

**HEALING STORIES OF THE UNCONSCIOUS:
PAST-LIFE IMAGERY IN TRANSPERSONAL
PSYCHOTHERAPY**

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the Degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in Psychology

ZELDA G KNIGHT

ABSTRACT

Theoretically this thesis was grounded in the discourse of transpersonal psychology and the related discourse of transpersonal feminism. The focus was on a particular category of transpersonal phenomena - past-life experiences. These experiences were viewed from a poetic and therapeutic perspective as being healing stories of the unconscious that served to articulate psychological and spiritual realities of the human psyche within both the personal and the collective unconscious. They were thus not questioned in regard to their literal occurrence. The central aims of this thesis were to (a) document and faithfully describe a participant's past-life experiences that occurred during selected psychotherapy sessions, (b) engage in a hermeneutic dialogue between the participant's past-life experiences and contemporary transpersonal literature, and, in so doing, to evaluate and extend existing theory, (c) uncover the archetypal significance of past-life experience and its relationship to the re-emerging Feminine within patriarchal culture and, finally, (d) show how the past-life stories and images contribute to the process of inner healing and transformation, a process termed 'spiritual emergence'. The research was a phenomenological-hermeneutic case study, comprising the selection of eight consecutive psychotherapy sessions in which nine past-life experiences were identified. These sessions were reduced to narrative synopses, and a hermeneutically grounded thematic analysis of a total of six past-life themes were explicated. Principle conclusions reached were that past-life stories and images contribute to the process of spiritual emergence and empowerment as well as to the re-emergence of the Feminine consciousness. Moreover, as healing stories of the unconscious, these past-life experiences can be understood as expressions of the collective struggle with unresolved archetypal forces within the collective psyche, as well as echoes of personal conflicts and dilemmas from the individual unconscious.

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PREFACE

Over the last three decades, transpersonal psychology, as a specific paradigm of Western psychology, has emerged from the theoretical assumptions of behaviourism, psychoanalysis and humanistic psychology. However, the roots of this perspective are embedded in the major religious and philosophical concepts found in Eastern, European, and North American Indian spiritual traditions.

A primary focus of the transpersonal paradigm is the study of experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness in which one's sense of identity or self extends beyond the individual or personal ego to encompass wider aspects of human experience, the psyche and the universe. These experiences, termed transpersonal experiences (beyond/trans the personal), have not been supported within most of the traditional Western approaches to psychology, psychiatry and psychotherapy. Rather, they have been pathologised. Contributors to this perspective have therefore drawn from a knowledge-base deriving from various academic fields such as shamanic healing, nondrug-induced altered states of consciousness, intensive experiential psychotherapy, meditative practice, as well as those traditional Western therapies that include the notion of a spiritual dimension within the human psyche. In this way, transpersonal psychology provides a conceptual framework in which to locate and understand transpersonal experiences.

Transpersonal experiences present a serious challenge to the fundamental assumptions of the Cartesian paradigm of Western science and its principles of objectivism, positivism and reductionism; principles which continue to dominate Western thought and perceptions concerning the nature of reality.

Objectivity implies that there is an objective universe, more or less separate from and independent of the observer. The positivist assumption implies that what is scientifically real must take as its basic data only that which is physically observable. Similarly, the reductionist assumption implies that scientific explanation consists of explaining complex phenomena in terms of more elemental events. However, transpersonal experiences cannot be objectively verified, or measured, or reduced to disturbances in brain biochemistry.

The Cartesian scientific approach of the Western world has therefore "effectively betrayed psychology and other human sciences" (Edwards, 1992a, p. 10). While Cartesian science emphasises important values within research it sacrifices other values in a way that defeats the aims of acquiring knowledge about important areas of human experience such as transpersonal experiences (Edwards, 1992a).

Although objectivity provides distance and clarity, it supports alienation and disdain for the phenomena under investigation, and although reductionism encourages a respect for complexity and a recognition of the value of studying phenomena on their own terms, this principle reduces and devalues transpersonal experiences to the level of dysfunctional brain physiology (Edwards, 1992a). Positivism devalues that which cannot be physically observed thus ignoring those spiritual values upon which many people through the centuries and across cultures have based their values (Grof, 1984, 1988; Harman, 1988).

Within traditional psychology little credence has been afforded to the significance of transpersonal experiences as psychological presence and reality in the process of psychological growth and spiritual development. Cartesian science has promoted a particular view of psychological life which generally demands a literal objective approach to a largely phenomenological experience. Transpersonal experiences are, however, a call to be transformed, to encounter a different perspective on experiences. They thus provide a different approach to the nature of experience and therefore to the nature of reality or consciousness. In this thesis, an attempt is made to foster a poetic investigation of, and approach to, the treatment of transpersonal experiences. This means that the discourse of transpersonal psychology is placed philosophically within the poetic tradition (described shortly). One way in which this is achieved is by elucidating the serious challenge of transpersonal experiences to the Cartesian model of reality. In a sense, transpersonal psychology may be viewed as an attempt to deal with the disillusionment felt in respect to the reductionistic and dualistic foundations of Cartesian science. Another way of fostering a poetic investigation is by working with and exploring transpersonal imagery as metaphorical rather than as literal.

Transpersonal psychology has also developed a particular approach to psychotherapy - transpersonal psychotherapy - which seeks to incorporate and expand upon the assumptions and methods of traditional mainstream psychotherapy. Its principle assertion is that the experiences of

nonordinary states of consciousness - transpersonal experiences - have healing potential.

Collectively, such experiences inspire an inner process termed spiritual emergence. This refers to an intensive process of psychospiritual transformation in which individuals experience a dramatic shift from an identity based solely on the personal self to an identity based on a spiritual and expanded sense of self. Under optimal conditions this may constitute a form of healing.

There are various types or varieties of spiritual emergence. The central concern of this thesis is about one particular variety of spiritual emergence and transpersonal experience termed past-life experience. Past-life experience is characterised as the experience of transcendence of consensual reality and the boundaries of space-time. It is thus defined as:

A specific, ego syntonic, altered state of consciousness in which the person experiences a coherent system of visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, and/or olfactory sensations within a clear historical context. This context is consistent in time and place, it seems to date from a single historical period before the present life of the individual, and its content usually refers to traumatic experiences (Van Beekum & Lammers, 1990, p. 51).

Past-life experience is often interpreted as evidence for or against the concept of reincarnation. However, recent research reveals that a belief in reincarnation is not a necessary prerequisite for its occurrence since this experience may often occur in psychotherapy despite the disbelief of both client and therapist. Additional interpretations are that this experience is the of material from the collective unconscious, or that it is the result of cryptoamnesia.

The theoretical position of this thesis is that, regardless of their source, past-life experiences are viewed as healing stories of the unconscious in which psychological realities, dilemmas and conflicts are expressed both within the collective and personal unconscious. Within this context, past-life experiences are not questioned as to their literal occurrence. Rather they are recognised as having the potential to articulate an inner process of transformation - the release of blocked emotions, and the recovery and re-emergence of lost or alienated aspects of the psyche, and the connection to a spiritual dimension within.

A primary aim of this thesis follows from the above reflection. This aim is to uncover the value of past-life images and experiences, and their relationship to the concept of the archetypal consciousness known as the Feminine consciousness. This notion lies within a particular discourse - transpersonal feminism - which begs a poetic interpretation of consciousness and the unconscious. This discourse is feminist in nature and yet it is also much more. It involves the feminist approach to experience within patriarchal societies which suggests that women (and some men) have been oppressed and thus powerless for centuries. In this context, it is proposed that women's experiences through the ages are never forgotten or lost but remain alive within the realms of the collective unconscious, only to later emerge as past-life images.

Transpersonal feminism is distinguished from feminism in that it emphasises the significance of the concept of the collective unconscious and the power of imagery to promote an expanded consciousness and inner transformation within the life of contemporary women.

Closely linked to the first aim is a second major aim. This latter aim is rooted in the fundamental assumption of transpersonal psychology: that transpersonal experiences contribute to the process of spiritual emergence. This second aim involves showing how past-life experiences and images facilitate healing and spiritual emergence. In order to demonstrate this, some of the past-life scenes and images that emerged for a middle-aged woman in the context of transpersonal psychotherapy are approached as ritual enactments of patriarchal ideology, while other images are investigated as contributing to the psychospiritual process of spiritual emergence.

This thesis is structured on two levels. The first level consists of the clinical contributions rooted in the two aims described above, while the second consists of the philosophical position alluded to earlier, and which seeks to ground transpersonal psychology on a poetic level. The main concern and body of this thesis is, however, dedicated to the former level while the latter level informs and penetrates the research investigations and contributions. This second level is based on an alternative intellectual tradition which seeks to avoid the raw and simplistic empiricism of positivist-Cartesian science. This tradition is termed the poetic tradition.

A poetic vision of life informs much of today's existential-phenomenological literature and forms the basis of the thinking of several writers within the tradition of depth psychology (Welman,

1995). The term 'poetic' essentially refers to "a particular way of thinking" (p. 17). In contrast to the dictates of Cartesian science, the poetic tradition shrinks from the narrow focus on reductive explanation and logical deduction which is tantamount to the negation of meaning (Levin, 1988). Rather than seeking manipulation and control, "the poet is thus fundamentally attentive to the emergence and elucidation of Being through a process of hermeneutic understanding" (Welman, 1995, p. 17). In this sense, poesis, (from the Greek word, to make), involves an "intrinsic, irreducible and mutually transformative relationship" between the poet and his or her subject matter (Brooke, 1991, p. 7). In this regard, both Welman and Levin point out that if scientific truth emerges from 'strict regimentation and univocity of meaning', then poetic truth is, in contradistinction, grounded in 'plurivocal complexity and ambiguity'. The view of the poet is thus centred on the openness to experience, and "typically embraces a mode of understanding that seeks to reclaim the inherently metaphoric character of psychological life, in contradistinction to the facile literalism of modernist being" (Romanyshyn, 1982, p. 143). The work of Romanyshyn grounds Welman's ideas that if poesis emerges from a hermeneutic search for meaning, "then this search begins not with denotative simplicity and exactness, but with the inherent ambiguity of psychological life" (p. 17). In this light, the meaning of psychological life may lose its richness if experiences are all sacrificed to a purely literal interpretation. In this way, the metaphoric image becomes the image of psychic life.

Jung (1929, p. 50) expressed this notion succinctly in his statement that "image is psyche". Image is the expression of the psychic situation and thus all reality is ultimately mediated through the imaginal dimension of the psyche. It is apparent that Jung's position was ultimately orientated towards a recovery of imaginal metaphoric meaning of psychological life and experience. For him, psychological life was rooted within the poetic tradition; a position, perhaps, in which transpersonal psychology may best find itself. The value of transpersonal psychology is that it invites a response to psychological life and (transpersonal) experience that is essentially imaginative, although it does not seek to banish entirely the possibility of literalism from (transpersonal) experience. Perhaps it will be able to keep the fruitful tension alive between literalism and metaphor without losing the richness and vibrancy of psychological life.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves to introduce the field of transpersonal psychology and to present the central aims and overall structure of this thesis.

1.1 THE EMERGENCE OF TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Transpersonal psychology, as the fourth force in psychology, has emerged from humanistic psychology (the third force) in much the same way that humanistic approaches emerged from their behavioural and analytical foundations (Valle, 1989, p. 257).

One of the fundamental principles of humanistic psychology is that it is open to all human experience and behaviour (Bugental, 1965; Wertz, 1994). Paradoxically, however, this openness to all experience does not extend to experiences that are beyond consensual reality and the boundaries of space-time. Transpersonal psychology is an approach to human experience that, amongst other presuppositions, recognises experiences which take place beyond consensual reality as being meaningful and a part of the full range of human functioning.

1.1.1 The theoretical foundations and historical context of transpersonal psychology

During the early part of the twentieth century, Western psychology was influenced by two distinct perspectives, behaviourism and psychoanalysis. These perspectives formed the basis for clinical and experimental psychology (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993).

The perspective of behaviourism, referred to as the first force, views human experience and behaviour as a response to the stimuli of the external physical and social world. From this

viewpoint, behavioural psychologists approach individual behaviour as passive and individuals as separate from the environment. Only those dimensions of human experience and behaviour that are observable and measurable are considered to be an appropriate focus for psychological research. Accordingly, the understanding of human behaviour is limited to observable and measurable aspects of behaviour that arise primarily as a function of response, conditioning and reinforcement schedules.

Although not a direct response to the limitations of the behaviourist approach, psychoanalysis is regarded by psychologists as the second force within psychology. From within this perspective, the focus of human behaviour is less on the role of stimuli in the external world and more on the role of the unconscious forces or impulses within the internal world, as described by Freud (1916).

According to Freud (1916, 1923, 1933), this unconscious dimension comprises biographical details such as past experience, memories and emotions that have been forgotten or repressed but exert a strong influence on later adult experience and behaviour. As a consequence, psychoanalysis focuses predominantly on the biographical-recollective level of the psyche, and embraces the view that psychopathology is rooted within childhood experiences and conflicts that have been repressed because of their painful nature. Against this background, psychoanalysis contends that the consciousness of an individual develops through the integration of unconscious material with that which is conscious (Freud, 1916, 1923). Thus the goal of psychoanalysis is to liberate previously inaccessible unconscious material so that it may be dealt with consciously. Freud (1923) stated that the unconscious material remains unconscious only through considerable effort. According to Freud, as this material is made accessible through psychoanalytic techniques such as free association, psychic energy is released that can be used by the ego for healthier pursuits. In this regard, psychoanalysis suggests that it is possible to come to terms with material that has been repressed as a result of the painful feelings associated with it. "One of the tasks of psychoanalysis ... is to lift the veil of amnesia which shrouds the earliest years of childhood and bring the expressions of infantile ... life which are hidden behind into conscious memory" (Freud, 1933, p. 28). The underlying assumption of psychoanalysis is that, if one is freed from the inhibitions of the unconscious, the ego establishes new levels of satisfaction in all areas of functioning.

However, in the early 1960s, psychoanalysis was seen by some psychologists and psychiatrists such

as Maslow (1968) and Bugental (1965) to be focusing more than was appropriate on the psychopathology of human experience. Moreover, like behaviourism before it, psychoanalysis tended to ignore other dimensions of human experience such as transcendent or spiritual experiences.

Dissatisfaction with the perceived limitations of psychoanalysis led to the development of the third force of psychology, known as humanistic psychology (Aanstoos, 1994; Davidson, 1994; Maslow, 1968). While humanistic psychology acknowledges the necessity of the ego and for ego development, as espoused by psychoanalysis, its unique contribution to the understanding of human experience is the emphasis that it places on the conscious life of individuals rather than on unconscious dynamics. In addition, humanistic psychology puts forward the assumption that individuals have within themselves the potential for deliberate and conscious psychological advancement (Bugental, 1967; Maslow, 1968; Wertz, 1994). In this respect, the individual is seen as an active agent within the social environment, acting and initiating rather than passively responding. The social world becomes an important context in which behaviour and experience can be understood. May (1958) adds that the one (person or world) cannot be comprehended without the other as both co-constitute one another.

Humanistic psychologist Maslow (1970) conceptualised human experience and behaviour as being motivated towards a psychological process that he termed self-actualisation. Inherent in this process is the notion that individuals will use opportunities presented to them to realise their potential, talents and capabilities. This assertion set the (early) scene for the postulation of an innate drive towards transcendence - the experience of a spiritual and life-transforming dimension. Maslow (1971) wrote extensively about the phenomena of 'peak experiences' or transcendent experiences - intense and transformative moments in life that have a spiritual quality to them. According to Maslow, these experiences may include emotional responses to scenes or events that are inspirational and creatively challenging. Maslow was one of the early writers to describe peak experiences and their impact on an individual's psychological life. He proposed that peak experiences resulted in a heightened awareness of the sacredness of all things and of the transcendent dimensions of life even in the midst of the ordinary everyday activities. Examples of such peak experiences could include walking into a cathedral and being encapsulated by the beauty and majesty of the place, or being in awe of the pregnant silence of a forest bathed in bright

moonlight.

Maslow's (1968, 1970, 1971) work comprised one of the shifts in humanistic psychology away from a focus solely on human potential and self-actualisation to a focus on the spiritual/transcendent aspects of human experience. He argued that a new psychology was urgently needed to accommodate these spiritual/transpersonal aspects of human experience. In 1968, Maslow stated that he considered humanistic psychology

... to be transitional, a preparation for a still 'higher' Fourth Psychology, transpersonal, transhuman, centred in the cosmos rather than in human needs and interests, going beyond humanness, identity, self-actualisation and the like. We need something bigger than we are (p. iii-iv).

From this historical context a new psychology thus arose in the form of transpersonal psychology (Sutich, 1976). Its approach to human experience embraced not only the values and principles of humanistic psychology, but also experiences that went beyond the personal ego, hence the term transpersonal. Sutich (1976), together with Maslow and psychiatrists Frankl and Grof, arrived at the first definition of transpersonal psychology. The most important aspects of this approach are noted below:

Transpersonal psychology is the title of the fourth force in the field of psychology by a group of professional men and women who are interested in those ultimate human capacities and potentialities that have no place ... in behaviourist theory ... classical psychoanalytic theory ... or humanistic psychology. Transpersonal psychology is concerned with ... the scientific study of, and responsible implementation of, the findings relevant to becoming, individual and species-wide meta-needs, ultimate values, unitive consciousness, peak experiences ... mystical experiences ... transcendence of the self ... (Sutich, 1976, p. 15).

Several writers within the field of transpersonal psychology, such as Boorstein (1980), Boucouvalas (1980) and Walsh and Vaughan (1980), have presented extended definitions of this earlier definition. An analysis of these modified definitions reveals that there are several frequently

occurring themes within the field of transpersonal psychology. These themes consist of (i) states of consciousness, (ii) highest or ultimate potential, (iii) moving beyond the ego, and (iv) transcendence. Such themes collectively provide a comprehensive view of the field of transpersonal psychology as a whole. Within the discourse of transpersonal psychology, 'states of consciousness' refer to the basic assumption that there are more states of consciousness than is recognised within mainstream Western psychology. 'Highest or ultimate potential' refers to the humanistic notion that all human beings, even under adverse conditions, have the potential to reach and achieve the very best within them. The experience of 'moving beyond the ego' is defined as the experience of an extended sense of identity that is not limited to ego consciousness. 'Transcendence' is defined as the experience of moving beyond the ego towards the spiritual transpersonal dimension within. Depending on the socio-cultural context, this experience is interpreted as, for example, the encounter with 'God', 'the ultimate reality', 'cosmic consciousness', and 'the Absolute'. In the light of the themes described, an integrated definition of transpersonal psychology is offered below.

Transpersonal psychology is an orientation within the field of psychology which is concerned with the study of experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness in which the sense of identity expands beyond the usual boundaries of the personal ego or individual history and which encompass wider aspects of human life, psyche and the universe. Through the study of these experiences, transpersonal psychology endeavours to discover what the nature of consciousness is: Transpersonal psychology recognises the potential for experiencing a broad range of states of consciousness. From this position, transpersonal psychology seeks to understand the full range of human potential and functioning.

The experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness in which the sense of identity extends beyond the individual or personal ego are termed transpersonal experiences (Boorstein, 1980; Grof, 1980, 1985, 1988; Walsh & Vaughan, 1980, 1993; Wilber, 1981, 1983, 1986, 1996a). Valle (1989, p. 261) fittingly adds that by exploring transpersonal experiences "one is now addressing the full range of human nature and our ultimate capacities and potential".

1.2 THE PRINCIPLES OF TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

The principles of transpersonal psychology are embedded within, but not exclusive to, most of the major religious and philosophical concepts found in Eastern, European, and North American Indian spiritual traditions (Valle & Valle, 1984; Grof, 1984). These traditions contain what Huxley (1946, 1970) termed 'the perennial philosophy', which asserts that:

- 1) A transcendent, transconceptual reality binds all apparently separate phenomena together;
- 2) The ego is not the ground or base of human awareness, but rather only one relative reflection-manifestation of a greater transpersonal Self¹ (pure consciousness without subject or object);
- 3) Transpersonal awareness is available and accessible to each person. Such an awareness is related to the spiritual dimension of human life;
- 4) This experience represents a shift in one's mode of experiencing and involves the expansion of identity beyond the ego;
- 5) This experience is self-validating meaning that it is personally enriching and fulfilling.

