' reads a Sufi proverb, "if you don't have room in your living room for an elephant – don't make friends with the elephant trainer" (Dass, 1971, p. 1). Thus, spirituality encompasses every single aspect of life:

Alan: It's a whole, I'm not just transpersonal when I'm working with clients, I'm transpersonal with myself.

The analysed data shows two different sub-themes in this last stage: Being *human* and Being *a psychotherapist*.

Being Human

Interestingly, as it will become evident throughout this whole section, the last stage of Being proves that spiritual maturity is not something superhuman, but rather constitutes humanity's truest capacities. T.S. Eliot (1971) wrote that "the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time" (p. 59), because he understood that progress in the spiritual path leads to the honouring of one's humanity:

Liam: For me, spirituality is about that innate desire, need to grow and understand ourselves more.

Mary: No one's perfect, we cannot be perfect! We all make mistakes, and the invitation is: learn... learn from mistakes.

Joel: I'm still... my first judgement of people is still hostile; I still find groups difficult; the difference [that] 32 years of [practice] have made is [that] I have a different way of dealing with it.

Naturally, this recognition and acceptance of one's strengths and flaws leads to the acceptance and appreciation of other people as they are as well. Most importantly, the recognition of our own "spiritual nature," as Anne puts it, allows us to recognise the same essence in other people (Hartelius, Friedman, & Pappas, 2015). Out of this comes the realisation of oneness as an element of *universality*, giving rise to increased social responsibility and an impulse towards genuine involvement in the problems of today's world:

Alan: This personal development is not just about you. It's also about serving humanity, serving the world... it's about caring for the environment, in showing love to other people.

Joel: I would also say – the capacity of growth is witnessed by a capacity to engage more in the world.

This coincides with Hartelius et al. (2007) who recognised that in one of its facets, "the transpersonal is the catalyst for human change" (p. 144); also, it feels deeply linked to Gandhi's understanding of religion, for "those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means" (as cited in Jolly, 2006, p. 306). Whether it is through politics, social service, or raising children, participants were forced to honour the responsibilities that come with one's humanity. Then one realises that the quality of our service increases tremendously, for "as we reach a deeper sense of who we are, we discover how much more we have to give" (Dass & Gorman, 1985, p. 241).

Being a Psychotherapist

As an inevitable consequence, the understanding of spirituality has important influences in

the participants' profession as psychotherapists. But how exactly does their understanding of spirituality influence their work as transpersonal psychotherapists?

First, in accordance to transpersonal theory (Boorstein, 1980; Cortright, 1997), an underlying attitude seems to be the main element in the participants' appraisal of the *transpersonality* of their approach:

Anne: The underlying foundation of everything I do is coming from that belief that this person (the client) is a spiritual person, that this person has the potential to grow. On the surface, I don't think I do anything fancy or clever or different [than] any other therapist. [...] But I think it's more in the attitude that I work with [...] I think it's more about who I am than what I do!

As explored above, what enables them to look at a client in this way is none other than having discovered the same potential and capacity for healing within themselves beforehand (Hartelius, Friedman et al., 2015). Indeed, Cortright (1997) regarded the intention and spiritual aspiration of the psychotherapist – including his/her ability to remain in a state of *presence* – as the primer components of any transpersonal approach. As Ram Dass (1974) aptly put it: "Psychotherapy is just as high as the psychotherapist" (p. 20).

Joel: I [usually don't] talk about spirituality [during sessions], but I think my experiences are with me...what I feel is[that there is] something that is bigger than me, [which is also] part of me, [which] somehow the psychotherapy taps into.

Alan: For me, it is important that I'm connected with myself. I cannot do transpersonal work with [clients], if I'm not connected to my transpersonal side.

In summary, it has been shown that by finding and nurturing the connection within themselves, the participants have become aligned with a higher Order – the Tao. As a result, they have in themselves become an opening through which the Order can become manifest – an instrument of God, for they understood the meaning of Jesus' words: "Take ye no thought how or what thing ye

shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say" (Luke 12:12). Maybe this is the underlying virtue behind a truly transpersonal psychotherapist.

Limitations of the study

Inevitably, this present study possesses a few limitations that need to be acknowledged. Most evidently, is the methodological flaw of lower generalisability inherent in the phenomenological design of the study. Secondly, the IPA approach places huge emphasis on the interpretation by the researchers of the participants' accounts, therefore, we recognise that our interpretation has inevitably been influenced to some extent by our own understanding of the essence of transpersonal psychology and spirituality; especially when acknowledging that spirituality is something very dear to both researchers. Lastly, there always exists an added difficulty when trying to explain the deepest essence of spirituality through words: a predicament that not only we as researchers had to face when writing this study, but also participants had to face when trying to convey the meaning of spirituality in words.

Implications

This study offers valuable insight to fill the literature gap that currently exists in transpersonal research, by trying to expose the subjective meaning of what is considered a fundamental element within transpersonal psychotherapy: the therapist's beliefs, values, and attitudes (Boorstein, 1986; Cortright, 1997; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993). Yet, this seems to be one of the ever-first studies to investigate this particular topic. Therefore, future research seeking to interview other transpersonal psychotherapists in order to confirm or reject this analysis may be appropriate. Another important area in which the lack of empirical evidence strikes as apparent concerns the topic of *transcendent awareness*. When considering the importance that is placed on *transcendent awareness* within the context of this study and its findings, we consider this research gap as highly noteworthy for future research.

The basic idea that *one can generally only take another being as far as one has gone oneself* is probably the most important implication that this study has for the psychotherapy professions; especially when considering the idea that there seems to exist *something* ineffable that by virtue of the psychotherapist's *state of presence*, can become manifest in the client through psychotherapy. Even after acknowledging that more research may be needed to support this, we believe that it has the potentiality of revolutionising the way that psychotherapeutic practices are conducted, along with the way in which psychotherapy training is approached, including the emphasis that is usually placed in spirituality within psychotherapeutic training. As Belschner, cited in Caplan et al. (2003), explained:

In the models of professional practice (e.g., psychotherapy), induced variations in the state of consciousness (from a dualistic state towards a more nondualistic state), especially on the side of the practitioner, are neither recognized nor part of the curriculum in academic training. (Caplan et al., 2003, pp. 144-145).

Lastly, given that spirituality means different things to different people, we consider the subjective understanding of what spirituality means to transpersonal psychotherapists as an elemental component in the identity of the field of transpersonal psychology. Thus, we consider this present study to be of highest relevance as an important contribution to the field of transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy.

Conclusion

All in all, this research study highlights the significance of the participants' experiences of self-discovery, especially the significance of the impact that these had on their personal and professional lives – as seen from the wider context of a spiritual journey. At last, it has been shown that spirituality is not something that the participants believe in, but rather something that they *are* at the deepest core of themselves. As such, the spiritual journey continuously demands the embodiment of the lessons learned in it, and therefore, spirituality becomes part of everything that the participants do – including their professional duties as psychotherapists. Even though this study exclusively fo-

cused on transpersonal psychotherapists, its results curiously invite all other psychologists to re-evaluate the importance that spirituality has within their profession, and more specifically, within their own way of *practicing* and *being*.

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A Study on Non-Human Intelligence Contacts and their Relevance to Anomalous Perception

Estudio sobre Contactos de Inteligencias no Humanas y su Relevancia en la Percepción Anómala

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Abstract

The survey presented is the Slovak translation of its original English version. It was designed by Dr. Edgar Mitchell, Foundation for Research into Extraterrestrial and Extraordinary Experiences (FREE). The FREE survey is the first comprehensive study of non-human intelligence contacts (NHI contacts), formerly known as ETs, which was administered in different languages throughout many countries. It aims at investigating different forms of NHI contacts reported by respondents who claim to have experienced them. The NHI contacts may or may not be associated with the so-called “Unidentified Aerial Phenomena” (UAP). Throughout the FREE study, the term UAP was used instead of the more traditional term, “Unidentified Flying Objects” (UFOs). The paper posits that NHI contacts in the form of near-death experiences (NDEs), out-of-body experiences (OBEs), mystical and religious encounters, spiritual meditation, channeling, remote viewing, precognition, retrocognition, and other anomalous experiences may be connected.

Keywords: anomalous perception, non-human intelligence contacts, extraterrestrial experience, extraordinary experiences

Resumen

La encuesta presentada en este estudio es la traducción al eslovaco de su versión original en inglés. Fue diseñado por el Dr. Edgar Mitchell de la Fundación para la Investigación de Experiencias Extraterrestres y Extraordinarias (FREE, en sus siglas en inglés). La encuesta FREE es el primer estudio sobre contactos con inteligencias no humanas (contactos NHI, en sus siglas en inglés). Se administró en diferentes idiomas en muchos países. Su objetivo es investigar diferentes formas de contactos NHI de encuestados que afirman haberlos experimentado. Los contactos NHI pueden o no estar asociados con los llamados “Fenómenos Aéreos No Identificados” (UAP, siglas en inglés). A lo largo del estudio FREE, se utilizó el término UAP en lugar del término más tradicional "Objeto Volador no Identificado" (OVNI). La investigación postula que los contactos NHI pueden estar relacionados con experiencias cercanas a la muerte (ECM), experiencias fuera del cuerpo (EFC), encuentros místicos y religiosos, meditación espiritual, canalización, visión remota, precognición, retrocognición y otras experiencias anómalas.

Palabras claves: percepción anómala, contactos inteligencias no humanas, experiencias extraterrestres, experiencias extraordinarias

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Introduction

One of the most important aims of the study is to highlight and analyze different forms of NHI (non-human intelligence) contact experiences and their effects. The experiences include the whole range of extraordinary and paranormal phenomena and their effects, mostly pertaining to the human faculty of perception under non-ordinary states of consciousness. Some of the experiences reported by the respondents left a long-term impact on the respondents. It is further important to mention that FREE's co-founder (Foundation for Research into Extraterrestrial and Extraordinary Experiences) Dr. Edgar Mitchell posited that The Quantum Hologram Theory of Consciousness (QHTC) and "contact modalities" such as near-death experiences (NDEs), out-of-body experiences (OBEs), mystical and religious encounters, spiritual meditation, channeling, remote viewing, precognition, and retrocognition, may be connected. Thus, as Swansons (2003) points out, all of these contact experiences may be interrelated and share a common root.

Methodology

The subject of this study is the FREE survey, administered in the Slovak language, which aimed to target subjects mainly in Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

The subjects completed the quantitative survey comprised of 522 questions. 69 participants took part in the survey between January 2017 and May 2018 via Survey Monkey, an online program.

At the beginning of the survey, participants were asked to provide the following demographic information: age, gender, occupation, state and country, race, and ethnicity.

The survey questions mostly pertained to different forms of NHI contacts. The subjects reported on different forms of NHI contact experiences including out-of-body experiences (OBEs), near-death experiences (NDEs), remote viewing, channeling, telepathy, feeling sense of presence, separation of consciousness from the body, scenes from distant past or future, time, space and body-distortions, past lives, etc.

All subjects provided consent to participate in this study. None of them reported any prior per-

sonal mental illness history. Moreover, only participants whose experiences were solely based on conscious memories, rather than memories based on hypnosis, regression or other interventions or methods, were allowed to participate in the survey.

The survey questions were prepared by the representatives of FREE. The survey is a modified version of a survey administered by Kenneth Ring in 1984 for research pertaining to NDE or UAP (Unidentified Aerial Phenomena) related experiences.

Questionnaires were received from 69 individuals. However, likely due to the high volume of questions, which may be considered the major defect of the study, the response rate of the study constitutes only between 30-40%. Thus, out of the 69 people who initially took part in the survey, an average of 27 respondents replied to the survey questions.

This study aims to present data on respondents who experienced NHI contacts that may have been connected to OBEs, NDEs, and other paranormal experiences, including those occurring during childhood. The paper examines the nature of non-physical interactions with the NHI contacts by describing different types of abnormal, anomalous, paranormal, and parapsychological experiences resulting in transpersonal perception rooted in the NHI contacts reported by the subjects.

The paper takes a closer look at the following anomalous experiences: OBEs, NDEs, the sense of presence, time and space distortion, separation of consciousness, the nature of sounds, lights, colors as related to the NHI contacts, body-distortion, Matrix reality experiences, etc.

I compare this data with data collected by five additional surveys aimed at studying OBEs, NDEs, ictal autoscopic phenomena (ICP), and anomalous perception studied under the Cardiff Anomalous Perception Scale (CAPS).

The paper also looks at different paranormal experiences children may have encountered in various forms, which may or may not be NHI contact related. I further report on the impact of NHI contacts in the form of spiritually transformative experiences of transpersonal nature, and other life changes, which the subjects reported spontaneously occurred after experiencing their NHI contacts. The changes pertain to religious beliefs, life interests, attitudes, concerns, values, priorities, etc. The paper also examines psychological behavior, as well as

affective changes, resulting from the reported NHI contacts.

Results

The results from the FREE survey are described below.

Out-of-Body Experiences

The survey asked the following two direct questions about experiencing an OBE:

1. Have you ever had an Out-of-Body Experience?
2. Have you ever met a Non-Human Intelligent being during the OBE?

60.61% out of 36 respondents replied yes to the first question. Regarding the second question, 40.00% out of 25 replied they have met a non-human intelligent being during the OBE.

Cases of individuals, belonging to the healthy population, who saw or interacted with a NHI during OBEs have been reported before.

Interestingly, the English version of the survey revealed that 1,950, or 81%, of the respondents who took the Phase 1 FREE survey experienced OBEs (Hernandez, Klimo & Schild, 2018). In addition, Sellers (2015) reported a case of an out-of-body experiencer whose contacts with NHIs seemed frequent and started occurring during childhood. The experiencer reported interactions with entities that do not have physical or tangible bodies. Furthermore, they do not possess any bodily contours, existing as plain forms of energy. According to the experiencer, the NHI beings consist of light, colors, geometrical forms, and different sounds/vibrations (audible and inaudible) (Sellers, 2015).

Interestingly, the predisposition to OBEs among the healthy population was measured by the Cardiff Anomalous Perception Scale (CAPS), which serves as a measure of propensity to anomalous perception (Braithwaite, Samson, Apperly, Brogna & Hullerman, 2011). The study of Braithwaite et al. (2011) was reportedly the first investigation of predisposition to OBEs in the non-pathological population, employing CAPS as well as the Launay-Slade Hallucination Scale (LSHS). CAPS consists of 32 items classified into nine selection categories about

the following anomalous experiences: 1) changed the intensity of sensory perception, 2) non-shared sensory experience, 3) distortions in sensory experience, 4) perception of an unexplained source in the form of sensory experience, 5) verbally based hallucinations, 6) form/size/shape/distortions, 7) perceiving thoughts out loud and hearing thoughts as an echo, 8) the so-called sensory flooding, and finally, 9) temporal lobe challenges (Bell, Halligan & Ellis, 2006).

According to Bell et al. (2006), the CAPS has a high level of reliability and uses neutral language. Furthermore, it is important to state that for the CAPS study, items that did not occur in a clear waking conscious state were removed from the CAPS so that a clear distinction could be made between the waking state and such states as the borderline between sleeping and waking. This is similar to the FREE survey, which too requested that participants have conscious waking memories of their NHI-based contact experiences.

The results of Braithwaite et al. (2011) show that out-of-body experiencers reported a high level of anomalous perception as revealed by their CAPS scores. In general, the study showed that OBEs are consistent with disturbances in the temporal lobe and body-based processing. Specifically, the OBEs scored significantly higher scores than non-OBEs in the following CAPS subscales: temporal lobe instability, body-distortion, and thought echo/out loud. Thus, the study showed that OBEs indicated a higher number of perceptual anomalies compared to the non-OBEs, even though they did not have any pathological history such as epilepsy or seizure (note that both OBEs and non-OBEs belonged to the psychologically normal population as indicated earlier).

As mentioned above, the research represented the first empirical investigation of OBEs employing the CAPS measures. It is further worth noting that the CAPS measures were also employed to investigate the OBEs of a frequent experiencer (Sellers, 2017). Interestingly, the subject (a healthy man belonging to the normal population) showed elevated CAPS scores. He replied yes to all 32 questions, thus receiving the maximum score.

In addition, I posit that CAPS measures are relevant for the studying of some of the phenomenological correlates of OBEs because many of the questions relate highly to some of the typical characteristics of OBEs. According to Braithwaite et al. (2011), CAPS is well suited for investigating not only anomalous perception but also some of the most

important factors of the OBEs. I agree with this statement as some of the CAPS subcategories contain items that are commonly occurring during OBEs. For instance, the category on sensory intensity asks respondents whether they ever find that their skin is more sensitive than usual to touch, heat, or cold. Interestingly, Sellers (2019) reports the following on the changes in the levels of tactile perception of a frequent OBEr:

When I am out of body, my orientation relies on extrasensory perception solely. I orient myself by touching at distance. ...It's a principle similar to that of an animal that does not see at night and yet can navigate its body. ...Vibratory-oscillation energy, which is a part of my body, but is at the same time extended in the broader space/time area, can cover my vision, touch, taste, hearing, feeling, and the sense of smell. (Seller, 2019, p.12)

In addition, the temporal lobe disturbances are not only consistent with OBE occurrence in the healthy population, as shown by the Braithwaite et al. (2011) study, but also with other paranormal experiences such as religious, mystical, spiritual experiences, or sense of presence. Persinger (2001) speculated that religious experiences, including mystical perception, spontaneously occur in the temporal lobe within a healthy population. This seems to support another study conducted by Persinger and Valliant (1985) which too, links temporal lobe disturbances with experiencing paranormal states, including mystical experiences. It is important to note that the study was conducted within a healthy population. Interestingly, experiencers in the study, although healthy subjects, reported experiencing different pathological symptoms during their paranormal experiences, such as hearing voices, olfactory disturbances, anomalous vestibular experiences, as well as depersonalization symptoms.

The connection between the disturbance of the temporal lobe and accounts of paranormal and anomalous cognition was not only established in the healthy population but in the pathological population as well (Persinger, 2001). According to Persinger (2001), people with mild brain injuries would have frequent paranormal episodes, as well as mystical accounts, including the feeling of a presence. Most of the paranormal episodes would be attributed to the right side of the brain. Specifically, the patients

would show heightened brain activity over the parietal and temporal regions. This is in line with the study of Devinsky and Lai (2008) who reported that individuals suffering from temporal lobe epilepsy would undergo religious or spiritual experiences between, during, or after seizures. Furthermore, temporal lobe disturbances in the healthy population were a preselected category of anomalous experiences in the CAPS study. The following CAPS questions: “Do you ever have the feeling of being uplifted, as if driving or rolling over a road while sitting quietly?” and “Do you ever sense the presence of another being, despite being unable to see any evidence?” were taken directly from experiences present in the Temporal Lobe Scale of Makarec and Persinger (1990) and were shown to exist in healthy populations experiencing temporal lobe disturbances (Bell et al., 2006). Thus, temporal lobe disturbances may not always be pathological or associated with distress or disability.

Sense of Presence

Another phenomenon experienced by some of the FREE survey participants resembled the phenomenology of the so-called sensed presence. A sense of presence is a paranormal perception that can be described as the feeling of someone being near you, when in fact there's no one there. According to Persinger (2001), as well as Persinger & Makarec (1986), the sense of presence phenomena may be related to the disturbance of the temporal lobe associated with a specific type of neural activity within the temporal lobe. The feeling of a presence is attributed to temporal lobe disturbances in both healthy and pathological populations. As per Persinger (2001), people with mild brain injuries would have frequent paranormal episodes and mystical accounts, including the feeling of a presence. The sense of presence phenomenon was also implicated in the electric stimulation of the left temporoparietal junction (Arzy, Seeck, Ortigue, Spinelli & Blanke, 2006). Brugger and Regard (1997) posit that sense of presence belongs to autoscopic phenomena which include the following five modes: heautoscopy proper, autoscopic hallucinations, the out-of-body experience, and two forms of autoscopic phenomena (which the authors distinguished as inner and negative).

In addition, the phenomenon of the sense of presence was included in the CAPS study (Bell et al.,

2006). The Temporal Lobe category of the survey included a question on whether participants have ever sensed the presence of another being, despite being unable to see any evidence (Bell et al., 2006).

Interestingly, this question was taken from a Makarec and Persinger study (1985), which was aimed at studying temporal lobe disturbances. The study, among others, revealed that people with temporal lobe disturbances often report sensing the presence of another being. Moreover, Persinger and Healey (2002), in their study, showed the sensed presence phenomenon can also be induced by applying a magnetic field over the temporal lobe. Braithwaite et al. (2011) similarly confirmed that the subjects participating in the CAPS study experienced disturbances attributed to the temporal lobe, such as distortion of time, or a feeling of sensed presence. Moreover, the study showed that the group of OBErs reported significantly higher temporal lobe instability compared to the group of non-OBErs.

As mentioned above, the CAPS survey, which was presented to nearly 400 healthy population participants, showed high scores of temporal lobe disturbances associated with anomalous perception, including the sense of presence. This is in line with Persinger (2001), who claims that the phenomenon of the sense of presence identified in the healthy population is probably caused by a disturbance in the temporal lobe. This seems to be consistent with Sellers' report (2019) of an anomalous experiencer who reported instances of increased spirituality and mysticism, including the sense of presence, during his out-of-body states. This subject regularly experienced, not only the presence of a person who was not physically visible but also sensing the presence of an overwhelming force, which usually came from an unexplained source in the form of sensory auditory hallucinations; distortions in form/size/shape, as well as sensory flooding (Sellers, 2019).

Feeling the presence of both energy and/or guides/helpers is a common experience for OBErs. A series of interesting out-of-body experience questionnaires were administered by Twemlow, Gabbard, and Jones (1982). The questionnaires pertained to the nature and impact of OBEs on 339 participants who claimed to experience an OBE. The questionnaires employed over 220 queries about conditions existing at the time of the OBE, its phenomenology and nature, as well as the impact of OBEs on the lives of the experiencers. The study revealed interesting information on sensing energy or guides dur-

ing the OBEs of the respondents. More specifically, the study reported over 50% of the OBErs (a total of 339) felt a sense of energy during their OBEs and more than 20% felt the presence of guides or helpers. Twemlow's study (1982) further reported subjects being aware of the presence of non-physical beings during their OBEs. Some of them felt that the beings were people close to them, who had died.

Similarly, Greyson's NDE scale (1983), the Item Analysis of Preliminary NDE questionnaire, showed that 47% of NDErs encountered mystical or unearthly beings. Interestingly, the same amount of NDErs reported the absence of mystical or unearthly being during their NDE. Furthermore, when asked whether they saw deceased or religious spirits, 26% of the respondents said that they did, while 62% replied they did not.