Implicit in these assertions, and as indicated earlier in the themes of transpersonal psychology, is the notion that nonordinary states of consciousness permit access to realities beyond those

¹ Within the transpersonal literature, this transpersonal Self (spelt with a capital 'S'), is not the same as Jung's (1960) notion of the self (cf. Chapter Two). Some of the meanings of Jung's self are described by Redfern (1977, 1983) such as, (i) a primary cosmic unity analogous to oriental concepts of the unity of oneself with all creatures and things, (ii) the totality of the individual, (iii) the experience of, or intimation of, such a totality, an experience of wholeness, (iv) a primary organising force or agency outside the conscious 'I'. An important point is that the self as an experience of wholeness (iii) is different from the self as the conceptual totality of the individual (ii). Brooke (1991) notes that it is not always clear which of these meanings Jung intends. On the other hand, the transpersonal Self or 'Higher Self' refers to that dimension of psyche that is located within the spiritual-transcendental dimension. Characteristics of this experience of the Self is the sense of, for example, 'cosmic consciousness' or 'unitive consciousness' (Grof, 1990), or 'no-boundary consciousness' (Wilber, 1979, 1983, 1986), peak experiences (Maslow, 1970) or mystical experiences (Underhill, 1961).

recognised within traditional psychology such as everyday waking reality, dream or sleep reality.

It was William James (1890) who argued that consciousness is a fundamental aspect of life. In direct opposition to his contemporaries, who described consciousness as comprising discrete units of preceding thoughts, he argued that consciousness is like a stream, ongoing, flowing and ever-changing. However, his most notable contribution to the understanding of consciousness lies in his notion that "normal waking consciousness is but one special type of consciousness" (p. 288). It was both his concept of (a) fluidity of consciousness and (b) other types of consciousness, that foreshadowed the emergence of transpersonal psychology almost 70 years later.

1.2.1 Grof's contribution to the study of consciousness

Grof (1976, 1980, 1984, 1985, 1988, 1990), a major contributor to transpersonal psychology and one of the early researchers to systematically study the nature of consciousness, called ordinary waking consciousness the hylotropic mode of consciousness. Experiences in this mode of consciousness support basic assumptions about the world, such as

... matter is solid; two objects cannot occupy the same space; past events are irretrievably lost; future events are not experientially available; one cannot be in more than one place at a time; one can exist only in one temporal framework at a time; a whole is larger than a part; or something cannot be true and untrue at the same time (Grof, 1988, p. 239).

This is the Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm of reality in which time is linear, space is three-dimensional and events are governed by the laws of cause and effect.

On the other hand, the experience of nonordinary states of consciousness, which Grof terms the holotropic mode of consciousness, is radically different to the hylotropic mode of consciousness in that this mode of consciousness involves "the experience of oneself as a potentially unlimited field of consciousness that has access to all aspects of reality without the mediation of the senses" (p. 239). The holotropic mode of consciousness supports a paradigm that is characterised by the

assumption that

... time and space are ultimately arbitrary; the same space can be simultaneously occupied by many objects; the past and future are always available and can be brought experientially into the present moment; one can experience oneself in several places at the same time; it is possible to experience more than one temporal framework; being a part is not compatible with being the whole; something can be true and untrue at the same time (p. 240).

In the hylotropic mode of consciousness it is possible to experience only the present moment and consensual reality, which accords with the Cartesian paradigm of reality (cf. 1.3), while the holotropic mode of consciousness fails to accord with the scientific assumptions of this paradigm. Grof (1984, 1985) has argued that this scientific paradigm of reality must be replaced by an appropriate paradigm that accommodates the findings of research into the nature of consciousness. This argument is discussed later on in this chapter.

1.2.1.1 Grof's model of the human psyche

Based on his systematic research over almost four decades Grof has described the broad spectrum of experiences that individuals may encounter while in the holotropic mode of consciousness. During the early 1970s, he recorded numerous individuals' experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness, and, on this basis, he categorised the experiences into four themes according to their content. These are:

- 1) aesthetic or sensory experience;
- 2) biographical experiences;
- 3) perinatal experiences;
- 4) transpersonal experiences.

These themes form the foundation of his model of the human psyche which, unlike traditional models of the human psyche presented in psychology, psychiatry and psychotherapy, incorporates

the psyche's potential to access nonordinary states of consciousness. In this way, Grof has thus extended the earlier models of the psyche which largely ignored or pathologised nonordinary states of consciousness. This pathologising of nonordinary states of consciousness by traditional psychology, psychiatry and psychotherapy is addressed in more detail in Chapter Two.

Implicit in transpersonal psychology is the belief in the healing and transformative potential of nonordinary states of consciousness in which transpersonal experiences emerge. It is for this reason that Grof asserts that knowledge of this model is indispensable for serious, safe and effective inner work.

Grof's (1988) model of the human psyche includes the biographical-recollective level, as described by the traditional perspectives of psychology such as psychoanalysis, and two additional levels or domains that are transbiographical. These are the perinatal level, characterised by emphases on the birth process and its symbolic connection to archetypal aspects of birth and death, and the transpersonal level that can in principle, according to Grof, mediate an experiential connection with any aspect of the phenomenal world, as well as with various mythological and archetypal domains.

The experiences within the two transbiographical domains may be activated by various nondrug induced methods such as intensive meditation, sleep deprivation, drumming, chanting, sensory overload, fasting or monotonous dancing. Grof (1988) maintains that various forms of deep experiential psychotherapy such as primal therapy, neo-Reichian work, Gestalt practice, rebirthing and a technique he has termed Holotropic breathwork (cf. Chapter Two) may also induce a nonordinary state of consciousness and lead to an experience within the transbiographical level of the psyche.

The model functions as an appropriate hermeneutic lens through which to understand the case material documented in Chapter Five. As the focus of this research is primarily on the experiences within the transpersonal domain of the psyche, the perinatal domain of the psyche will only be mentioned briefly.

(A) The perinatal domain of the psyche

Grof (1988) writes that the perinatal domain of the psyche comprises the early memories of biological birth. Conventionally, medical science has dismissed the possibility of such early memories. However, there is accumulating evidence of the authenticity of literal memories of the birth process (Chamberlain, 1990; Verney, 1981). The concern here is not so much about their literalism, but rather about their psychological significance and metaphoric presence. As such, these experiences may take on mythological and symbolic overtones. Such symbolic experiences tend to reveal themselves in four experiential patterns or thematic clusters termed perinatal matrices. These perinatal matrices correspond to the clinical stages of biological birth. The four perinatal matrices are each characterised by the respective themes of: the amniotic universe, cosmic engulfment and no exit, the death and the rebirth struggle.

According to Grof these themes centre on and involve sequences of symbolic death and rebirth which have powerful therapeutic effects on emotional and psychosomatic problems. Moreover, Grof maintains that clients experiencing this level of the unconscious report dramatic inner shifts and healing as well as new insights into their own personal conflicts and everyday problems.

Grof (1988, p. 10) asserts that:

Deep experiential encounter with birth and death is typically associated with an existential crisis of extraordinary proportions during which the individual seriously questions the meaning of his or her life and existence in general. This crisis can be successfully resolved only by connecting with the intrinsic spiritual dimension of the psyche and deep resources of the collective unconscious.

(B) The transpersonal domain of the psyche

Transpersonal experiences cover a wide range of phenomena, and Grof (1988, p. 39) argues that it is possible to

... reach ... all the remaining aspects of existence. These include not only access to one's biographical, psychological, social, racial, and spiritual history, and the past,

present and future of the entire phenomenal world, but access to other levels and domains of reality described by the great mystical traditions of the world.

Grof (1988) documents these experiences and has divided them into three main categories according to their content.

(a) The first category, 'experiential extension within consensus reality and space-time', comprises experiences which involve transcendence of spatial barriers and include the experience of the boundaries between individuals and the universe as not being fixed and absolute. Examples of this type of experience are; (i) experiences of 'dual reality' - an experience in which the normally perceived boundaries of the ego are felt to be transcended, (ii) a sense of merging with another person into a state of unity, (iii) the identification with other persons or even animals and plants or botanical processes, (iv) experiences of transcendence of linear time. Such experiences may involve foetal or embryonic memories and ancestral experiences which are characterised by a strong sense of historical regression to periods preceding the individual's conception. In this category is also found the experience of past-life (described fully later).

(b) In the second category, 'experiential extension beyond consensus reality', consciousness seems to go beyond the phenomenal world and the space-time continuum as we ordinarily perceive it in our everyday life. In this category are found experiences such as communication with the dead or experiences of the chakras and the Kundalini awakening (cf. Chapter Two), auras, and other subtle energy manifestations. Other experiences in this category involve spirit guides² in animal or human form and various superhuman entities. On occasion, individuals may experience adventures that seem to be in universes beyond our own. Also included in this category are experiences of

² Individuals who encounter 'spirit guides' (cf. Chapters Two and Five) experience them as beings that exist on a higher level of consciousness. These beings or spirit guides may appear unexpectedly as a source of radiant light or energy. Sometimes the spirit guides are reported to have a human form with a distinctly numinous quality (Grof, 1988).

Wilber (1979, 1980, 1981, 1983, 1986, 1996a) is a major contributor to transpersonal psychology in general and to research into the nature of consciousness specifically. It is not within the scope of this thesis to detail all of his extensive work, but the main principles of his developmental model - the 'spectrum of consciousness' - are described below. The goal in presenting his model is to highlight the role of consciousness in psychological development, which includes transpersonal development.

Wilber (1986) has described the entire spectrum of consciousness in a single, integrated developmental model of consciousness. His fundamental notion is that consciousness itself develops or evolves from one state to another, and in this respect, his developmental model of consciousness maps out human growth and development. This model has been described and modified in several books and articles (1977, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1983). The model, in part, mirrors psychological development of individuals as described in Western psychology. It is thus an attempt to reconcile conventional Western models of psychological growth and development with contemplative schools of thought on human development. The underlying assumption of such a model is the description of the psyche as multi-layered, composed of successively higher ordered wholes and of integration of the preceding levels; consciousness evolves or transforms in a linear process of "hierarchisation" in which it becomes increasingly complex. As this occurs, there are emergent properties or characteristics at each new level that are not evident in the less complex level below it. This assumption of the increasing complexity and differentiation of consciousness penetrates his various states of consciousness.

According to Wilber (1980), consciousness develops in two interrelated processes. First, there is the outward arc which is the process of personal, ego development from subconsciousness to self-consciousness. Wilber describes this as the process from undifferentiated consciousness (of the new born) to differentiation between the infant and the surrounding world. This differentiation increases as the infant grows, gradually resulting in the development of the sense of a separate body-ego self. The second major process is the inner arc which is comprised of the development of transpersonal spiritual awareness and identity. In this process consciousness extends beyond the body-ego self into various levels or realms of consciousness, as similarly described by Grof (1984, 1985, 1988, 1990).

Wilber's model contains, in addition to the traditional Western notions of development (affective, cognitive, moral), several other levels of development through which each of these traditional notions of development may progress. However, before describing the other levels that Wilber envisions, it is noted that in his 1986 publication he limits these levels to nine since he believes they are the most basic and central levels (described shortly). Three each are found in the prepersonal (levels one to three), personal (levels four to six) and transpersonal (levels seven to nine) realms. He writes, "this presentation reflects my growing conviction that developmental theory can benefit from the contribution of both conventional psychodynamic concepts and transpersonal approaches" (1986, p. 66).

In this developmental model of consciousness, Wilber (1986) differentiates between basic structures and transition structures (or self-stages/transition stages) of the psyche. The basic structures are "those structures that, once they emerge in development, tend to remain in existence as relatively autonomous units or sub-units in the course of subsequent development" (p. 67); while transition structures are "phase-specific" and thus temporary, tending to be replaced by subsequent phases of development (p. 67). In this light, the basic structures tend to "remain in existence" in the life of the individual during subsequent development (p. 67). Even though it is eventually transcended and subordinated by the individual's development or movement to higher basic structures, each basic structure however, retains "a relative autonomy and functional independence" (p. 68). The basic structures of consciousness are, in effect, what is known as the Great Chain of Being (Smith, 1976). Wilber points out that some versions of the Great Chain give only two levels (matter and spirit), others give three (matter, mind and spirit), still others give four or five (matter, body, mind, soul and spirit). Some give many more (p. 68). He further suggests that some basic structures seem to be cross-cultural and universal. Inherent in his model is the idea that consciousness develops through a series of stages.

Below are described the nine levels that comprise Wilber's (1986, p. 67ff) model of consciousness; all nine levels represent basic structures:

1. Sensoriophysical - the realms of matter, sensation, and perception (the first three Buddhist skandhas); Piaget's sensorimotor level, Aurobindo's physical-sensory.

2. Phantasmic-emotional - the emotional-sexual level (the sheath of bioenergy, elan vital, libido, or prana; the fourth Buddhist skandha, the pranamayakosa in Vedanta), and the phantasmic level (Arieti's (1967) term for the lower or image mind, the simplest form of mental "picturing" using only images).

3. Rep-mind - an abbreviation for "representational mind," or Piaget's preoperational thinking ("preop"). The rep-mind develops in two stages - that of symbols (two to four years), and that of concepts (four to seven years) (Arieti, 1967; Piaget, 1977). A symbol goes beyond a simple image (the phantasmic mind) in this essential respect: an image represents an object pictorially, while a symbol can represent it non-pictorially or verbally. Thus, for example, the mental image of a tree looks more or less like a real tree, whereas the word-symbol "t-r-e-e" does not look like a tree at all; symbolic representation is a higher, more difficult, and more sophisticated cognitive operation. A concept is a symbol that represents, not just one object or act, but a class of objects or acts - an even more difficult cognitive task. A symbol denotes; a concept connotes. But no matter how advanced the rep-mind is over its phantasmic predecessor, one of its most striking features is that it cannot easily take the role of other. It is, as Piaget would say, still very egocentric. This is very similar to Aurobindo's "will-mind", the third chakra⁴ in Yoga psychology, etc.

4. Rule/role mind - This is, for example, Piaget's concrete operational thinking ("conop"). Conop, unlike its rep-mind predecessor, can begin to take the role of others. It is also the first structure that can clearly perform rule operations, such as multiplication, division, class inclusion, hierarchization, etc. (Flavell, 1970; Piaget, 1977). Aurobindo describes this structure as the mind that operates on sensory or concrete objects - very similar to Piaget.

⁴ The third chakra is one of seven dominant chakras or energy centres that form the chakra system within the body as described by Eastern traditions, such as Tibetan Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoist Yoga, Tantric Yoga, Korean Zen and Sufism. Details of this chakra and the other chakras can be found in the following chapter.

5. Formal-reflexive mind - This is essentially Piaget's formal operational thinking ("formop"). It is the first structure that can not only think about the world but think about thinking; hence, it is the first structure that is clearly self-reflexive and introspective (although this begins in rudimentary form with the rule/role mind). It is also the first structure capable of hypothetico-deductive or propositional reasoning ("if a, then b"), which, among other things, allows it to take genuinely pluralistic and more universal views (Flavell, 1970; Piaget, 1977; Wilber, 1982). Aurobindo calls this level the "reasoning mind", a mind that is not bound to sensory or concrete objects, but instead apprehends and operates on relationships (which are not "things").

6. Vision-logic - Numerous psychologists (e.g., Bruner, Flavell, Arieti) have pointed out that there is much evidence for a cognitive structure beyond or higher than Piaget's "formal operational." It has been called "dialectical," "integrative," "creative synthetic," and so forth. I prefer the term "vision-logic." In any case, it appears that whereas the formal mind establishes relationships, vision-logic establishes networks of those relationships (i.e., just as formop "operates on" conop, so vision-logic "operates on" formop). Such vision or panoramic logic apprehends a mass network of ideas, how they influence each other and interrelate. It is thus the beginning of truly higher-order synthesizing capacity, of making connections, relating truths, coordinating ideas, integrating concepts. Interestingly, this is almost exactly what Aurobindo called "the higher mind," which "can freely express itself in single ideas, but its most characteristic movement is a mass ideation, a system or totality of truth-seeing at a single view; the relations of idea with idea, of truth with truth, self-seen in the integral whole." This, obviously, is a highly integrative structure; indeed, in my opinion it is the highest integrative structure in the personal realm; beyond it lie transpersonal developments.

7. Psychic - The psychic level may be thought of as the culmination of vision-logic and visionary insight; it is perhaps best epitomized by the sixth chakra - the "third

eye"⁵: the individual's cognitive and perceptual capacities begin to "reach beyond" any narrowly personal or individual perspectives and concerns. According to most contemplative traditions, at this level an individual begins to learn to very subtly inspect the mind's cognitive and perceptual capacities, and thus to that extent begins to transcend them. This is Aurobindo's "illuminated mind," the "preliminary stages" of meditation in Hinduism and Buddhism.

8. Subtle - The subtle level is said to be the seat of actual archetypes, of Platonic Forms, of subtle sounds and audible illuminations (nada, shabd), of transcendent insight and absorption (Aurobindo; Da Free John, 1977; Evans-Wentz, 1971; Guenon, 1945; Rieker, 1971). Some traditions, such as Hinduism and Gnosticism, claim that, according to direct phenomenological apprehension, this level is the home of personal deity-form (ishtadeva in Hinduism, yidam in Mahayana, demiurge in Gnosticism, etc.), recognised in a state known as savikalpa samadhi in Hinduism (Blofeld, 1970; Hixon, 1978; Jonas, 1958). In Theravadin Buddhism, this is the realm of the four "jhanas with form," or the four stages of concentrative meditation into archetypal "planes of illumination" or "Brahma realms." In Vipassana meditation, this is the stage-realm of pseudonirvana, the realm of illumination and rapture and initial transcendental insight (Goleman, 1977; Nyanamoli, 1976). It is Aurobindo's "intuitive mind"; geburah and chesed in Kabbalah.

9. Causal - The causal level is said to be the unmanifest source or transcendental ground of all the lesser structures; The Abyss (Gnosticism), the Void (Mahayana), the Formless (Vedanta) (Chang, 1974; Deutsche, 1969; Jonas, 1958). It is realized in a state of consciousness known variously as nirvikalpa samadhi (Hinduism), jnana samadhi (Vedanta), the eighth of the ten ox-herding pictures (Zen); the seventh and eighth jhanas; the stage of effortless insight culminating in nirvana (vipassana); Aurobindo's "Overmind" (Da Free John, 1977; Goleman, 1977; Guenon, 1945; Kapleau, 1965; Taimni, 1975). Alternatively, this stage is

⁵ The sixth chakra or 'third eye' is said to mark the beginning or opening of transcendental, transpersonal, or contemplative development. This chakra, like the third chakra mentioned earlier, is part of the Eastern notion of the chakra system, and is also described in the following chapter.

On experiencing this level of consciousness, "the individual comes to feel, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that he is fundamentally one with the entire universe" (Wilber, 1979, p. 3). This experience accords with aspects of the perennial philosophy described by Huxley (1946), and documented earlier; namely, that there is a transcendent, transconceptual reality that binds all apparently separate phenomena together.

Wilber (1980, 1981, 1986) has mapped out phenomena that may be experienced within the transpersonal level of consciousness; for instance, experiences of precognition, out-of-body experiences (OBEs); or auras relating to the chakra system (cf. Chapter Two). The description of these transpersonal experiences is similar to Grof's description of the wide range of transpersonal experiences which he has categorised into three main groupings, described in his model of the human psyche.

With regard to the transition stages or self-stages in Wilber's model, these are not included and subsumed in subsequent development but tend instead to be negated, dissolved, or replaced by subsequent development (p. 75). Wilber gives the example of Piaget's cognitive structures as basic structures (sensorimotor is level one to two, preoperational is level three, concrete operational is level four, and formal operation is level five). These levels, once they have emerged, remain in existence during subsequent development. In contrast, Kohlberg's (1981) moral stages of development are "phase-specific" transition structures. For example, moral stage three replaces stage two, which replaces stage one.

One of the underlying assumptions of Wilber's model is that the sense of self (self-system) transforms, as indicated earlier. For example, at the earlier levels of development "the self is the locus of identification", the locus of that which is "me" versus "not me" (1986, p. 78). The self then develops further and becomes "the process of organising". Thus, the self is not merely a synthesis of the underlying psychic parts or substructures, but an independent organising principle. This perspective is similar to Jung's (1960) notion of the self (see footnote one and cf. Chapter Two).

According to Wilber (1980, 1981, 1983, 1986), at any stage of development, the self is confronted with choices or directional pulls. For example, on the one hand, it can (within limits) choose to

remain on its present level of development, or it can choose to "release its present level in favour of another" (1986, p. 78). In other words, if the self is to develop, it must release or negate its exclusive identification with its present basic level in order to identify with the next higher level in the developmental ladder. Once it has dis-identified from an exclusive involvement with that level, and ascended to the next developmental stage, Wilber (1986) stresses that a new and phase-specific self-stage emerges and a new self-sense and new self-needs consequently develop. However, the lower self-stage remains in existence as a "necessary rung in the ladder of consciousness", but is "integrated into the overall newly configured individual" (p. 81). Wilber states that on the new level the self seeks consolidation and preservation until it is able once again to negate that level as well, transcend (release) it and ascend to the next higher level.