In his study, Hoepner et al. (2013) investigated the anomalous experiences of subjects during ictal autoscopic phenomena (AP), which mostly included simple partial autoscopic seizures. The study showed that none of the AP experiencers indicated that they encountered mystical beings or presence or saw deceased or religious spirits.

In the Contact Experiences category, the Psychic or Parapsychological Experiences subcategory of the FREE survey, the respondents were asked whether they have ever seen what can be described as a ghost or spirit. 76.47% of 34 respondents replied yes to the question. Furthermore, 34% out of 23 responded that they encountered a mystical being, which they were able to see. 30% reported they were not able to see an actual being, only sensed the presence of the being.

The FREE survey further asked a question about encountering deceased or religious spirits while in a Matrix-like type of reality. Note: The FREE survey defines a Matrix-like type of reality not as a three-dimensional reality, but rather as a reality with no boundaries, similar to that of being positioned in outer space. 22 respondents replied to the question. Out of them, 18% reported they felt the presence of deceased or religious spirits, while over 22% were able to see them. When asked about meeting a deceased person and conversing with them, 38.24% (out of 34 total who replied to the question) said they either met or conversed with a deceased person. 61.76% replied no to the question.

In the Psychic and Parapsychological Experiences category of the FREE survey, respondents were asked whether while in their own houses they saw dark cloudy images, which appeared as human-

like apparitions. 23.08% out of 23 respondents, who replied to the question, said yes, while 76.92% replied negatively. Similarly, in her case study, Sellers (2017) reports on an OBER who, when out-of-body, can perceive information from the deceased, and entities of different natures as well as spirits, at the level of exchange of instant thoughts (telepathy). I posit that telepathy is a natural process of communication that is somehow inbuilt within human biology. Telepathy includes both electromagnetic processing, which is built on oscillation, as well as vibrational processing, based on audible as well as inaudible sound.

Near-Death Experiences

The FREE study asked the following question about NDEs: “Have you ever had a Near-Death Experience?” 30 respondents replied to the question. Out of them, 53.33% replied that they have experienced a NDE. Interestingly, some of the survey respondents underwent their NDE during their childhood. 35.71% reported they nearly died as a child. 16.67% reported their NDE occurred when they were children.

NDEs are often associated with OBEs, especially because a NDE is often accompanied by an OBE. The study conducted by Nelson, Mattingly, and Schmitt (2007) revealed that 76% of NDErs suggested they also experienced an OBE. The study conducted by Greyson (2007) similarly confirmed that some individuals who experienced NDEs also experienced OBEs.

Similarly, Sellers (2017), in her study, reports on an OBER who has experienced certain features of OBE phenomenology as well as semiology, similar to NDEs. When taking the Greyson (1983) NDE questionnaire the OBER replied “yes” to all 16 final NDE scale items as reconstructed in Table 1. below.

Table 1. Greyson NDE Scale

Did time seem to speed up? yes
Were your thoughts speeded up? yes
Did scenes from your past come back to you? yes
Did you feel a sense of harmony or unity with the universe? yes
Did you have a feeling of joy? yes

Did you see or feel surrounded by a brilliant light? yes
--

Did you feel separated from your physical body? yes

Did you seem to be aware of things going on elsewhere, as if by ESP? yes
--

Did scenes from the future come to you? yes

Were your senses more vivid than usual? yes

Did you suddenly seem to understand everything? yes

Did you seem to enter some other unearthly world? yes

Did you seem to encounter a mystical being or presence? yes

Did you see deceased spirits or religious figures? yes
--

Did you come to a border of a point of no return? yes

Sounds

Hearing unusual or distorted sounds, voices, and other auditory phenomena is a frequent characteristic of extraordinary experiences such as OBEs, NDEs, or other anomalous forms of cognition involving altered states of consciousness. The FREE survey applied several questions aimed at describing the nature of sounds or voices heard during NHI contacts or other paranormal experiences specified in the survey.

Below, I present an analysis of questions the FREE survey asked on the nature of sounds or noise the respondents may have experienced during their NHI contacts. The respondents were asked whether they sometimes hear unusual sounds that they cannot identify. 60%, out of the 30 respondents who replied to the question, said that they sometimes hear unusual sounds, while 40% felt they did not.

The following is the breakdown of the type of unusual sounds 20 respondents reported hearing:

- Buzzing 50%
- High-pitched 45%
- Humming 20%
- Pulsing sounds 55%
- Beeping 35%
- Other 25%

In addition, Sellers (2017) in her case study identified the following characteristics of the most frequent noises and sounds associated with OBEs:

- Sounds similar to buzzing bees, or flies.
- A deep droning sound, similar to the sound of singing the Indian Ohm mantra.
- Sounds similar to rattling, wheezing, ticking, or a powerful roar.
- The sound of bells or sounds of metal objects colliding with each other.

This seems to correspond with the Twemlow et al. (1982) study, which implied buzzing, as well as roaring, sounds as the most frequent sounds heard during OBEs of the respondents. More specifically, in the section on the nature of OBEs, 71 respondents (out of 339 total) reported hearing noises in the early stages of their OBEs, while the most common noises were buzzing, roaring, music, or singing.

The FREE survey respondents were further asked whether they heard buzzing, or vibration, in their ears while experiencing telepathic NHI contact. 19 respondents replied to the question. Out of these, the majority, 68.42%, heard buzzing in both ears before detecting the telepathic message. 21.05% heard buzzing in the left, while 10.53% in the right ear.

In addition, the FREE survey inquired whether respondents have ever experienced hearing a voice in their head that seemed like another person was talking to them. Out of the 35 respondents who replied to the question, 57.78% replied yes, while 42.22% said no.

Also, Greyson's preliminary NDE scale included the question about hearing "meaningful sounds" during NDEs (Greyson, 1983). 22%, out of 74 respondents, reported the presence of meaningful sounds during their NDEs, while 64% felt meaningful sounds were absent. In addition, both CAPS (Bell et al., 2006), as well as the Twemlow OBE Scale (1982), included several questions about hearing sounds/noise, during instances of anomalous perception. CAPS included questions about experiencing sounds and noises in the following 5 (out of 9) categories: Inherently Unusual or Distorted Sensory Experience, Changes in Levels of Sensory Intensity, Having a Non-Shared Sensory Experience, Sensory Experiences from an Unexplained Source, and Verbal Hallucinations.

Interestingly, some of the CAPS items related to hearing sounds/voices/noise, as a result of anomalous experience, are highly relevant to some of the OBE phenomenology about auditory sensations. Based on my research of a spontaneous OBE as well as my first-hand accounts, I posit that the

following CAPS items meaningfully relate to OBE auditory phenomenology:

- Noticing that sounds are much louder than they normally would be or are distorted in strange or unusual ways.
- Hearing voices saying words or sentences when there is no one around that might account for it.
- Hearing sounds or music that people near you don't hear.
- Hearing noises or sounds when there is nothing to explain them.

Furthermore, Sellers (2015) described the following auditory sensations associated with first-hand accounts of two individuals who experienced OBEs (one was a daily OBEr, the other experienced OBEs less frequently):

Account of the 1st individual:

When you are out-of-body, you feel the three-dimensional environment, so to speak. Except it is more than 3D; it is multi-dimensional, as you can see with 360-degree vision, you can hear many sounds coming from different sources at once, you hear it all at the same time. You can hear what is going on out on the street and in an apartment inside a building at the same time; you can hear it simultaneously, so to speak. It is like you are extended in space, you crossed the border of your body..."

The feeling of being out-of-body is similar to the feeling of being within your body with the exception that any sounds, colors, lights, taste, smell, and touch are experienced much more intensely. You can hear over a long distance. When you are out of the body, you hear all sounds coming from all sides at once. You hear conversations of people who are beyond walls. (Sellers, 2015)

Account of the 2nd individual:

Oftentimes, when out-of-body, I was only able to hear clear voices, different sounds, and noises, which you can usually encounter on a busy street. Sometimes I hear the voices of men, other times the voices of women. Mostly they speak in Slovak and English. Furthermore, some of my out-of-body experiences were accompanied by a sharp sound similar to the sound of a drill, in addition to different buzzing sounds, as well as sounds of my breathing. As

soon as I slipped out-of-body, however, the sounds ceased. It is interesting that sometimes when going out-of-body, I can hear sounds taking place within my own body, such as my pulse or heartbeat, and also the movement of different internal organs, as well as a rushing noise which I think could be attributed to the movement of blood, water or lymph in my body. Another time I heard mixed voices of many different people and their conversations, taking place somewhere in the distance. Sometimes, when out-of-body, I don't see or hear anything. I only receive and read ideas that appear in my head, on what appears to be something similar to a screen. The ideas have no sound attached to them, they are inaudible. (Sellers, 2015)

Lights, Colors

Seeing lights or colors is another frequent feature associated with many paranormal experiences, especially OBEs and NDEs.

The FREE survey asked the following question about seeing light: "While in this Matrix-like type of reality, did you see or feel surrounded by a brilliant light?"

More than 58% of the 22 respondents who replied to the question, reported seeing or feeling surrounded by a brilliant light. Specifically, 36.36% reported seeing an unusually bright light, and 22.73% were aware of a light of mystical or otherworldly origin during their NHI contact while in the Matrix-like type of reality.

Seeing light in different shapes and colors is a common phenomenology reported by OBEs, NDEs, as well as individuals who experienced different anomalous experiences. For example, Ring (1980) posits that one of the NDE stages is seeing a brilliant light, as well as entering a different realm or world of existence, with the help of the light. Similarly, Twemlow et al.'s OBE study (1982) reported OBEs see a brilliant white light. 44 of the total 339 subjects opined the light was very attractive, while 32 subjects thought the light, in reality, was a being who tried to communicate with them. Interestingly, the study further revealed that 25% of respondents saw a white light at the end of a dark tunnel episode they experienced as part of their OBE.

Greyson's study (1983) in the Item Analysis of Preliminary NDE questionnaire showed that 43%

of 74 respondents (with an 81% response rate) reported unnaturally brilliant light during their NDE. However, 40% of NDEs reported such light was absent during their NDE.

Interestingly, Greyson's NDE scale includes certain questions, on experiencing lights that are similar to some of the CAPS items. In the subcategory about changes in levels of sensory intensity, or sensory experience from an unexplained source, CAPS asks whether participants "ever have days where lights or colors seem brighter or are more intense than usual". The second question under the category of Sensory Experience from an Unexplained Source asks the respondents whether they "ever see shapes, lights, or colors even though there is nothing really there." Sellers (2017) describes a subject, who claimed that during his OBEs, his surroundings not only appeared in brighter colors than what is considered normal under a regular state of consciousness but during his OBEs he was able to see colors that were not visible when in the physical body. The subject further claimed he was no stranger to anomalous perception such as sensing or seeing plasma, lights, colors, or different shapes of light and sound coming from an unidentified source. Sellers (2017) further described the following visual elements occurring during the OBEs of the subject of the study:

Visions of bright glare although the OBE takes place at night and in complete darkness, while the experiencer often sees bright vibrant colors or plasma-like shimmering lights accompanied by sounds. (Sellers, 2017, p. 702)

Moreover, the question about the ability of subjects to see or feel surrounded by a brilliant light was presented to patients in the study of Hoepner et al. (2013). Interestingly, 2 out of 5 patients experiencing AP (cerebral lesions) replied yes to the question. The first patient experienced autoscopy, while the second patient was an OBE experiencer. Hoepner et al.'s (2013) study further revealed that experiences of subjects during autoscopic phenomena, which mostly included simple partial autoscopic seizures, had common features with NDEs.

It is worth noting that Hoepner et al. (2013) used Greyson's NDE scale to study their subjects' AP. The scale consisted of 16 items divided into 4 subscales: cognitive, affective, paranormal, and transcendental. Questions related to phenomenology typical of NDEs, such as speeding up thoughts and

time, experiencing feelings of harmony or unity with the universe, feelings of joy, pleasantness, experiencing brilliant light, feelings of separation from the physical body, experiencing scenes from both past and future.

Hoepner et al. (2013) report on a total of 5 subjects who experienced ictal AP, out of which 4 reported experiencing OBEs, and one subject reported autoscopia. Interestingly, the study reported that the experience of ictal autoscopies may have some features similar to NDEs. Moreover, I hypothesize that ictal autoscopies may in some aspect resemble certain characteristics of OBEs. Further, OBEs and NDEs have several similar features related to both phenomenology, as well as semiology, of the phenomena. Thus, experiencing a near-death feeling does not mean one has to be dying or experiencing a situation that would threaten their life to one degree or another. I posit that not only ictal autoscopic phenomena but also OBEs, as well as different NHI contact modalities, can cause semiology and phenomenology similar to that experienced during a NDE.

This seems to be in line with the report of the case of the OBEr who regularly experiences dark tunnel episodes during his OBEs (Sellers, 2017). Thus, tunnel episodes are not prerequisites for experiencing a NDE. This further seems to be in line with Twemlow et al. (1982), who similarly reported as many as 25% of OBErs felt a sense of being in a dark tunnel with a light at the end of it during their OBEs.

Could the tunnel experience be occurring not only during the process of dying but also as an organic part of other phenomena, such as time travel or quantum tunneling? Research on NDEs, conducted by Ring (1980), suggested that out of 102 who reported being near death, a quarter would experience the tunnel journey. Interestingly, the study further found that suicide attempters would describe NDEs differently from those who experienced NDEs as the result of a disease or accident. According to the study, NDEs resulting from a suicide attempt did not last long and included elements similar to those occurring during OBEs, such as detachment of the physical body, or floating in space. It is further intriguing, that the element of the tunnel, in NDEs occurring during suicide attempts, was missing (Ring, 1980).

Furthermore, it is worth noting that a study conducted by Facco and Agrillo (2012) reported a case of a NDE under normal, that is non-life-

threatening, conditions. The study presents a case of a male, who underwent an extraordinary anomalous experience accompanied by many of the characteristics common to NDEs, with the exception that this experience occurred under normal, non-life-threatening conditions. In other words, the individual, who belonged to the healthy population, experienced a NDE under normal conditions, while not experiencing a near-death state. Facco's study implies that one does not have to be dying to experience a NDE. This hypothesis seems to be in line with Seller's study (2017), which presents a case of an individual who, during his OBEs, regularly experiences elements typical for NDEs. As reported earlier in this study, the individual who has spontaneous OBEs every day, but has never experienced a NDE, replied yes to all items on the Greyson NDE scale (1983). The most frequent NDE items experienced by the OBEr were as follows: speeding up thoughts and time, experiencing feelings of harmony or unity with the universe, experiencing brilliant light, feelings of separation from the physical body, and experiencing scenes from both past and future.

Time, Space, and Body Distortion

Anomalous perception, such as time distortions, is a frequent feature of an altered state of consciousness occurring during different paranormal experiences such as OBEs, NDEs, mystical, religious experiences, or shamanic journeys to name a few.

The FREE survey asked several questions about distortions of time. Respondents were asked whether they experienced any "missing time", such as arriving much later than expected for which they could not find any reasonable explanation; or whether they realized that time had progressed much more rapidly than expected. 66.67%, out of the 30 who replied to the question, said there was no missing time, while 33.33% felt they did experience missing time. When further asked how much time they felt was missing, 57.14%, out of the 14 respondents who replied to the question, reported missing time of fewer than 5 minutes, while 14.29% claimed their time gap lasted more than 3 days.

In addition, inquiry about time distortions was part of the FREE survey category related to the Matrix-like type of reality. Specifically, respondents were asked whether in the Matrix-like type of reality, time seemed to speed up or slow down. The majority of respondents, 79%, out of 24 who replied to the

question, felt changes in the time flow. Out of these, 54.17% reported time stopped or lost all meaning, while 25% felt everything seemed to be happening at the same time. When asked whether they perceived that time did not exist in the Matrix-like type of reality, 22 people out of 25 answered yes to the question.

When compared to other studies, which investigated time distortions perceived by respondents who underwent different anomalous experiences, certain similarities may be found. Greyson (1983) revealed that the majority of respondents/NDers (64%) replied that time stopped or lost meaning during their NDE. However, according to Greyson (1983), the item on time only weakly correlated with the rest of the preliminary NDE questionnaire items.

Further, in the Item Analysis of Preliminary NDE questionnaire, Greyson (1983) reported that 22% of NDers felt events seemed instantaneous. Similarly, the CAPS (Bell et al., 2006) study in the temporal lobe subcategory asked whether subjects' experience of time ever changed dramatically. It seems that time distortions are often associated with temporal lobe disturbances. Hoepner et al. (2013), in their study, reported two patients, out of five with an epileptic dysfunction close to the TPJ region, felt time speeded up or slowed down when experiencing ictal AP, such as autoscopy and OBE.

Interestingly, 107 subjects/OBers in Twemlow et al.'s study (1982), reported feeling a change in time sense, while 220 reported they did not. Moreover, a regular OBER reported the flow of time as non-existent during his OBEs with the experience of time moving forward and backward at once (Sellers, 2017).

It is further worth mentioning that time and space distortions were implicated in the research on the neurophysiology of meditation. A study on alterations in the sense of time, and space and body, connected to mindfulness meditation shows mindfulness meditation-induced feelings of timelessness, as well as spacelessness, in the subjects of the study (Berkovich-Ohana, Ziderman, Glicksohn & Goldstein, 2013).

Persinger (1974), in his study, likewise concludes that paranormal experiences, which I posit should also include the category of OBEs, cause distortions in physical time. The study of Berkovich-Ohana et al. (2013) further revealed possible implications of the right temporoparietal junction (TPJ) in the distinct sensations of time and space distortion. This is intriguing as TPJ on both sides of the brain is implicated as the cause of possible OBEs in many

studies. In addition, according to the study conducted by Smith and Messier (2014), the left TPJ may be the cause of eliciting OBEs in a woman who belonged to the healthy population. She was able to elicit OBEs at will, during which she found herself floating above her physical body. According to Gloor (1990), distortions in time are a common feature during temporal lobe seizures.

Time and space distortions seem frequently occur during the anomalous experiences mentioned above. In addition to these, recent research has revealed that distorted own body perceptions are similarly a frequent feature occurring especially during OBEs, or mystical and religious experiences, thought to occur during heightened temporal lobe disturbances. According to Brugger and Regard (1997), who used phenomenological criteria for the definition of autoscopic phenomena, phenomena associated with autoscopic perception presented challenges to body ownership, embodiment, and demonstrated distorted own body perceptions. Distortion of own body perception is further implied by Sellers (2015) in a description of an etheric hand seen by an OBER during an OBE:

I remember I tried to raise my hand. However, I could not see any hand. What I saw was only the contours of my hand. It looked cloudy, shadowy, and I knew it was not a hand made of physical matter, flesh, muscles, and tissues. It was a phantom, an etheric double hand. (Sellers, 2015)

In addition, Sellers (2017) reported the following anomalous distortion of surroundings from the point of view of an OBER:

- Distorted vision of the surrounding environment.
- Wave-like distorted motion of surrounding objects.
- Changes in the shapes of surrounding objects in unusual ways. (Sellers, 2017, p. 702)

This further seems to be in line with the description of the distortion of the external world as experienced by an OBER (Sellers, 2015):

In the state of what I would call a waking sleep, I often saw the walls moving in the room from side to side. With them, everything else in the

room started to move. I felt the space around me actually change its shape like it was a banding. Objects around me were no longer material, dense, physical objects. They shape-shifted into some sort of waves, or wavy lines moving from side to side and shimmering. I could feel everything vibrating or pulsating. Things around me were losing their shape, geometry, density, and mass turning into wavy, curly objects. Furthermore, I felt something was happening to time itself. It felt different. It was passing by at a different rate and speed from what I was used to under normal conditions. The pulsing of time felt different within the inner part of myself. (Sellers, 2015)

The above description is further consistent with the experience of the representatives of the psychologically normal population who, in the subcategory on the distortion of form of own body and the external world in the CAPS study (Bell et al., 2006), reported experiencing body-distortion phenomenon. The study revealed that respondents experienced the sensation that their body, or a part of it, changed shape. Furthermore, the study conducted by Braithwaite et al. (2011) showed respondents reporting the appearance of things or people seemed to alter in a puzzling way, such as distorted shapes or sizes or color. Interestingly, the study further showed that in the CAPS subcategory on body-distortion the OBEs scored significantly higher scores than non-OBEs.

Separation of Consciousness from the Body. Floating in Space

The survey further inquired whether, during their NHI contact, respondents felt their consciousness was separated from their bodies. 39.13%, out of 23 who replied to the question, said that their consciousness was separated from their body during their NHI contact, while 60.87% felt it was not.

There are other reports of individuals, belonging to the non-pathological population, who experienced self-separated from their bodies. Specifically, Braithwaite et al.'s study (2011) reported that 6 out of 17 OBEs either saw their own body separated from the physical body or another form of body representation during their OBEs. Moreover, all 5 ictal AP patients, studied in Hoepner et al.'s study (2013), reported experiencing separation from their physical bodies while experiencing ictal AP. All 5

responded yes to the following question: "Did you feel separated from your body?" (Note that the question was originally taken from the Greyson NDE Scale.) Separation from the body, as well as detachment from surroundings, was further reported by Greyson (1983) in his NDE scale study.

In addition, Twemlow et al. (1982) not only reported on experiencing the separation from the physical body experienced by the respondents but more than half of the experiencers (over 60% of OBEs out of the total of 339 respondents) were aware of an out-of-body figure similar to a physical body or felt their out-of-body figure in the same environment as their physical body.

Interestingly, CAPS subjects, in the category of temporal lobe disturbance, reported a feeling of being uplifted, as if driving or rolling over a road while sitting quietly. The CAPS study (Bell et al., 2006) further reported instances where subjects experienced a sensation that their body, or at least a part of it, changed or changed shape without there being a separation of the self from the physical body.

The FREE survey further asked whether participants felt they were a spirit floating in space, meaning they appeared to be non-material as if they were pure consciousness. Specifically, the respondents were asked whether they have ever experienced NHI contact, but were not in a three-dimensional reality; i.e., they were not in a perceived physical location, such as on earth, on a planet, on a ship, etc., but instead, they perceived themselves in a Matrix-like type of reality (a reality with no boundaries, similar to existing in outer space). Out of 31 respondents who replied to the question, 70.97% replied yes, while 29.03% replied no. Furthermore, 64% of respondents, out of 25, replied that they were not in their physical body while experiencing the NHI contact. The survey further asked whether they felt they were separated from their physical body while in the Matrix-like type of reality. 48%, out of 25 respondents who replied to the question, felt they were separated from their body, lost awareness of their body, clearly left their body, and existed outside it. 36% responded negatively to the question, while 16% were not sure about being separated from their physical body while in the Matrix-like type of reality.

The feelings of becoming pure consciousness, or a spirit floating in space, as described by the definition of the Matrix in the FREE survey, are similar to the feelings of a frequent OBE who described himself during one of his many OB states as:

flowing in space, independently of the physical body, as a point of consciousness, the self-perceiving the surrounding environment through all senses, which seems connected to both the physical body as well as the independent point of consciousness (Sellers, 2017). In addition, literature reporting on the phenomenon of OBEs includes the sensory perception of floating in an elevated position as one of the frequent features accompanying the phenomenon of OBEs (Blanke, Ortigue, Landis & Seeck, 2002; Bos, Spoor, Smits, Schouten & Vincent, 2016; Smith & Messier, 2014; Sellers, 2017; Monroe, 1971).

In addition, a study conducted in 1941, further revealed that upon electrical stimulation of the right superior temporal gyrus in an epileptic patient, the patient perceived a sensation of floating (Penfield, 1941 as cited in Tong, 2003). Similarly, a study conducted by Blanke et al. (2002) revealed an epileptic patient reporting floating close to the ceiling after electric stimulation of the patient's angular gyrus in TPJ, as well as displacements of the whole body. In addition, Bos et al. (2016) indicated an implication of the left, as opposed to the right, TPJ in eliciting OBEs in a patient who underwent craniotomy while awake. The patient reported a floating sensation after stimulation of her left TPJ. The association of OBEs with floating sensations was further implicated in the study conducted by Lopez, Halje, and Blanke (2008).

Interestingly, floating sensations were also reported by NDErs. Research on NDEs conducted by Ring (1980) revealed that NDEs included elements similar to those occurring during OBEs, such as detachment of the physical body, or floating in space.

NHI Contacts, OBEs, NDEs Feel Real

A recent study on NDE memories showed that individuals who experienced a NDE reported NDE memories as real events, with a high emotional content when compared to real or imagined memories (Thonnard et al. 2013). Similarly, enhanced reality (Anzellotti et al., 2011), along with the sensory perception of floating (Monroe, 1971), as well as a profound feeling of being outside of the body (Smith & Messier, 2014), are considered among the main features of OBEs. The element of experiencing vivid reality during OBEs is further suggested by the majority of OBE researchers (Brugger, 2002). Furthermore, feelings of enhanced reality are reported to be a vital part of the OBEs of a subject described by

Sellers (2017). The subject reported his OBEs were "extremely real, with extremely vivid settings, highly intensified emotional perception, as well as intensified sensory input."

Based on the evidence above, I hypothesize that OBEs, NDEs, and NHI-based contacts and experiences may share a common element of "experiencing vivid or enhanced reality".

Similarly, the FREE survey inquired whether the multi-dimensional experience of the respondents, while in the Matrix-like type of reality, seemed as real or normal to them as if they were speaking with a family member. The majority of respondents who replied to the question, 19 out of 24, replied yes to the question. Only 2 respondents responded no, and 3 respondents were not sure.

Twemlow et al.'s (1982) study showed that more than 45% of the respondents felt that their perception during an OBE was extremely vivid and real. Specifically, over 90% of the respondents replied yes to the question asking whether their OBE experience felt more real than a dream. Interestingly, the respondents emphasized their experience was an OBE and not a dream. They further reported, with certitude, that they were aware of the difference between a dream and an OBE.

A similar question about the intensity of the experiences was asked by the Greyson (1983) NDE scale. The majority of respondents replied that their senses were either more vivid than usual or atypical/ambiguous when experiencing a NDE. Similarly, Braithwaite et al.'s (2011) study revealed that 4 out of 17 subjects, who experienced OBEs more than once in their lives, reported vivid OBEs. Hoepner et al.'s study (2013) showed that 3 out of 5 patients, experiencing ictal AP, reported their senses were more vivid than usual while experiencing an OBE or autoscapy. This is in line with previous studies reporting on a hyperreality of OBEs. Mohr, Blanke, and Brugger, (2006) reported that OBEs feel very real to experiencers while they undergo them.

Scenes from Distant Past or Future

OBE features related to scenes from the past and future include strong feelings of being taken into another space/time, dimension, remote past, distant future, or an environment substantially different from terrestrial, as well as an instant transfer over long distances to different places, including what is

perceived by the experiencer as other dimensions, the past, or the future (Sellers, 2017).

Respondents in the FREE survey responded to questions about seeing scenes from their past or their future. The majority of the respondents, 17 out of 24 who replied to the question, reported they were not aware of any scenes from their past coming back to them. However, 16% of the respondents reported that their past flashed before them very quickly, and it was out of their control, while 12% reported remembering many past events. Regarding future scenes, over 71% (15 from the total of 21 respondents) reported scenes from the future coming to them while experiencing NHI contact in the Matrix-like type of reality. Over 14% reported seeing both future scenes from their future, as well as from the world's future.

Interestingly, the Item Analysis of Preliminary NDE questionnaire (Greyson, 1983) shows that only 16% of a total of 74 respondents saw visions of the future. In addition, Sellers (2017) describes an OBER who, during his OBEs, can perceive in a multisensory mode, different scenes, situations, and happenings from a very distant past as well as from the future. This is similar to the descriptions of five patients who experienced IPA (Hoepner et al., 2013). Some of those who reported OBEs and other autoscopic phenomena would also report seeing past or future scenes, encountering mystical beings, seeing spirits and the deceased, and visiting worlds that had otherworldly settings. This further seems to be in line with other OBERs who reported encountering supernatural settings during their OBEs (Irwin, 1985).

Matrix Reality

The following FREE survey questions pertain to what the survey calls Matrix-like reality experiences. As mentioned earlier, experiences in a Matrix-like type of reality are characterized by the FREE survey as experiences occurring not in a three-dimensional reality, but rather in a reality with no boundaries, similar to that of outer space. It is worth mentioning that the majority of the questions in the FREE survey subcategories related to non-3D multidimensional realities, Matrix realities, were identical to questions used in the Greyson NDE scale from 1983.

The replies from the participants provided below pertain solely to NHI contacts experienced in

a Matrix reality - a non-3D multidimensional reality. Plus, it is assumed, that the replies were consciously recalled by the respondents, which should have excluded experiences occurring under hypnosis, regressions, dreaming, influence of hallucinogens, etc. Out of 25 respondents, 9 were physically not in their body during their NHI contact. 9 people further reported their consciousness was separated from their body at the time of their NHI contact.

Out of 19 respondents who replied to the question about whether their thoughts sped up during their NHI contact, 5 said their thoughts sped up incredibly. 4 out of 20 (20%) reported their senses were incredibly more vivid than usual. 9 (45%) respondents replied their senses were more vivid than usual.

33.33% of respondents felt incredible peace or pleasantness while in the Matrix-like type of reality. Another 33.33% felt relief and calmness during their NHI contact while in the Matrix-like type of reality. However, the same percentage of respondents (33.33%) reported that they did not experience a feeling of peace or pleasantness. Interestingly, based on the Item Analysis of Preliminary NDE questionnaire, 57 (77%) NDErs experienced feelings of peace, while 47 (64%) NDErs experienced feelings of joy (Greyson, 1983).

Similar positive experiences were reported by OBERs in Twemlow et al.'s (1982) study. More specifically, 83% of respondents (from a total of 339) felt calm, at peace, and quiet during their OBE, while 51% felt joy. The majority of respondents in Twemlow et al.'s study further reported being physically relaxed and mentally calm during their OBEs.

This is in line with Braithwaite et al.'s (2011) study, according to which the vast majority of OBEs occur during a relaxed state. Furthermore, a high number of respondents in Twemlow et al.'s study (1982) reported having an OBE while dreaming. Out of these, 83% were described by the experiencers as a "flying or falling" dream. Consequently, the question arises whether an OBE occurring during a dream should be considered a genuine OBE. I posit that an OBE occurring during a dream be considered an OBE-like experience. This is consistent with Braithwaite et al.'s (2011) study which specifically excluded sleep-related states, such as dreaming, from the study of OBEs in the psychologically healthy population, on the basis that dreaming does not constitute a form of OBE.

FREE survey respondents were further asked whether they felt a sense of harmony or unity with

the universe during their NHI contact in the Matrix-like type of reality. Over 80% (19 out of 23) replied yes to the question. Out of these, 69.57% reported they felt united or at one with the world, while 13.04% felt no longer in conflict with nature. Similarly, in the Item Analysis of Preliminary NDE questionnaire, 57% of NDErs experienced feelings of cosmic unity (Greyson, 1983).

Our survey participants were further asked whether, when experiencing NHI contact in a Matrix-like type of reality, they seemed to enter some other, unearthly world. Out of 22 respondents, 40.91% replied no to the question, while 31.82% responded they had entered some unfamiliar and strange place. 27.27% of respondents felt they entered a mystical or unearthly place.

Interestingly, some of the respondents felt they had memories of themselves visiting or receiving a glimpse of "Heaven", or what can be called the "Spirit World", while in the Matrix-like type of reality. Out of the 32 respondents who replied to the question about experiencing a glimpse of "Heaven" or spotting the "Spirit World" during their NHI contact, 45.16% replied yes, while 54.84% replied no. As many as 85.71% of respondents (out of 28) felt that there is a connection between NHI and the spirit world, life after death, and heaven.

Based on the above, I posit that the description of a Matrix-like type of reality may be similar to the description of the environment, or reality, which OBErs or NDErs enter during their experiences. Moreover, the Greyson NDE scale indicated some NDErs reported entering an unearthly world during their NDEs (Greyson, 1983). Similarly, one subject suffering from ictal AP, as revealed by Hoepner et al.'s study (2013), reported entering some other, unearthly, world during his ictal episodes. Specifically, this pertains to a case IV patient who experienced autoscopy, while he was the only patient out of the five experiencing AP, who reported entering some other unearthly realm. Interestingly, Sellers's (2019) study similarly reports on an OBEr who inspected different and remote places, including settings that didn't seem to be of earthly origin.

The survey further inquired whether respondents had any type of interaction (voice, channeled, telepathic, etc.) with a *non-visible*, non-human intelligent entity. 46 respondents replied to the question. 60.87% said they did, 21.74% replied they did not, while 17.39% said they were unsure.

Out of 43 respondents who replied to the question, 62.79% reported that their experience in-

involved some type of telepathy, or thought transference, or direct knowing, transmitted to them via their NHI contact. When asked whether this information was conveyed to the respondents via "Channeling" (the process of receiving messages or inspiration from extra-dimensional beings or spirits, whereby one is a medium or channel for such an entity), 50% of respondents felt it was conveyed via channeling, while the other 50% felt it was not (a total of 44 respondents replied to the question). When asked what type of information the respondents received during their NHI contact, out of 35 replies, 54.29% claimed they received personally relevant information, pertaining directly to them. 40% of respondents received spiritual or religious information.

The FREE survey further asked whether respondents experienced the so-called AHA moment: "Did you suddenly seem to understand everything?". Over 60% (13 out of 21) replied yes to the question, out of which more than 23% reported they understood everything about themselves and others, and more than 38% said they understood everything about the Universe. Interestingly, sudden understanding was present in 30% of 74 respondents in the Greyson (1983) Item Analysis of Preliminary NDE questionnaire, while 45% of the respondents reported that sudden understanding during their NDEs was missing.

Passing Through Walls?

Our survey asked respondents whether they had dreams or memories of flying or passing through windows, walls, or ceilings. Out of 26 respondents, 46.15% replied yes to the question. Passing through walls, windows, or closed doors, similarly, is a common characteristic reported by individuals who experienced OBEs. Sellers (2015), in her book, observes the following based on the first-hand experience of an OBEr:

When you are out-of-body, virtually no obstacles exist for you. You pass through closed doors, walls, and windows..... You can hear things taking place behind walls, you can go through walls and doors, and you can see in all directions at once (the so-called 360-degree vision). (Sellers, 2015)

In addition, Twemlow et al.'s (1982) study showed more than 82% of respondents (from a total

of 339) who experienced an OBE reported that they did not feel a sense of borders or limits while undergoing the OBE. Moreover, some of them felt they were able to pass through objects, touch objects, or experienced a panoramic vision.

This seems to be consistent with Sellers' (2017) case report, which describes the following as part of the OBE phenomenology of a regular OBEr:

- Ability to cross or pass through tangible objects such as walls, doors, windows, pieces of furniture, ceilings, buildings, and different objects.
- 180-degree inversion in perceiving the environment.
- 360-degree vision (the so-called circular vision). (Sellers, 2017, p. 702)

Childhood

In the section about childhood experiences, the majority of the participants seem to be very intuitive from an early age. Out of the 23 participants who replied to the question on sensing the future, 52.17% replied that, as a child, they seemed to know things that were going to happen in the future, and they did. 58.33% out of 24 respondents replied that, as a child, they felt they had a "Guardian Angel" or special spirit friend that watched over them. 70.37% of 27 reported they had very vivid dreams as children. On past life memories, 25% of the total of 24 respondents supported the notion of previous life memories. They felt that, as children, they had memories from past lives. Interestingly, 23.08% of 26 respondents claim they can remember being aware before the time of their physical birth; i.e. they believe they had memories of events that took place before they were born into the physical world. Stories of children who claim to remember their past life have been described before.

Tucker (2013) documented several cases of children who seemingly remembered their past life. Bowman (1998) launched her research on past life memories in children after her son accurately described, not only his past life but also his death during the Civil War. Furthermore, one individual who claims to have memories from the prenatal period describes an interesting experience that reportedly took place directly in his mother's uterus: "I remember being in my mother's uterus. I remember how it feels, the exact sounds, colors, and surroundings. I

remember many of my so-called past lives." (Sellers, 2015).

Interestingly, recent research confirms that, next to past life recollection, children are prompt to experience additional paranormal phenomena such as OBEs, premonition, precognition, retrocognition, etc. A recent study revealed that the phenomenon of OBEs can happen to children as young as six (Cowie, McKenna, Bremmer & Aspell, 2018). In addition, research confirms NDEs may not only be experienced by adults but also by children (Morse, 1991). Atwater (1999, 2005, 2012) similarly reports on numerous near-death experiences in children, from across different cultures, and how NDEs relate to human consciousness and the evolution of humankind. Rodwell (2016), in her latest book, goes even further. She describes children's encounters with NHIs and believes that the overwhelming increase in children's ADHD, dyslexia, and autism are actually new programs for humanity (Rodwell, 2016).

Impact

The survey further inquired about the impact NHI contacts have had on the lives of the respondents.

Under the "psychological condition of the experiencer" category, the general attitudinal and evaluative response subcategory, the respondents were asked four questions about the life-changing intensity as well as meaningfulness brought by the NHI contacts. 72% (18 out of 25 who replied to the question) felt that their NHI contacts were very meaningful with a long-lasting impact. When asked whether the NHI contacts changed their life, 30.77% (out of 26 total who replied to the question) felt an extreme life change as a result of their NHI contacts. 53.85% responded that their NHI contacts were slightly meaningful and had some impact on their life. 64% (out of 25 total) responded that their contact experience had a highly positive effect on changing their life.

Finally, when asked to provide an overall emotional evaluative response to their NHI contact experience, 30.77%, out of 26, felt that their NHI contact was the most positive, meaningful, and emotional experience in their life, while 42.31% felt that their NHI contact experience was a mostly positive, emotional, and meaningful experience in their life.

In general, the study shows that the contact experience was more positive than negative for the experiencers.

In the “psychological condition of the experiencer” category, life changes inventory subcategory of the study, the respondents were asked whether their interest in UFO experiences affected their life by bringing about certain changes. Interestingly, the majority of the respondents reported some kind of positive change brought onto their life due to their heightened interest in UFO/NHI contact experiences.

This is in line with the FREE study administered in more than 100 countries, in the English language. The English version of the FREE survey revealed that 60% of respondents stated that their concern with spiritual matters strongly increased since they first became interested in their UFO experience, regardless of whether the experience was an OBE or non-OBE related NHI contact (Hernandez et al., 2018). Moreover, the study showed that an overwhelming number of respondents considered their NHI contact experience positive as well as spiritually transformative. The survey further revealed that the respondents’ desire to achieve a higher consciousness, as well as their understanding of what life is, strongly increased. Many NHI experiencers experienced NDE/OBE related NHI-contact modality.

Respondents were further asked whether their interest in psychic phenomena has increased or decreased (and to what degree, if any) since they became interested in UFO experiences. Out of 26 respondents who replied to the question, 61.54% felt their interest in psychic phenomena strongly increased, while 7.69% replied that their interest strongly decreased. Similarly, the section on the impact of OBEs in Twemlow et al.’s (1982) study showed that 78% (out of 339 respondents) replied that they became interested in psychic phenomena immediately after their OBE.

The survey further asked whether after they had become interested in UFO experiences, their conviction, that there is life after death, increased or decreased. Out of 27 respondents who answered the question, 55.56% said that their conviction that there is life after death strongly increased. 3.70% felt that their conviction decreased. These results again seem to correspond to Twemlow et al.’s (1982) study. The majority of the respondents in the study reported having a positive reaction to their OBEs. Specifically, the study revealed that 63%, out of 339, respondents felt a change in their belief in life after death,

after their OBE experience. Furthermore, more than 50% felt that their life changed immediately after the experience, and they considered the experience to be spiritual. Moreover, a high number of respondents reported the following occurring a long time after the experience:

- Developed a greater awareness of reality, 83%.
- Felt the experience was very pleasant, 81%.
- Felt the experience had lasting benefits, 71%.
- Felt a change towards the belief in life after death, 63%.
- Felt the experience was the greatest thing that ever happened, 40%.

Discussion

This study has several defects. The major defect was that the study comprises over 500 questions which may have taken too much time for the individual respondents to answer. I suspect that may be the reason why some respondents did not respond to all the questions. Consequently, the response rate of the study is only between 30-40%. Thus, the most noteworthy limitation of our study is the small sample size.

It is also relevant to note that this paper did not intend to analyze all the survey results, but only the results which specifically pertained to anomalous experiences such as OBEs, NDEs, and other abnormal experiences related to altered states of consciousness (ASC). Thus, the results are as follows.

First, OBEs, NDEs, and NHI contacts have more commonalities than recognized by previous studies.

Second, the phenomenology of NDEs may not necessarily be present only under life-threatening conditions, but under other ASC modalities such as OBEs and NHI contacts.

Third, ictal OBEs (epilepsy-based OBEs) and other autoscopic phenomena may in some characteristics be equivalent to NDEs.

And finally, the FREE survey shows that NHI contacts may have characteristics similar to those of OBEs, NDEs, ictal AP, anomalous perception as described by the CAPS, and a variety of experiences including mystical, spiritual, religious, paranormal, abnormal, anomalous, spiritually trans-

formative, exceptional human, non-ordinary transcendent, parapsychological, as well as other ASC related experiences (including, but not limited to: channeling, remote viewing, shamanic journeys, glossolalia, xenolalia, spontaneous dance, automatic writing, automatic drawing, EVP, astral travel, lucid dreaming, spontaneous prophecy, crystal-gazing, dowsing, travel in spirit, precognition, retrocognition, premonition, telepathy, orb contacts, communication with the deceased and animals, non-verbal communication, synesthesia, direct vibrational cognition, trance, hypnosis, peak experience, sense of presence, time travel, ectatic dissociation, bilocation, and levitation).

The phenomena may be related to temporal lobe instability, which in turn may be related to the artificial or organic stimulation of the temporal parietal junction. This may further cause a breakdown in the multisensory integration causing different kinds of anomalous perceptions of proprioceptive, vestibular, auditory, visual, gustatory, tactile, or own body processing nature.

All this seems to lead to a question of whether anomalous experiences such as OBEs, NDEs, NHI contacts, pathological ictal autoscopic phenomena, mystical and other paranormal experiences, may be attributed to a so far unidentified much deeper common trigger, or root, of quantum origin.

Conclusion

The presented study investigated Non-Human Intelligence contacts (NHI contacts), formerly known as ETs, and their connection to other anomalous experiences, especially those related to OBEs, NDEs, and ictal AP. It also looked at the impact that those experiences have had on the lives of respondents.

The results of the study showed that: 1) there may be connections between NDEs, OBEs, ictal AP, and what we call NHI contact modalities; 2) in general, NHI contacts (as confirmed by the respondent's replies) were very meaningful for the respondents with long-lasting impact.

Future studies should take a closer look at investigating the links between OBEs, NDEs, autoscopic phenomena, and NHI contacts, whether UAP or non-UAP related.

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Theoretical Studies

Spiritual Healing in the Light of Pandemic

Sanación Espiritual a la Luz de la Pandemia

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Abstract

In this Covid19 induced pandemic, men are comprehensively tormented—physically, mentally, financially, socially. Amidst this darkness, though some glimpses of hope are observed here and there, a holistic solution seems elusive. The Paper initially defines the term ‘spiritual healing’ while bringing out the differences between healing and curing. It explains how this can take place and pints out why its understanding and application have become all the more important in this pandemic whose salient impacts are highlighted. Positioning ‘spiritual healing’ as the basic support to the existing systems of medicine, the Paper presents various time-tested measures, with scriptural, illustrative, and experiential underpinning, to be taken by the aspirant. When curing becomes difficult and prevention is the priority, healing takes the centre-stage. Emphasizing the differences among ordinary life, religious life and spiritual life, the Paper urges all to bring in positive changes in their lives to develop in that direction with the assurance that individual experiences remain the guide and the validation in the whole process. The pandemic has underscored its importance as never before since it remains the only universal way out of the present predicament.

Keywords: consciousness; mental stress; spirituality; pandemic; healing

Resumen

En esta pandemia por Covid-19 las personas están afligidas de manera integral: física, mental, financiera y socialmente. En medio de esta oscuridad, aunque se observan algunos atisbos de esperanza, una solución holística parece difícil de alcanzar. Este artículo define el término "curación espiritual" al mismo tiempo que resalta las diferencias entre curar y sanar. Explica cómo puede ocurrir esto y señala por qué su comprensión y aplicación se han vuelto aún más importantes en esta pandemia cuyos impactos más destacados se destacan. Posicionando la "curación espiritual" como el apoyo básico a los sistemas de medicina existentes, este trabajo presenta varias medidas probadas con el tiempo, con diversos tipos de respaldo. Cuando curar se vuelve difícil y la prevención es la prioridad, la curación toma el centro del escenario. Haciendo hincapié en las diferencias entre la vida ordinaria, la vida religiosa y la vida espiritual, se sugiere introducir cambios positivos en las vidas para desarrollarse en esa dirección con la seguridad de que las experiencias individuales siguen siendo la guía y la validación en todo el proceso. La pandemia ha subrayado su importancia como nunca antes, ya que podría ser la única salida universal de la situación actual.