The notion of the development of the self is central to Western developmental psychology, particularly those schools known as object-relations, self-psychology and psychoanalytic ego psychology. For example, in addition to Piaget's (1977) work, the work of Mahler's (1975) 'infant development', or Blanck's and Blanck's (1974, 1979) 'fulcrum of development' have been pivotal in furthering the understanding of early stages of self-development. The significant contribution of Wilber's spectrum of consciousness model to transpersonal psychology is that Wilber uses mainstream psychological concepts as building blocks towards his ideas of transpersonal development, as well as demonstrating that self-development is but one stage of development.

Wilber's spectrum of consciousness or developmental model of consciousness is a linear model of evolution and development. As such, it fails to match the frequently described process of inner growth in which change is not linear. Both Jung (1939) and Grof (1985) have shown that it is quite common for so-called "dealt with" issues of psychological growth to resurface or return and to be confronted again. They suggest that development is not linear but rather that it is circular - the individual will often return to earlier processes and work with them at a finer or more subtle level.

Another criticism that can be levelled against Wilber's model is that he uses ideas, words and concepts from other traditions such as Hinduism, sometimes out of context or without reference to their origins. For example, on p. 101 in his 1980 publication, the term Atman (the Hindu concept of the eternal Self) is used in conjunction with the term sunyata (a Buddhist term relating to the impermanence of all things, including the Self). In this regard, the tradition of hermeneutics in

psychology demands that ideas and concepts have meaning only within a given tradition. As Frager (1989) points out, to set up an arbitrary system of universal categories is to risk violating the unique meanings of individual traditions.

1.2.3 Tart's contribution to the study of consciousness

The notion of the existence of extended areas of consciousness beyond the ego is also postulated by Tart (1971, 1975), who is a major contributor to research into the nature of consciousness. Tart uses the term altered states of consciousness (ASC) rather than nonordinary states of consciousness to describe consciousness experienced beyond the personal ego. Based on his research (1971) he has described and recorded ASC experiences that corroborate Grof's description of experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness, such as space-time transcendence, mystical and peak experiences, nonphysical kinds of energy flowing through the body, identification with others and the experience of total unity with the universe. He asserts that the experiences of ASC "are of extreme importance in creating a philosophy and a style of life" (1975, p. 12). He further adds that, because of the transcendent nature of these experiences, they represent a serious challenge to the assumptions that create the consensual reality of the Western scientific world. Such a reality "fails to adequately deal with human experience in the realm we call spiritual, that vast realm of human potential dealing with ultimate purposes, with higher entities, with God, with love, with compassion, with purpose" (p. 4).

Tart (1975) contends that science, although not adequately dealing with transpersonal phenomena, as a method of sharpening and refining knowledge can be applied to human spiritual experiences that could result in a "scientific transpersonal psychology, or psychologies" (p. 4). Like Grof (1984), Tart (1975) views transpersonal psychology as moving towards the goal of bridging the gap between science and spiritual experience. Furthermore, like Grof and Wilber, Tart declares that experiences of consciousness beyond waking consciousness or sleep or dream states give access to a particular reality that has been observed for centuries in the rich heritage of Eastern spiritual traditions and disciplines. Tart states that, "Western psychology has dealt very poorly with the spiritual side of men's nature, choosing to either ignore its existence or to label it pathological ... Our culture, our psychology, has ruled out man's spiritual nature" (p. 5). In the context of this

statement, Western psychology and culture need to re-claim a spirituality that is based on direct experience of ultimate or unity consciousness, a spiritual experience that transcends religious Western dogma. In this regard, transpersonal psychology is a movement towards providing a paradigm or set of assumptions about the nature of reality; the nature of consciousness.

The transpersonal assumption that nonordinary states of consciousness give rise to the experience of dimensions of reality beyond consensual reality is supported by non Western shamanic traditions (Harner, 1980; Kalweit, 1988, 1989; Knight, 1996a, 1996c; Walsh, 1989). Traditions such as the shamanic traditions have used ancient methods of transforming consciousness in order to access other forms of reality which are regarded in many cultures as important dimensions of existence, and sources of healing and spiritual development.

"Shamanism is one of humankind's most ancient traditions" (Walsh, 1989, p.13). Archaeologists have indicated that this tradition spans thousands of years (Eliade, 1964). Throughout the centuries in which shamanism is thought to have existed, shamans and shamanic cultures have become familiar with accessing nonordinary states of consciousness, or the "shamanic state of consciousness" (SSC) as described by Harner (1980). The SSC can be induced by a wide variety of conditions, suggesting that there may be an inherent tendency to experience transcendence. These conditions may include isolation, sleep deprivation, starvation, sweat lodges, or rhythmic sounds.

Like Grof (1988, 1990), both Walsh (1989) and Harner (1980) assert that experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness reveal realities that are not scientifically validated. However, Walsh stresses the phenomenological approach to experience - to accept direct experience as a truth. In other words, there is a fundamental need to recognise the validity claims of lived-experience. From within this perspective, shamanic cultures that practice the entry into the SSC adhere to the perennial philosophy of a transcendent, transconceptual reality that binds all apparently separate phenomena, and that the ego is not the only ground of human awareness.

The contribution, however, of Western psychology to understanding the SSC has traditionally been a negative one. Psychoanalysis has viewed religious experiences as expressions of defense mechanisms at best, or severe pathology at worst (Walsh, 1989). Transcendent experiences of the shaman reported by psychoanalytically informed anthropologists have often been regarded as

pathological regressions of near-psychotic proportions. Since shamans may exhibit periods of bizarre behaviour, claim to commune with spirits, or have visions, they have often been dismissed as psychologically disturbed by some psychologists and anthropologists. However, Walsh (1989) points out that the emergent schools of psychology such as humanistic, transpersonal and Jungian orientated psychologies, have a more sympathetic approach to shamans and to spiritual experience.

The focus of transpersonal psychology on experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness does not imply that transpersonal psychology advocates the discarding of 'our humanness', but rather emphasises that there is more to being human than the emotions felt, the events experienced and the thoughts created. In this respect, transpersonal psychology recognises that human experience and existence are not located within the humanness of daily life only, but "call us through and beyond our more familiar level of ego awareness to a critical examination of the very ground from which our behaviours, thoughts and emotions emerge as forms or manifestations" (Valle, 1989, p. 262).

May (1986), however, asserts that the term transpersonal implies "that we can leap across the negative aspects of human behaviour" (p. 88) and that, thereby, transpersonal psychology naively aims to avoid and transcend the negative aspects of human nature. In response, Valle (1989) states that "to truly understand the nature of the human individual one must first acknowledge the full range of our humanness, which includes our negative aspects, our positive aspects and the phenomena that are beyond the personal" (1989, p. 262).

Transpersonal psychology does not imply, therefore, that there is a 'spiritual bypassing' (Vaughan, 1991) of the negative aspects of human experience and behaviour. Rather, as Valle (1989) maintains, transpersonal psychology includes the notion that in order to understand the full range of humanness one must also embrace the negative aspects of the psyche [(Jung's 1916, 1917, 1927, 1943 shadow)] as well as the positive aspects. Only from within this broader transpersonal perspective can one begin to understand the true nature of any human experience or motivation and "it is from this perspective that transpersonal psychologists question and examine all aspects of human nature, not only what we hide in the darkness of our shadow but that which makes us noble and good as well" (Valle, 1989, p. 262).

1.3 PHILOSOPHICAL CHALLENGES TO THE CARTESIAN PARADIGM OF WESTERN SCIENCE

Grof (1988, p. 160) argues that "transpersonal experiences ... shatter the most fundamental assumptions of materialistic science and of the mechanistic worldview". Likewise, Harman (1988), Harner (1980), Walsh (1989), Walsh and Vaughan (1980), and Wilber (1983) have observed that experiences of transcendence violate some of the most basic assumptions of Western science.

The main assumptions underlying the Cartesian paradigm of Western science were formulated in the seventeenth century by Decartes, Newton and Bacon. It is characterised by three fundamental assumptions.

- (a) The objectivist assumption: That there is an objective universe, more or less separate from and independent of the observer, which can be explored by external probes of scientific enquiry and which can be approximated, progressively more precisely, by analytic models.
- (b) The positivist assumption: That which is scientifically real must take as its basic data only that which is physically observable.
- (c) The reductionist assumption: That scientific explanation consists of explaining complex phenomena in terms of more elemental events (for example, gas temperature in terms of the motions of molecules).

These three assumptions have arguably shaped and influenced modern science as well as modern society since the seventeenth century. Its formative aims for the past three centuries have been prediction and control and the consequent ability to manipulate and transform the physical environment.

Underlying these assumptions is a prevailing image and common belief about the world and the nature of reality, hence the term paradigm of reality. A paradigm is defined as a set of assumptions or values shared by members of a scientific community (Kuhn, 1962).

Reality as described by the scientific paradigm emerged out of a world that was perceived in a fundamentally different way - the world of Medieval society. For a person living in the medieval era, the world was enchanted, infused with spirit, alive and wondrous. Human beings were not separate from nature and the cosmos was a place of belonging. The earth as the centre of the cosmos was the seat of the seasons of change and transformation. "Above it circle the planets and the stars, themselves pure and unchanging, moved by divine spirits and signalling and influencing human events by their locations and aspects" (Harman, 1988, p. 19). The universe was perceived to be alive, meaningful and imbued with purpose. All was interconnected in a web of life, death and rebirth - all were part of an everchanging network of nature. There was no separation from nature and from the divinity within nature, symbolised as the archetypal image of the Mother goddess. The working of enchantments, the occurrence of miracles, the presence of witches and other beings with supernatural powers is assumed to be real, magical, divine and containing the power to give and withhold life (Harman, 1988).

This description of reality may be related to the discourse of Western Romanticism⁶. Romanticism owes its ideological allegiance to the work of nineteenth century Romantic poets such as Novalis and Schelling (Avens, 1982; Choron, 1963; Jaffe, 1989). The essential vision of Romanticism and Romantic literature is that it embraces the transcendent and the metaphysical, in contradistinction to the scientific emphasis on the concrete and observable (Welman, 1995).

The associated paradigm of reality of Medieval society was displaced in the seventeenth century by the scientific revolution which gave way to the scientific paradigm of reality. The scientific paradigm describes a world perceived in the same way as the one perceived today; a world with an essentially dead universe with events accounted for not by the gods but by mechanical forces and laws of cause and effect. In this paradigm, human beings are separate from nature, controlling and dominating nature. "It was not just that men now believed that the earth goes around the sun, or even that the web of meaning had been displaced. The change was far more fundamental. It essentially consisted of a different perceived universe and a different basis on which truth is to be decided" (Harman, 1988, p. 19). It was a paradigm shift to a new authoritative system of empirical

⁶ Given the confines of this thesis, it is neither possible nor necessary to consider Romantic literature in detail.

science, a shift that transformed the Western world.

Inherent in the scientific paradigm is the prevailing metaphysical assumption that the "basic stuff" of the universe is matter-energy. Whatever consciousness is, it emerged out of matter, i.e., consciousness is an epiphenomenon of matter. (Capra, 1976; Grof, 1980, 1985, 1988; Harman, 1988; Sheldrake, 1988).

Although the Cartesian scientific paradigm has been successful in yielding technological and predictive successes, and gained, as a consequence, prestige and authority, Harman (1988, p. 13) points out that "it is devoid of meaning and largely lacks a relationship to the profound spiritual insights of thousands of years of human experience".

The implication of the scientific paradigm is that it excludes certain aspects of human experience, or seems unable to deal adequately with various areas of human experience. For example,

- * Complex instinctual behaviours of organisms that appear to require teleological explanations.
- * Behaviours of humans and other organisms that imply a choosing "self" - volition, intention, paying attention, comprehension, and so forth.
- * The realm of social organisation and social action and the underlying meaning systems of social groupings and societies.
- * Self-awareness, conscious awareness.
- * Creativity, intuition and other experiences that imply an unconscious "self" or component of the "self", or perhaps a "higher self".
- * Reported phenomena involving consciousness or mind that "don't fit" - for example, the paranormal such as clairvoyant "remote viewing", psychokinesis.

(Harner, 1988, p. 14).

Since the documentation of the unconscious within Western society in general, and psychology in particular, it has been apparent that Western Cartesian science, like any other belief system or paradigm, could be fundamentally mistaken.

Within transpersonal psychology, transpersonal experiences present a serious challenge to the metatheoretical level of the scientific paradigm with regard to the nature of reality and the nature of knowledge. Characteristic of transpersonal experiences is that they transcend all limits of ordinary and everyday working consciousness (Grof, 1976 1980, 1985, 1988, 1990; Harner, 1980; Kalweit, 1988, 1989; Maslow, 1970, 1971; Tart, 1975; Walsh, 1989; Walsh & Vaughan, 1980, 1993; Wilber, 1979, 1980, 1983). Due to this ability, transpersonal experiences cannot be integrated or accounted for in the scientific paradigm of Western reality. These experiences are not considered "real" within the scientific paradigm and are reduced to, as Grof (1988, p. 160) states, "irrelevant products of the imagination or as erratic phantasmagoria generated by pathological processes in the brain". Such attempts by the scientific paradigm to deal with transpersonal experiences are inadequate (Grof, 1976, 1980, 1984, 1985, 1988, 1990; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993; Wilber, 1983). In normal waking consciousness (hylotropic mode of consciousness), these experiences appear bizarre, but if they are conceptualised within a reality that extends beyond the limits of the reality described by Cartesian science, then they 'make sense', and are recognised as evidence that the nature of reality includes more than that which has been described for the past three centuries. Consequently, the experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness (holotropic mode of consciousness) imply that certain aspects of the nature of knowledge, as presented in Western societies dominated by the scientific paradigm, need to be reconsidered. For example, in the research of Grof (1988), Grof has demonstrated that some of the various types of transpersonal experiences (described earlier) allow experiential access to the future, while Cartesian science denies the possibility of experiencing the future. Another set of transpersonal experiences allows experiential access to a level of consciousness in which the sense of identity is experienced in more than one place at a time, contrary to the assumption of the scientific paradigm that one cannot be in more than one place at a time or exist in more than one temporal framework at a time.

The inadequacy of the scientific paradigm to deal with human experience and experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness has produced an imperative:

It is impossible to create a well-working society and a knowledge base that is fundamentally inadequate, seriously incomplete, and mistaken in basic assumptions. Yet that is precisely what the modern world has been trying to do (Harman, 1988, p. 20).

Its effect was to undermine the common religious and spiritual experiences that individuals based their values and life meanings upon and to replace it with moral relativism. Into the vacuum came pseudovalues - material progress, efficiency and productivity. Decisions, that would affect the lives of all people in Western societies, were made on the basis of short-term economic considerations. The technological drive to develop and apply technology that would result in profit now came to endanger both the life supportive systems of the earth and human civilization (Harner, 1988; Houston, 1987; Metzner, 1990, 1993). The realisation that Cartesian science seems to have missed important aspects of human experience is not only becoming evident within transpersonal psychology but within both the scientific community and broader Western society. Within these two areas there are indications of a re-examination of the long accepted tacit metaphysical assumptions of modern society. This is evident in the research of Bohm (1980), Capra (1976), Chopra (1989), Ferguson (1980), Houston (1987), Huxley (1973), James (1958), LeShan (1966) and Sheldrake (1988).

Common to the research of these theorists is the metaphysical assumption that the ultimate foundation and make up (the "ultimate stuff") of the universe is consciousness. Mind or consciousness is primary, and matter-energy arises out of consciousness. The principle implication is that human minds are not separate but share and connect at some level not accessible to ordinary waking consciousness.

Furthermore, evident in their research is a shift towards a new paradigm of reality, a reformulated science which is inclusive of aspects of human experience, such as those described earlier by Harman (1988) and experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness, traditionally excluded or not adequately dealt with. There comes a time "when recognition of the limitations of a great paradigm gives rise to a search for a new paradigm" (Frager, 1989, p. 296). At such a time, a new paradigm needs to develop that will accommodate new discoveries and new data. Like the scientific revolution of three centuries ago, this shift is assumed by these theorists to potentially transform Western cultural images and perceptions of reality. Kuhn (1962) stresses that the acceptance of a new paradigm involves a new way of seeing, and as such there may be resistance to the new paradigm from those attached to the old one. Kuhn warns that as these two paradigms operate on different assumptions, there may be fundamental disagreement concerning the nature and definition of reality. At the present time this shift includes an increasingly widening group of

people who are discovering that their experienced reality is not what they have been led to believe by the established authorities.

1.4 THE CONTRIBUTION OF JUNG'S WORK TO TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Implicit in the research of Grof is the notion that some of the transpersonal experiences that emerge through the vehicle of nonordinary states of consciousness may be archetypal in nature - revealing universal patterns and motifs. Grof situates the notion of the archetype in his idea of the systems of condensed experience - COEX. The COEX is an extension of Jung's concept of the complex. In order to contextualise both the concept of the COEX and the complex, Jung's (1919) notions of the collective unconscious and the archetype are described below.

1.4.1 The collective unconscious

Jung (1919) conceptualised that part of the psyche which is common to all, or shared with others, as the collective unconscious. He (1919) described the collective unconscious as containing the spiritual heritage of mankind's evolution and posited that it is born anew in every individual. Jung (1917) originally described the collective unconscious as the transpersonal unconscious, because it served as a reservoir of all human experience that was accessible to almost all people. In this sense, the term collective unconscious "is a hypothetical construct intended to account for the great structural similarity in behaviour and experience across cultures and times where this similarity cannot be put down to 'learning'" (Brooke, 1991, p. 15). The implication of this concept is that there exists a part of the psyche which contains the possibilities for the typical patterns of response that reach back into our phylogenetic past. In this light, Jung's collective unconscious suggests that "nothing in the psyche is ever lost." He wrote that the psyche is

... not of today, it's capacity goes back many millions of years. Individual consciousness is only the flower and fruit of a season, sprung from a perennial rhizome beneath the earth, and it would find itself in better accordance with the truth if it took the existence of the rhizome into its calculations, for the root matter

is the matter of all things (Jung, 1936, p. 42).

Jung (1919, 1921) posited the idea that the shared repository of the experience of the human race was experienced through universal patterns or archetypes. In other words, the contents of the collective unconscious are archetypes.

1.4.2 The concept of the archetype

In his 1919 paper, Instinct and the Unconscious, Jung introduced the psychological notion of archetype as being not so much an image but rather a form or structure. He postulated that as structures within the unconscious the archetypes are inherited, revealing "truths that belong to no time" (Jung 1928, p. 190). Jung noted that archetypes express something of the ancestry of human history and experience, and are to be understood as the sources of typical patterns of human behaviour and experience. Jung, however, emphasised that archetypes as structures do not carry content (images and memories). Accordingly, archetypes in themselves do not contain meaning; meaning emerges only in the ways in which they influence or affect human consciousness (Jung, 1934/54). In this regard, he made a conceptual distinction between the archetype as such, that is as a potentiality, (the structural form), and the archetypal image, or variety of images, that give it expression, that is, the content (Jung, 1947). Thus, although the archetype itself is inherited, the image is not. In this respect, for any archetype there emerges a wide variety of archetypal images, and this reflects "the different cultural and historical settings in which the archetype is realised" (Brooke, 1991, p. 16).

As potentiality, the archetype as such becomes the "transcendent and hence ultimately unknowable factor" (Welman, 1995, p. 49), which "never was conscious and never will be. It was, and still is, only interpreted" (Jung, 1940, p. 156). The archetype serves as a blueprint for psychological development, acting on and shaping experience in typically human ways, and as such, the archetype structures 'imaginative activity' according to particular patterns of human experience and development (Welman, 1995). Brooke (1991) points out that in this light archetypes are relatively unchanging structures within the psyche (they contain no personal experience), but are 'filled out' or actualised through the contingencies of personal and cultural experience. Jung (1947/54, p. 346)

maintained that:

The unconscious supplies as it were the archetypal form, which is itself empty and irrepresentable. Consciousness immediately fills it with related or similar representational material so that it can be perceived. For this reason archetypal ideas are locally, temporally, and individually conditioned.

To speak of 'archetypal experience' therefore implies the articulation of primordial possibilities of being in the lived world. In principle, the archetype can never be experienced. Jung (1947/54, p. 213) stated:

The archetypal representations (images and ideas) mediated to us by the unconscious should not be confused with the archetype as such. They are varied structures that all point back to one essential 'irrepresentable' basic form. The latter is grasped at by certain fundamental meanings, although these can only be grasped at approximately. The archetype as such is a psychoid factor that ... does not appear, in itself, to be capable of reaching consciousness.