Palabras clave: conciencia; estrés mental; espiritualidad; pandemia; sanación

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We are told: ‘what cannot be cured, must be endured’. Again, ‘prevention is better than cure.’ A scriptural assurance is also heard: ‘we are essentially birthless and deathless entities, free of dis-ease.’ If that be so, is there no method which can comprehensively address the question of prevention and cure and can go beyond to usher in lasting peace? Getting an answer to this most basic question is the need of the hour, especially amidst the traumatic pandemic.

Spiritual Healing -- What?

At the mundane level the connotation of the term ‘spiritual’ or ‘**spirituality**’ is dependent on space, time and person but at the transcendental level, the implications of these terms converge though their symbolic expressions vary, as our *Shāstra* (scripture) says: ‘*Ekam Sad, Viprā Bahudhā Vadanti*’ - The Truth is One, the sages express it in different ways (Rig Veda, 1.164.46).

Hence, we go to a realized soul like Sri Aurobindo (1999, p. 362) to comprehend what do we mean by being spiritual:

It is **spirituality** when you begin to become aware of another **consciousness** other than the ego and begin to live in it or under its influence more and more. It is that consciousness wide, infinite, self-existent, pure of ego etc. which is called spirit (Self, Brahman, Divine) ... and ‘**Consciousness** is a reality inherent in existence. It is there even when it is not active on the surface but silent and immobile... invisible... It is not... a phenomenon dependent on the reactions of personality to the forces of Nature... consciousness is usually identified with mind, but mental consciousness is only the human range... there are ranges of consciousness above and below the human range, with which normal human has no contact... supra-mental and sub-mental ranges (Sri Aurobindo, 1973, pp. 233-235).

The normal average human being, with some effort, can raise the bar and go beyond the human range into the supra-mental which marks the dawn of real awakening.

Healing is the process of restoration of health. A comprehensive connotation of healing implies a holistic understanding of health (not just physical health) which in turn requires an in-depth grasp of human personality. In Ayurveda, for example, the word for health is *swāstha* which means ‘to be one’s own spiritual self’ (As per Sanskrit etymology the word *svāstha* (meaning health) may be seen as a compound of ‘*sva*’ (self) and ‘*stha*’ (established)). Thus ‘spiritual healing’ implies a process in which the whole human being is restored to its pristine health through evolution of consciousness.

Healing vs. Curing

It is contextually important to note that ‘healing’ has a different and wider connotation than ‘curing’ as it is understood in the subject of medicine. ‘Curing relates only to the physical body, while healing relates to the whole being.’ Thus ‘not everyone can be cured, but everyone can be healed’ and ‘healing is purely spiritual’ (Fools Crow, as cited by Pravrajika Vrajaprana, 2008, p. 64). Therefore, healing comes from within and curing generally starts from an agent without. Hence spiritual healing includes the concepts of Holistic Health and Integral Health.

It may be noted that it is not our intention to position spiritual healing as an alternative to the elaborate mainstream medical system and its treatments. They are obviously necessary for common men, who have not been able to lift their mind to the highest spiritual plane on a sustained basis, but following the assertions of the realizers and the experiential validity of the seekers, it may be safely opined that as an aspirant advances towards the spiritual goal the necessity of such treatments gets reduced or even, if the gross physical body is subjected to the torment of such treatments, the other dimensions of the personality may remain in blissful peace.

Indian psychology explains how spiritual healing may work thus. One of the basic tenets of this psychology is: “subtle is the cause, gross is the effect” (Vivekananda, 1927, p.13). Therefore, subtle body is the cause, gross body is the effect: “The psychophysical vehicle of the self, the real man, can be comprehended... as the threefold body... Be-

sides the physical body... every individual has two more bodies—the subtle and the causal, which are more potent, though invisible” (Satprakashananda, 1974, p. 49). Extensive details of the constitutions, functions and manifestations of these bodies are available in Indian scriptures, especially *Vedāntic* texts.

Spiritual healing helps in curing the subtle body by connecting it with the ever pure core of human personality (the Atman which is qualitatively equal to the Brahman), thereby having a great influence on the diseases of gross body. The diseases due to the *prārabdha karma* will be very difficult to cure, but may be healed at the subtle body level, but many diseases of the gross body may be prevented if the subtle-body is cured in time. It should be understood that these curing/healing are not the objective of spirituality though -- if the aspirant is rightly focused at the highest aim, these things happen as a bye-product provided the Divine has a purpose to retain the body or as per the theory of *samskāra(s)*, the body is required to work out the *prārabdha(s)*.

The ideas of *karma* and *samskāra* as understood here may be briefly elaborated thus: ... *karma*, which includes the residual impressions of the past and the impressions of the current actions... can be arranged in three groups: (1) The accumulated (*sancita karma*), the stored up latent impressions of the past that will fructify in a future life or lives. (2) The fructifying (*prārabdha karma*), the past impressions that are bearing fruit in the present life. (3) Prospective (*āgāmi karma*), the impressions of the current activities that are accumulating and will fructify in due course. These are also called *sanciyamāna karma* (the impressions that are being accumulated) or *kriyamāna karma* (the impressions that are being created) (Satprakashananda, 1974, p.139).

All our volitional actions in the waking state (i.e., *karma(s)*) leave indelible impressions on the mind which are called *samskāra(s)*. An individual's course of life is determined by the nature of the impressions (or *samskāras*) acquired by his *karma* in the present and past existence as well (Satprakashananda, 1974, p. 86-87).

Thus, spiritual healing is based on a holistic understanding of the human personality and not on

the mechanistic dichotomy of mind and matter. Hence any disease is to be seen not just as an ailment of any particular tissue or organ, but as a malfunctioning of the whole system which is generally manifesting at a particular tissue or organ; consequently, the healing process requires the involvement of the whole personality which ultimately draws sustenance from its core. Since microcosm and macrocosm are intimately connected, as per the Vedantic perspectives the individual cannot survive independent of the cosmos, hence the spiritual healing essentially implies a philosophy of life which is in harmony with the individual's environment. [Microcosm (*ātman*) and Macrocosm (*Brahman*) are essentially same. This is the essence of *Vedānta*. One may refer to e.g., Katha Upanishad, verse no. 2.2.9].

Spiritual Healing -- How?

Spiritual healing works for oneself, if applied through powerful thought-currents emanating from a deeply meditative mind in communion with the Supreme; this works well for others also. It must be noted that in spiritual healing, the patient is supposed to play a central role in the process of healing. Here they “are not the passive recipients of treatment, but are vital participants in the pursuit of restoring and maintaining their health” (“Healthy mind, healthy body”, 2008, p. 51). Thus, all healing is self-healing; therefore, one needs to take care of oneself.

How spiritual healing works? Mother of Pondicherry explains: “Peace and stillness are the great remedy for disease. When we can bring peace in our cells, we are cured” (Dalal, 2011, p. 1).

The profound concept of spiritual healing is supported by the realizers and the thinkers of the West and the East alike, e.g.:

- Plato asserts: “No attempt should be made to cure the body without treating the soul” (“Healthy mind, healthy body”, 2008, p.7). And “the treatment of a part should not be attempted without treatment of the entirety” (Ante Domino, The State-380, “Healthy mind, healthy body”, 2008, p.74).

- Swami Vivekananda firmly believed in spiritual healing. This can be deduced from many of

his assertions, e.g., he urged his brother disciples to apply it thus: “Why are Baburam and Yogen suffering so much? Tell them to meditate for an hour at a stretch, ‘I am the Atman. How can I be affected by disease’, and everything will vanish” (Vivekananda, 1972, p.8).

- Medical researches based on contemporary scientific methods also yield support to spiritual healing: “It’s clear from the correlational studies within the epidemiology data that positive relationships exist between religious and spiritual practice and health outcomes on a variety of different conditions” (Schlitz, 2005).

- Rabindranath Tagore, the Rishi-poet, divulges the secret behind such healing: “For once one shall have to die completely. Only then will it be possible to be born anew in God” (Chakraborty & Bhattacharya, 1996, p. 170).

For Whom the Bell Tolls

This article is meant for those who pay considerable attention to their physical and mental health. Some of them may be spiritual seekers but their aspiration is not intense enough to ignore the question of health. The others, for whom probably the secular pursuits are more important, will also benefit from the ensuing discussions. For the minuscule minority, the most blessed children of the Lord, for whom the spiritual aspiration is so intense that they cannot pay any heed to the question of physical health, to whom we are all ever-indebted for the highest spiritual wisdom which flows to us through them, the spiritual giants whom we call mystics, the Divine takes charge of their whole being including the question of health and hence beyond the purview of the present article.

This account is probably not of interest for those who have identified themselves with their physical bodies, but among them those who have exhausted the available medical treatments without improvement should benefit from this discussion. It will be easier to derive benefit from the contentions for those who have developed a general intellectual conviction that ‘I have a body, but I am not the body; I have a mind, but I am not the mind...’, (*Nirvānashatakam (Ātmashatakam)* by Adi Shankaracharya) even if they have not yet felt it or realized it fully. Thus, spiritual healing is easier to achieve provided one has developed a Vedantic understand-

ing of identity of real self and does not suffer from such identity crisis. The idea of two selves (Lower Self/Higher SELF or Apparent Self/Real SELF) is a basic concept in Indian spirituality especially Vedanta, (e.g., ref. Srimad Bhagavad Gita (BG), verse no. 6.5-6)

In such a scenario, a happy situation of harmony appears between the two selves (the real and the apparent or the higher and the lower) in which the distinction between spiritual and secular and the reality appear in the form of integral life whereby the sacro-secular symbiosis thus achieved, ensures a general well-being at all levels of human personality which then is the ideal we should try to achieve. [Levels of human personality generally implies the concept of five *Purusha(s)/Kosa(s)*; ref. *Taittiriya Upanishad*, Part 2].

The Pandemic

The impact of Covid19 outbreak is ubiquitous. It has affected almost all entities—urban or rural, rich or poor, high or low, human or non-human across the world. The degree and nature of the effect varies—for some it is positive, for some it is negative, for some it is mixed. The impact is both short-term as well as long-term, both local as well as global. Moreover, the whole situation is dynamic and evolving fast. Amidst this vortex, so many variables are at work, some perceptible, some imperceptible, some operating at the surface both in time and space, some at much deeper level. Thus we are in a very interesting time when the ‘great suffering’ (*mahati vinastih*) and ‘opulence’ (*abhyudaya*) (BG, verse-18.78) both appear as possibilities, may be one in the womb of the other. [*Kena Upanishad, verse-II.5* (The Sanskrit word ‘*vinasti*’ is interpreted in various ways by different commentators, in the present context we have found the expression ‘great suffering’ used by Swami Lokeshwarananda as an apt one.)] The situation echoes the sentiments of “it was the best of times, it was the worst of times” (Dickens, 1859, p.3).

The all-encompassing impact may be classified into individual, organizational, societal, environmental, national, and international level. The **individual level** impacts may be **further classified** into physical, mental and ethico-moral categories e.g., anxiety and fear of death affecting at the mental level, work from home affecting at the physical

level, loss of income and uncertainties affecting at the ethico-moral level—since these levels of human personality are not mutually exclusive, rather highly inter-related, the effects also have interrelated and multifarious dimensions.

Similarly at the **organizational level** we may have various categorization—sector specific (services, manufacturing, realty etc.), function specific (HR, Marketing, Finance, IT, Production etc.), organizational environment specific (macro/micro, internal/external) etc. Example Covid19 induced lockdown affecting both supply and demand scenario of marketing, WFH is creating new challenges for HR, consequential revenue loss affecting the finance and share-holder sentiments, fear of right-sizing (or downsizing?), layoff etc., affecting employee-morale and so on.

The **societal level** impacts are not always pronounced and varies widely from community to community but in general the prolonged and uncertain nature of the pandemic has increased both mistrust and compassion, familial discord and camaraderie, civil support and fearful indifference among the people.

The **environmental level** impacts may again be classified into effects on the natural environment (very pronounced during the lockdown, e.g., huge reduction in all kinds of pollution due to decreased incongruous human activity and consequential impact on flora and fauna is well documented), technological environment (prominent changes and innovations can be observed in the health, pharmacy and IT related technology) etc.

The **national level** impacts may be classified into macro-economic (strain on national economic budget, fiscal scenario etc.), political (communication and campaign are highly affected due to lockdown and physical distancing impediments), socio-cultural (these effects are the slowest but deepest and therefore are not always easily perceptible but nevertheless always present in such wide-ranging churning).

At the **international level** we may observe some pronounced trends induced by Covid19 at the levels of bilateral and multi-lateral relationships, international power dynamics, international organizations and multi-lateral groupings. Experts and

observers are talking of **new world order** getting shaped.

Thus, a quick scan of several dimensions of existence, suggests one thing -the post Covid world will not be same as the pre-Covid one -there will be some fundamental changes. The nature, direction and intensity of the change are matters of deep contemplation.

Amidst the present turmoiling situation, the common thread running through all these impacts and their manifestations is **mental stress** (any sudden change beyond a certain magnitude of psychophysical threshold, be it positive or negative, arouses stress in the mind of an average person). Thus, with ubiquitous Covid19, the mental stress has also become all-encompassing. [There are many reports suggesting this, e.g., the NIMHANS, India report quoted in *Economic Times* (ET) of India dated 10/7/20; another report says: ‘In July, 47% of people under 30 reported feeling anxious’ (ET dated: 4/8/20)]. Chronic stress is a slow, but inevitably a silent killer through its various manifestations, whereas its effective coping may yield wonderful success in human achievements. Acute stress can be instantly fatal.

Spiritual Healing -- Why?

Spiritual healing is the only sustainable solution for this problem of stress and its underlying factor: the fear. Mother of Pondicherry observes: “The normal human condition is a state full of fears; if you observe your mind deeply for ten minutes, you will find that for nine out of ten it is full of fears...” (Dalal, 2011, p.23). Anxiety is ‘fear spread thin’. The common man caught, in his evolutionary saga, in a plane between the Divinity and the Animality, is constantly experiencing the anxiety, only the degree varies with his perceptual depth and environmental condition, because “man is too conscious to be indifferent, he is not conscious enough to know what will happen. Truly it could be said without fear of making a mistake that of all earth’s creatures he is the most miserable... This torment can come to an end only with a total surrender to a higher consciousness than his own to which he can totally entrust himself, hand over his worries and leave the care of guiding his life and organising everything” (Dalal, 2011, pp. 44-45). Hence “learn

to be quiet and silent... When you are caught in a difficulty... instead of becoming agitated... remain quiet. And according to your nature, with ardour or peace, with intensity or widening or with all these together, implore the Light and wait for it to come” (Dalal, 2011, p. 47-48). It is easily said than done, especially in the times of pandemic, when we are bombarded with innumerable pieces of conflicting, confusing, heart-breaking and at times reassuring information and experiences. But, for those who practise silence and *prapatti* (surrender) on a regular basis, it is an opportunity to test their degree of success in maintaining equanimity. To the extent they are successful, to that very extent they are able to radiate that calm around themselves and others also are benefitted. There may be many tips of overcoming fear and anxiety but all of them have temporary and evanescent effect, but this spiritual remedy comes from the highest source and therefore yields the best results. Thus, spiritual healing appears to be essential in the present pandemic situation.

There are many **illustrations** of varying degrees of effectiveness of the application of spiritual healing:

- Many incidents have been documented in medical history particularly that related to *Holistic Health* or *Integral Health* movements that illustrate spiritual healing and some of them in cases which otherwise seemed hopeless at one point of time, e.g., narrating the incident of a terminally ill patient (whose condition appeared despairing) Dr. Anthony Allina comments; “For the past seven years she (the patient) has discovered that when she remains close to her innermost spiritual path, her disease remains quiescent. When she meanders back into the frantic, disconnected distractions of soulless American ‘busy-ness’, her illness flares. She now feels grateful for her disease because it has directed her to a meaningful and, for her, a deeply spiritual path” (“Healthy mind, healthy body”, 2008, p. 47).

- We get ample examples of spiritual healing in our texts, e.g., the amelioration of Arjuna’s enthralling problem in the Bhagavad Gita (BG) is a classic instance: he was deeply depressed with all sorts of physical symptoms. (Thus, Arjuna says: “... my limbs fail me, and my mouth is parched up. I shiver all over, and my hair stands on end. The bow *Gāndiva* slips from my hand, and my skin burns”) (Swarupananda, 2007, p.17). He was profoundly

counseled through elevating spiritual dialogue by Sri Krishna (‘Renouncing all actions to Me, with mind centred on the Self, getting rid of hope and selfishness, fight-free from (mental) fever.’) (BG-verse no.3.30; Swarupananda, 2007, p.87), and he got great recovery, regained physical strength. (Arjuna confirms: “Destroyed is my delusion, and I have gained my memory through Thy grace... I am firm; my doubts are gone. I will do Thy word.”) (BG. Verse no. 18.73; Swarupananda, 2007, p. 402), and fought valiantly to establish righteousness.

- By the grace of the Lord, the author has had some such experiences, e.g., few years back, one of his close relatives suffered a femur-neck fracture; five medical professionals were consulted, all of them suggested immediate surgery. A sincere prayer guided by an earnest aspiration based on Law of Karma and Unity of Existence, enabled him to get the right decisions and the effective measures; the patient remained in home-care and after few months got completely cured without surgery.

- It is a clinically established fact that mental stress reduces immunity which has remained the keynote amidst this fear psychosis of pandemic and its consequences affecting almost all levels of individual and collective existence. Along with the standard medical and behavioural measures, one needs to strengthen one’s inner defense mechanisms through spiritual methods to avoid unnecessary hassles. A frantic late night phone call, during the Covid19 induced lock-down, revealed the predicament of a middle-aged childless couple living far away from their relatives in a famous city in western India. The husband suddenly developed high fever and other mild symptoms; imagining the imminent dire consequences of catching Covid, in a relatively unknown place with no trustworthy friend, the wife started showing severe physical symptoms of acute stress. They reinforced each other’s negative orientation and were spiralling down in a vicious cycle with no one else to pull them up. The informal counsellor on the other end of the phone, reminded the husband of his having the Guru (he being initiated) and advised him to take simple medicine for fever and earnestly do *japam* (silent repetition of spiritual formula) till he fell asleep; the wife took very ordinary sleeping pill; the counsellor himself kept praying for them throughout that night. Another phone call in the

morning confirmed that the husband had normal temperature, and both had reasonably good sleep. The situation was saved, and they recovered with no further problem.

Based on deep and contemplative reading of the instances and personal experiences, it seems the healing takes two alternative courses: (1) when the mind becomes calm and get connected with the Consciousness, it being all-knowing, the solution bubbles up in the awareness, implementing which one gets the remedy; (2) getting in touch with the Consciousness, the sublime peaceful energy may be directed to the affected physical/mental system and get it cured. It requires sustained effort and perfect concentration which makes this course not so easy. Another important point needs to be noted—the whole universe being one at all levels, gross to subtle, the healing may be effected in one's own mind-body complex or to somebody else's.

Divine Life -- A Sustained Endeavour

The spiritual masters, whose lives are embodiment of the theory, suggested several measures for the evolution of consciousness. Some of them are briefly highlighted below:

(A) **Food.** By controlling the quality and the quantity of food one can control the body, and by controlling the attitude towards eating one can control the mind. Thus our Rishi (s) (seers) have visualized the food as medicine (*Food is considered as medicine; Taittiriya Upanishad, verse-2.2.1*), and therefore we are instructed to respect food. [The Upanishad instructs us to respect food, e.g., 'never speak ill of food...', 'one should not neglect food...' (*Taittiriya Upanishad, verse-3.7-8*) etc.] At the same time, we should respectfully note that like all other substances, the food is also classified into three categories—*sāttwika*, *rājasika* and *tāmasika* (BG, verse no. - 17.7) and for the spiritual healing one must take *sāttwika* food. (The essence of food goes to form the mind, therefore as is the food, so is the mind; ref. *Chandogya Upanishad, verse 6.5.1*). The *sāttwika* food helps in developing *sattwa guna* curbing the *rajo* and *tamo guna*, and thus prepares the ground for spiritual healing. This ancient classification is strikingly similar to the modern classification of alkaline ash forming and acid ash forming food. If we examine the effects of these two types of

food and compare them with the characteristics of *sattwa* and *rajo guna* the correspondence is established. At the same time, to control our palate, we should remind ourselves the old adage: one should eat to live and not live to eat. At the same time, the process of eating should be seen as a sacred activity (BG, verse no. 9.27). Thus, while eating one should observe silence and should carry out the process with calmness of mind and respect towards the food as if one is offering oblation to the Divine. Thus, one should prepare the mind before taking food as one is expected to do before any *pujā* (worship).

(B) **Sleep.** It is necessary for the adequate rest of the body and that of the mind. Our scriptures say: we have four states of existence (Satprakashananda, 1974, pp.148 and 159) viz. *jāgrat* (waking), *swapna* (sleep with dream), *susupti* (dreamless sleep) and *turiya* (deep meditation). The sleep essentially involves *swapna* and *susupti*, which have been established by recent scientific experiments also (REM and non-REM sleep, etc.) Of the two states, *susupti* gives the real rest of body and mind, the *swapna* state though necessary for mental health, does not give adequate rest to the mind. To a common man, these things appear involuntary and therefore outside his awareness, but the experienced practitioners realize that they may be brought under voluntary control, at least to some extent, through the process like *yoga nidrā*, several relaxation exercises of the mind, especially prior to sleep, like prayer and meditation. Intense prayer before sleeping may regulate positively the subsequent *swapna* state, this is supported by the Western Freudian psychology as well as by the Eastern spiritual psychology (the author is also inspired to state this based on his own experience). Thus, a well-regulated sleep helps greatly in spiritual healing.

(C) **Exercises.** To some extent, we all understand the importance of exercise in our life, but to achieve spiritual healing, like all other activities, the exercise also should be given a holistic turn. In our daily routine there should be exercises covering all dimensions of personality: physical, *prānic*, mental, ethico-moral and spiritual. If we follow self-discipline and regulate our activities based on some sound philosophy of life, e.g., Patanjali's *Astānga Yoga* (briefly explained later), these things will be ingrained in our daily habit and no extra effort is necessary. Moreover, one of the important objectives of these exercises should be to achieve ade-

quate relaxation of the tensed muscles of the stressed areas of the body as well as relaxation of the mind. This requires a prior self-awareness which is expedited through the processes like *yoga-nidrā* (in which the concentrated awareness is moved from one extremity of the body to the other), and reversal of consciousness (in which mind is seen as an instrument separate from the self and hence must be controlled by the self). The comprehensive self-awareness includes the understanding of one's biological rhythms and synchronizing one's exercises in tune with these rhythms to get better results; "... the spiritual aspirant should learn to attune his psychophysical system to his own biorhythms" (Bhajananda, 2008, p. 33).

(D) **Confronting the sub-conscious.** The fact that the largest part of our mind is generally obscure to our daily awareness, is accepted and well-documented in both the modern Western and the ancient Eastern psychology. [Here we are using the word 'mind' as an umbrella term to include all its dimensions, not in a particular sense like '*manas*' in Vedanta or '*mind*' in Sri Aurobindo's nomenclature]. The subconscious mind is the repository of most of our problems as well as solutions, "... all that is consciously experienced sinks down into the subconscious, not as precise though submerged memories but as obscure yet obstinate impressions of experience... The subconscious is the main cause why all things repeat themselves and nothing ever gets changed except in appearance. It is the cause why people say character cannot be changed, the cause also of the constant return of things one hoped to have got rid of forever. All seeds are there and all *samskāra*(s)..." (Aurobindo, 1972, pp. 354-55). "... whatever is suppressed in the conscious mind remains in the subconscious being and recurs either in the waking state when the control is removed or else in sleep..." (Aurobindo, 1972a, vol.23, p.898). "It (the subconscious) is largely responsible for our illnesses; chronic or repeated illnesses are indeed mainly due to the subconscious..." (Aurobindo, 1972, vol.22, p.353). Unless these repressed complexes or past *samskāra*(s) are deactivated (they may not be fully eradicated but may be deactivated by the *gyānāgni* (the fire of knowledge and wisdom), (BG., verse no. 4.37), there is no lasting solution to our chronic illnesses and thus very limited spiritual healing. Achieving this deactivation is extremely difficult, dream interpretation and other such psychotherapeutic techniques have got limited

success, however "those who depend on God through intense prayer, may... find that these inner blocks are removed through divine grace" ("Healthy mind, healthy body", 2008, p.36). This is one way how spiritual healing may work.

(E) **Opening up to the Universal Consciousness.** Man does not live in isolation. This universe is an inter-connected whole. Swami Vivekananda (1964, p.13) points out: "each mind is connected with every other mind". This interconnectedness needs to be experienced and revived on a daily basis which rejuvenates and repairs the diseased cells of our body through the flow of cosmic *prāna* (vital energy) into them. We are given the gross senses to experience the gross entities in our environment, similarly we have been given subtle instruments to experience and activate the subtle entities, e.g., mind is a very powerful subtle but material instrument which may be used to experience such entities by increasing its frequency through meditation. With such an empowered mind, imagination. Imagination is a very powerful human faculty. As Swami Vivekananda (1964, vol.5, p.386) points out: "Imagination precedes realization...", and auto-suggestion work well on these cells and help recovery.

(F) **Listening to One's Inner Voice:** During the daily exercises, there should be a component in which the awareness needs to be moved slowly to each part of the body, whereby if any part is not in proper health, it comes in our awareness, we need to concentrate on this part and if the concentration is deep enough, an inner voice is heard which seem to suggest the solution. Then the solution is to be worked out amidst our normal consciousness.

(G) **Astānga Yoga.** The science of holistic living. This is a comprehensive system comprising of *astānga* (eight limbs or steps) which ensures development at all levels of human personality. The steps are: (1) *Yama* (abstention from evil-doing) which includes five sub-steps; viz. *ahimsā* (non-injury), *satya* (truthfulness), *asteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacharya* (abstention from incontinence), *aparigraha* (non-covetousness); (2) *Niyama* (Prescriptions) which again includes five sub-steps, viz. *shaucha* (cleanliness of body and mind), *santosha* (contentment), *tapah* (austerities / self-discipline), *swādhyāya* (study of scriptures including utterances of sacred formula or mantra(s)), *ishwar-pranidhāna*

(dedication of the fruits of action to God); (3) *Āsana* (postures); (4) *Prānāyāma* (controlling internal and external breathing); (5) *Pratyāhāra* (interiorization of all *indriya* (s); i.e., sense organs and mind); (6) *Dhāranā* (concentration); (7) *Dhyāna* (meditation); (8) *Samādhi* (absorption of the mind in the object of meditation) (Patanjali's Yoga Aphorism no.2.29-30, 32). The aspirant must proceed step by step. It may require a full life-time (or more) to achieve perfection. It should be highlighted that steps 3 & 4 have been popularized in recent times but for their effectiveness steps 1 & 2 must be given priority.

(H) **Infinite to be the Anchor.** "There is no happiness in the finite. Happiness is only in the infinite. But one must try to understand what the infinite is..." (Chandogya Upanishad; verse no.7.23.1). Since our mind is finite and therefore cannot think of anything infinite we need to create a symbol of the infinite and nurture in our heart. This symbol becomes an anchor in all our distress, and through this symbol the reversal of consciousness can be achieved effectively with relative ease which leads to spiritual healing.

(I) **Selfless Service.** When one serves others in body, mind and words **without any selfish desire**, one spends positive energy for the social welfare and following the natural laws one's body and mind get healed with more positive energy as Mother of Pondicherry points out: "The energy must be spent to be renewed. The human body is not a closed jar that gets emptied by spending. The human body is a channel that receives only when to spend" (Dalal, 2011, p.23). This desire-less service also purifies the heart, and the person moves closer to the Divine. Swami Vivekananda explains beautifully the enlightened interest of oneself in doing good to others (2017, pp.124-125).

(J) **Silence.** Amidst this fury of action all around, one needs to remain silent, this is the essence of Yoga. "This illusion of action is one of the greatest illusions of human nature... Whatever has been done in the world has been done by the very few who can stand outside the action in silence; for it is they who are the instruments of the Divine Power" (Dalal, 2011, p.61).

(K) **Purification of Emotions** (*Chittashuddhi*). It is argued that if negative emotions (or Dis-Values) cause illness, positive emotions (or

Human Values) should cause wellness. Thus, emotional purification (*Chittashuddhi*) is intimately connected with the spiritual healing. Without going through an ethically strong life-style one cannot hope to achieve this kind of healing. Thus, to achieve the health, as understood in Ayurveda and Indian psychology, a values-based life is considered essential. This is also evident in Patanjali's Yoga (the first two steps in this comprehensive philosophy of life for all-round development essentially talks of values and ethics) (ref. to item no. G).

(L) **Right Prioritisation.** To achieve this kind of healing we need a paradigm shift in our thoughts and actions both individually and socially. This shift should be 'from ceaseless exteriorization to periodic interiorization; complex living to simple living; brilliant intellect to pure heart; external innovation to inner discovery; competitive survival-of-the-fittest to cooperative survival-of-all; greed to need; speeding to stilling; market-led globalisation to Spirit-led universalization; calculative networking to sincere helping; limited earthly orientation to comprehensive cosmic sense; Nature-as-utility to Nature-as-love; freedom of / to freedom from" (Chakraborty, 1998, p.12). One should realize that to give an upward turn towards the Divinity one needs to work out this transformation.

(M) **Integration through right action.** Healing can also happen through mental integration. Thus "when our activity is set toward a precise end, our mental and organic functions become completely harmonized. The unification of the desires, the application of the mind to a single purpose, produce a sort of inner peace. Man integrates himself by meditation, just as by action" (Carrel, 1961, p. 263). But it must be noted that the activity must be *sāttwika* (*Srimad Bhagavad Gita*, verse no. 18.23) for this integration to result in sustained healing.

Nothing Beyond

It is a fact that in today's scenario, it is not easy to follow all these suggestions by the householder but that does not mean that one should not have any ideal. The real may fall short of ideal, but that does not justify its banishment. Thus "we must have an ideal" (Vivekananda, 1964, vol.2, p. 63), and "the solution is not by bringing down the higher, but by raising the lower up to the level of the

higher” (Vivekananda, 1990, p. 224). Once the ideal is set and devoted effort is taken with a sincere prayer, many a time, it is seen that the obstacles get removed gradually and the aspirant moves in the right direction.

To achieve prompt and effective spiritual healing the ideal is to lead a spiritual life. In this context it is extremely important to note the distinctions among **ordinary life, religious life and spiritual life**. In the words of Sri Aurobindo (2013, pp.40-41): “The ordinary life is that of the average human consciousness separated from its own true self and from the Divine, and led by the common habits of the mind, life and body which are the laws of the Ignorance. The religious life is a movement of the same ignorant human consciousness, turning or trying to turn away from the earth towards the Divine, but as yet without knowledge, and led by the dogmatic tenets and rules of some sect or creed which claims to have found the way out of the bonds of the earth-consciousness into some beatific Beyond. The religious life may be the first approach to the spiritual, but very often it is only a turning about in a round of rites, ceremonies and practices or set ideas and forms without any issue. The spiritual life, on the contrary, proceeds directly by a change of consciousness, a change from the ordinary consciousness, ignorant and separated from its true self and from God to a greater consciousness in which one finds one’s true being and comes first into direct and living contact and then into union with the Divine. For the spiritual seeker this change of consciousness is the one thing he seeks and nothing else matters... If you have a **sincere aspiration** to the spiritual change in your heart and soul, then you will find the way and the Guide. A mere mental seeking and questioning are not enough to open the doors of the Spirit”. One must self-introspect and determine in which mode one’s life is at present and accordingly take steps to move up the ladder. As one embarks on this ‘pilgrim’s progress’ the new dawn in the process of thinking appears when one realizes that the physical body is ‘the temple of the indwelling Spirit’ (‘Consider the embodied soul as the master of the chariot, the body as the chariot...’; *Katha Upanishad*; verse no.- 1.3.3), and therefore should be taken care of, not as an instrument for enjoying the material environment, nor as the field to experience the fruits of the past *karma*(s), but as a medium of manifestation of the Spirit for the welfare of the many. The reversal of consciousness is the necessary condition for spiritual healing. Such a

paradigm shift in one’s understanding of one’s personality and identity brings in new responsibility towards one’s body. In such a holistic framework, one realizes one’s responsibility for both falling ill and getting well—the doctor or the healer only helps in curing or healing the disease as the case may be—thus in spiritual healing the aspirant or the patient is primarily responsible as the active agent.

Spiritual healing is both the goal as well as a journey. As one embarks upon this expedition through any one or more measures highlighted above, one gradually feels the peace within, instead of intellectual argument, an emotional conviction is essential. Direct perception is the greatest evidence. As the aspirant proceeds valiantly, the Grace descends. The pandemic, as a blessing in disguise, seems to be inspiring us to regain this paradise.

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Archetypal Work in the Liminal Space Addressing Active Imagination in Archetypal Work for Co-creation in Transpersonal Coaching

El Trabajo Arquetípico en el Espacio Liminal. La Imaginación Activa en
el Trabajo Arquetípico para la Co-creación en el Coaching Transpersonal

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Abstract

The paper discusses the value of addressing archetypes and dream symbols in active imagination as an additional set of knowledge that can provide both the client and the transpersonal coach with an understanding of higher realities, higher self-awareness, and the possibility of active co-creation. Applying the methodology of organic inquiry, six participants took part in five sessions of transpersonal coaching, which were designed to develop a co-creative relationship with the unconscious by working with images. Based on the themes that emerged from the explanations of the participants, I found that archetypal work can tune us into what is happening within the unconscious mind and can lead to the discovery of dormant qualities and resources. In the literature review there is an overview of transpersonal coaching, archetypal astrology, dream work, and somatic centred meditations, among others. Three examples on how the transpersonal coach can make use of the archetypal imagery in an expanded state of mind and body respecting the boundaries of coaching is presented. Finally, the article offers an overview of the main observations and most significant findings related to this research and applications.

Keywords: transpersonal coaching, liminal space, archetypal work, archetypal astrology, dream-work

Resumen

El artículo presenta la importancia de abordar los arquetipos y los símbolos oníricos en la imaginación activa como un conjunto adicional de conocimientos que pueden proporcionar tanto al cliente como al coach transpersonal una comprensión y toma de contacto con las realidades superiores, una mayor autoconciencia, y la posibilidad de una co-creación activa. Aplicando la metodología *organic research*, seis participantes recibieron cinco sesiones de coaching transpersonal, que fueron diseñadas para desarrollar una relación co-creativa con el inconsciente mediante el trabajo con imágenes. Basándonos en los temas que surgieron de las explicaciones de los participantes, descubrimos que el trabajo arquetípico puede sintonizarnos con lo que está ocurriendo dentro de la mente inconsciente, y puede conducir al descubrimiento de cualidades y recursos latentes. En la revisión bibliográfica se ofrece una visión general de diversos temas: coaching transpersonal, astrología arquetípica, el trabajo con los sueños, y meditaciones somáticas, entre otros. Se presentan tres ejemplos sobre cómo el coach transpersonal puede hacer uso de la imaginería arquetípica respetando los límites del coaching. Finalmente se ofrece una visión general de las principales observaciones y hallazgos más significativos relacionados con esta investigación y sus aplicaciones.

Palabras clave: coaching transpersonal, espacio liminal, trabajo arquetípico, astrología arquetípica, trabajo con los sueños

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Introduction

Participatory cosmologies assume that matter and psyche are interdependent and, on some level, ultimately one (Tarnas, 2006). Rather than fixed structures waiting to be discovered, an archetypal approach in transpersonal coaching is open to a co-creative dialogical participation (Ferrer, 2002), with the cosmos and/or the spirit.

It is because of the lack of research in the field of coaching with archetypes in an expanded state of mind that I have conducted exploratory research (Carod, 2021) applying the method of organic research inquiry. Organic research aims to engage with the sacred through an inclusion of alternative modes of knowing such as feeling, sensing, and intuiting in all phases of the research projects (Braud, 2004). There is a strong emphasis on transformation and its application for psycho-spiritual growth as a result of archetypal experiences and trans-egoic sources like dreams, synchronicities and creative expressions originated beyond ego. Within this approach, the psyche of the researcher becomes the subjective instrument of the research, working in partnership with liminal and spiritual influences (Anderson & Braud, 2011).

The archetypal coaching approach that I developed during the master's dissertation research (Carod, 2021), brings awareness to the inner dynamics reflected by the natal chart archetypes and dream symbols, and fosters the client's engagement in a dialogue with these images and archetypes in active imagination.

The participatory archetypal approach of my research can be perfectly integrated into transpersonal coaching psychology, a framework that connects with the spiritual value of the clients, embedding this value into the transformative process, providing paths between the unconscious and the conscious mind (Law, Lancaster & DiGiovanni, 2010).

Literature review

Coaching today is about the study of human potential and possibility; it understands the past as context but deals mostly with a person's present and seeks to help him/her design and act on behalf of a more desirable future. While therapy is

about recovering and uncovering, coaching is about discovering (Williams 2003, p. 5). Here is where archetypes can be addressed for assistance in the task of discovering hidden resources and potentials.

The coaching profession has evolved in time and some authors acknowledge how coaching can share some traits with other professions. English, Sabatine and Brownell (2018, p. 3) define the term *coach-sultants* as "those coaches who occasionally offer a personal experience, a piece of data or relevant expertise with the intent to fill a gap identified during the coaching conversation". Masterful coaches do utilize skill sets from solution-oriented therapy approaches, cognitive and behavioral psychology, and recent advances in positive psychology. But that does not make coaching the same as psychotherapy (Williams 2003, p. 15). Similarly, the fact that an archetypal coach makes use of astrological archetypes does not make coaching the same as astrology.

Coaching can also be defined as a skillset and a mindset that allows clients to tap into creative solutions. Guiding clients into awareness provides a clear mind and intuitive insights which connects them with creative actions (Lasley, Kellogg, Michaels & Brown, 2015). In transpersonal coaching, creative solutions are waiting to be discovered in the liminal space held with the client. In *The Nature of Holding Space* (Dängeli & Geldenhüis, 2022) the authors explore the idea of the liminal space and point out the components involved:

Liminal relates to a transitional process or something that occupies a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold. It is the co-created medium in which coaching or therapy is performed that facilitates exploration, discovery and healing in a safe and responsive setting. In transpersonal interventions, this includes the freedom to access altered states of consciousness; experience of the physical, emotional, and spiritual self; the psyche's shadow; interpersonal dynamics; and perceptions of interconnectedness beyond one's self constructs, a state of openness, receptivity and equanimity. (Dängeli & Geldenhüis, 2022, p. 127)

Transpersonal coaching considers intuition and imagery as the main tools of the transpersonal coach (Rowan, 2018). The original idea of working with our imagination through the encounter with divine images is rooted in the Theurgical Neoplatonism of Iamblichus (c. 245-c.325). *Theurgia* or divine action, consisted of ritual action that allowed human beings to enter the activity (*ergos*) of a god (*theos*) (Shaw 2016, p. 328). As in Iamblichus' *Theurgia*, participants employed images and symbols to contact the astral potencies and receive direct knowledge from them in a third realm between body and spirit, a world of imagination, that is neither material nor spiritual (Shaw, 2008). Practicing a mindful awareness facilitated a state of balance between conscious will and a receptive state of surrendering to the unknown, to the mystery (Hart, 2000). This contact with the divine occurs only with an ecstatic exchange that transforms our imagination into an organ of the god while the soul—with empty mind—follows the visions and witnesses the divine reunions (Shaw 2003, p. 11). In a passage of *De mysteriis*, Iamblichus asserts that “intellectual understanding does not connect theurgists with divine beings... In fact, these very symbols by themselves perform their own work, without our thinking” (Shaw 1985, p. 10)

The ancient pantheon of Greek myth, the rituals of the mystery religions and the Pythagorean numinous universe of a unitive order are the roots of the platonic archetypal cosmos. For the Platonic – Pythagorean tradition, to align with the archetypal order of the cosmos was to realize one's essential being (Tarnas, 2011). Theurgic astrology, employed images and symbols to contact the astral potencies and receive direct knowledge from them (Greene, 2018). Iamblichus established the ground of astrology as symbols that allow the human soul to free itself from the limitations of material consciousness and begin to see itself as an image of God (Voss, 2000). According to Iamblichus (Shaw 2003), in the ecstatic encounters of imagination we learn to accept and to honor the images that form part of the soul's itinerary to recover its wholeness:

What is given in one manner [from above] is received in another manner by things below. For example, the emanation of Kronos is stabilizing and that of Ares is kinetic, but in material lives our passive

and generatively geared receptacle receives the former as rigidity and coldness and the latter as inflammation beyond measure. (Shaw 2003, p. 22)

As a previous step to this encounter with the Gods, Iamblichus suggested the practice of specific prayers and rituals that would allow to reach higher states of consciousness. It is interesting to note, that in this original conception, man could overcome his fate acting from the immortal part of his soul or “nous”.

After the attack of the Catholic church against all forms of paganism, the fact that we may be supernatural and connected to Gods or Spirits could not be affirmed in the face of the overwhelming power of both monotheism and the rational philosophy of the Greeks (Shaw, 2008). Our western society has inherited the Plotinian doctrine of the undescended soul with the majority of astrologers influenced by the *Tetrabiblos* from Claudius Ptolemy (100- c. 170), a late Hellenistic work that gives an irrevocable judgement of fate sealed by the birth moment. Within this frame, the spiritual nature of astrology and dream-work and the state of consciousness and receptivity to access the divine realm became irrelevant (Shaw, 2003).

However, a new stage in the West's cultural and psychological evolution, has brought within a transformed vision of astrology which stems from the principles of personal freedom and fulfilment of one's authentic nature and potential as in Jung's concept of individuation (Tarnas, 2006). For Jung (1960) the natal chart¹ represents a system of fundamental qualities in a person's character and can therefore be regarded as an equivalent of the individual psyche. Moreover, Jung (1960) considered a person's natal chart could provide insights into “what her soul intended for her to achieve.” The Jungian approach considers a *process of individuation* where the locus of identity is transferred from the ego to a deeper existential centre (the realized Self). It sees the world as opposites between ego / shadow, anima / animus, unconscious / conscious, introversion / extroversion, thinking / feeling and a variety of other opposing pairs (Jung, 1960). The concept of the realized Self (an inner guiding seeking union and balance within the psyche) implies that each person can manifest an alternative being, or mode of being, that is more

mature or more authentic than the ordinary self of everyday existence (Daniels, 2005).

Archetypes are images charged with an emotion; they contain psychic energy and dynamism (Hillman, 1975). In the ancient myths, archetypes were represented as immortal gods and goddesses. They were defined as primordial instincts by Freud (Tarnas, 1987), as innate cross-cultural patterns of behaviour that build our psyche (Jung, 1960), or as gods that symbolize occult aspects of our psyche as James Hillman suggested (1975).

The Jungian collective unconscious is structured through universal patterns based on Plato's archetypes. For Jung, "archetypes, like all numinous contents, are relatively autonomous, and cannot be integrated simply by rational means, but require a dialectical procedure, a real coming to terms with them" (Jung 1968, p. 85). Jung drew symbols from dream imagery and from astrological archetypes as the underlying patterns of the *mundus imaginalis*, what Iamblichus understood to be the sacred ground where divine and human could meet (Greene, 2018). Similarly, Tarnas, (mentioned in Ferrer, 2002, p. 7) affirms that transpersonal realities can be approached only by a "heartful dialogical engagement with the Mystery that is the source of all"; psyche is a participant along with cosmos in the shaping and creation of the reality.

Astrology supports the ancient idea of an *anima mundi*, or world soul, in which the human psyche participates. From this perspective, what Jung called the collective unconscious can be viewed as being ultimately embedded within the cosmos itself (Tarnas 1987, p. 2).

Imaginal Psychology, a new branch of Archetypal Psychology developed by James Hillman (1975), focusses on the process of *soul-making*, working with the images a person is drawn to in a meaningful way, a third realm between body and spirit, a world of imagination, fantasy and reflection, that is neither material nor spiritual. It also recognizes images and symbols that emerge spontaneously from the individual, as we find in dreams, offering a sense of meaning. Hillman claims that the poetic basis of mind seeks to explore images rather than explain them. Hillman emphasizes that "the Gods are *"a manner of existence, an attitude toward existence"*

(Hillman, 1975, p. 30) and suggests us to stick with the image, having a rich reflection on it (p. 169).

Discussion

In the following paragraphs I will illustrate how the inclusion of archetypal work in a transpersonal coaching methodology has allowed me to connect with the transformative processes of my coachees, providing paths between the unconscious and the conscious mind (Law *et al.*, 2010), and helping my research participants to reintegrate their new, widened, and resourceful perspective into their lives.