Put differently, these primordial possibilities are mediated through archetypal images (Sullivan, 1989; Welman, 1995). Brooke (1991) points out that because the archetypes are those patterns of behaviour and experience that are 'passed on through phylogenic history', they may be realised in typical or universal situations; for example, childbirth, initiation, menstruation, marriage, death, dawn and dusk, spring and summer, and abandonment, grief and loss. However, Brooke cautions that the archetype, like the collective unconscious, is a theoretical construct used to account for the typicalities in human themes and images that cluster around human experience and existence, whether in the dreams of modern day societies in various cultures across the world, in children's drawings, or in the delusions of mentally ill people. "Their existence is inferred on the basis of their effects, and the essential core meanings within them remain an unfathomable mystery" (p. 16). Thus, even the interpretation of the meaning of an archetypal image is only an approximation of this core.

Criticisms have been levelled at Jung's concept of the archetype. One criticism centres around the

notion that the archetypes are organically inherited. However, Jung emphasised that what he meant by inherited was that he was referring only to the form/structure (archetype as such) and not to the content of the archetype (images). There is thus no assumption that images are inherited. "To speak of an archetypal predisposition is simply to say that as existent beings we are endowed with 'the potential to have images, drives, fantasies, and emotions' that are definitely human" (Welman, 1995, p. 50). By positing the concept of the archetype, Jung attempted to describe the foundation stones or structures of human consciousness.

Another criticism is that Jung repeatedly stressed the separation of the archetypal image from the archetype. However, at times he used the terms 'image' and 'archetype' in such a way that this separation was not always maintained effectively (Jung, 1928). Also he did not clearly explain what makes an image archetypal.

1.4.2.1 Hillman's view of the archetype

Hillman (1977, 1978, 1989), while acknowledging the contribution to depth psychology of Jung's understanding of the archetypes, extends this concept. Hillman observes that, "we find ourselves less able to say what an archetype is literally and more inclined to describe them in images" (1989, p. 23). In this sense, one can only speak of what they are like. Archetypes are about the imagination. To understand the concept of the archetype, he suggests one must envision the basic nature and structure of the soul in an imaginative way.

From this perspective, Hillman invites one to approach and imagine the archetypes as the "deepest patterns of psychic functioning" (1989, p. 23), the roots and depths of the soul. Hillman uses the word soul because it escapes reductionistic definition. It expresses the mystery and complexity of life, and it connects psychology to religion, art, poetry, love, death and destiny. It also suggests to him that one could never illuminate the full extent of the soul. He sees the images of the soul expressed in archetypal form. Archetypes can therefore present themselves as root ideas, psychic organs, figures of myths, modes of existence or fantasies. In this light, they can be described as metaphors such as

... immaterial potentials of structure, like invisible crystals in a solution or form in plants that suddenly show forth under certain conditions: patterns of instinctual behaviour ... the genres ... in literature, the recurring typicalities in history, the basic syndromes in psychiatry, the paradigmatic thought models in science, the world-wide figures, rituals and relationships in anthropology (p. 23).

Hillman (1977) considers images to be the basic givens of psychic life, self-originating, inventive, spontaneous, complete and organised in archetypal patterns. Images are the raw materials - the roots of the soul - and are a mode of access to the depths of the soul. Everything that is known comes into being as an image.

From an archetypal perspective, events and experiences in an individual's personal life may be open to organisation into clusters or constellations (Grof's (1988, 1990) 'COEX system' (cf. 1.5), or Jung's complex). Hillman (1989) explains this by giving an example of the archetype of the hero: Firstly, it appears in behaviour, the move towards activity, exploration, responses to challenges, seizing, reaching, achieving, extending. Secondly, it appears in the images of the gods in mythology such as Achilles, Samson, or modern day cinema characters such as Rocky, doing their tasks of heroic salvation, and thirdly, in a style of consciousness, in feelings of independence, planning, conquest, decisions, coping and assertiveness.

Hillman's (1974, 1977, 1978) notion of the archetypes implies that archetypal images are all around us, being renewed and created as personal life intersects the collective life and experience within the fabric of the interconnectedness of history and culture.

Thus Hillman's unique hermeneutic move is to identify the fantasy that would make a hypothesis about archetypes as things-in-themselves which produce many images. "You can't open your mouth without an archetypal perspective speaking through you" (1978, p. 119). Thus if Jung thought that 'behind' an image was a hypothetical archetype, Hillman, using Jung's initiative, sees that 'behind' the hypothesis of the archetype is another image, an imaginal figure creating a 'hypothesis' (Brooke, 1991, p. 142). However, the concept of the archetype as a hypothesis which refers to a substantive entity is rejected by Brooke (1991). He gives the following reasons:

It is rejected as a naturalistic fantasy that is contradicted by Jung's hermeneutic method, circumscribed as it is within language, individual experience, texts, mythology, social anthropology, and cultural history. It is also rejected in the sense that the 'hypothesis' is seen through in terms of a particular cultural fantasy. In other words, Jung's own method provides for a hermeneutic reduction from empirical consideration concerning a supposed entity to thought about the existential perspective within which such considerations are possible. Finally, the images Jung described as archetypal are understood in terms of culturally acquired imaginative structures. They are historical, and their understanding lies in the fact that historically situated imaginative structures are nevertheless also shared across great expanses of space and time (p. 143).

Such a comment does not diminish the significance of Hillman's view that archetypes are all around us, and yet they have this numinous quality about them that speaks of the depths of the soul in an imaginative way.

1.4.3 Archetypes and the complex

Jung's (1947) notion of the complex can be defined as

... a psychic energy centre around which are clustered particular types of, or themes within, personal experience ... they can be said to structure the experience that enters consciousness in accordance with those patterns that have developed in the life history of the individual (Brooke, 1991, p. 15).

Complexes are thus modes of being in the world. They function from the realm of the personal unconscious (which contains the personal experiences, memories, emotions, images and thoughts and repressed or forgotten experiences), but they seek integration into consciousness. As such,

Jung (1934, p. 95) described them as "unconscious personalities". Complexes, in this light, are the "living units" of the psyche whether they are successful or not in integrating into consciousness (p. 96). Brooke (1991) states that the ego development (centre of consciousness) has to do with one's relation to these complexes and with their integration and personalisation.

In the work of psychological (and spiritual?) development it is important that the ego differentiates itself from the unconscious effects of the complex, not by denying them, but by "seeing through them to the archetypal nuclei of the meaning that usually (always?) lie at their core" (Brooke, 1991, p. 15). In this regard, human consciousness is structured as a multiplicity of complexes.

Complex and archetype are intimately linked. Jacobi (1959) notes that Jung's concept of the archetype developed out of his notion of the complex. As indicated, complexes are expressed and dramatised, for example, in universal motifs in myths, dreams, folklore, and legends - across space, cultures and time. Although Jung situated complexes in the personal unconscious and the archetypes in the transpersonal unconscious, the link between them is that "archetypes emerge in a person's life as complexes; complexes have an archetypal core" (Brooke, 1991, p. 138). In other words, the archetypes may be realised through the complex (Jung, 1934).

1.5 SYSTEMS OF CONDENSED EXPERIENCE - COEX

As a result of his research, the concept of the systems of condensed experience, or the COEX, has been put forward by Grof (1990). Systems of condensed experience, or the COEX, are principles governing the dynamics of the individual unconscious.

A COEX system is a dynamic constellation of memories (and associated fantasy material) from different periods of the individual's life, whose common denominator is a strong emotional charge of the same quality, intense physical sensations of a particular kind, or shared additional important elements (Grof, 1988, p. 4).

Originally Grof thought the COEX systems governed only the dynamics of the individual

disempowerment of victimisation and oppression, or the sense of injustice when wrongfully accused of committing a crime. However, a COEX system does not always contain painful material. It can also contain constellations of positive experiences. For example, a single COEX constellation may contain memories of events that were joyful, exciting, self-validating or inspiring (Grof, 1990).

Grof points out that COEX systems affect every level of our emotional life; the way we view the world, our close friends and others, as well as how we view ourselves. "There is a constant interplay between the COEX system of our inner world and the events in the external world" (Grof, 1990, p. 25). External events can activate corresponding COEX systems within us. COEX systems can shape the way we view the world, and through these views we act in ways that bring about situations in the external world that echo patterns in our COEX systems. For example, a woman living within an abusive relationship may experience feelings of exploitation, powerlessness and inadequacy as a woman. In the work place such a woman may encounter a situation which gives rise to similar feelings or the experience of the same COEX of helplessness, victimisation and loss of control. Events in her childhood may also have activated feelings (the COEX) of feminine inferiority and powerlessness. In this regard, each event or situation in her life can activate a COEX of helplessness, inadequacy and abuse. In turn this COEX may shape the way she experiences the world; the world is abusive and exploitative. She may begin to believe that "As a woman I am powerless and inferior".

1.6 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The perspective of transpersonal psychology, rooted in Eastern traditions and spiritual disciplines, maintains that nonordinary states of consciousness empower access to realities or dimensions of consciousness that do not accord with the Cartesian scientific paradigm of reality. Experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness (the holotropic mode of consciousness) are experiences beyond the ego and personal history of individuals and are thus experiences of transcendence that challenge the prevailing scientific paradigm of Western reality. The work of researchers such as Grof, Tart and Wilber has contributed to this paradigm shift by describing these experiences, and by showing how they reveal extended areas of consciousness that are not normally accepted or viewed as essential to the personal and spiritual growth of individuals within Western culture. However, the

emerging perspective of transpersonal psychology is nevertheless another paradigm of reality - a socially constructed set of assumptions about the world. Although it is a paradigm that takes seriously transcendent experiences, it should not be regarded by psychologists as the only paradigm of a spiritual and transcendent reality, but rather as a valuable map or framework within which transpersonal experiences and nonordinary states of consciousness can be conceptualised. The framework should not become a rigid structure in which other dimensions of experience or bodies of knowledge are dismissed or rejected.

Grof's model of the human psyche includes the biographical-recollective level and two additional levels or domains that are transbiographical. These are the perinatal level and the transpersonal level. The transpersonal level is a central focus of this research and is described by Grof as that dimension within the psyche that can, in principle, mediate an experiential connection with any aspect of the phenomenal world, as well as with various mythological and archetypal domains. Grof has extended Jung's concept of the collective unconscious in specifically describing the wide range of experiences that individuals may encounter when accessing this level of the unconscious.

Given transpersonal psychology's poetic approach to and interpretation of certain transpersonal experiences as being metaphorical-archetypal in nature, Grof's notion of the COEX provides an effective conceptual basis for understanding the phenomena of universal psychological themes and motifs that repeat themselves in individuals lives, revealing "truths that belong to no time" (Jung 1928, p. 190). The concept of the COEX is an extension of Jung's idea of the complex in that it includes not only the personal but the perinatal and the transpersonal levels of the psyche.

1.7 THE CENTRAL AIMS OF THIS THESIS

Two of the primary aims of this research are (a) to uncover the archetypal significance of one category of transpersonal experiences - past-life experiences - of a participant in transpersonal psychotherapy, and their relationship to the notion of the re-emerging Feminine⁷ consciousness within patriarchal culture, and (b) to show how the past-life stories contribute to the process of

⁷ The Feminine is spelt with a capital 'F' to indicate its archetypal dimensions.

spiritual emergence as defined in the Preface.

At this point it is appropriate to give a brief description of the Feminine and the discourse in which it is located (although it is described in more detail in Chapter Three). The Feminine consciousness is a term located within the discourse of transpersonal feminism (also described in more detail in Chapter Three). 'Transpersonal feminism', a term coined by the researcher, is a contemporary body of knowledge that is inclusive of contemporary feminist discourse, but presents a perspective that focuses not only on cultural and ideological gender relations, but on the two basic structural elements or dimensions within human consciousness. These two dimensions of consciousness are termed the Feminine and the Masculine. The Feminine and the Masculine⁸ refer to an innate universal, archetypal pattern in the human psyche, and are not restricted to one gender but are present in both men and women, and were once viewed as complementary within the so-called ancient Goddess cultures. The principle assumption of transpersonal feminism is that the Feminine consciousness, traditionally repressed within patriarchal societies, is re-emerging. If this assumption is seriously considered, the question asked is: Could past-life images be vehicles for the transformation of consciousness at both the personal and archetypal levels? If so, past-life images may be viewed, in the context of transpersonal psychotherapy, as healing stories of the unconscious. In order to explore this question, and to show how the past-life stories and images contribute to the process of spiritual emergence and inner healing, some of the past-life scenes are explored as ritual enactments of patriarchal ideology, while others images are examined as contributing to the process of healing and transformation, although all the past-life experiences may be viewed as contributing to this process. As a reminder, past-life experiences need not be questioned in regard to their literal occurrence. Rather, they can be interpreted as metaphoric images and scenes.

1.8 THE OVERALL STRUCTURE OF THIS THESIS

Chapter Two includes the description of the conceptual framework of transpersonal psychotherapy as well as the concept of spiritual emergence. As this research focuses on past-life experience in

⁸ The Masculine is spelt with a capital 'M' to indicate its archetypal dimensions.

therapy, the philosophical hypotheses and theoretical assumptions of past-life work in therapy, as well as the details of the therapeutic process of such experiences, are described. Three dominant interpretations of past-life experience in therapy are also documented. As the use of past-life work in therapy is not suitable for everyone, contraindications for its use are outlined, and concluding comments are presented at the end of the chapter.

Chapter Three presents the conceptual framework of transpersonal feminism, and together with Chapters One and Two, forms a hermeneutic lens through which to conceptualise the case material. This chapter includes an overview of the principle assumptions of contemporary feminism, out of which transpersonal feminism has emerged, the theoretical assumptions of transpersonal feminism, the theory and description of the ancient Goddess cultures, and the impact of the devaluation of women and the Feminine on the archetypal level of consciousness. The research approach uses the notion of ritual enactment of patriarchal cultures as a way of approaching the content of the past-life experience of a participant; the ritual of the menstrual taboo, female rape, the witch hunts of Europe, and human sacrifice are also described. In addition, the implication for women of patriarchal ideology is outlined. The chapter is completed with concluding comments in the light of all three chapters (Chapter One, Two and Three).

As the aims of this research dictated the research approach, a combination of the phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches was considered appropriate. The philosophical and theoretical foundations of these two approaches, as well as details of the research aims and research procedures, are delineated in Chapter Four. The justification for the use of a single-subject or participant is also described.

Chapter Five outlines the case material which includes the case history, the synopses of selected therapy sessions, and the past-life themes that were identified.

In Chapter Six, the past-life scenes are phenomenologically explicated and hermeneutically discussed within the light of the theory described in Chapters One, Two and Three.

Finally, Chapter seven presents the conclusions of the research.

CHAPTER TWO

TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOTHERAPY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the light of the previous introductory chapter to the field of transpersonal psychology, this chapter presents the principles for a transpersonal psychotherapy. The focus of this form of psychotherapy is the healing potential of experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness as described in the previous chapter. In this regard, the central concern of a transpersonal psychotherapy is the validation of transpersonal experiences which are thought to contribute to the transformative inner process of spiritual emergence. This chapter presents a definition of spiritual emergence and offers a description of three of the forms or varieties in which it may appear.⁹ These three varieties are: Kundalini awakening; the shamanic crisis; and past-life memories or karmic experiences. This chapter also examines the transpersonal perspective of the phenomenon of spiritual emergency which is, however, not specific to transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy, but is described in other spiritual traditions and sacred texts of Eastern origin.

2.1.1 A definition of transpersonal psychotherapy

The transpersonal perspective on psychotherapy seeks to incorporate - and expand upon - the core assumptions and methods of traditional mainstream psychotherapy, drawing on each as appropriate to match the unique needs of the client.

Walsh and Vaughan (1980, p. 14) have put forward the following definition of transpersonal psychotherapy:

⁹ Although there are more than three forms or varieties of spiritual emergence (Grof & Grof, 1990), three forms have been selected as they are the three forms of spiritual emergence that the subject of this research experienced, and thus, these three forms only are presented as they provide a hermeneutic lens through which the case material can be understood.

Transpersonal psychotherapy includes traditional areas and techniques of therapeutic concern; where appropriate, it adds to these an interest in facilitating growth and awareness beyond traditionally recognised levels of health, and in so doing, emphasises the importance of modifying consciousness.

However, the psychoanalytic model and humanistic models of psychotherapy are also concerned with "the importance of modifying consciousness". Transpersonal psychotherapists maintain that what differentiates transpersonal psychotherapy from other models or approaches is its central concern with the realisation of experiences beyond ego boundaries and the confines of space-time (transpersonal experiences as described in Chapter One), and the healing transformative potential of such experiences. In this regard, transpersonal psychotherapy seeks to facilitate the emergence of transpersonal experiences of ultimate states of consciousness such as 'transcendence', 'mystic union' and 'cosmic unity' in order to expand consciousness (Grof, 1976, 1980, 1988; Sutich, 1976; Walsh & Vaughan, 1980, 1993; Wilber, 1977, 1979).

As a consequence, the transpersonal perspective, unlike some of the traditional psychotherapeutic approaches, places a greater emphasis on and distinguishes between transpersonal experiences and psychosis. Transpersonal experiences are not viewed as manifestations of psychopathology.¹⁰ Walsh and Vaughan (1980, p. 18) point out that those individuals who have not yet experienced transpersonal awareness "must necessarily interpret such experiences from an inappropriate and pathologising perspective". In support of this statement, Grof (1988) states that such individuals or systems function necessarily as conceptual straight-jackets and are inhibiting and counterproductive.

Vaughan (1986, 1991) asserts that transpersonal psychotherapy aims to help clients not only to

¹⁰ A rare exception to the dismissal of spiritual-transpersonal experiences as psychosis in the field of traditional psychology is the work and scholarship of Jung. Jung emphasised the paramount significance of the study of mythology for the understanding of the psyche in general, and psychosis in particular. He proposed that some forms of psychosis or what appears to be psychosis are in fact healing processes of transformation, and mirrored in mythological stories and legends. Passages that are relevant to this area can be found throughout Jung's work, such as *The psychogenesis of mental disease*. One resource in which Jung's ideas are developed in this area is to be found in the books of the late mythologist, Joseph Campbell, such as *The hero with a thousand faces* and *Myths to live by*. Another resource that develops Jungian theory in this respect is the work of John Perry, such as *The far side of madness* and *Roots of renewal in myth and madness*.

resolve personal issues and conflicts, but directs clients towards the experiential understanding that their rootedness is in the formless dimensions of spiritual existence. Experiential understanding is a notion within transpersonal psychotherapy that refers to knowledge or understanding that is obtained only through direct experience.

2.1.2 Principles for a transpersonal psychotherapy

Transpersonal psychotherapy, as is the case with other psychotherapeutic perspectives, is concerned with the development of a stable, enduring ego identity. The transpersonal approach assumes that the development of the ego provides the possibility for a stable inner foundation from which to engage in the world. It also provides the foundation on which clients may begin to appreciate that their ego identity is not the only possible or desirable identity (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993; Wilber, 1977, 1979, 1986, 1996a). This assumption accords with one of the underlying assumptions of the 'perennial philosophy' (Huxley, 1946), as described in the previous chapter, which asserts that the ego is not the ground or base of human awareness, but rather only one relative reflection-manifestation of a greater transpersonal Self (pure consciousness without subject or object).

In this light, transpersonal psychotherapy conceptualises 'inner healing' and psychospiritual development as a movement towards integration and wholeness (cf. 2.3) which is grounded in the awareness of and identification with Self - the transpersonal-spiritual dimension of the psyche (Vaughan, 1991, 1993; Walsh, 1980). This movement may be achieved through the experience of intensive nonordinary states of consciousness (Grof, 1980, 1988, 1990). Furthermore, the transpersonal perspective views healing as a remembering of our 'true nature' (spiritual nature). Grof (1984) has pointed out that the traditional religions have tried to describe this return to our true nature in different ways. For example, in Indian traditions the goal of spiritual life is to realise Atman (true nature), or in Buddhism, to find the Buddha within (the Buddha nature). In relation to this return to 'our true nature', transpersonal psychotherapy may involve working with the material from the individual unconscious as well as from the transpersonal-collective and perinatal levels of the unconscious as described in Chapter One.

The transpersonal approach to psychotherapy includes the notion that verbal exchange between

client and therapist, as in traditional Western models of psychotherapy, does not access the transpersonal or perinatal levels of the unconscious. Transpersonal experiences are thus fostered as they are assumed to permit access to other levels of the psyche. From within this approach, the traditional perspective of psychoanalytic psychotherapy is regarded by the transpersonal approach as limited to the biographical and personal unconscious levels (Grof, 1988, 1990; Grof & Grof, 1989, 1990; Sutich, 1976; Walsh & Vaughan, 1980, 1993; Wittine, 1989). Moreover, unlike other traditional Western therapies, transpersonal psychotherapy favours the rapid and powerful activation of the unconscious through the introduction of consciousness altering techniques such as Holotropic breathwork (described shortly).