Spring is a teacher and mother who feels a strong need to be true to her instincts and intuition. She is currently involved in studies of movement, dance, expressive arts, and mindfulness. In our first session, she brought a dream about a coach slipping down to the water; the dream was pointing to her intense fear before the writing process, a fear of losing boundaries with so much information and theories. I resonated with her fear and got kinesthesia reactions that confirmed me I was getting the essence of her trigger. We also identified her need to explore new possibilities through the examination of archetypes related with her trigger. We reframed her fear as a fear of losing contact with who she is, dissociating from her essence. Next, we used her dream as a loop to focus on specific archetypes of her natal chart that appeared to be in conflict with one another. In active imagination, we embraced polarities through dialoguing and identifying needs and archetypes: her need for persistent effort and concentration represented by Mars conjunct Saturn (Tarnas, 1987, p. 7), and her need to express herself bluntly and to nurture her insights and intuitions symbolized by her contact between Mercury and Uranus (Tarnas 1987, p. 6)².

On another dream, Spring described a scenery where there was a wise old man in a big room with balls of clay popping all over the place. We associated the stones to her natal Mars-Saturn conjunction. Mars symbolizing aggression and movement and Saturn the heaviness of the rocks and their force of gravity. These archetypal themes served also as a guide to embracing polarities; we looked at needs that appeared to be in conflict. I clarified her need of persistent effort and

concentration, determination to overcome all obstacles (Mars in contact with Saturn), and her need of being inspired and access to intuitive knowledge (Neptune). I suggested her to do active imagination between these needs, holding them with respect, without making one side more important than the other. She named *wise man* to Saturn, and her insight was that he was taming her wilderness, protecting her from expressing too much. Through the dialogue between her dream symbols and her inner Saturn archetype, Spring received an embodied insight of Saturn's role as a detector of what is in the environment and as a protector, allowing her to set boundaries. As an antidote to feeling overwhelmed, blocked or frustrated, her inner Saturnian archetype was suggesting sacred action, creating from a more mindful space.

.... it seems like Saturn was there to kind of feel the environment, to feel what was happening. So, it wasn't necessarily a negative influence... in fact it was, maybe the inner protector so to speak on some level. (Spring 35-81, in Carod, 2021).

In the practice of active imagination, clients are encouraged to acknowledge spontaneous images giving voice to what the image/archetype needs and what they appreciate about it. The conscious mind participates consciously in the events that take place on the imaginative level, which is neither conscious nor unconscious, and creates a life experience that combines the elements of both (Johnson, 1986). Although participants were provided with the basic definition of archetypes, this participatory process took place through the invocation of archetypes and images in active imagination and through a later rich exploration of images, rather than through their explanation (Hillman, 1975). By inviting astrological archetypes and dream symbols in the held space through active imagination, participants were able to receive insights related to their current issues. Insights arrive suddenly and vividly and involve a great deal of knowledge in a brief period with a sense of permanence. (Miller & C' de Baca, 2001).

I could dialogue with Saturn and wonder, what he tries to tell me, to see it more of an ongoing mystery, rather than seeing something always being blocked and even

perhaps getting into a victimized, you know, mindset, which is not empowering. (Spring, 127-130, in Carod, 2021)

Archetypal awareness can play a significant role in positively influencing the unfolding of personal potential (Tarnas, 2006). Moreover, the essential role of astrology is to develop what is already there (Jung, 1960). "...a kind of like an understanding of that type of energy that is like my birth right, in me, surrounding me, influencing me" (Spring, 162-163, in Carod, 2021).

When Spring interacted with certain archetypes in active imagination, she described a state of resonance with the order of the cosmos (Bogart, 2011). In a reflective exercise about these archetypes after the active imagination session, she wrote:

Through the archetypes I can start to appreciate particular needs that I have and experiences that I notice and turn towards as being part of something that is bigger and beyond me. I can see myself as a channel for the manifestation of a particular energy and life force. (Carod 2021, Appendix B)

At some stage of the coaching process, participants were encouraged to engage in a creative work in any form (painting, sculpting, writing, vision board, dancing...) incorporating archetypal qualities of their personality in a unifying symbol, as a way of transcending duality. The artistic creation will serve as an anchor to focus attention and embody the desired state or vision. Spring's artwork was prospective and anticipatory, revealing what was emerging for her. For the representation of her inner Saturn (structure in the physical world), she decided to build a container with clay and burnt some sage as a symbol of her potential transformation.



She described her experience as *journeying into Saturn* and named *centered freedom* to the integration of her opposed needs, freedom and efficiency. "... I feel like the clay was representing the holder, the container of life, and the fire was representing the potential transformation" (Spring 15-17, in Carod 2021).

Self-knowledge through awareness of the archetypes of the collective unconscious and dream symbols brought Spring a sense of unity and belonging to the cosmos, a sensing of a collective freedom coming from a transpersonal field of information.

... so perhaps I'm just feeling into this archetype of freedom (Uranus) rather than just freedom belonging to me, it's more of a freedom that's available to all. I feel bigger. I feel way bigger than this body. My body is like a vessel for these energies that want themselves to be known in the world. (Spring 96-98, in Carod, 2021)

Her conscious elaboration of a larger field of change concurs with Jung's archetypal theory (Jung, 1960) of the collective universal unconscious that is present in all of us.

In the next example, I will explain how we practiced active imagination with the most significant archetypes of the natal chart, the Sun and the Moon. While the Sun symbolizes our personal will and ability to pursue our personal goals, the Moon archetype symbolizes the attachment style that has been conditioned in our early years, our automatic emotional mind.

Roshani is a brilliant film maker and teacher with a powerful personality who was going through a tough period³.

In our first session, Roshani expressed her feelings of her old structures breaking. She felt a need for change, but that was also causing her anxiety. Many of the dream symbols that Roshani brought to the sessions before the accident were about not being able to act with her masculine side: the elevator not stopping at her floor, being late, missing the bus, or standing in the wrong queue for

the wrong train. It seemed that she was in the process of making an effort to trust the unknown and accepting imperfection.

She dreamed of three butterflies, which were fluttering and standing in alignment, one on top of the other, symbolizing her inner child at three different ages. "I had a dream of three butterflies fluttering and, in the meditation, I felt them on my skin, the ephemeral butterfly dust from my childhood" (Roshani, 45-46, in Carod, 2021).



I suggested that we should practise a dialogue between her archetypes of the Sun and the Moon in order to explore the relationship between her self-power and conscious will on the one side, and her unconscious reactions linked to her early emotional needs on the other.

The active imagination session brought up an internal struggle between her needs and wants, a pull towards different directions (a highly logical mind and proactive personality versus an emotional side that had been blocked since childhood). In expanded awareness, I encouraged her to voice what her Moon needed as a symbol of her inner child. The answer included three messages for her three inner children and their needs at three different ages; the two-year-old child needed to be held, the five-year-old child needed to be joyous and laughing, and the twelve-year-old needed to feel secure.

We then asked her Sun (her inner drive toward goals and self-expression) what it needed to feel okay about Roshani nurturing her deepest needs, and the answer was that she should start moving towards her goals.

We observed patterns and embraced polarities through needs that appeared to be in conflict, holding them with respect, without making one side more important than the other (Lasley *et al.*, 2015).

Later on, in guided meditation, we invoked the butterflies and Rosahni felt them caressing her face, fluttering, and leaving their color on her skin. Through this subtle embodied experience, Roshani was able to release her emotional pain which provided her with a profound sense of peace: "... There's a lot of healing that comes about. Like I told you, this information is very delicate, is like the butterfly dust. You can miss it if you don't look out right" (Roshani 75-77 in Carod, 2021).

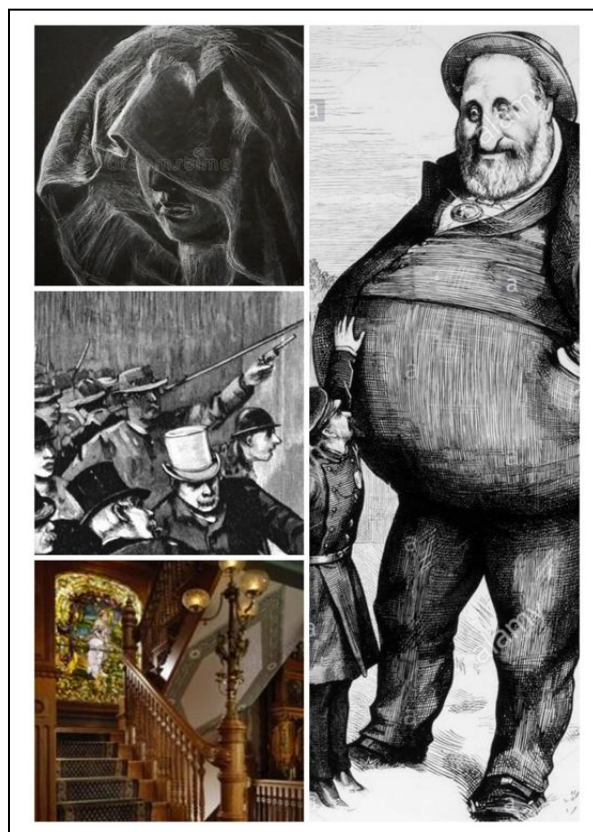
Iamblichus affirmed that theurgic, or god-sent dreams come not when we are unconscious but when we are "between waking and sleeping," that is, in a hypnagogic state. This "in-between" awareness is conscious but not active, it perceives but does not analyze or exert its will (Shaw 2003, p. 62).

The case of Roshani illustrates how the contact with the numinous (not only the content of the image) was in itself healing (Bogart, 2009; Jung, 1960; Hillman, 1975).

Mary is a mother and mindfulness teacher for adults and kids who had a spiritual awakening during a silent retreat in Thailand when she was thirty years old. Her initial trigger was her relationship with her husband and kids. She identified a need to feel accepted and concluded that the core of it was self-acceptance. She elaborated a dream where there was this sense that she was not good enough to be out there with the angels. Revisiting the dream and dialoguing with them in active imagination, she observed there was a feeling of anger, and just through acknowledging that, she was able to accept those feelings with compassion and stop judging herself. The golden angels brought Mary a sense of warmth and safety, a sense that we are all part of this universe and intelligence, and that everything is connected in some way. She felt uplifted, awaked and a lot lighter and luminous.

Another day Mary dreamed of *centeredness*, an 18th century masculine archetype

that provided her with clarity, serenity, and compassion for the different aspects of herself.



The *centred man* acted as a tool of integration for different parts of her personality: the part that feel helpless in the face of her own inner conflict, the inner conflict and what it has to say, the fear that it holds, and the part that feels centred and is allowing the reactivity and the feeling of helplessness.

After she had led a group guided meditation one night, she had a sinking feeling and felt fear and rejection. When she meditated the next morning, she became conscious of the discomfort and tuned into the body sensations and the emotions and thoughts that accompanied them. She then embodied the centred man and was curious to view the discomfort from this position:

And then offering a loving presence as a parent would do to an angry child (to the lynch mob). Then just resting in the stillness whilst allowing the reactivity and offering a loving presence as I embody the person being accused, the centred entity. (Mary, in Carod 2021, appendix E)

The dreams that the participants brought to the coaching sessions showed what their inner self wanted to explore at that moment (Johnson, 1986), bringing light to a specific area of the psyche which was unconscious (Jung, 1960).

It is important to note here, that the cultivation of somatic awareness when approaching dreams and astrological symbols non interpretively allowed for meaningful insights.

Conclusions

Results suggest that a co-creative approach to archetypal work, drawing on dream images and astrological symbols, promoted the participants' connection with a deeper truth, respecting the boundaries of coaching.

Astrological archetypes and dream symbols acted as mediators between the conscious and unconscious aspects of personality. Reflecting and meditating on the value of certain archetypes and the highest ways to express them, light was shed on resources, potentials as well as on unconscious dynamics. The more we focused on the participants' archetypes and dream images in the held space, the more guidance, insights and feelings of unity and transcendence they provided.

The faculty of imagination and the organizing principle of archetypes (Bogart, 2011) were crucial factors in the process of dealing with unconscious material. Imagination enabled participants to reach the Jungian *mundus imaginalis*, or as Hillman describes (1975), the process of soul making. After the union with the dream symbols and archetypal divine qualities in active imagination, participants were lifted to a higher state of consciousness and could integrate new insights into waking physical reality.

It was the dynamic relationship with the symbols of their imagination in the held space and the contact with the numinous (not only the content of the image) that was in itself healing. The impact of creating unifying symbols and co-creating with them in an expanded state of mind in active imagination in transpersonal coaching is worthy of further exploration.

The breadth of content of this exploratory research has made the operationalisation of the variables at stake more difficult. The study has limited generalizability because of the limited range of the sample with all participants sharing a background in transpersonal psychology. Future research with purposeful sampling is necessary to shed light on how to approach transpersonal work as an archetypally informed dialogue, respecting the boundaries of coaching while facilitating a context for change.

Notes

¹ A natal chart is a picture of the heavens from the perspective of the earth at the moment of one's birth.

² Mercury represents the principle of mind, thinking, and the movement or exchange of ideas through speaking, writing, and other forms of communication. Uranus represents the principle of change, of freedom, rebellion, and revolution.

³ Roshani's mom died two years before and now her beloved dog also passed away. On top of all this, she was knocked over by a dog and broke her wrist.

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La Astrología como Herramienta Terapéutica Estudio de un Caso de Duelo Complicado

Astrology as a Therapeutic Tool Study of a Case of Complicated Grief

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Resumen

La astrología es una práctica milenaria que está en crisis por sus numerosos problemas internos y su resistencia al rigor científico. Este artículo revisa dichos problemas y propone tentativa y constructivamente una alternativa basada en la integración de la experiencia astrológica y los conocimientos del siglo XXI en psicología. Se describe un caso donde se utilizó la astrología como herramienta en el tratamiento psicoterapéutico a una mujer en profunda crisis de sentido vital después de la pérdida traumática de su hijo de 15 años en un accidente de tráfico. El artículo intenta asentar las bases de la utilidad de la carta natal (mapa del Sistema Solar en el momento y lugar del nacimiento) para personalizar la evaluación y el tratamiento.

Palabras clave: astrología, psicología transpersonal, espiritualidad, duelo, trauma

Abstract

Astrology is an ancient practice that is in crisis due to its numerous internal problems and its resistance to scientific rigor. This article reviews these problems and tentatively and constructively proposes an alternative based on the integration of astrological experience and 21st century insights in psychology. A case is described where astrology was used as a tool in the psychotherapeutic treatment of a woman in deep crisis of vital sense after the traumatic loss of her 15-year-old son in a traffic accident. The article attempts to lay the foundations for the usefulness of the birth chart (map of the Solar System at the time and place of birth) to personalize evaluation and treatment.

Keywords: astrology, transpersonal psychology, spirituality, grief, trauma

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Un Paradigma en Crisis

La astrología adolece de una serie de problemas e inconsistencias que obligan a revisar muchos de sus fundamentos y corpus de conocimientos. Mi motivación por dicha revisión no se basa en el desprecio a esta disciplina sino en el amor a un conocimiento que puede mejorar como lo han hecho y lo hacen todos los conocimientos humanos.

Estos problemas e inconsistencias son muy evidentes. Se pueden fácilmente detectar en el ejercicio práctico y aplicado de esta disciplina. Lo único que se necesita para verlo es una actitud mínimamente crítica, y cierto desapego de nuestra identidad y orgullo con la astrología.

Hay una serie de situaciones que hacen sospechar que algo no va bien en el ejercicio del astrólogo con el consultante:

I. Parece más importante la carta natal que la persona que tenemos delante; es decir, el mapa se impone al territorio. En consecuencia, una consulta astrológica suele consistir en “interpretar la carta natal” entrando así en una descripción y análisis conceptual basado en lo puramente astrológico.

II. Durante este análisis, el lenguaje usado suele ser muy abstracto y ambiguo, de alto grado inferencial, fruto de los lenguajes simbólicos, dificultando con ello la comprensión del mismo, y facilitando así fenómenos cognitivos como el *Efecto Forer*, el cual supone la percepción subjetiva, por parte del consultante, de un alto grado de acierto en el análisis psicológico, a pesar de no ser así.

III. Se ignora que las circunstancias (factores no astrológicos) posibilitan y, a la vez, limitan el abanico de posibilidades de expresión concreta de un símbolo astrológico. Es decir, las circunstancias actúan como un catalizador que concreta la infinitud (amplitud probabilística) de lo arquetipal, de igual manera que el fenómeno cuántico, de naturaleza probabilística, colapsa y se determina cuando el entorno le presiona para ser (para existir concretamente).

IV. El astrólogo, durante el análisis, suele proyectar su personalidad, valores y preferencias personales, sesgando y proyectando su propio mapa al consultante, lo cual supone un riesgo para éste, así como una flagrante violación ética.

V. El corpus astrológico se presupone verdadero, deviene dogma. Existe una masiva asunción de sus conceptos y principios, una credulidad ingenua a un conocimiento teórico del que se deduce todo. En los casos más extremos incluso se

rechaza que sea un conocimiento conceptual, como si fuera puro sentir sin mente, lo cual sabemos que no es así (Mercadé, 2012).

VI. En general, y relacionado con el punto anterior, la inducción brilla por su ausencia y el astrólogo fundamenta sus juicios en su propia autoridad semidivina, o en textos que son considerados sagrados, subestimando y negando los avances de los últimos siglos y décadas, la falibilidad humana, la existencia del sesgo, y la subjetividad como contaminante. Pienso que sobran las repeticiones de lo dicho -los refritos- y el abuso de la deducción, y hace falta la observación curiosa y crítica: la inclusión del método hipotético-deductivo.

VII. Las divergencias irreconciliables entre corrientes y escuelas astrológicas, en vez de motivar una revisión y el debate constructivo, permanecen como tabú, seguramente por falta de métodos fiables que permitan contrastar las ventajas y desventajas de cada perspectiva.

VIII. No se reflexiona sobre las consecuencias de que el lenguaje simbólico pueda concretarse de forma múltiple y que, a priori, sea imposible estar seguro de cómo una carta natal se va a concretar (desarrollo horizontal). Es decir, un mismo arquetipo se puede concretar en diferentes conductas y, a la vez, una misma conducta puede manifestarse como resultado de diferentes arquetipos astrológicos.

IX. Tampoco se reflexiona sobre el hecho de que la carta natal es un potencial (desarrollo vertical), y no se puede decir que alguien es de una manera u otra desde la carta natal, obviando así todos los factores no astrológicos que posibilitan o dificultan el despliegue de dicho potencial. En la figura 1 se sintetiza cómo el desarrollo vertical se articula con el desarrollo horizontal en el caso de varios sujetos con la misma carta natal pero diferentes desarrollos.

X. Se olvida que la astrología es una disciplina sistémica, y se incurre en interpretaciones de recetas sesgadas; sobre todo, en el caso de las astrologías más populares.

XI. A pesar de que continuamente los astrólogos conectamos lo simbólico a todo tipo de cuestiones (psique, cuerpo...) existe un escaso interés en ser interdisciplinar, como si un astrólogo pudiera ser solamente astrólogo. En nuestra sociedad se ha perdido esa figura de sabio interdisciplinar que siempre había ido de la mano de los astrólogos del pasado.

Figura 1.
Fundamentos astrológicos. Desarrollo vertical y horizontal.



Nota: Diferentes sujetos con una misma carta natal podrían desarrollarse, según circunstancias, en grados diferentes (nada, poco, normal o mucho) y esto sería el desarrollo vertical. Cuanto más arriba mayor desarrollo. Por otro lado, se podría desarrollar, también por circunstancias, de una manera, u otra, u otra... (tipo 1, 2, 3, 4, 5...) y éste sería el desarrollo horizontal. Así pues, en una lectura en frío, solamente a partir de la carta natal, sin saber las circunstancias de la otra persona, no podríamos definir en qué punto se encontraría del desarrollo de su carta natal. No sabríamos si mucho o poco o de una manera u otra.

XII. Parece que se ha olvidado que tenemos entre manos un conocimiento extremadamente sutil, y resulta pretencioso creer que lo dominamos o que hay quien lo domina.

XIII. Como es propio de nuestro tiempo, vistos todos los olvidos e ignorancias anteriores, existe una importante falta de humildad, espíritu crítico, paciencia y profundidad intelectual y espiritual.

Revolución

La astrología actualizada que propongo es una astrología que integra pasado, presente y futuro: arte, ciencia y espiritualidad (Mercadé, 2021). Abraza la sabiduría de la tradición, pero sin idolatrarla, consciente de sus límites. Agradece la integración de miradas psicológicas como la de Liz Greene y Howard Sasportas, o la espiritualidad de Richard Tarnas o Eugenio Carutti, pero con el espíritu crítico y científico de nuestro tiempo.

La revolución que propongo mantiene elementos esenciales como la mirada sistémica y holística. La astrología es así una matriz universal

que lo compatibiliza todo, lo cual la convierte en la disciplina más interdisciplinar, es decir, la que más necesita saber sobre otras disciplinas. Debido a la naturaleza profundamente estructural y poco superficial de la astrología, ésta se ve obligada a estar en estrecho vínculo con los conocimientos específicos referidos por los conceptos astrológicos. Por ejemplo, si hablamos de la importancia de la comunicación para Géminis tendremos la oportunidad de comprender este arquetipo mejor que nunca si nos adentramos en lo que actualmente se sabe sobre la comunicación, comprensión que no tuvieron ocasión de acceder los astrólogos del pasado. Lo mismo ocurre cuando hablamos de personalidad, comportamientos, emociones problemáticas, emociones placenteras, y otros conceptos psicológicos. La psicología ha evolucionado mucho en relación a las últimas décadas. Existen infinidad de conocimientos que permiten -al astrólogo que pretenda ayudar a conocerse y desarrollarse- disponer de mayor solidez y profundidad en los análisis astrológicos. Sería una gran limitación, por lo tanto, hacer astrología sin psicología, como lo sería hacer química sin física, o economía sin matemáticas.

Esta astrología sería holística y sistémica por su marco infinitamente integrador. No obstante, en sí misma, como herramienta sería una más. Es decir, propongo hacer terapia con astrología, no astrología con terapia.