These principles form the context in which various techniques and activities within the transpersonal approach to psychotherapy have been developed. Such techniques are used in relation to the transpersonal goal of spiritual awareness and healing. Vaughan (1993) and Grof (1988) discuss some of these techniques which are not exclusive to transpersonal psychotherapy. These include work with guided imagery, bodywork, art and dance/movement work, and work with nonordinary states of consciousness through safe nondrug induced methods which may give rise to transpersonal experiences. Grof (1988, 1990) developed a psychotherapeutic technique originally termed Holotropic therapy, but later renamed Holotropic breathwork. This technique is one such nondrug induced method for facilitating the emergence of transpersonal experiences. The term Holotropic is derived from the Greek words *holos* and *trepein*, meaning moving towards wholeness or totality. Grof wished to capture the essence of this name - Holotropic - in his technique of healing and transformation. This technique integrates ancient spiritual practices and modern research into the nature of consciousness by combining controlled deep breathing, loud evocative music, focused bodywork, and a relaxed, safe setting.

Transpersonal psychotherapy has two major limitations. Firstly, it places stringent demands on the therapist (Walsh & Vaughan, 1980). "I consider the crucial issue in transpersonal psychotherapeutic work to be the perspective, attitude and orientation of the therapist (Sutich, 1976, p. 10). This factor raises certain questions. Can therapists competently and simultaneously work with the spiritual and psychological demands of the client? Can therapists work in such a way as to avoid their own counter-transference traps and spiritual bias? Will therapists who are agnostic implicitly endorse their own belief values? As Boorstein (1980, p. 5) notes, "clearly, the practice

of transpersonal psychotherapy requires the very best the therapist is capable of: experiential knowledge rather than opinion; attention instead of preconception; certainty in place of theory".

Secondly, the notion that experiential knowledge must provide the basis for intellectual comprehension may place a limitation on those who have not experienced, for example, nonordinary states of consciousness. Undoubtedly, at some level, conceptual understanding will be limited if experiential knowledge is lacking. Failure to appreciate this notion has led, according to Walsh and Vaughan (1980, p. 27), "to countless misunderstandings, discounting and superficial and pathologising interpretations of the transpersonal". In this context, the implication is that the limits of personal experience represent one of the major limiting factors within the field of transpersonal psychotherapy (and psychology).

Within the transpersonal perspective, the roots of psychopathology reach beyond the events of early childhood and the personal unconscious (Boorstein, 1980; Grof, 1988, 1990; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993; Woolger, 1987). Grof (1988, p. 167) states:

Experiential therapeutic work will uncover - behind the traditional biographical roots of symptoms - deep connections with clearly transbiographical domains of the psyche, such as elements of profound encounters with death and with birth, characters of the perinatal level, and an entire spectrum of factors of a transpersonal nature.

As a reminder, Grof's (1988) model of the human psyche, described in Chapter One, provides a conceptual framework in which to locate these experiences.

Various writers within the field of transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy have made certain claims concerning the healing potential of nonordinary states of consciousness (Boorstein, 1980; Grof, 1976, 1980, 1985, 1988, 1990; Grof & Grof, 1989, 1990; Lukoff & Everest, 1985; Maslow, 1970, 1971; Perry, 1974; Tart, 1971, 1975; Vaughan, 1991, 1993; Walsh & Vaughan, 1980, 1993). Based on the outcomes of his research, Grof (1988, p. 168), supported by other transpersonal therapists such as Lucas (1993) and Woolger (1987, 1993), claims that experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness, if allowed to emerge in a safe and professionally supported

environment, may result in "dramatic, emotional and psychosomatic healing and personality transformation with lasting effects". Grof (1988, 1990) further maintains that psychological healing through nonordinary states of consciousness is achieved through the rapid release or unblocking of unconscious material, often through the traditionally recognised psychological mechanism of catharsis and the mechanism of abreaction. Grof claims that both processes complement each other in the release of repressed unconscious content. Furthermore, Grof asserts that the experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness are usually dramatic and often shake the foundational beliefs of clients.

Given these claims and the mounting supporting literature for the advocacy of such healing potential of nonordinary states of consciousness, and the fact that the major spiritual traditions of the East have described the healing power and potential of extended states of consciousness, it is nevertheless apparent that there are certain reservations concerning the perspective of transpersonal psychotherapy and its assumption of the healing potential of nonordinary states of consciousness.

From within the field of mainstream traditional psychology the first criticism levelled at this approach is that such experiences are potentially dangerous and should be discouraged, or even prohibited. The primary reason supplied is that experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness induce the breakdown of the ego and the potential for psychosis. The transpersonal perspective responds by stressing that this form of psychotherapy is not suitable for everyone. Transpersonal therapists warn against certain individuals participating in altered states therapy. These individuals would normally be those whose symptoms clearly indicate psychosis or borderline personality. Such individuals would normally not have the ego strength or the capacity for integrating the experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness, and would not be capable of gaining insight from this type of therapy.

A further criticism is made of the transpersonal approach of fostering experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness in the psychotherapy context. This criticism is that such experiences may be physically harmful. Experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness may produce physical sensations and movements such as shaking, violent trembling, twisting or climbing motions. Such physical experiences are, indeed, acknowledged by transpersonal therapists to be demanding and sometimes strenuous. It is for this reason that altered states therapy is contraindicated for those

individuals with serious heart complaints or a history of heart attacks, cardiosurgery, cerebral haemorrhage, malignant hypertension, advanced atherosclerosis, or arterial aneurysm. A further contraindication is the condition of pregnancy. Grof (1988) has observed that experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness may include not only the literal or metaphoric recall but the experiential reliving of memories of birth. If a pregnant woman were to attempt to physically relive her birth or try to give birth during therapy, this might, according to Grof, cause stress to the foetus and lead to miscarriage.

The fundamental difference between the transpersonal perspective and other therapies is the recognition and advocacy that the transpersonal approach to psychotherapy gives to the healing and transformative potential of extended areas of consciousness - nonordinary states of consciousness (Fiore, 1980, 1993; Frager, 1989; Grof, 1988, 1990; Grof & Grof, 1989, 1990; Lucas, 1993; Vaughan, 1991, 1993; Walsh & Vaughan, 1980, 1993). These states of consciousness are not normally addressed by the other approaches to psychotherapy. This emphasis on nonordinary states of consciousness is valued by transpersonal therapists as an avenue to accessing the spiritual or transpersonal dimensions of the psyche. Inherent in this value is the assumption that access to the transpersonal levels of the psyche contributes to the inner healing of individuals in therapy. This approach is, however, partly related to Jung's analytical psychological approach to psychotherapy. Analytical psychology, and its approach to psychotherapeutic healing, focuses, in part, on transpersonal or spiritual dimensions of the psyche. This approach recognises, as does the transpersonal approach, that the psyche has within it the potential for transformation and healing through the encounter with the transpersonal level of the psyche. Jung (1968) emphasised that healing must involve the realisation of the numinous or transpersonal dimensions of experience. The fundamental difference between the two approaches is that analytical psychology does not give the same attention to and emphasis on the fostering of nonordinary states of consciousness (in the therapeutic process) in which the sense of identity extends beyond the individual or personal ego.

Humanistic therapies address themselves more to the ego level - thus the development of ego consciousness is central. From the transpersonal perspective, ego development is important but not viewed as the final goal of growth and, at times, may even be viewed as an obstruction to the transpersonal realisation of nonordinary states of consciousness such as those beyond the ego (transcendence). Humanistic therapies are concerned with self-actualisation and the human capacity

for self transcendence. However, these concerns are considered to be the final stages of development. The transpersonal approach to psychotherapy, on the other hand, views experiences of transcendence as part of the process of spiritual development and not as the final stage of development.

The existential approach is similar to the transpersonal one in its concerns for the search for meaning in life, the confrontation with death, the belief in the ultimate aloneness of existence, the demands for authenticity and the responsibility of choice (Walsh & Vaughan, 1980). Bugental (1965) writes that psychotherapy itself is about finding this meaning, making peace with impending death and the need to face the fear of responsibility and of free choice. In this regard, existential therapy becomes the ground in which individuals realise that they create their own reality by the perceptions and thoughts they hold. Psychotherapeutic work is, in part, concerned with understanding consciousness, but only at the 'existential level' (Wilber, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1983). Although it recognises the capacity for self-transcendence it remains locked in the notions of separateness and consciousness remains dualistic.

2.2 THE CONCEPT OF SPIRITUAL EMERGENCE

Within the context of transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy, transpersonal experiences contribute to a developmental process that is conceptualised by transpersonal psychologists and psychiatrists as spiritual emergence (Grof, 1988, 1990; Grof & Grof, 1989, 1990). This term refers to an intensive evolutionary or developmental process of profound psychological transformation where individuals experience, "a shift from an identity centred in the personal self, personal history and personal motivations" (Edwards, 1991b, p. 2) toward a more "expanded way of being ... (and) an increasing awareness of the spiritual dimension in one's life" (Grof & Grof, 1990, p. 34). In this regard, transpersonal experiences are not viewed as isolated events, but form an integral part of the healing process which

... is an innate human capacity of all human beings. It is a movement towards wholeness, the discovery of one's true potential. And it is as common and natural as birth, physical growth and death - an integral part of our existence (Grof & Grof,

1990, p. 1).

Edwards (1992a) points out that, within Western culture individuals undergoing such an intensive developmental and healing spiritual process have not always had access to a conceptual framework within which to understand and validate their experiences:

Until recently we have had no accurate psychological models of this process. Our materialist and science based culture invalidated experiences leading towards this type of development, and our religious traditions had often lost their experiential base, or supported only a limited range of the experiences that we now know are part of the transformational journey (p. 7).

The notion of spiritual emergence is not new, however. The foundational work of the earlier researchers of spiritual experiences, such as Assagioli (1965), Huxley (1946), Jung (1933, 1936, 1947), Maslow (1970) and Wilber (1977, 1979, 1980, 1983), resulted in the development of comprehensive conceptual frameworks for understanding spiritual development and transformation. Like Grof, these writers emphasised that ancient and pre-industrial societies practised spiritual experiences that arose out of nonordinary states of consciousness. Moreover, they described how, with the advent of the Western Industrial and Scientific Revolution, the cultural value of spiritual experiences declined. Consequently, mainstream culture within the West was enmeshed in the pursuit of material values and goals rather than spiritual goals. Western culture began, with the advent of the industrialised era, to lose its belief in the importance of spirituality, or in the value of an inner process rooted in the spiritual. However, these writers also observed that a type of cultural transformation occurred in the late 1950s and the 1960s. This transformation was believed, at the time, to be concerned with the re-emergence of an interest in spirituality. However, this speculation gained validity within transpersonal psychology when Grof (1976, 1980) and Sannella (1987) submitted reports based on a systematic research of an increase in the number of people in Western culture experiencing spiritual or transpersonal experiences during the 1960s and following decades.

Sannella (1987) noted that his clients were encountering spontaneous experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness. With his knowledge of yogic traditions and their concepts of energetic

phenomena, Sannella worked with the Eastern concept of the Kundalini and its process (to be described shortly) as a spiritual map or framework through which his clients could understand their own psychospiritual process. He claimed that, as a result of the use of this framework, many of his clients were able to give meaning to their own spiritual experiences.

It has been observed that there have been few conceptual spiritual frameworks available in Western societies in which individuals can locate and conceptualise their spiritual experiences, particularly when such experiences do not accord with traditional religious systems and notions of spirituality and spiritual experience (Ferguson, 1980; Houston, 1987; Edwards, 1992a).

Grof (1988, 1990) maintains that the emergence of a concern in large numbers of people all over the world for a more expanded sense of identity and wholeness, is evidence of a collective spiritual awakening. Like Sannella (1987), Grof claims that there is a collective spiritual emergence within Western mainstream culture that is not deterred by the lack of conceptual models of such a process or by those individuals or models which seek to pathologise, neutralise and tranquillise individuals undergoing such transformation. Grof's claim is supported by other writers who also suggest that there is a collective spiritual emergence, particularly within Western societies that have been consumed in these past decades with materialism (Assagioli, 1989; Laing, 1989; Perry, 1974, 1989; Ram Dass, 1989). Some writers suggest that this spiritual emergence may have been repressed through erroneously labelling it as psychosis (Lukoff & Everest, 1985; Perry, 1974). This point is addressed further on in this chapter.

2.2.1 Varieties of spiritual emergence

Grof (1988), Grof and Grof (1989, 1990), Harner (1980), Kalweit (1988), Laing (1965), Perry (1974, 1986) and Sannella (1987, 1989) describe experiences that have led to spiritual emergence and personal transformation. Of these writers only Grof and Grof (1989, 1990) have succinctly provided a practical classification system of the categories of such a process. A list of the different

types of experiences that they describe is given:

- * episodes of unitive consciousness;
- * the awakening of Kundalini;
- * near-death experiences;
- * emergence of past-life scenes;
- * psychological renewal through return to the centre;
- * the shamanic crisis;
- * awakening of extrasensory perception (psychic opening);
- * communication with spirit guides and channelling.

Three categories from this list that are relevant to a conceptual understanding of the case material to be presented in Chapter Five are described in more detail below. A brief description is offered of the remaining experiences which are not mentioned again.

(A) Episodes of unitive consciousness (peak experiences)

Individuals experiencing unitive consciousness, a category of experience similarly described by Maslow (1970) as peak experiences, have a sense of leaving ordinary everyday waking reality, and entering a timeless mystical realm where space is no longer three dimensional and time is not perceived as linear. An important experiential quality of unitive consciousness is a sense of holiness or numinosity - the term Jung used to describe a profound feeling of sacredness or holiness that is associated with certain deep processes within the psyche. This experience of holiness is not a result of religious convictions or beliefs, but is rather based on a direct and immediate awareness of a divine realm beyond ordinary perception of the everyday world.

Grof and Grof (1990) assert that descriptions of such experiences are normally paradoxical and violate the basic laws of the Cartesian science that dominate Western reality. For example, the mystical state might be referred to as "being without any specific content yet all-containing" (p. 75). While it articulates the experience of nothing being concrete, nothing seems to be missing, since it contains everything in potential form. During peak experiences or unitive consciousness, individuals report an ability to access "ultimate knowledge" and wisdom in matters of "cosmic

relevance" or importance (p. 75). This knowledge does not involve specific information about the material world; rather it is a comprehension into the fundamental essence of existence, as described by, for example, the Upanishads - "the knowledge of which gives the knowledge of everything" (p. 76).

(B) Near-death experiences

Moody's (1990) research into the phenomenon known as near-death experiences drew the attention of professional circles to the area of death and dying. His work was based on the accounts of 150 people who had experienced near-death experiences. The description validated the accounts found in the Tibetan and Egyptian sacred texts (Books of the Dead). Grof and Grof (1990) state that the underlying assumption of such experiences is that the process of dying can be associated with "an extraordinary inner journey into the transpersonal domains of the psyche" (p. 81). The near-death experiences contain several universal transcultural themes. These themes include the experience of one's entire life being suddenly reviewed. Consciousness can detach from the body and move freely about, remaining close to the scene of the 'death' or travelling to other places beyond the scene. There is commonly the experience of moving through a dark tunnel or enclosed tube towards a bright light "whose radiance and brilliance are beyond human imagination" (p. 81). This light is experienced as loving and comforting and it radiates all-embracing forgiveness and acceptance. This encounter is experienced as a meeting with 'God'. As a result, people who undergo near-death experiences of this nature have a renewed sense of life, and a dramatic spiritual awakening and personal transformation. The reason near-death experiences frequently lead to a spiritual emergence is that they involve "an unusually abrupt and profound shift in the experience of reality" (p. 82).

(C) Psychological renewal through return to the centre

Perry (1976) describes this transformational experience as a renewal process. Grof and Grof (1990) maintain that individuals involved in this experience may find themselves in a dramatic sequence of events that make them feel as if they are at the centre of these events. Such events occur on a

cosmic or global scale. "Their psyche becomes a fantastic battlefield where the forces of Good and Evil are engaged in a universal combat that seems critical to the future of the world" (p. 86).

These visionary states appear to recapture and replay events of historical collective relevance, yet, paradoxically, take these individuals further back into their own roots and even the origins of all of humanity. This aspect of the process may offer individuals an opportunity for transforming some of their own personal errors that happened in their past, as well as for transforming the collective universal errors and making a better renewed world.

This process of renewal through return to the centre is often experienced as an intense preoccupation with death in its many different forms (literal and metaphoric). Individuals involved in this type of experience may feel that it is important for them to comprehend all the dimensions of death and dying. When this experience is allowed to unfold beyond the initial confusion and upheaval, the experiences become less frightening and more acceptable, culminating in a sense of resolution and integration. At this time the process seems to be accessing the transpersonal Self or centre. "This transpersonal centre represents our deepest and true nature and is ... closely related to the Hindu concept of Atman-Brahman, the Divine within" (p. 87).

Individuals who connect with this inner dimension may interpret this achievement as a "personal apotheosis, a cosmic happening that elevates them to an exalted human role ... a great leader, world saviour, or even the Lord of the Universe" (p. 87). As the process shifts and resolution is experienced as complete, individuals may feel that they have a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of life. They may view the experience as a metaphor or as containing mythological roots that offer a pathway towards the unfolding process of psychospiritual development.

(D) Awakening of extrasensory perception (psychic opening)

The awakening of extrasensory perception is viewed by spiritual traditions as a natural consequence of consciousness evolution, particularly consciousness development in the transpersonal realms (Wilber's (1986) levels seven to nine, cf. Chapter One). However, such an experience may become a trap for some in that they view the experience with so much fascination that it becomes an obsession and a source of ego inflation.

"Practically any type of transpersonal experience can under certain circumstances provide astonishing information that the individual could not have acquired in conventional ways and that appears to come from paranormal sources" (Grof & Grof, 1990, p. 90). This experience of awakening extrasensory perception may involve an increase in intuitive ability and the occurrence of psychic phenomena, such as remote viewing, precognition and telepathy. The most dramatic manifestations of psychic opening are out-of-body experiences (OBEs). "Here consciousness seems to separate from the body, assume various degrees of independence and ... acquires the ability to perceive the environment without the mediation of the senses" (p. 91). Such states are common during near-death experiences (NDEs).

(E) Communication with spirit guides and channeling.

Encounters with spirit guides have been referred to (cf. Chapter One). In addition to that description, it is also possible to communicate with these suprahuman entities or deities inhabiting higher planes of consciousness. Individuals report that they may have human voices and send verbal messages. A special example of experiences in this category is channeling. Individuals who channel become mediators or channels for messages that come from a source beyond their personal consciousness. These messages are received while individuals are in a trance. Automatic writing is also a common form of channeling. "The question of the ultimate source of the information has been the subject of many speculations and conjectures" (Grof & Grof, 1990, p. 94). Nevertheless, channeling is reported by individuals to be "a transformative experience for the recipient", and much of the channeled information has often been a valuable guide for personal development (p. 94).

The phenomenon of channeling is not a recently emerging phenomenon, but has played a pivotal role in the history of humanity. "Among the channeled spiritual teachings are many scriptures of enormous cultural influence, such as the ancient Indian Vedas, the Koran, and the Book of Mormon" (p. 94).

The predominant reason why such experiences may trigger a serious crisis or 'spiritual emergency' (cf. 2.4) is that Western culture has traditionally "ridiculed and pathologised" this type of

experience. Despite this, for certain individuals engaged in the experience of receiving information from a source beyond their personal ego, their experiences cannot be easily discarded.

2.2.1.1 Kundalini awakening

Traditionally, Western psychiatry and psychology have characteristically viewed the human being in terms of physical body parts (medical model), social-biological functions (id, superego, instincts, drives), behavioural patterns and emotions, aspects of awareness (conscious, preconscious, unconscious), or elements of the unconscious (archetypes). By contrast, traditional Eastern cultures have derived a view of the human being as comprised of energy (Gallegos, 1983; Sannella, 1987).

This Eastern view posits that energy moves through the human body to initiate certain psychospiritual experiences and processes (energetic phenomena). When the energy is situated beyond the body, but while still influential, it creates what is termed a subtle body. It is however, not only human beings who have a subtle body; animals and plants are thought to have one as well.

Talbot (1991) describes the subtle body as a field of energy that surrounds the body - a "halo-like envelope of light that exists just beyond normal human perception" (p. 165). Within Indian religious doctrine, this energy is referred to as Prana or Chiti (universal consciousness), and is the life force which permeates the universe. "Within every human being is a great and divine energy" (Muktananda, 1980). When this energy resides within the human body, it is known as Kundalini-Shakti.