Otra importante característica de la revolución que propongo es que esta astrología no rechazaría la ciencia ni el pensamiento crítico asociado, pues este rechazo lleva al reduccionismo, limita nuestra mirada. Pienso que es un mal planteamiento rechazar algo por sus límites, en vez de valorarlo por sus posibilidades. Es pensamiento limitante en estado puro. No creo que haya una mirada mejor o peor, sino un conjunto de miradas a combinar sabiendo lo que cada una puede aportar. Todo tiempo pasado ha tenido sus marcos teóricos y, por ello, es importante tomar consciencia de que los astrólogos solemos practicar una astrología contaminada de muchos principios metafísicos desfasados (en el caso de la astrología tradicional), y conceptos propios de marcos demasiado restrictivos, y a ratos ingenuos, como el de la teosofía, el psicoanálisis y el New Age (en el caso de la astrología psicológica).

Por supuesto integrar la ciencia en lo astrológico supone un reto epistemológico mayúsculo pero permitiría superar muchos problemas:

1) Aportaría formas de controlar los procesos de inducción y deducción, aportando creativas metodologías cualitativas y cuantitativas.

2) Fomentaría el espíritu crítico y minimizaría verdades basadas en la autoridad. Pienso que

autores como Geoffrey A. Dean (Dean, Mather, Nias y Smit, 2016), o García Vara (2014) serían buenos ejemplos.

3) Dispondríamos de un conocimiento más sólido y menos dado a las especulaciones extravagantes más subjetivas. Ya expuse en un anterior congreso evidencias experimentales para afirmar la realidad de lo astrológico (Mercadé, 2019)

4) Abriríamos la dimensión interdisciplinar en toda su envergadura. Se podría establecer puentes con la Física, como fue el caso Santos (1978), o con la biología, haciendo especial mención a Luna (2022) y su reciente disertación sobre posibles relaciones entre lo astrológico y la epigenética.

5) Gozaría de una mayor aceptación social y apoyo institucional, pues aunque seguiría siendo parcialmente pseudocientífica se iniciaría un interés exponencial por parte de muchas mentes y almas brillantes (no caigamos en el prejuicio de que un científico no pueda ser sensible y espiritual).

Así pues, el estudio riguroso en astrología supondría poder cuantificar lo astrológico, de lo cual existe cierta tradición, y algo que los programas de astrología han desarrollado desde múltiples criterios. Comparto (tabla 1) de forma resumida (sin entrar en todas las excepciones y matizaciones) el criterio que personalmente uso al buscar correlaciones entre diferentes fenómenos psicológicos y lo astrológico:

Tabla 1. Criterio de cuantificación astrológico

Factor astrológico	Valor numérico
1 Sol (signo*)	9
2 Regente solar (signo)	8
3 Aspectos del Sol y regente solar (planetas convertidos en signos + signos)	6
4 AC (signo, planetas cerca convertidos en signos)	9
5 Regente AC (planeta convertido en signo y signo)	8
6 Aspectos del regente del AC (planetas convertidos en signos + signos)	6
7 Luna (signo)	4
8 Aspectos de la Luna (planetas convertidos en signo + signos)	2
9 Otros (signo)	2

(*) Aquí los signos concentran significados que van más allá de los signos literalmente. Las casas apenas las considero (solamente AC) por razones que trataré en otra ocasión.

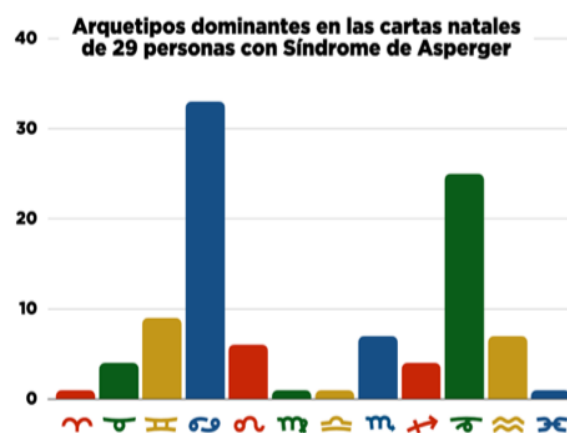
También, como se muestra en la tabla 2, comparto algunos resultados provisionales con algunos fenómenos psicológicos.

Tabla 2. Correlación entre fenómenos psicológicos y arquetipos dominantes.

Fenómenos psicológicos	Signos (arquetipos) dominantes
1 Síndrome de Asperger	Cáncer-Capricornio
2 Ansiedad y Trastorno del pánico	Capricornio-Escorpio
3 Mutismo selectivo	Capricornio-Géminis
4 Trastornos psicóticos	Escorpio-Acuario-Piscis
5 Trastornos de alimentación	Libra-Tauro-Cáncer-Virgo
6 Depresión y Bipolaridad	Capricornio-Sagitario-Piscis

En la práctica, un Sol conjunto a Saturno en Cáncer contaría como "Capricornio". Es decir, tal como se puede ver en la tabla 1 (criterio de cuantificación), uso los conceptos de los signos para agrupar cualidades arquetipales como la de los signos y planetas. En el cuadro 2 he seleccionado los arquetipos que resaltaban sobre el resto. Por ejemplo, en el caso del Síndrome de Asperger se dieron estos porcentajes que aparecen en la figura 2 siguiente.

Figura 2. Arquetipos dominantes en caso Síndrome Asperger



Todos estos resultados deben tomarse con sumo cuidado. Son resultados a partir de muestras muy reducidas (n=25 de media), con un muestreo del tipo bola de nieve, y un tratamiento estadístico deficiente. Estos resultados se apoyan más en el análisis de casos más que en estrategias cuantitativas por lo que en ningún caso deben generalizarse dichos resultados, sino tomarse como punto de partida hipotético para futuros estudios. Y es que el gran reto de la investigación cuantitativa astrológica, además de contar con criterios de cuantificación de lo arquetipal (tabla 1), es contar con extensas bases de datos de calidad.

Para aquellos astrólogos que rechazan que lo científico pueda formar parte de lo astrológico solamente me limitaré a plantear la siguiente situación:

¿Podrías discriminar la carta natal de una persona de otra falsa solamente hablando con esa persona con cierto grado de profundidad? Si la respuesta es que sí, entonces estarías aceptando una forma de atrapar científicamente lo astrológico, pues repitiendo esta prueba se estaría demostrando algo presuntamente imposible. Sin embargo, si la respuesta fuera que no, entonces te plantearía las dos preguntas más incómodas: 1) ¿entonces qué información puedes obtener a partir de una carta natal? y 2) ¿entonces por qué sueles hablar en términos contrastables?

Como puede deducirse, es difícilmente defendible el resistirse a aceptar que la astrología pudiera científicarse.

Por descontado, la astrología que propongo no sería íntegramente científica pues también cabría la sabiduría y sensibilidad filosófica, artística y espiritual a la que actualmente tenemos acceso.

En conclusión, por todo lo expuesto en este apartado, mi propuesta es que la astrología se deje influir por su tiempo, permitiendo que transmute, que evolucione, lo cual por supuesto tendrá también sus problemas.

El modelo Terapéutico-Clínico

Este modelo se fundamenta en la importancia del contexto y otras dimensiones no astrológicas a la hora de analizar una carta natal. Esto supone que en una consulta se explora el territorio; es decir, se pregunta al consultante sobre su vida, sus circunstancias, sus relaciones, su sentir, pensar y hacer. Ello permite analizar de qué manera vive y ha vivido la carta natal, permite calibrar cómo (desarrollo horizontal) y cuánto (desarrollo verti-

cal) está desarrollando su potencial, y cómo ha sido dicho desarrollo. Sabemos que dos personas con la misma carta natal -por venir de padres con cartas natales, genéticas y contextos socio-culturales diferentes- viven vidas muy diferentes. Podríamos decir que arquetipalmente tienen vidas muy parecidas, aunque su manifestación concreta parezca tan diferente. No obstante, aunque asumimos que todo el mundo desarrolla su carta natal "a su manera" también hay circunstancias no astrológicas poco favorables para la manifestación de los arquetipos involucrados, pudiendo así encontrarnos con personas que no manifiestan su carta natal (o parte de ella), o lo hacen de una forma imperceptible.

De esta manera la astrología se convierte en una herramienta (siempre lo había sido), en un mapa que nos acompaña y usamos para lo que es nuestro objetivo principal: ayudar a que el consultante se entienda, se conozca, comprenda cuáles son sus fortalezas y debilidades, tanto las ya desarrolladas como las que pueda haber en potencia, y ello siempre desde lo que actualmente es una realidad, con tal de poder visualizar en qué punto del camino se encuentra, qué obstáculos le impiden avanzar o que simplemente podrían mejorar.

Es crucial subrayar que este modelo hace especial hincapié en los problemas significativos del momento para el consultante, así como su realidad, evitando especulaciones o hablar de posibilidades improbables. Así pues, existe un interés genuino por la persona, un respeto y un acercamiento humilde, reconociendo de entrada la propia ignorancia a la hora de poder afirmar nada categóricamente. Se hace astrología desde la flexibilidad y no desde la certeza, lo cual también presupone cierto trabajo personal por parte del astrólogo para evitar contratransferencias peligrosas.

Tengo la convicción de que los conocimientos que actualmente disponemos sobre psicología son especialmente útiles para la práctica astrológica. Es cierto también que para hacer terapia, o para diagnosticar, es necesario ser psicólogo clínico por lo que hay que ir con cuidado con no invadir dichas competencias; sin embargo, tanto para el astrólogo que le interesa usar la astrología para entender a otras personas a nivel psicológico como para terapeutas en general, este enfoque permite análisis astrológicos infinitamente más profundos y certeros, así como permite dar consejos mucho más útiles y personalizados.

Así pues, entrando más en detalle, ¿qué es lo que aporta la astrología en el contexto terapéutico?

1. La carta natal es un mapa más que, triangulando con otras herramientas y conocimientos terapéuticos, permite conocer el territorio con mucha más claridad y profundidad.

2. Se pueden estudiar cartas natales parecidas a la de nuestro consultante y usarlas como modelado, tanto para inspirar comportamientos modélicos a seguir como aprendizaje de comportamientos a evitar.

3. Cuando se analiza la aparición de problemáticas o devienen cierto tipo de experiencias, los tránsitos y sinastrías permiten identificar más rápidamente qué está pasando, qué hay en juego, qué temas tenemos ante nosotros. Esto es especialmente útil cuando el diagnóstico es confuso.

4. Podemos entender por qué tenemos algunos patrones energéticos que nos hacen tener tendencia a vivir ciertos acontecimientos; y por qué atraemos ciertos sucesos o personas. Algo muy especial de la astrología es que su naturaleza sistémica permite comprender nuestra carta natal como si fuera una molécula con determinados enlaces al exterior diseñados para atraer o repeler cierto tipos de moléculas, favoreciendo determinadas conexiones y dificultando otras. Esto no debe jamás plantearse en términos de culpabilidad. Nosotros no causamos sufrir un abuso o que un familiar sufra un accidente. Somos parte de multitud de sistemas donde todos los involucrados interactúan con todos.

5. El lenguaje simbólico, lejos de determinar, permite abrir opciones. Cada arquetipo es múltiplemente realizable por lo que el lenguaje astrológico es especialmente útil cuando una persona esté viviendo de forma muy rígida. Es decir, la carta natal le propondrá creativamente todo tipo de actividades que, manteniendo la motivación esencial, sustituyan la conducta problemática. O si no hay conducta problemática a sustituir, simplemente propondrá actividades afines.

6. La carta natal permite tener una comprensión global de quiénes somos lo cual es útil para definir objetivos con una alta carga de sentido y propósito vital. Esto es especialmente útil después de crisis por situaciones límite o como problema típico de nuestro tiempo.

7. El modelo de la carta natal ya presupone una estructura sistémica interna (y no solamente externa) que nos permite visualizar y naturalizar que, como individuos, somos internamente seres múltiples, con distintas facetas y subpersonalidades que pueden estar relacionadas entre sí de diversas maneras.

8. La carta natal facilita sobremanera la autoaceptación y aceptación de las diversas maneras de ser, de forma independiente a la normalidad

dictada por nuestro entorno. Es decir, permite aceptar nuestras rarezas, permite conciliarnos con nuestra normalidad singular.

Existirían otros aportes de la astrología aunque serían menos exclusivos, como el hecho de que posibilita la reflexión y la tranquilidad de poner palabras a hechos, emociones y comportamientos que nos generaba demasiada angustia o incertidumbre.

Estudio de un Caso

Exploración del Territorio

A continuación vamos a ver el caso de Teresa, de 47 años, mujer que tuvo en consulta hace 10 años, y a quien he cambiado el nombre y otros datos biográficos por cuestiones de privacidad.

Teresa vino a consulta porque quería encontrarse mejor y conocerse, saber qué hacer con su vida, encontrar sentido a su vida. Se presentó después de una noche de desesperación, de haber sufrido mucho por encontrarse muy mal, aunque luego sabría que llevaba desorientada y sufriendo muchos meses atrás. Su marido la animaba a hacer terapia desde hacía mucho tiempo. Desde el primer momento se mostró muy amable y muy entregada. No había hecho terapia psicológica nunca pero confiaba en que le fuera a servir.

Teresa trabajaba en una multinacional en el sector de las telecomunicaciones. Estudió una ingeniería y estaba muy bien considerada en el sector. Venía de una familia muy religiosa (catolicismo) y se consideraba creyente, aunque ahora (en el momento de la consulta) reportaba estar en crisis de fe. Está casada y tiene 3 hijos. Hacía dos años su hijo menor, Alberto, de 15 años, había fallecido en un accidente de moto después de un fallo mecánico muy improbable (la moto estaba en buen estado). Su padre conducía la moto, quien sobrevivió con pocas secuelas físicas. Iban por la ciudad a una velocidad no demasiado elevada pero durante la caída Alberto tuvo mala suerte y el impacto fue fatal. No hubo posibilidad de salvarlo y murió a las pocas horas.

Toda la información recopilada fue de gran ayuda para entender el caso de Teresa. Parecía estar viviendo una profunda crisis de sentido vital, tal como ella mismo me había explicado. No era algo nuevo pues nunca había tenido demasiado claro lo que le motivaba pero ahora la crisis era otra cosa, mucho más profunda y dolorosa.

Era evidente que no había hecho el duelo con su hijo y que sería el tema central de nuestras sesiones, y el punto de partida para poder abordar la cuestión del sentido vital. En su momento no

apliqué ningún test que me permitiera verificar rigurosamente su diagnóstico pero me apoyé en literatura científica afín (Worden, 1997).

Siempre le habían gustado las terapias alternativas como la medicina tradicional china y la astrología. Estudió naturopatía y quiromasaje, aunque nunca se dedicó a ello pues su trabajo le había absorbido. Años atrás se planteó cambiar de profesión hacia las terapias alternativas pero finalmente renunció a esta idea.

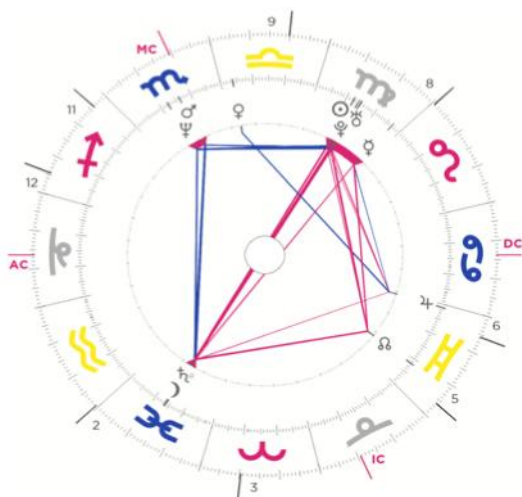
Teresa estaba viviendo una crisis de fe religiosa. Había dejado de creer en Dios después del accidente pues “no le cabe en la cabeza” que Dios hubiera permitido la muerte de su hijo que era tan buena persona.

Cuando era pequeña vivía en una familia con estilo parental autoritario, muy exigente y poco emocional (pocas muestras de afecto y cariño), también con los duelos. Tenía una mascota, un perro, y cuando se murió por accidente lo pasó muy mal y no entendía por qué ya no estaba.

Análisis del Mapa

Teresa nació el 10 de setiembre de 1965, a las 16:30, en Madrid (España). La figura 3 presenta su carta natal.

Figura 3. Carta natal de Teresa



Lo más esencial en esta carta natal sería fijarse en los 4 planetas en Virgo donde encontramos el Sol y el regente solar, y dos planetas transpersonales. La casa 8, si seguimos el modelo de casas que la considera análoga a Escorpio, enfatizaría los rasgos plutonianos. Teresa nació en Luna Llena, con la Luna en Piscis junto a Saturno, regente del AC.

A mi modo de ver, el grueso de la carta natal estaría en lo descrito antes. Marte y Neptuno en Escorpio en C.10 será útil de analizarlo en algún momento, así como Júpiter en Géminis y Venus en Libra.

Podríamos confirmar el anterior análisis con el criterio de investigación (tabla 1) y que nos daría lo siguiente:

Figura 4. Arquetipos dominantes de la carta astral de Teresa



En las páginas siguientes entraremos en el significado de esta carta natal, análisis que haremos siempre a partir de la información real recopilada, evitando así divagaciones sin sentido.

Cuando tengo una carta natal delante siempre me hago muchas suposiciones de cómo estará la persona viviendo y desarrollando su carta natal. En el caso de la oposición Virgo-Pisces de Teresa, después de escuchar la historia, ésta no parecía estar integrada. Incluso llegué a pensar que raramente visitaba el polo lunar. Como ingeniera (aunque su trabajo estaba más cerca de la gestión de equipos y consultoría) se había polarizado en su lado Virgo. Todos sus variados intereses (naturopatía y quiromasaje) podían ser juzgados bajo dicho signo. Incluso la astrología era para ella una forma de analizar y controlarlo todo.

Así pues, a pesar de tener Marte-Neptuno en Escorpio, posición que debería dar mucha energía a lo acuoso, no había demasiada evidencia de que esa Luna-Saturno en Piscis fuera una parte de ella vivida como tal pues ante fenómenos y vivencias piscianas como lo religioso, el símbolo o la muerte siempre había tenido un acercamiento literal, mental, ingenuo y superficial.

Integrando Mapas para Comprender el Territorio

El objetivo de las consultas fue la integración de la oposición descrita lo cual supuso un profundo análisis sobre la muerte, la pérdida, el sufrimiento, la espiritualidad y el sentido de la vida, a la vez que buscamos el procesamiento emocional y una experiencia no racional sobre las cuestiones anteriores, saber diferenciar cuándo estábamos ante una cuestión de proporciones humanas, analizable y controlable virginiamente, y cuándo no, cuándo estábamos pretendiendo imponer lo humano sobre lo trascendental, diferencia que Teresa estaba lejos de identificar y aceptar.

Una persona con una sabiduría pisciana integrada hubiera afrontado la situación fluyendo con lo que la vida le había traído (“señal que no tenía que ser”), no obstante Teresa nunca había aplicado esta estrategia de afrontamiento y mucho menos iba a hacerlo ante la pérdida de un hijo, evento muy difícil de encajar espiritualmente pues como veremos se trata de un acontecimiento que involucra nuestros sistemas más primarios.

Un modelo teórico interesante para empezar a analizar este caso es el llamado *Working Model* el cual describe el circuito cognitivo-afectivo del apego (Romero, 2013). Teresa estaba (y probablemente está todavía) apegada a su hijo, algo habitual por procesos instintivos que favorecen y permiten mantener los lazos afectivos. El sistema de apego, representado por la Luna en la carta natal, se hubiera interrumpido súbitamente, lo cual es justo lo que la conducta de apego pretende evitar a toda costa. Así pues, esto explicaría las reacciones emocionales suscitadas como el dolor, la frustración o la culpa, entre otras.

La experiencia de la pérdida, la cual la experimentamos en multitud de situaciones (ruptura de pareja, pérdida de posesiones o status, etc.), atraviesa nuestra existencia y es por ello que su experiencia, cuando es muy intensa, como en el caso de la muerte de alguien cercano, nos penetra hasta el núcleo de nuestro ser (Cabodevilla, 2007). La pérdida es parte de la vida y, en el mejor de los casos, nos ayuda a aprovechar y afrontar la vida con autenticidad, nos ayuda a crecer y realizarnos personalmente. Se trata de una experiencia que suele recordarnos lo frágiles y vulnerables que somos, lo fugaz de nuestra existencia, nuestra finitud, provisionalidad e inexorable destino. Todo ello entraría en conflicto con Teresa y el paradigma de omnipotencia controladora en la que estaba instalada. Una persona con un fuerte Plutón en Virgo puede incluso llegar a pensar que si todo lo

controla y lo hace perfecto nada horrible le podría ocurrir, como quien por tener una dieta perfecta se cree inmune a desarrollar enfermedades, o como quien ante la presencia ya de la tragedia se piensa que es controlable y se obsesiona al respecto buscando inútilmente dar la vuelta a lo irreversible con soluciones absolutamente ineficaces.

La pérdida por muerte nos enfrenta a la soledad más radical, nos impone el silencioso vacío y nos confronta con el misterio de la vida (Cabodevilla, 2007). Somos la única especie que es consciente de su propia muerte y de su inevitabilidad lo cual nos genera profundos miedos, ansiedad y otras reacciones totalmente normales. Vivimos en una sociedad donde la muerte es tabú, como cualquier realidad dolorosa y perturbadora, tendencia que posiblemente se irá acrecentando a medida que siga avanzando la eficacia de los tratamientos médicos contra todo tipo de enfermedades, y las nuevas promesas de inmortalidad (como el tratamiento epigenético). Paradójicamente, la no consciencia de la muerte nos trae la no consciencia de la vida, pues esta última incluye como certeza a la muerte, el dolor, el sufrimiento y el misterio, por mucha aversión que nos genere.

Habitualmente las personas religiosas experimentan la muerte (la propia o la de seres queridos) de una forma menos estresante precisamente gracias a la protección que confieren las creencias y rituales, como las oraciones, las cuales aportan sentido y adaptabilidad (Villalba, Cots y Romero, 2012). Y tiene sentido pues la voluntad de Dios está detrás de todo. La muerte es el camino a la vida eterna, a un lugar mejor y, por lo tanto, la ruptura que representa la muerte “solamente” es en esta vida encarnada, por lo que hay expectativa de reencuentro en el más allá.