According to Hindu and Buddhist Tantric schools, the Kundalini energy is feminine and sexual in nature and, in her internal aspect, lies dormant at the base of the human spine (Grof & Grof, 1990; Sannella, 1987, 1989). Traditionally, the Kundalini energy is symbolically represented as a serpent coiled three-and-a-half times - Kundalini literally means the coiled one (Mookerjee, 1989).

Within the Eastern traditions, such as Tibetan Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoist Yoga, Tantric Yoga, Korean Zen and Sufism, it is believed that this Kundalini energy may be activated through, for example, spiritual practices such as meditation, certain forms of yogic practice, or intensive

experiential psychotherapy (Grof, 1988; Mookerjee, 1989; Sannella, 1987, 1989). Once the Kundalini energy is activated, in its fiery feminine form - Shakti - it rises up the spine, unfolding (uncoiling) and awakening an individual to a powerful psychospiritual and transformative process.

Within these Eastern cultures, it is assumed that on its upward journey, the Kundalini energy encounters the seven chakra systems or centres which are part of the human energy field (Mookerjee, 1989; Sannella, 1987, 1989). The Kundalini energy progressively pierces and penetrates each chakra on her way up to the crown (seventh) chakra. This upward journey may not be smooth and uneventful, as each chakra centre may present itself as a blockage.

(A) The human energy field (the subtle body) and the chakra centres

Chakras are described as vortices or funnels of spinning energy that function as intake organs for the energy from the universal life energy field (prana), giving life to the body and power to the psyche (Sannella, 1987, 1989). Eastern traditions distinguish seven chakras, described below, and contend that human consciousness itself functions within these chakra centres, i.e., consciousness is in the body itself. In this regard, the chakra centres are gateways to the consciousness of the human being. Each chakra is thought to have an exit or opening on the outside of the body which is connected to the spinal column. Energy enters into the body at the base of the spine and rises up vertically through the chakra centres, all sequentially located along the spine (Bruyere, 1994; Talbot, 1991).¹¹

The concepts of the chakras, subtle body and Kundalini energy are not widely accepted within mainstream Western psychology and psychotherapy. These descriptions do not make any sense in the context of the Western medical model since, as Grof (1988) points out, they do not correspond to known physiological processes or structures in the anatomy of the human body. The Eastern traditions, however, do not make any claims that these phenomena are located in the gross material realm; they have always described them as related to the subtle body (Grof, 1988; Sannella, 1987).

¹¹ However, Crawford (1990) describes the Kundalini energy as sometimes being activated by spiritual energies which are separate from the Kundalini energy, and entering through the top of the head before descending downward.

As a consequence, the notion of chakras has been reinterpreted in Western psychological thought and terminology. For example, certain Western writers have assumed that each chakra, which the Eastern traditions note as corresponding to a specific region of the body, has a particular function in relation to the psychological development of the personality. (The concept of the personality is a Western notion not an Eastern one). In this context, within the Western culture, the hypothetical notion of the chakras is understood as a metaphor for psychological stages of development (Brennan, 1993; Grof, 1988; Sannella, 1987).

The Western interpretation of the Eastern concept of the seven chakras as metaphors for psychological development is outlined below. Each chakra centre (first to the seventh) is not interpreted as a sequential stage of development. For example, an individual in his mid 30s may face developmental issues that are centred at the second chakra while a younger individual may be dealing with psychological issues that are focused in the sixth chakra. Furthermore, an individual may confront developmental issues that are rooted in more than one chakra.

The first (base) chakra centre is located at the base of the spine (sacral-coccyx joint). It is related to our will to live and supplies the body with vitality and conscious awareness (Sannella, 1987). This chakra centre is responsible for the sustained life force (prana) within the human body that gives rise to life itself (Bruyere, 1994; Talbot, 1991). Moreover, this base chakra centre is concerned with our connection to the earth and nature and our psychological needs for security and a sense of groundedness or rootedness in life (Motoyama, 1981; Sannella, 1987, 1989).

The second chakra is known as the water centre and is found within the genital region of the body. This centre is related to sensuality, sexuality and sexual identity in life. It is concerned with procreativity and the survival of the species (Brennan, 1993; Bruyere, 1994).

The third chakra is located in the solar plexus region of the body. This centre is associated with perception and intuition, and is related to identity and social relationships. This chakra centre is concerned with issues of power, achievement and ambition (Bruyere, 1994; Motoyama, 1981).

The fourth chakra is termed the heart centre and is located near the heart in the centre of the chest cavity. This centre is related to psychological and emotional issues of love, self-sacrifice and

compassion for others (Brennan, 1993; Davis, 1991). Bruyere (1994) states that the heart centre is also the transitional or transformational centre which relates to the transforming of a situation of pain into a situation of healing. In addition, this heart chakra is viewed as important because it is the link between spirituality (transpersonal consciousness) and sexuality (Davis, 1991).

The fifth chakra is described as the energy centre in the throat and is related to the expression of emotion and thought through the medium of speech. It is associated with the outward search for truth, spiritual goals and values, authenticity, creativity and the meaning of existence (Davis, 1991; Sannella, 1987).

The sixth chakra, or brow chakra, is located in the centre of the forehead and is related to insight or inner knowing (intuition) that is obtained from a domain beyond the five senses. Consequently, this chakra is known as the 'third eye' (Brennan, 1993; Sannella, 1987). The brow chakra or third eye is the centre out of which personal inner psychospiritual transformation occurs. Sannella (1987, 1989) maintains that the opening of the third eye may catapult individuals into a new spiritual identity.

The seventh or crown chakra centre is housed at the top of the head and is closely associated with integration of the personality elements (within Western psychology this would be the ego, persona, shadow), and with the development of spiritual enlightenment and illumination, thus enabling the individual to access the invisible transpersonal world of spirit and universal consciousness (Brennan, 1993; Bruyere, 1994; Motoyama, 1981; Sannella, 1987).

The process of the Kundalini awakening, followed by the rising up and movement of this energy through the chakras, normally brings into consciousness a broad spectrum of previously unconscious elements. These might include memories of psychological and physical traumas, perinatal sequences, and other transpersonal experiences such as chanting, visions of bright lights, archetypal figures, and encounters with spirit forms. As the 'energy moves up the spine'¹², powerful emotions such as rage, deep sadness, joy, fear, sexual and/or ecstatic rapture, involuntary

¹² This experience is not necessarily interpreted in its literal sense but may be approached metaphorically.

laughter, crying, and screaming may be spontaneously released and expressed (Grof, 1988; Grof & Grof, 1990). Such psychological, physical and emotional manifestations are known as kriyas (Grof & Grof, 1989; Sannella, 1987).

2.2.1.2 Shamanic crisis

This form of psychospiritual transformation bears a close resemblance to the initiatory crises of shamans - the healers and spiritual leaders of certain so-called primitive cultures such as the Aboriginal people of Australia or the !Kung Bushman of South Africa. Grof and Grof (1990) state that this initiation crisis refers to a dramatic episode of nonordinary states of consciousness that marks the beginning of the healing career of the shaman. However, Grof and Grof (1990) have observed that this phenomenon is not limited to these cultures, but is experienced by individuals within contemporary Western culture.

In a nonordinary state of consciousness, individuals or the novice shaman may participate in a wide spectrum of rich and varied experiences. These experiences normally involve an encounter with the mythic symbolic underworld - the realms and dimensions of reality that are ordinarily hidden to human perception. A common process of this mythic metaphoric journey to the underworld is the experience of being attacked by vicious animals or demonic forces and entities, and exposed to torturous ordeals culminating in dismemberment and death. The symbolic death experience is usually followed by one of resurrection or re-birth. In addition, in the course of this inner journey, the individual may experience other realms of reality, many of which are mythological in nature. Other experiences may include; visionary adventures, encounters with power animals or guides in animal form, spiritual guides, deities, demons and other beings.

The symbolism and metaphoric richness and meaning of the experiences that make up the shamanic crisis may vary from culture to culture. However, whatever specific symbolic form the shamanic journey takes, the common experience is the destruction of the old sense of identity and an experience of renewal and ecstatic connection with nature as well as a sense of connection with a creative energy of the universe. If this form of transformation, like the other forms, is supported, "the result can be dramatic emotional and psychosomatic healing" (Grof & Grof, 1990, p. 119).

Individuals that experience the sequences of shamanic crises often return to normal waking consciousness with a special connection to nature - the oceans, rivers and mountains. Most of these individuals feel a desire to pursue a healing or medical career, discovering that they have unusual insight into the nature of a myriad of emotional and psychosomatic disorders and ways of healing them.

2.2.1.3 Emergence of past-life 'memories'

Grof (1988) affirms that the emergence of past-life 'memories' or 'karmic experiences' is another variety or form of spiritual emergence. These experiences "belong to the most colourful and dramatic manifestations of nonordinary states of consciousness" (p. 87). Van Beekum and Lammers (1990, p. 51) define past-life experiences as

... a coherent system of visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, and/or olfactory sensations within a clear historical context. This context is consistent in time and place, it seems to date from a single historical period before the present life of the individual, and its content usually refers to traumatic experiences.

The concept of past-life experience, and how we can understand such experience in transpersonal psychotherapy, is central to this thesis and is therefore discussed more fully further on in this chapter.

2.3 HEALING AS A MOVEMENT TOWARDS INTEGRATION AND WHOLENESS

Within the context of the healing nature of nonordinary states of consciousness, Grof (1980, 1985, 1988, 1990) maintains that as the psyche is activated and the contents of the unconscious, the perinatal and the transpersonal level of the psyche, are released and integrated into consciousness, psychological healing and spiritual transformation occur. He views this process of healing and spiritual transformation (spiritual emergence) as a movement towards integration and wholeness (Grof, 1988). Wholeness is defined as the identification and relationship with, and openness to, the

spiritual dimension within. This healing movement towards wholeness is achieved through the experience of intensive nonordinary states of consciousness. All the varieties of spiritual emergence listed above potentially contribute towards psychospiritual development. Jung's (1921, 1961) process of individuation and the realisation of the self is partially linked to the notion of spiritual emergence.

Jung's (1921, p. 448) concept of individuation is defined as

... the process by which individual beings are formed and differentiated ... it is a process of differentiation, having for its goal the development of the individual personality.

It is a life-long process which has two related aspects. The first aspect is concerned with the process in which individuals differentiate themselves from the world and its collective ideals, opinions and expectations but 'not in a way that shuts one out from the world' (Jung, 1928) but rather gathers the world to oneself (Brooke, 1991).

Welman (1995) points out that this aspect of individuation implies a demand to be oneself, to make authentic and ethical decisions, and is not a simple reaction to society's norms and values, but is directed towards the realisation of a unique self that remains meaningfully engaged in the world.

The second aspect involves the integration of those (opposite) elements within the psyche that are hidden, isolated and unacknowledged. The gathering together of these opposites is what constitutes the conscious emergence of the self. This is a level of transformation that cannot occur unless the opposites within the psyche are made known, made conscious. This is the ultimate goal of individuation (Jung, 1961). This gathering together takes place therefore with the development of consciousness which must necessarily result in the re-discovery of the self. Jung (1973, p. 196) wrote:

Although the self is my origin, it is also the goal of my quest. When it was my origin, I did not know myself, and when I did learn about myself, I did not know the self. I have to discover it in my actions, where it first reappears under strange

Edwards also asserts that purification - the release of unconscious content - necessarily leads to a process of empowerment, that is, the reclaiming of a lost or repressed and wounded self and its integration into conscious life. As such, this process leads to an increasing sense of self-worth as well as to the sense of an inner strength and spiritual awareness. This process transforms the old personality structures and identities in a way which is necessary for psychospiritual development (Edwards, 1994).

The processes of initiation and empowerment are concerned with spiritual development as opposed to ego development, (although, as stated earlier, ego development is a necessary prerequisite for spiritual growth), and the concept of purification is similar to the traditional approaches to therapy and healing. For example, both Freud (1916, 1923) and Jung (1917, 1927, 1947/54) wrote of the need to confront and integrate into consciousness experiences that had initially been too traumatic to be faced.

2.4 THE CONCEPT OF SPIRITUAL EMERGENCY

Grof and Grof (1990) observe that spiritual emergence or spiritual awakening is sometimes so subtle and gradual that it is hardly noticed. After a period of months or years, individuals may notice that there has been a profound spiritual transformation and shift in consciousness. However, they warn that this spiritual awakening may be quite sudden and so dramatic and overwhelming that daily life becomes chaotic, confusing and difficult. Grof and Grof (1990) have coined the term spiritual emergency to describe the process that results when spiritual emergence is too rapid and dramatic. "People who are in such a crisis are bombarded with inner experiences that abruptly challenge their old beliefs and ways of existing and their relationship with reality shifts very rapidly" (p. 35). Furthermore, individuals experiencing spiritual emergency may experience various physical sensations such as forceful uncontrollable tremors and shaking. These may be accompanied by experiences of fear, loss of control, anxiety, depression and confusion. Despite these characteristics of spiritual emergency, Grof and Grof assert that "even the most dramatic and difficult episodes of spiritual emergency are natural stages in the process of spiritual opening and can be beneficial if circumstances are favourable" (p. 36). These favourable circumstances are

described as a supportive environment or community, and professional guidance during the intensive process.

What is the nature of spiritual emergency? Grof and Grof (1990, p. 36) assert that the nature of spiritual emergency is fundamentally the "radical clearing of various old traumatic memories and imprints from the unconscious". This notion implies a specific approach to the nature and dynamics of the unconscious. In this regard, they make a further claim that "if properly understood and treated as difficult stages in a natural developmental process, spiritual emergencies can result in emotional and psychosomatic healing, deep positive changes of the personality and the solution of many problems in life" (p. 36).

In this context, Grof and Grof (1990) observe that this emergence of unconscious content may be too rapid and overwhelming for some individuals. Occasionally "the amount of unconscious material that emerges from deep levels of the psyche can be so enormous that the person involved can have difficulty functioning in everyday reality" (p. 39). Other therapists agree that this event is essentially the psyche's attempt to heal itself by discharging negative contents of the unconscious (Laing, 1989; Lukoff & Everest, 1985; Perry, 1974; Sannella, 1987, 1989; Woolger, 1987). In this respect, Grof and Grof (1989, 1990) explain that spiritual emergencies are the psyche's spontaneous attempt to rapidly release previously unconscious material (whereas spiritual emergence, in contrast, is the gradual release of previously unconscious content).

A spiritual emergency is generally unpredictable and chaotic, and individuals may experience a collapse of psychological, emotional and spiritual functioning (Grof & Grof, 1989, 1990; Perry, 1989). From a traditional point of view, particularly within Western psychiatry, such experiences are referred to as psychosis (Laing, 1989; Perry, 1974, 1986). The clinical assumption underlying psychosis is that a biological process is responsible not only for the occurrence of the experiences but also for their content. Transpersonal psychologists have noted that the content of transformational states of consciousness (often mystical) is seen as further evidence for the disease concept (Kalweit, 1989; Lukoff and Everest, 1985; Perry, 1974). As indicated earlier, traditional Western Cartesian science is structured in such a way as to be incompatible with notions of spirituality (Grof & Grof, 1990). Thus in Cartesian science, personal experiences of spiritual realities are (mis)interpreted as manifestations of mental disease - psychosis.

From the transpersonal point of view, the attitude of Western Cartesian science towards spiritual emergency has dramatic implications for individuals and the process of transformation. Such individuals may erroneously be treated with tranquillising medication or hospitalised. Several writers agree that this serves to suppress the natural movement of the psyche towards healing and wholeness (Grof, 1988; Grof & Grof, 1989, 1990; Kalweit, 1989; Laing, 1989; Lukoff and Everest, 1985; Perry, 1974; Walsh & Vaughan, 1993). Grof and Grof (1989) claim that the tendency of Western psychiatrists to treat spiritual-mystical experiences as psychosis has led to "the development of a schism in Western culture" (p. xi). However, they offer a word of caution: Episodes of nonordinary states of consciousness cover a wide range, from spiritual experiences without pathological features through to conditions that are organic in nature and require medication. They warn that there may be the danger of "spiritualising psychotic states and glorifying pathology, or even worse, overlooking an organic problem" (p. xiii). However, "the belief that we are dealing with a disease in the medical sense is unfounded, since there are at present no clinical or laboratory findings supporting it" (Grof & Grof, 1990, p. 42).

Concerns have been raised, however, as to what the distinction is between psychosis and spiritual emergency. It has been pointed out that "the term psychosis is not accurately and objectively defined in contemporary psychiatry" (Grof & Grof, 1990, p. 43). The response from transpersonal psychologists and writers is that until psychosis is more clearly defined, it is impossible to delineate between the two conditions (Frager, 1989; Laing, 1989; Lukoff & Everest, 1985). Grof and Grof (1990) assert that, despite the lack of clarity regarding psychosis, it is wise to ask which characteristics of a nonordinary state of consciousness suggest that it would be better to treat it with alternative methods rather than with the methods based on the medical model. They offer as the first criterion - the absence of any medical condition that could cause such experiences, such as intoxication, infection, metabolic disorder, diseases of a degenerative nature, tumour or circulatory disturbances. Grof and Grof maintain that the changes in consciousness in individuals undergoing spiritual emergency are different from those associated with the clinical diagnosis of organic psychosis. Furthermore, psychosis is differentiated from the experiences of spiritual emergency (or emergence) in that those individuals undergoing spiritual emergency have a clear understanding that the experiences are from their own inner world and that changes in their experiential world are not due to or caused by events in the external world. In other words, they are able to clearly distinguish between inner experiences and conscious reality, unlike the psychotic

At the time that Freud's ideas were being scrutinised by the psychoanalytic community, psychiatrist Rank (1929) discovered that his clients were remembering what he termed 'birth memories'. This discovery was greeted with scorn and quickly discredited because it was assumed that memory depended on the presence of myelinated sheaths in the brain, which are not yet developed in the newborn. However, Rank persisted with this claim and extended Freud's original notion to include the idea that early trauma also occurred in the birth experience.

Almost 20 years later, when working with Lysergic Diethylamide Acid (LSD) in the 1950s, Grof (1976) reached the same conclusion as Rank. He then attempted to reintroduce the idea of the possibility of the recovery of birth memories when in a nonordinary state of consciousness. Again the idea was discredited. It was assumed that the LSD drug was responsible for the so-called recovery of birth memories. Grof, like Rank, did not give up his research, and after the banning of LSD and the introduction of the technique of Holotropic breathwork, Grof again produced results from his research which indicated the possibility of the recall of birth memories. Even though Grof demonstrated that the retrieval of birth memories was not dependent on the LSD drug, the debate as to whether these memories are actual memories of birth has continued, despite the supportive work of Chamberlain (1990) and Verney (1981). Both Chamberlain and Verney concluded that their clients experienced birth 'memories' and that, on further investigation, these memories were authentic. However, it must be stated that, regardless of whether the 'memories' are authentic or not, the experience of birth 'memories' does not detract from their psychological significance and impact.

Based on clinical practice, the concept of the ability to recover 'memories' from a previous lifetime was introduced by certain therapists in the 1970s (Fisher, 1985; Guirdham, 1970; Iverson, 1976; Lenz, 1979; Wambach, 1979). Grof (1988, p. 87) defined past life experiences as

... usually dramatic and associated with an intense emotional charge of a negative or positive quality. Their essential experiential characteristic is a convinced sense of remembering something that happened once before to the same entity, to the same unit of consciousness. The subjects participating in these dramatic sequences maintain a sense of individuality and personal identity, but experience themselves in another form, at another place and time, and in another context.

For the past thirty years past-life experience, or karmic experience, has mainly been the focus of qualitative case study research, although quantitative research has also been formulated. These experiences can be conceptualised from different perspectives, including parapsychological, psychic, philosophical, mystical, religious and psychotherapeutic (Fiore, 1980, 1993; Grof, 1988; Grof & Grof, 1989, 1990; Sutphen, 1976, 1978; Woolger, 1987, 1993). In recent years, the work of transpersonal psychologists and psychotherapists, such as Bache (1990), Fiore (1980, 1993), Dethlefsen (1993), Grof (1988, 1990), Lucas (1993), Oppenheim (1990), Schlotterbeck (1987), Van Beekum and Lammers (1990), Wambach (1978, 1979), and Woolger (1987, 1993), has led to a more rigorous understanding of past-life regression.

Therapists regard past-life experience as having a dynamic role to play in the process of psychotherapy, and they particularly acknowledge its power as a healing tool and a channel for personality transformation (Bache, 1990; Edwards, 1994; Fiore, 1980; Grof, 1988, 1990; Lucas, 1993; Moody & Perry, 1990; Oppenheim, 1990; Snow, 1993; Weiss, 1988; Williston & Johnstone, 1988; Woolger, 1987). For example, Woolger (1987, p. 15) states, "I have come to regard this technique (past-life regression) as one of the most concentrated and powerful tools available to psychotherapy short of psychedelic drugs". Similarly, Grof's (1988, p. 87) view is that:

Past incarnation phenomena are extremely common in deep experiential psychotherapy and have great therapeutic potential. A therapist who does not allow experiences of this kind to develop in his clients or discourages them when they are spontaneously happening is giving up a powerful mechanism of healing and personality transformation.

In the mid-1960s and early 1970s, the initial steps towards understanding past-life memories and experiences and to introducing such experiences as a psychotherapeutic tool were undertaken by Denys Kelsey, a British psychiatrist. Based on his research and clinical experience, he concluded that clients could, as well as literally uncovering memories of birth and prenatal life experiences, experience events that seemed to occur in a previous lifetime. He argued that these past-life experiences, regardless of their source, were psychotherapeutic. As a result of this work, a powerful thrust of interest, hypothesis-formulation and testing, as well as theory construction,

began to develop. Various explanations for the experiences began to surface. Three of the dominant explanations were: Past-lives may be viewed as fantasy or cryptoamnesia; past-lives may be viewed as reincarnation; and past-lives may be viewed as material from the collective unconscious. These three explanations are presented below.

2.5.1 Past-lives may be viewed as fantasy or cryptoamnesia

We may think of them as creative fictions. The cautious, reductionist approach is to regard these as cryptoamnesia, mere productions designed to look like memories, but, in reality, constructed from images and scenes remembered from books, plays and films (Edwards, 1992b, p. 2).

The theory of cryptoamnesia states that the unconscious mind has recorded many overheard conversations, stories, films and plays, and scenes from novels, magazines and journals that have long been forgotten. This theory asserts that these forgotten stories 'mature in the unconscious' and later may emerge disguised as fully elaborated memories (Woolger, 1987). In the context of past-life experience, the theory of cryptoamnesia would explain past-life scenes or memories as the emergence of these early biographical memories. In this regard, past-life scenes are imaginative dramatisations in response to the demands of the psychotherapy context (Wilson, 1981). This theory thus dismisses any claims that the experience of past-life scenes or memories are from memories of an actual previous existence.

Certain of the selected case studies suggesting the ability to recall actual past lives were investigated by Wilson (1981). In these cases the clients or participants were all hypnotised. One such case was the Bridey Murphy case in which an American woman, Virginia Tighe, was hypnotised by Bernstein and recalled a past life memory of living in Ireland in the late nineteenth century (Appendix A). As the existence of Bridey Murphy could not be historically verified and there were several inconsistencies, Wilson concluded that the evidence was suggestive of cryptoamnesia, or the active imagination of Virginia Tighe, rather than of memories of an actual previous lifetime. He stated, "there was no way of proving it one way or another, and anyone could do his own checking and twist the transcripts according to his own interpretation of their validity" (p. 76). In conclusion

he wrote: "All too often ... people have uncritically interpreted them (past life memories) as evidence for reincarnation. And too often the glaring inconsistencies to such an interpretation have been ignored. Yet the fact remains that while they may not be what they appear, they seem evidence for something, as yet, unexplained, and when the dubious and downright spurious has been discarded there remain signs of some not yet understood phenomenon at work" (p. 81). He does not suggest what this unexplained phenomenon could be. However, it raises the issue of fantasy versus memory. What do cases such as that of Bridey Murphy reveal about the nature of memory while under hypnosis? What does research reveal about memory even under normal circumstances?

Research has shown that memory under normal circumstances is not reliable. Nothing can be recalled accurately from before the first birthday and little from before the second. Poor memory from before the fourth birthday is normal. (O'Connell, Shor & Orne, 1970; Terr, 1991; Usher & Neisser, 1993). Research has also revealed that memory under hypnosis is even less reliable (Lindsey & Read, 1994; Nash, 1987; O'Connell, et al, 1970; Usher & Neisser, 1993). This research documents that hypnotic memory enhancement is based on the (inaccurate) belief that human memory faithfully records every perception, permanently records such perceptions and accurately 'replays' them in their original form when the individual is placed under hypnosis and asked to remember them. In addition, this research shows that attempts to demonstrate improvements in memory as a result of hypnosis have failed. Most of the studies on the effects of hypnosis conclude that hypnosis increases the suggestibility of participants (Lindsey & Read, 1994; Nash, 1987). Furthermore, research indicates that any recalled memories or events while under hypnosis incorporate 'incorrect' or fantasised information (Nash, 1987; O'Connell, et al, 1970). In the light of the above research and the fact that some of the cases suggestive of reincarnation cannot be historically verified, it is certainly possible to view past-life memories as fantasy or cryptoamnesia, particularly in the case of participants who claimed to have recalled memories while under hypnosis at the time. In this regard, all memories contain a significant degree of fantasy. Therapist Woolger (1987) asserts that remembering is by no means a simple matter, particularly when the practice of narration is examined. Regarding the assumed opposition between memory and fantasy, he emphasises that memories actually contain a significant degree of fantasy. He states, "in both past and current life remembering, our imagination will often fill the gaps and round out the story in all kinds of subtle little ways" (p. 31). Cases that he and Wilson have

explored are suggestive of cryptoamnesia or fantasy. This seems to suggest a prevalence of the tendency to fantasise and for it to be natural to do so. It is as if, as Woolger (1981) points out, the past-life 'memory' acts as a projective screen onto which these unconscious fantasies can be realised.

Woolger (1987) further elaborates that he has found it necessary to entertain the possibility of cryptoamnesia on occasions when more than one client claims to have been a famous historical figure, producing accurate historical dates and records. Woolger does not believe that the clients were trying to trick him into believing that they played a prominent role in history. Rather, he believes that their motivations were based on an authentic identification with one or other aspect of these historical figures. For example, they may not have been Joan of Arc, but they may have retained the past-life memory of their own witch burning, which could easily have been aroused by reading the story of Joan of Arc when they were children. "In this way the archetypal stories of the famous become vehicles for moving, amplifying and bringing to a head emotional conflicts dormant in the unconscious minds of those attracted to them" (p. 31).

If some of the cases can be explained as fantasy or cryptoamnesia, can they all be justified in this way? Using the theory of cryptoamnesia, some aspects of cases that Wilson (1981) investigated cannot be explained as fantasy; for example, the Bloxham tapes¹³ or the case of the "Pollock twins". Wilson cannot explain how two twin sisters - the Pollock twins - thought to be the reincarnation of their two dead older sisters who died before the twins were born, had vivid memories of how the older sisters had been killed without ever having been told.

Moreover, in recent years many individuals have recalled past-life memories in a nonordinary state of consciousness that were not induced through hypnosis but by other means such as the Jungian technique of active imagination or relaxation techniques. This fact demonstrates that the emergence of past-life memories can occur without the suggestion of the hypnotist.

¹³ The Bloxham tapes (Iverson, 1976) were a set of audio-recorded tapes by hypnotist Bloxham which comprised the experience of past-life 'memories' of clients while under hypnosis. The tapes, according to Wilson (1981), are apparently convincing evidence for the case of reincarnation; however, Wilson remains sceptical.

In conclusion, it would seem that the human psyche, while in a nonordinary state of consciousness, has the ability to generate fantasies and stories that seem to be 'memories' of a previous existence. However, it seems that there are cases in which the theory of cryptoamnesia cannot be used to adequately explain these experiences. In these instances, such cases appear to provide some evidence to support the notion of reincarnation, but the evidence is not entirely convincing, particularly from within the perspective of the scientific community. In this regard, such cases may be also interpreted as the accessing of a level of the unconscious that is collective. The Pollock children, who had vivid memories and dreams of their dead older sisters, may have accessed the realm of the collective unconscious, although this interpretation is limited as it does not explain the apparently inherited memories of the older sisters. Perhaps, as Wilson (1981) suggests, there remain signs of some not yet understood phenomenon at work.

2.5.2 Past-lives may be viewed as reincarnation

We can think of past lives as the real linear journey of an individual spirit dipping in and out of the limits of time and space (Edwards, 1991b, p. 2).

Reincarnation is a concept which posits that human beings have a soul that resides within the human body, and at death this soul departs only to be reincarnated or reborn into the body of a newborn child. At each reincarnation this soul is thought to bring with it into the new body the experiences and wisdom learned from the previous life. The implication of this concept is that the human soul survives physical death, can transcend the limits of space-time and 'journeys' through lifetime after lifetime, accumulating wisdom and knowledge as it does so. Pecci (1993, p. 27) describes the 'journeying of the soul' as the purpose of our stream of lifetimes. "It (the soul) embraces a consciousness essentially unlimited, that is continuous, has no boundaries, knows everything and forms our essential core".

The idea that past-life 'memories' may be viewed as evidence to support the notion of reincarnation is not new. Although the concept of reincarnation itself has been slow to take root in modern Western thought, it is an established tenet of faith for more than half the people of the world. Reincarnation is possibly one of the oldest and most widely held spiritual beliefs known to

humanity. Judging by the literature on the subject, it is not only a belief held by ancient religions, but by current ones as well. Grof (1988, p. 87) points out that the concepts of karma (the Hindu notion of cause and effect) and reincarnation represent a "cornerstone of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism, and Taoism". Similar ideas can be found in such geographically, historically, and culturally diverse groups as various African tribes, American Indians, pre-Columbian cultures, the Polynesian kahunas, practitioners of Brazilian umbanda, the Gauls and the Druids (Bache, 1990; Dethlefsen, 1984; Grof, 1988; Lucas, 1993). In ancient Greece, several important schools of thought subscribed to it. Among these were "the Pythagoreans, the Orphics, and the Platonists" (Grof, 1988, p. 87). As a doctrine, reincarnation was adopted by the Pharisees, the Karaites, and other Jewish and semi-Jewish groups, and it formed "an important part of the kabbalistic theology of medieval Jewry". It was also supported by the Neoplatonists and Gnostics and in modern times by the Theosophists, Anthroposophists, and certain Spiritualists (p. 87).

Belief in reincarnation is the antithesis of orthodox Christian doctrine. Traditional Christian churches believe in a physical death that will be reversed in the future when Christ returns and resurrects the righteous or those who believed in Him. However, for the first four hundred years of the Christian era, the doctrine of reincarnation was an integral part of the theology of the Church (Cranston & Williams, 1983; Williston & Johnstone, 1988; Woolger, 1987). In AD 325, the Council of Nicea met to adopt the present form of the Bible which focused on and reinforced the necessity of redemption and healing through the belief in a monotheistic male God and Saviour. This Council rejected almost all passages of the gospels that referred to reincarnation or pre-existence. Later, in AD 553, the Fifth Ecumenical Council declared the doctrine of reincarnation, as proposed by the gnostic Origen, to be anathema (cursed). This council was successful in discouraging Christians, at times violently, or with the threat of violence, from further self-exploration of reincarnation, a success that has lasted to the present day.

Do past-life experiences represent proof of reincarnation? This is a controversial area as there seems to be no concrete evidence to suggest that past-life experiences are proof of reincarnation. Considerable doubt has been placed on research that claims to suggest that past-life regressions can be historically verified, research such as that by Fisher (1985), Guirdham (1970), Iverson (1976), Lenz (1979), Ryall (1974) and Wambach (1978, 1979). However, the belief in reincarnation

persists.

Stevenson (1961, 1974) investigated cases suggestive of reincarnation that involved young children, and offered detailed descriptions and analyses of the cases. Based on his evidence, he claimed that reincarnation does indeed take place. Although his research is extensive and covers almost twenty years of painstaking examination of details, his work has been viewed with reservation and scepticism by the scientific community. The reason for this reservation or doubt is that Stevenson's research design ignores certain social pressures. Stevenson's explorations mainly took place in cultures and regions of the world, such as India, Sri Lanka and Lebanon, which openly believe in reincarnation. He would take a child to the village of his or her supposed previous incarnation in order to verify the past-life memory. But in so doing, there is the possibility that the child may have learned unconsciously to conform to and confirm the descriptions of the dead person whom he or she was supposed to have been in another lifetime. During the matching up of a child's memories, with the collaboration of villagers who knew the deceased, it is postulated that the child may have been fulfilling the expectations of the informants, for whom reincarnation was an accepted teaching.

However, many past-life therapists (therapist who predominantly use the healing modality of past-life therapy in their work with clients), strongly believe in reincarnation, and that the memories of previous lifetimes which their clients present are not fantasy but actual memories. Such therapists apparently disregard the fact that reincarnation has not been scientifically proven to be a fact. But then neither, in every case, has it been proven that it does not take place. For example, the media focused attention on the case of the supposed reincarnation of the Cathars, but this case was not proven to be supportive evidence for reincarnation as those involved wished to remain anonymous. However, it has not been totally dismissed as fantasy. This case involved a psychiatrist, Guirdham (1970), who hypnotised a number of people, most of whom did not know one another, but who found they shared a common past lifetime among the Cathars of thirteenth century France. A similar case is that of therapist Reider (1991) who reported on a group of people who appeared in her practice, most of whom did not initially know each other in this lifetime, but who had apparently shared a lifetime together during the American civil war.

Although most of the early reported cases suggestive of reincarnation do not have a

psychotherapeutic focus, they serve to stimulate the debate surrounding the controversy over reincarnation. The Western cultural belief system, based mostly on Christian ideals and beliefs, strongly rejects the concept of reincarnation. Thus, any cases presented that are suggestive of reincarnation will emerge against a tide of cultural and religious resistance and disapproval. Cases such as the Pollock twins or the supposed reincarnation of the Cathars, that may represent supportive evidence for reincarnation are, however, difficult to explain as fantasy or imaginative dramatisations in response to the demands of the psychotherapy context.

Many past-life therapists continue to be uncertain as to whether past-life experience is evidence for reincarnation. For example, Woolger (1987, p. 39) writes:

I cannot pretend that I have not speculated a great deal about the tantalising questions of whether this (the past life phenomenon) is memory or fantasy, whether these are really our other lives and whether there truly is a continued existence of the soul, as so many religious traditions assert.

It seems that the debate as to whether past-life memories are actual memories and thus supportive evidence to suggest the idea of reincarnation remains unresolved.

2.5.3 Past-lives may be viewed as material from the collective unconscious

We can think of them as reflecting access to a stored memory of human lives lived and passed away ... the collective unconscious (Edwards, 1992b, p. 2).

A third perspective is that these past-life experiences may be material from the collective unconscious, a perspective that does not imply a belief in reincarnation but rather a belief in the possibility of a shared unconscious.

Jung's (1919, 1936, 1970) concept of the collective unconscious suggests that nothing in the psyche is ever lost. From within this context, Edwards (1992b, p. 2) writes:

Jung's great insight, encapsulated in his concept of the collective unconscious, was that we are not simply products of our personal history. The Freudian story, of unmet needs for sensuality and nurturance and of unresolved interpersonal conflicts within the family, while true, is only part of the story of our identity. We participate in history.

One way of viewing past-lives is to consider past-life experience as material that has emerged from this shared unconscious. Does this mean that we inherit psychic predispositions or tendencies?

Jung (1964), in his commentary on The Tibetan Book of the Dead, remarked that psychic heredity does exist - that is to say, there is inheritance of psychic characteristics (the karmic factor in archetypes) such as predisposition to diseases, traits of character, special talents, and so on. Jung does not explain how this karmic factor in an archetype operates. (Correctly speaking then, we do not inherit 'memories' from the collective unconscious - the archetypes are devoid of experience because, as Jung insists, they contain no personal material). Nevertheless, there still remains a difference between past-life 'memories' and the karmic factor.

Although Jung did not extend his theory to include past-lives, his concept nevertheless paved the way for some therapists to view past-life experiences as arising from the collective unconscious.

In disagreement, Woolger (1987, p. 42) points out that this position

... fails to explain why specific memories seem to come repeatedly to certain individuals and not to others or why these memories have such a ring of uncanny familiarity to many of those who recall them. The experimental consensus to date is that past life memories are by no means arbitrary or random, we cannot just access the cosmic computer at will and pull out any life we choose. Like it or not, certain of them really do seem to belong to us individually.

2.5.4 A way forward

Within the psychotherapeutic context in which past-life experience may emerge, the explanations of

1987). In these cases the past-life memories are thought to be personalised stories set in a historical period. When aspects of the unconscious are released through the past-life story, healing occurs as the conflicts and dramas are resolved (how this occurs is described briefly below). The overall assumption is that past-life experiences are healing stories of the unconscious and, in the context of transpersonal psychotherapy, they are vehicles for transformation.

In the light of the previous chapter on transpersonal experiences, past-life encounters and scenes are transpersonal episodes in which consciousness is experienced as a transcendence of consensual reality of space-time boundaries. However, as indicated, some transpersonal experiences are archetypal in nature (cf. Chapter One), and thus are from the collective unconscious. This is apparent when some of the past-life experiences and scenes reported in the literature reflect universal patterns and themes not specific only to the individual lives from which they emerge. In this sense, past-life images, like dreams, serve to articulate psychological and spiritual realities and the crises and dilemmas of the human psyche both within the personal psyche and the collective unconscious (Edwards, 1991b).

2.6 PHILOSOPHICAL HYPOTHESES AND PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC ASSUMPTIONS

As indicated above, the psychotherapeutic approach to past-life experiences as healing stories from the personal and collective unconscious does not require past-life therapists to make decisions concerning the authenticity of their clients memories of an actual previous existence. Judging, however, from the accumulating literature within the field of past-life therapy, there is unanimity among many past-life therapists that reincarnation actually takes place. As a consequence, the philosophical hypotheses and psychotherapeutic assumptions of such therapists are informed by this underlying belief. For example, clinical psychologist and past-life therapist Fiore (1993, p. 252) states, "I believe that we are born again and again into physical bodies in order to perfect ourselves". Another example is from past-life therapist Henning (1993, p. 189) who states that, "since the soul comes back, it must have been here before, so therefore it has had other life experiences prior to the present one". Nevertheless, the common assumption among most past-life therapists, regardless of their belief or non-belief in reincarnation, is that past-life experience in therapy is a spiritual and deeply healing experience.

The central concern of past-life therapists is the facilitation of conditions in which their clients may develop not only an expanded consciousness, as is the goal of traditional therapies, but a deepening sense of awareness of the transpersonal-spiritual dimension within the psyche. Jue (1993, p. 158) similarly asserts that this transpersonal quality of past-life work "enables a therapist to help a client explore deeper parts of the psyche". Snow (1993) fittingly adds that the process of past-life work is at heart a profoundly spiritual one. From within this therapeutic framework of past-life work, a fundamental philosophical assumption about the nature of the psyche and humanity itself is made: "Man is a spiritual being with unlimited creative potential, endowed with the capacity to know who he is and where he is going" (Denning, 1993, p. 188). Inherent in this assumption is the notion that individuals have the capacity for healing and transformation (Dethlefsen, 1993; Fiore, 1980; Jue, 1993; Moore, 1976; Oppenheim, 1990; Schlotterbeck, 1987; Wambach, 1979; Williston & Johnstone, 1988; Woolger, 1987, 1993). This notion is no different from conventional psychological thinking. However, the emphasis for past-life therapists is that the psyche was once in a state of spiritual unity before the process of individuation began. The process of individuation is regarded as Jung's (1961) central concept to describe the psyche's journey towards integration and completeness. This journey is, effectively, a return to that self which forms the original matrix of one's life.

It seems that many past-life therapists assume that this process of moving towards wholeness (a process of re-claiming an original state of spiritual unity), is, in part, potentially realised through the experience of past-life scenes. Embedded in this assumption is the notion of the existence of a soul or primordial Essence within each person. This soul is characterised by an essentially spiritual core which contains a soul-wisdom that can be accessed through a past-life experience. This soul is in a process or on a journey ('soul journey') of spiritual development. While on this journey life experiences form a context in which learning and spiritual growth may occur (Bache, 1990; Fiore, 1980; Lucas, 1993; Moody, 1990; Moore, 1976; Snow, 1993; Wambach, 1987, 1979).

It seems that the concept of the soul is similar to Jung's concept of the self, although he did not include the notion of 'soul journey' or that the self could be accessed through a past-life experience.

A further fundamental philosophical hypothesis is the notion of psychological patterns or complexes

that recur within an individual's life (cf. Chapter One). Although it is not acknowledged by all past-life therapists, these patterns are similar to Grof's (1988, 1990) idea of the systems of condensed experience - COEX (cf. Chapter One). As described earlier, the notion of the COEX is originally derived from Jung's concept of the complex. Grof posits that a COEX is a dynamic constellation of memories from different periods of the individual's life, whose common link is a strong emotional charge of the same quality. He maintains that it is not uncommon for a dynamic constellation to comprise material from the transpersonal realm as well as the biographical and perinatal realms of the psyche.