En el caso de Teresa todo esto no le sirvió de nada, se negaba a creerlo, su comprensión de estos principios espirituales no era profunda. Teresa sabía que era un hecho cotidiano que habían madres perdiendo a su hijos de las maneras más trágicas, sin embargo su fe jamás se sintió cuestionada. Fue cuando la tragedia se convirtió en una realidad que su fe se descubrió condicional y personal, pues los principios religiosos que sabía reproducir mentalmente no aplicaban en su caso. Así pues, esta fuerte disonancia cognitiva fue otra de las causas de su desorientación vital pues resolvió dicho conflicto interno negando la religión lo cual hizo que su crisis de sentido se convirtiera en algo mucho más profundo. Por supuesto, en ningún caso el objetivo en la consulta era necesariamente recuperar su fe en la religión que había profesado, pero difícilmente iba a poder afrontar su situación sin la reconstrucción de sus pilares espirituales,

pilares esta vez saturninamente establecidos; es decir, con cimientos lo más reales posibles.

El duelo es el proceso que nos permite asimilar la pérdida y es un proceso totalmente natural donde hay aturdimiento, dolor, tristeza, rabia, culpa, pérdida de apetito, de peso, de sueño, dificultad para concentrarse, momentos de negación y otras características. El duelo es un proceso necesariamente doloroso y existe una serie de complicaciones que se pueden dar. Estas dificultades impiden volver a abrirnos a la vida, al amor y a la felicidad.

El objetivo en estas terapias es acompañar en un duro y doloroso proceso, promoviendo el esfuerzo, la valentía, la flexibilidad y el equilibrio, la recuperación de los valores, y la conexión con un propósito. Y es vital dar todo el tiempo del mundo.

El duelo es un proceso neptuniano¹ por lo que no es recomendable presionar. Todo lo contrario, el vínculo terapéutico es especialmente pisciano: no directivo, extremadamente incondicional y empático. Tiene que permitirse que el consultante pueda sumergirse en el océano sin límites de su ser, permitir el silencio, el sentir su estruendo, el dar espacio al vacío. En estos procesos, cada uno tiene sus propios ritmos y propias manifestaciones. Muchas veces las personas en duelo sienten el entorno como censurador, y en terapia no pueden encontrarse lo mismo. Aquí el diálogo socrático suele ser especialmente útil pues no pone al terapeuta en posesión de la verdad sino que lo sitúa en el rol de cuestionador inteligente, humilde y curioso.

Para profundizar en el proceso terapéutico usé el modelo de William Worden (1997) que sigue siendo un gran referente en el tratamiento de duelo. Este autor plantea cuatro tareas a realizar durante el proceso del duelo. Con Teresa fueron necesarias 16 sesiones para realizar este viaje por las 4 fases:

1. Aceptación de la realidad
2. Identificar y expresar emociones
3. Ajustes externos e internos
4. Recolocación emocional

Después del proceso Teresa había retomado ya su vida de una forma emocionalmente serena y volvió a estar intelectual y socialmente activa. Por supuesto no era la misma persona pues ahora era mucho más sensible (más agua). La integración de la oposición la motivó a escribir (y otras actividades creativas); la impulsó a ayudar y apoyar poblaciones difíciles (como los menas) a través de ONGs, conectando así con valores como el servicio, y otros valores relacionados con la entrega amorosa y el cariño incondicional. Así que recu-

peró el sentido, desarrolló una sensibilidad espiritual mucho más madura y profunda, con el misterio por fin integrado, creyendo en un destino insondable, construyendo un sentido para su vida y la muerte de Alberto.

Notas

¹ Es neptuniano por la tristeza trascendental, la incertidumbre, el misterio, el estado de depresión, el victimismo, la esperanza, etc. También es principalmente saturnino (aceptar el hecho tal cual, la carencia, la muerte) y plutoniano (los estallidos, dolor profundo, vacío de sentido, convivencia con la nada, impotencia, tabú). No obstante, al remover la pérdida trágica los cimientos de nuestro ser, la totalidad de nuestro ser requiere reajustarse por lo que toda la carta natal se vuelve relevante de análisis.

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Miracles & Omens & Afflatus as Marginal Phenomena of our Life Confirming that we aren't sole here

Milagros, presagios y revelaciones como fenómenos marginales
de nuestra vida confirmando que no estamos solos

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Abstract

This article talks about wonderworking which along with foresight (prior viewing of something in the future) was at all times as the sort of traditional competitor to the prevailing academic foundations. In particular, the author thoroughly explains that only single factor of the multi-layering live organisms is quite enough for the adequate justification of anthropomorphic miracles (also named in this case "thaumaturgy"). While most of the rest of the mysterious (including heavenly or even sacral) phenomena can be interpreted by means of a drastic change in the current natural science base. Above all, there is kept in mind the recognition of dominant astrological dependence and (what already suggests here itself) the superior governing noosphere as well. Moreover, the last clarification to the greatest extent concerns the very predictive practice because at almost any its rationale, one may hardly do without the thinking and computing noosphere. At the same time, as an illustrative example, the situation with having previously forecasted World War III which is about to become, alas, an inevitable reality, is given.

Keywords: miracles, celestial contact-agents, future vision, astral widening, cosmic noosphere

Resumen

Este artículo trata de los prodigios/milagros que junto con la predicción (visión previa de algo en el futuro) fueron en todo momento una especie de competidor tradicional de los fundamentos académicos imperantes. En particular, el autor explica a fondo que un solo factor de los organismos vivos de múltiples capas es suficiente para la justificación adecuada de los milagros antropomórficos (también llamados en este caso "taumaturgia"). La mayoría de fenómenos misteriosos (incluidos los celestiales o incluso sacros) pueden interpretarse mediante un cambio drástico en la base actual de las ciencias naturales. Fundamentalmente, esto quiere decir el reconocimiento de la dependencia astrológica opresiva (que parece darse por sentado aquí), así como la noosfera controladora superior. Además, la última aclaración en gran medida se refiere a la práctica predictiva, porque cualquiera de sus fundamentos difícilmente puede prescindir de las concepciones de la noosfera. Como ejemplo ilustrativo se da la situación de haber pronosticado previamente la Tercera Guerra Mundial que está a punto lamentablemente de estallar.

Palabras clave: milagros, contact-agentes celestial, visión futura, expansión astral, noosfera cósmica

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Introduction

Despite a huge number of riddles and unresolved problems, progressive scientific thought has still taken over - at least, on many controversial issues. First of all, this refers to the materialistic paradigm. On the submission of individual wonder workers manipulating Tarot cards, passing through the walls (i.e. implying by space the entity a little different from our dogmatic), naïve existential trends have already begun almost to be reanimated. However materialism withstood eventually this onslaught, enriched at the same time by a special interpretation of multicomponent matter and quasi-matter.

In its turn, the theory of precognition */future vision/* also in some way contradicts to the common academic point of view; therefore, naturally it requires closer attention as well.

So now researchers' primary task is to try intelligibly to ground miracles, having given them an explanation within the modern fringe science.

Wonders, illusions, artifacts or a breakthrough into another reality?

In particular, rejecting the postulates of creationism, we have (least) to agree with the version about some highly developed external observers who, a true, don't practically interfere with earthly life. Since alternative one (that supposedly we are all potential but "dormant" yet wonderworkers) looks selfish and unlikely because of the abundance of clearly non-anthropogenic miracles. Let alone the numerous oral and sometimes even fixed evidence about past paleo-contacts.

In addition, the presence of the rudiments of miracles at the lower levels of the phylogenetic tree can be considered quite proven that, in turn, once again confirms the idea of the natural origin of Homo from a monkey (and indeed from ancient primitive organisms with a similar genome). It's just that human miraculous abilities have increased in the end about the same (in comparison with animals) as his intellect - and all this is directly related to the progress of the nervous system.

All people, regardless of moral or intellectual qualities (that is, purely according to the degree of their proximity to Supreme Will) can be divided into three categories: a) "thaumaturges"; b) "the initiates" (devoted or heavenly chosen ones);

c) "mediocrities" (commoners, well or other). Moreover, thaumaturges are literally a few. These are, as a rule, lifetime wonderworkers, and after demise - celestials and canonized spiritual teachers such as Gautama Buddha, Pythagoras, Joseph of Copertino, Shirdi Sai Baba & Sathya Sai Baba, Grigory Rasputin, Zé Arigó, Uriel Geller. The initiates are about 10-15% of the total population. This is exactly the percentage of people, whose prayers, and also various kinds of spells, conspiracies, requests have chance to reach the addressee and thus show affect on the devoted themselves or on their entourage. These lucky beggars, in particular, know how to reliably read cards, see prophetic dreams, experience religious ecstasy (like witness of Fatima apparitions Lúcia dos Santos together with her cousins Francisco & Jacinta de Jesus Marto), successfully practice yoga, shamanize, etc. And if they don't make somewhat of the above, it's evidently - only because don't a priori guess about having such abilities at oneself. Surely, all of them will find as well their place of honor in "the kingdom of heaven" after death. Among different folks, the percentage of initiates varies, which directly depends on the physiological, and also, by the way, on purely genetic characteristics of the representatives of a concrete nation. So, at the Scandinavian and Finno-Ugric tribes, it drops to 5, but in the ancient Jews was noticeably higher than the average.

As for the commoners, their miserable other worldly vegetative existence (if it happens at all) can except that be deeply sympathized with. But even in this life, ordinary parishioners and monks occasionally have a very hard time, since de-facto their numerous appeals to the Almighty are like down the drain. From this point of view, one of the most exemplary members of this category is the great biblical martyr Job (or rather, his real prototype from then Transjordanian kingdom Jobab ben Zerah).

In contrast to such a longitudinal division, there is also a transverse independently of it: into left and right hemispheres (i.e. all three of the above groups, in turn, are divided in two halves). The left-hemispheric are more prone to some effective deeds while their antipodes are to meditative ones. Wherein, according to this concept, the phenomenon of poltergeist should be considered as the other worldly acts of some immature (and possibly even unkind) left thaumaturges.

So apparently any tendency to congenital or (rarely) acquired wonderworking has to be

somehow reflected anatomically. And moreover, it's not at all necessarily through a certain defect but just by means of one or another deviation within the functional norm (including the features of inter-neuronal links, hemisphericity, etc.) As for the alternative point of view (that all the great wonderworkers were allegedly sent to us from the outside), it much smells creationism. Though the activity of strong built-in spirit-spies who managed to establish contact with "Self" (as, for instance, in the case of initiation at shamans always outwardly differed in spectacular miracles. And unlikely they are associated only with a suggestive impact on the public – for sure, also with some momentary changes in the usual physical properties of matter, time and space! Well, and besides, there is the third version, according to which wonderworkers can be hybrid descendants of extraterrestrials distantly related with the most ancient earth creatures.

The inheritance of miraculous abilities from an ancestor in the next generation may indicate the obvious genetic basis of such phenomenon, though the specific mechanism for its implementation isn't still entirely clear here. Meanwhile as the inheritance of the same qualities but already after a generation or even from some outsider donors (for example, from a witch) only confirms the direct participation in this the spirits-spies refluttering from a predecessor to a successor. At the genetic level (with regard to family cases), unless the functional predisposition of the organism to due reciprocity of spi-spy can be transmitted.

Essentially, one single factor of the multi-layering live organisms is completely enough for an adequate interpretation of anthropomorphic miracles (as a rule, named "thaumaturgy"). In particular, the latent presence of some corporeal endosymbionts quite could be suspected when, let's say, that is talking about the direct connection of the contactee to the universal noospheric database. Wherein a person sometimes does not even realize this himself: for instance, at hypercalculation (high-speed automatic counting), multilingualism (when ordinary people suddenly become polyglots), and also - not excluded - in the traditional practice of acupuncture and herbalism. And as for all the others (i.e. natural artifacts not related to a specific personality), it may well be manifestations of a "different physics" in the form of parallel entities, compactificated spaces, wormholes-bridges etc. Let alone the innocent (but outlandish, and sometimes wild to our perception) mischiefs of some immature pranophytes¹. Though this, by the

way, can also include the posthumous infantile tricks of earthly cubs-wonderworkers (and moreover - not necessarily from the genus Homo).

Thus, now the question on the immediate agenda is whether individualized high powers like UFO-nauts, angels, tengri, genies and all similar demigods really exist around us. For the presence of the supreme divine substance doesn't already cause, probably, any doubts: without it planetary progress would just have been impossible! However even said pranophytes¹ can be imagined both in the kind of collection of special elementary particles and in the form of diversified wave emanations or, finally, infusions of some "spiritual energy" from parallel worlds. Shortly speaking, this philosophical question is still relevant – despite higher super-individuals almost never interfere in everyday aspects of social life (not to mention concrete human destinies).

So, let's now turn our attention to enough many-faceted area of outside wonderworking which obviously does not fit into the rigid framework of the usual "home-grown" thaumaturgy.

In particular, weird artifacts on snapshots taken in pitch darkness (but with manual exposure), "modulated noise" by Lamoreau brothers, Raudiv's paracusia, as well as some heavenly and especially ufological signs indicate either that being us interpreted information (by way of fundamental Universe's phenomenon as a whole) can be not quite correct and clear, or we perceive, and hence are aware it through our subtle sheaths, i.e. warpedly.

At the same time the most prominent role in explaining such paradoxes belongs, perhaps, to modern American scientists J. Allen Hynek and Jacques Vallee who (1975) advanced own alternative hypothesis of extra-dimensional intelligence (abbr. - EDI) to the global academic community. And precisely thanks to their restlessness and ebullient exploratory enthusiasm, somewhere at the end of the last century, it became possible to put into overall use many demanded today by researchers the terms like sensory filter, info-subjectivism, parallel worlds.

Although, as it subsequently turned out, even the very father of cybernetics Norbert Wiener (1983, p.343) had latent doubts about exact definitiveness of information, implying by it enough vague data which any actively perceiving subject is able to interpret in own. But with that, despite the seeming speculation of this concept, it certainly must after all have a specific material rationale (at

least in the form of some so far elusive quasi-particles or a gauge field); forasmuch otherwise it is not surprising to sink here into empty sophistry and agnosticism.

In turn, rare but pretty shocking episodes associated with a poltergeist might be caused by the pranks of the immature children's souls belonging to the suddenly deceased (or tragically dead) potential wonderworkers. However, on the other hand, one can also hardly ignore the version of similar actions by UFOs watching us; but that is less convincing in this case (due to the complexity of the adequate rationale for their infantilism). Although the sullenness of ancient castles' spooks, along with the carefree tomfoolery of "noisy ghosts" (like the talking mongoose Gef), gives reason to argue that the pranophytes¹ also have some own age gradation. Where, a true, the word "age" itself has nothing to do with the impending demise.

Thus, so called «external wonderworking» can testify either to aliens, or to former highly developed terrestrial civilizations, or to parallel entities what any way is connected with very powerful (in the energy sense) hierarchs.

The outcome of the Third World War isn't predetermined at all by Vanga, but with heaven!

As already mentioned, the ability to precognition may well be directly not related to those miracles we are accustomed (or about which, at least, have been reading more than enough).

For the seers contemplate not the dynamic perspective itself, but only astral widening somehow coupled with it (even if they borrow all the required information from celestial contact-agents). Numerous cases from the life of twins (who, developing from a single maternal egg, respectively, have a joint astral destiny, as a result of which are then subjected to almost same vicissitudes of fate) also testify in favor of such a quite obvious hypothesis. And from this, in turn, it follows that above metaphysical vector (or, if you like, the theosophical sheath) has the greatest impact on the subconscious thoughts and many involuntary movements of a person.

So astrology in its essence is by no means reduced to a trite copying of various Universe's cycles. But even if it can be done, then ipso facto time itself ought to have some special transcendental qualities which could determine its interest in

certain objects. After all, be that as it may, any baby yet from conception is organically associated with heaven through invisible strong bonds; therefore, the old theosophical guess about the astral as one of the influential "subtle matters" has, by and large, the full right to exist.

It is curious that the heavens selectively show their sympathy-antipathy for specific individuals (and sometimes even for entire states) precisely at the level of luck or - in extreme cases - the basic vital instincts; however don't, alas, regulate the degree of development of their mental abilities. This once again emphasizes the ancient evolutionary nature of such connections - as, incidentally, that a mankind is gradually getting rid of them (and in a robotic society they, all appearances, will finally lose own topicality).

By the way, since the ill-fated 3rd World War is now on the lips of almost everyone, let's see together what the recognized luminaries of forecasting Michel de Nostredame (1672), (Wilson, 2007) and Vangelia Gushterova (Tosheva, 2016) wrote about this.

The first of them which completed his futuristic chronicle (I note: in full conformity with the Hebrew lunar calendar that is also approaching its epochal 7,000th milestone²) by a very relevant for us frontier of the 2240s, prophesied numerous troubles and pestilence in Europe due to the fatal invasion from the East. But nevertheless, with the beginning of a new astrological week (2243) on our planet, supposedly, the long-awaited overall peace and tranquility should already come.

As for the illustrious Bulgarian clairvoyant Vanga, she - on the contrary - slightly hurried things, having moved the tragic page of history at least a decade and a half closer to the starting point of the millennium. In particular, in her opinion, all the up-and-downer should have been brewed back in 2008 - after the doom of four presidents. That is, translated into the language of realities, this might, most likely, mean the following: at the moment of the signing of a reconciliatory memorandum between Russia and Ukraine (with the participation of Putin, Zelensky, Erdogan, as well as the leader of Poland or Belarus), the bloodthirsty yankees together with accomplices from NATO will carry out a brutal terrorist act that evidently take the lives of everyone present. But since this terrible international atrocity will be thought out in advance and very carefully disguised, no one immediately can identify its practical executors on the spot. Therefore, after the initial shock (and perhaps

even involuntary panic and confusion), certain time must still pass before nuclear weapons are used. Moreover, according to Vanga's prophecies, this interval may last up to a year and a half.

As a result of radioactive fallout in the Northern Hemisphere, almost no animals or vegetation will remain alive. And then the Muslims (or – which isn't excluded at all - the Chinese) will launch a massive chemical attack against the few surviving Europeans. So eventually, about 5 years after the start of the war, the Old Continent unrecognizably becomes empty.

That is, as we can see, in both predicted scenarios, representatives of the East must put an end in this planetary conflict. And from the point of view of astrology, this feature is just much more significant than a quite natural stochastic spread of dates in one direction or another.

Wherein a detailed theoretical analysis of the available evidence suggests the fact only two versions are actually suitable for substantiating the precognitive techniques. Because everything else seems frankly far-fetched or at least deeply doubtful.

So here they are in a nutshell:

a) Computing of our future by some stealth contact-agents - with subsequent transfer of information to Earth through selected mediators like John the Apostle, Basil the Blessed, as well as above-mentioned Baba Vanga or Nostradamus. Since it is carried out along precisely to the lead determinant vector, hence, is probabilistic rather than affirmative here. Moreover, this vector may even be astral; but in any case, such complex multi-valued calculations could realize only by extra-terrestrial creatures (or, for example, the cosmic noosphere as a whole), while our home-grown astrologers-unless to get already prepared information from them.

b) Programming of separate allegedly foreseen episodes. This point, if relevant, is perhaps only in combination with the first. Its general meaning is as follows: in order to maintain the reputation of the chosen clairvoyant or fortune-teller, and also to intimidate earthlings, the disembodied cosmic pranophytes¹ in every possible way contribute to the implementation of the previously predicted action at the right time (including through UFOs, built-in spirit-spies etc.)

As for “direct contemplation” of the future like peculiar documental movies, such a vulgar-idealistic approach just doesn't stand up to criticism - and especially in the light of the current

paradigm (according to which the cause must be followed by an effect). Well, and vice versa: in the case of proven real existence of “chrono-ribbon a la Minkowski”, the vast majority of the previous achievements of world scientific thought will have to be thrown, I'm afraid, into the dump. By the way, a somewhat similar situation is with notorious journeys along the time scale or for instance, with so called "parallel universes" (i.e. as if everything predicted comes true somewhere, but not necessarily with us): that is another example of typical empty ranting, which can only take away researchers' mental health and precious years of life.

Therefore, when substantiating successful (and especially - for sure attested) prophecies, it has most often to be considered both factors: as preliminary as programmed. But still, of course, the first of them is much more important (at least even etiologically). In turn, among the secondary (programmed) levers of influence, the following can be distinguished here:

a) The exceptional sporadic giftedness of this particular human through a strong astral (what generally should anyhow manifest itself from an early age).

b) Certain personal interest on the part of the given demigod (contact-agent).

c) Polyfactorial prediction (say, regarding A.S. Pushkin - several alternative "white riders on a white horse").

And although the last of the versions seems here to be somewhat far-fetched (and, all the more, the rather sensational story with the executed Decembrist S.I. Muravyov-Apostol does not fit into that, for instance), it still has the right to a conceptual discussion.

Conclusion

So now is the time to draw a resultive line.

As we have just found out, of the huge variety of natural phenomena that have not yet been solved, the most easily explained are prophecies actually coming true.

Plus, in addition to everything, it's also very important that knowing the essence of the forecasts (whether from the mouth of a palmist, parapsychologist or even simple gypsy fortune-teller), with a strong own desire they can, of course, be prevented! So all the common pseudoscientific speculations on this theme (arbitrarily taken, for example, from biographies of Napoleon

Bonaparte, queen Marie Antoinette, A.S. Pushkin, M.S. Gorbachev, Indira & Rajiv Gandhi, Barack H. Obama and others) do not have any serious evidence base.

In turn, lion's share of anthropomorphic miracles could certainly be debunked if academic science finally recognized in the spirit of the main postulates of Theosophy (as, however, ancient Eastern teachings) the quite obvious multi-layering of every live organism.

Well in the end, the most difficult here is still the case with divinely inspired, ufological and other outlandish effects of clearly extraterrestrial origin. Therefore, it would be more expedient (and useful for the earthlings) to put the question in a slightly different plane: why do the higher hierarchs demonstrate us periodically their miracles for?

Acceptable answers might be such:

a) They don't want to allow the dictatorship of artificial intelligence or robots' hegemony.

b) Wonders are shown not by the hierarchs themselves, who were set here purely for impartial outside observation and rare evolutionary interferences, but their little-minded offspring.

And besides, certain spontaneous miracles can be performed by the untimely deceased wonderworkers' souls, especially by dead children's (poltergeist) or even by adults' who, for some reason, haven't gotten to the noosphere.

Notes

1. Pranophytes are alternative forms of the Universal evolution that do without gross (visible) matter. And also, they, as it appears, possess (through built-in spirit-spies) own fifth part of "quite legitimate" but covert presence at all levels of the development of matter. Although, analyzing their behavioral stereotypes, the deduction inevitably suggests itself that in terms of a creative (i.e. not copied from somewhere and not borrowed from someone) mind they may be inferior to Homo sapiens.

2. «I have computed almost as many events in the future time as there are years that will pass until the Second Coming at the beginning of the seventh millennium». M.Michel Nostradamus: "Letter to King Henry II of France".

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