According to past-life therapists, the patterns that emerge on the biographical level also emerge on the transpersonal level of past-life and are termed 'karmic patterns'. This is similar to Jung's (1947/54) idea that a complex has an archetypal core. Few past-life therapists acknowledge Jung's conceptualisations of the complex and its relation to the transpersonal dimension.

Lucas (1993, p. 27) claims that "it is the existence of these karmic patterns that is the basic hypothesis underlying regression therapy; just to tap into past-lives without postulating that they reveal patterns would be a hollow effect". Pecci (1993, p. 520) asserts that "out of past-life work patterns begin to emerge that give special meaning to existence and a timing to all trauma, suffering and life challenges".

Woolger (1987) calls the karmic patterns that emerge from the past-life scenes *samskaras* or psyche residues. His concept of *samskaras* is used interchangeably with the Jungian term complex. He maintains that past-life aspects of a complex (*samskara*) arise when there are events in another lifetime causing a strong emotional charge, such as that of pain, hurt, loss or grief, that are brought forward into the present life. In this respect, it is believed by many past-life therapists that the patterns repeat themselves for the purpose of learning or spiritual development. Such patterns, and the lessons they bring, manifest clearly in relationships, because relationships become a part of one's karma (present life situation) and "weave back and forth through lifetimes until the emotional entanglements are resolved" (Lucas, 1993, p. 28). Karma is the Hindu concept of the process of cause and effect. The underlying assumption is that what has occurred in a past-life (cause) will impact (effect) on the current life of an individual. In other words, responses to past events determine the present behaviour - an originally Freudian notion, but in the context of past-life

work, karma has been extended beyond biography to transpersonal levels. Bache (1990), Fiore (1993) and Oppenheim (1990) put it in this way; the life of an individual today (effect) is a chance to rectify the mistakes (cause) made in a previous lifetime. From this perspective, past-life experiences offer the opportunity to dis-identify from current life patterns that may restrict healthy psychological functioning. How this may be achieved is described in this chapter.

The idea put forward by past-life therapists such as Bontenbal and Noordegraaf (1993), Dethlefsen (1976, 1993), Fiore (1980, 1993), Jue (1993), Snow (1993), and Woolger (1987, 1993), that patterns repeat themselves on many levels, is an idea they derive from Pribram's (1970) holographic theory. This theory holds that each individual is a small part of the whole and each part reflects the whole. From within this approach, a reflection of each complex or pattern can be found on different levels simultaneously.

Woolger (1987, 1993), using the principles of the holographic theory, puts forward the idea that complexes can manifest in six areas of the psyche, that is, a complex has six aspects to it. These are:

- (a) The existential aspect of the complex; problems bothering persons in their life now.
- (b) The biographical aspect of the complex; infancy, childhood, adolescence and more recent unfinished business.
- (c) The somatic aspect of the complex; physical manifestations such as illnesses, chronic pains, rigid muscular problems, breathing and sexual dysfunctions.
- (d) The perinatal aspect of the complex; all intrauterine aspects and experiences of the birth trauma, following Grof (1988, 1990).
- (e) The past-life aspect of the complex; the samskaras (karmic patterns) or psychic residues from previous lifetimes.

(f) The archetypal aspect

concept of contradictory roles is termed polarity. Examples of polarity would be of slave-master, victim-victimiser, arrogance-humility. Such polarities are thus potentials within each person. For example, a person may have the potential to be both a victimiser and victimised. In this regard, Woolger (1993, p. 223) points out that, "the dark or shadow sides of their personality are to be integrated into consciousness and not banished ... as if they are possessing entities". This notion of the integration of the repressed or unaffirmed aspects of the psyche (the shadow) is not a philosophical hypothesis unique to past-life work. Jung emphasised that the integration of the shadow aspects of the psyche is the process of healthy psychological development. As a consequence of this assumption, one of the central aims of past-life therapy is to become detached from the complex, and not to allow the complex to overwhelm and control the individual's life and psyche.

Furthermore, as a reminder, regression work such as past-life therapy differs from conventional therapies in that it is conducted when the client is in a nonordinary state of consciousness. The past-life scene or story that emerges often has a past-life character that acts like an autonomous personality with its own life history, tragedies and personal power. It seems that this past-life image or story becomes a dynamic vehicle for transformation. Various past-life therapists therapeutically work with the past-life character or story in differing ways depending on their own philosophical assumptions and theoretical orientation.

Some past-life therapists such as Fiore (1980, 1993), are more concerned with the remission of symptoms, while others, such as Woolger (1993), focus on other areas of healing such as the gaining of insight into the past-life stories. In this respect, there is no consensus among therapists as to what is the principal psychotherapeutic goal, or whether transformational techniques are necessary.

Judging from the numerous published transcripts of past-life sessions with clients, there initially seems to be no coherent structure or pattern to the emergence and overall process of past-life scenes in therapy. It is however notable that in attempting to 'make psychotherapeutic sense' of the past-life experience, certain past-life therapists such as Dethlefsen (1993), Jue (1993), Pecci (1993), Snow (1993), and Woolger (1987, 1993), have identified three stages in which the past-life experience may unfold. Each stage may be labelled differently by different therapists but they

follow a similar process. For the purposes of this research Woolger's (1987, 1993) stages are used.

These are:

- a) Stage 1: Identification
- b) Stage 2: Symbolic and metaphoric exploration
- c) Stage 3: Insight leading to creative productivity and service

2.6.1 The first stage of past-life therapy: Identification

At this level, Woolger (1987, 1993) treats all past-life stories or scenes that have been dramatised by the psyche 'as if absolutely real'. He states that one may legitimately take the stories or past-lives literally, as if there were a linear sequence that operates within the lives. The stories are treated as a product of a living trauma that is in need of healing and often catharsis. The trauma/story is brought into consciousness and allowed to be expressed.

Absolute respect for the psychic reality of the experience is necessary so that this other life or story can be reconstituted and relived. The stance of the therapeutic 'as if' provides an attitude of unconditional concern and is the basis for the successful release and expression of the story in all its confusion, pain, or fragmentation. And whatever embroidering, distortion or unconscious reworking may have occurred, each client's story needs nevertheless to be heard totally without judgement or without interpretation (1987, p. 320).

This first stage often reveals painful and shameful aspects of the psyche that need to be confronted. Woolger (1993), whose conceptualisations of the psyche and psychological growth are based on Jung's notions of the psyche, terms this facing or confronting negative qualities in the psyche and subsequent acceptance as 'shadow work'. This process is similar to that of the process of purification (cf. 2.3.1). "Past-life remembering is possibly the most vivid and extensive way of facing the shadow - seeing and knowing the murderer, the prideful priest, the cruel soldier, the abandoning mother ... that we all carry within us" (p. 235). Grof (1988), whose work is also largely influenced by Jung, emphasises that not all shadows of the psyche are necessarily dark.

Individuals may identify with past-life characters that have successful, creative lives. In this regard, he asserts that the psyche will often compensate for the ego personality as part of its tendency to seek balance and stability within the psyche as a whole.

During this process of identification and facing the shadow aspects of the psyche, Woolger maintains that this stage is characterised by intense emotional and physical catharsis. He assumes that catharsis is a powerful healing process and a necessary part of transformation. Woolger (1993, p. 235) claims that "by bringing the traumatic incident to consciousness in all its horror and pain there is often a strong cathartic release and complete remission of symptoms'. Fiore (1993) supports Woolger's assumptions concerning the value of catharsis and the release of symptoms. She postulates that, in the process of identifying with the past-life, the emotional energy tied up with the memory is released and the remission of symptoms is complete.

There is consensus within other approaches to psychotherapy that the role of catharsis is valuable, but not enough, and must therefore be supported by other transformational techniques (Nichols & Zax, 1977) such as cognitive re-evaluation or re-structuring - the re-working and integration into daily life of the insights gained during a therapy session. Many past-life therapists advocate that catharsis is not the only source of healing within therapy (Grof, 1988; Oppenheim, 1990; Weiss, 1988; Woolger, 1987).

At this stage of identification therapists differ on the emphasis that they place on the process of past-life work. For instance, Snow (1993) is primarily concerned with the death and life-threatening experiences of the past-life scene. He suggests that it is at these crucial moments that the emotional responses are carried forward into future lifetimes and manifest as symptoms.

2.6.2 The second stage of past-life therapy: Symbolic and metaphoric exploration

The second stage is the stage of symbolic and metaphoric exploration. This stage involves clients separating from the past-life experience and adopting a 'witness point' (Woolger, 1987). It is only by dis-identification from the past-life story and reaching this separated position of an observing witness that clients may begin to discover the underlying core meaning of the complexes or patterns

that have emerged in the past-life experience. Once this meaning is found "it is possible to detach from the complex and see what has been re-lived as more like a dream pregnant with meaning" (Woolger, 1993, p. 235). This is similar to Hillman's (1979) de-literalising of a complex. At this stage, asserts Woolger, one now asks for meaning rather than catharsis, for metaphor rather than realism. Woolger gives an example of this metaphoric emphasis as opposed to the literal meaning: "The pains in the neck, in the first level experienced as beheading, may indicate a feeling of being cut off from life. Feeling crippled and starved for love may now be metaphors for our current life patterns" (p. 225).

This stage represents a transformational shift from identification with, and being overwhelmed and traumatised by, the past-life experience to dis-identification and gaining a wider, less overwhelmed, perspective. This stage represents a move towards knowing that patterns can be changed, that the shadow can be faced, that the image is a projection of an aspect of the psyche that is innately driven towards resolution, integration and wholeness.

Jue (1993) suggests that at this stage the goal is to understand the story, the decisions made, the experiences learned. "When the patient can see it (the past-life) for what it is, then he can bring in other dimensions and see what happened and is happening as a spiritual event" (p. 168). In this context, it seems that the transformation from identification with the past-life character to dis-identification is not an easy transition but requires clients to find unknown or unacknowledged resources within themselves and to face the fullest meaning behind the past-life story.

Implicit in the underlying psychotherapeutic assumption of this second stage is the notion that catharsis and abreaction are not enough for complete healing.

Most past-life therapists are of the opinion that at some stage during the process of experiencing a past-life scene or image confrontation with the shadow will take place. It is not clear when this is occurring - either during the first or second stage - but it is agreed among past-life therapists that the confrontation and integration of the repressed and denied aspects of the shadow are important features of the healing and transformative process of past-life work. A further goal of past-life work is thus to reveal the elements of the polarities or opposite types of past-life personality characters - the psychic opposites (for example, persecutor-victim, child-parent, king-servant,

lover-murderer) - the "opposites that are rejected and concealed in the shadows but which we need if we are to approach wholeness" (Lucas, 1993, p. 41). It is assumed by past-life therapists that healing cannot take place until the polarity (opposites) behind the symptom is confronted (Dethlefsen, 1993; Fiore, 1980, 1993; Lucas, 1993; Woolger, 1987, 1993). This is the work which is needed for clients to become complete and whole within themselves.

It seems that this integration of the shadow is not achieved without psychic pain and distress, for to face the shadow is to face the deepest depths of the unknown psyche. Yet this is where transformation occurs. Woolger (1993, p. 225) states that at this stage "a shadow figure becomes integrated, a split is healed, a lost part of the soul is redeemed".

2.6.3 The third stage of past-life therapy: Insight leading to creative productivity and service

This stage of the process of past-life work is the stage of insight leading to creative productivity and service that concerns a more advanced level of spiritual transformation and growth. Woolger (1993, p. 236) asserts that, at this stage, "a subtle and almost indescribable movement of the recentering of the personality is experienced, which often brings spiritual openings and manifestations of the Greater Self in dreams and meditation". Within the transpersonal perspective, this concept of the 'Greater Self' (is the same as the notion of the transpersonal Self) and is defined as that primordial Essence or Higher Self that is all knowing and wise. It is the soul of the human being, which is rooted in, and yet paradoxically is at the same time, the spiritual dimension of the psyche.

It seems that this stage is not available for all clients but rather those clients who have already committed themselves to a spiritual path and hold a belief in the journey and unfolding of the soul. Clients who work at this level are thus involved in a process of spiritual awakening and emergence, or a development towards more spiritually mature levels of functioning, rooted in the transpersonal. Pecci (1993) observes that at this stage there is a kind of transcendent realisation of the meanings of the past-life experiences, not an intellectual but rather a spiritual knowing of the meanings. This transformation is "a process of coming to a place of peace and harmony with the Self that is attained by experiencing the primordial Essence from which we have become separated" (p. 521).

According to Jue (1993), at this stage clients begin to understand and to integrate their own inner story and complexes, and when this happens a shift has occurred.

The underlying psychotherapeutic assumption of the stage of transformation is that clients, usually unconsciously, know what underlies their current issues and distress, and how to alleviate them. This implies that clients know how to heal themselves, and that the therapist is only the facilitator, and the past-life scene the vehicle of potential transformation. In this context, it is assumed by past-life therapists that inner healing remains the responsibility of clients and, as clients are exposed to the past-life experiences, therein lies the opportunity for expanded insight and a deepening spiritual awareness of the wisdom of the soul or Self. It seems that this insight is not a sudden event but an on-going re-contextualising of clients lives.

Past-life therapist Edwards (1992, 1993, 1994), suggests that in working through the past-life story with clients and integrating its message, clients may begin to understand that their lives are not located just within a personal story and history but reach into the wider collective story of humanity. The individual ego identity and its struggle become a vehicle for transforming the archetypal struggles of humanity.

2.7 CONTRAINDICATION FOR USE OF PAST-LIFE WORK IN THERAPY

Lucas (1993) is of the opinion that "the most obvious barrier to regression work is a belief system that is strongly sceptical of the concept of past-lives, even if they are seen as a metaphor". Not all past-life therapists would agree. For instance, Woolger (1987, 1993) points out that even if clients do not believe in past-lives, this type of work can still be effective.

Most past-life therapists agree, however, that a strong ego is a prerequisite for all clients engaged in past-life work in therapy, and this, therefore, excludes psychotics or borderline personalities. However, Pecci assumes that work with psychotics is possible once they have obtained sufficient ego strength through conventional therapy. However, it seems that if this were the case such individuals would probably no longer be psychotic. The underlying psychotherapeutic assumption is that a strong ego will enable clients to integrate both the frequently traumatic and symbolic

material that may arise. Psychotics, with a weakened ego, are therefore at risk of breakdown or of experiencing severe ego confusion. This ego confusion may manifest, for example, in not being able to dis-identify from a past-life character (Dethlefsen, 1993; Lucas, 1993).

Some therapists are of the opinion that children should not be exposed to past-life work in therapy (Dethlefsen, 1993). Although the reasons are not made explicit, these therapists indicate that they believe the ego organisation is not yet stable enough to endure the demands of past-life work. However, Noordegraaf (1993) has successfully worked with children from 4 to 15 years of age.

Other contraindication for the use of past-life therapy are clients' lack of capacity for introversion or clients who have "lost touch with their emotions" (Lucas, 1993, p. 52). Such clients will be unable, according to Lucas, to experience the full impact of the past-life experience and thus lose the opportunity that it presents for psychotherapeutic healing.

Reynolds (1993) and Woolger (1987) believe that in times of crisis, past-life work is not suitable and may serve only to add further psychic distress to that already being experienced.

Past-life work is contraindicated for those individuals who cannot detach themselves from the identity of "I am a victim", and are thus unlikely to take responsibility for their lives (Woolger, 1987). Lucas (1993, p. 52) points out that "nothing can be accomplished in regression work unless the patient is willing to take responsibility for what happens to him".

Most past-life therapists agree that past-life work in therapy is not recommended for anyone seeking to confirm prior metaphysical beliefs. Woolger (1993, p. 228) adds, "usually it will provide experiences that are distressingly incompatible with fixed beliefs".

This work is also not suitable for those who find imaging too difficult or working inwardly too alien (Fiore, 1980; Jue, 1993; Woolger, 1987, 1993). Past-life work entails a projected identification with an inner sub-personality, and this, according to Woolger (1993), "involves imagination in the fullest sense" (p. 224).

2.8 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The transpersonal approach to Western psychotherapy is fundamentally an approach that honours and fosters experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness (transpersonal experiences). This approach is particularly relevant within a society dominated by the scientific paradigm of reality and which thus largely lacks a meaningful relationship to the transcendent transpersonal realms of the psyche.

It is significant, however, that some of the assumptions of the transpersonal approach concerning the nature, development and (healing) process of the psyche are largely based on the conceptualisations of Jung. Examples include the use of the term 'shadow', the understanding of healing and transformation as involving the process of the integration of psychic opposites, and the healing power of the release of unconscious repressed content into conscious life.

The transpersonal approach, however, focuses not only on the personal unconscious dynamics (as traditional therapies do) but on the perinatal and the transpersonal dimensions of the psyche, and their potential for healing and spiritual development. It is thus ultimately concerned with the facilitation of spiritual growth and an expanded sense of identity beyond the ego (through experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness) that is rooted within the transpersonal domain.

The implication of such an approach is that it provides a much needed therapeutic framework for healing that locates and grounds healing in the spiritual-transpersonal realms as much as in other areas of existence. Thus, encounters with past-life experiences, regardless of their source, are experiences that may contribute to the process of healing, spiritual emergence and wholeness.

CHAPTER THREE

TRANSPERSONAL FEMINISM

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is on women's experience of abuse and disempowerment within the socio-cultural organisation known as patriarchy. It is acknowledged, however, that men within patriarchal societies have also been restricted and wounded. It is suggested that the traditional dominant themes of women's experience are of oppression, exploitation, abuse and disempowerment; also that these themes are apparent in many contemporary patriarchal societies. In this regard, women's consciousness (and the unconscious content of the psyche) has surely been shaped by such experiences. This may manifest in specific archetypal COEXs or complexes such as: "As a woman I have no real power", or "As a woman I am inferior".

The central argument that is presented in this chapter is that patriarchal societies maintain their ideology of female disempowerment through certain ritual enactments such as the witch hunts of the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, or on-going acts of sexual violence such as rape. In addition to this argument, it will also be argued that patriarchy is a precarious social structure maintained by a system of the abusive use of power. The social structures within this system are built on and function from a discourse of systematic covert and overt intimidation, censorship and dictatorship in which complete allegiance to the system is demanded of all men and women. Any deviance or rebellion from this system is ridiculed, suppressed and even punished.

It is not the goal of this chapter to understand such a social system but rather to recognise that this system may have affected the basic structure of the unconscious as well as consciousness, specifically women's consciousness.

Within the perspective of transpersonal psychology, although not exclusively limited to this perspective, the collective unconscious may be seen to contain two aspects: The Feminine and the Masculine. A further principle argument that is presented is that, since the emergence of

assumptions of the feminist perspective, extends beyond feminist conceptual boundaries to include the notion of the Feminine and Masculine consciousness. Transpersonal feminism includes the idea that the so-called Goddess cultures honoured the Feminine consciousness but did not exclude or exile the Masculine consciousness. Against this theoretical background, the documentation of three ritual enactments are presented; the menstrual taboo, rape and the witch hunts. These three examples have been selected as they directly pertain to the content of the case material to be presented in Chapter Five, and thus form a hermeneutic lens through which understanding of the case material may be achieved. The chapter delineates the implications for women of patriarchal ideology which can best be understood within the context of transpersonal psychology with its concern for the nature of consciousness.

In the penultimate section of the chapter there is a shift away from the focus on patriarchy as negatively impacting upon women and women's lives to a more expanded view that patriarchy, as indicated earlier, is a precarious social system maintained by the abusive use of power. Within this particular perspective, men too are negatively affected. Two examples of patriarchal abusive use of power are presented; the persecution of those seeking ancient wisdom and the phenomenon of human sacrifice. A reminder is given that the complete chapter forms a hermeneutic framework for understanding the case material to be presented in Chapter Five. A summary of this chapter, and comments in the light of the two previous chapters, are presented in the final section.

3.2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE PRINCIPLE ASSUMPTIONS OF CONTEMPORARY FEMINISM

The term 'feminism' gained widespread usage in the Western world in the 1890s. It emerged at this time as a way to identify individuals who supported not merely an increased public role for women but also women's right to define themselves as autonomous beings (Elliot & Mandell, 1995). However, throughout this past century, as women's private and public lives have expanded and altered, the definition of feminism has broadened to include political, cultural, economic, sexual, racial and ethical dimensions.

Feminism is defined here as a discourse that articulates the position and experience of women

within patriarchy and patriarchal societies. It is a complex way of thinking about and acting upon women's lives and experiences. The implication is that the experience of women within patriarchal societies, in comparison to that of men, is fundamentally one of oppression and discrimination.

Historian Eisler (1987) maintains that patriarchy (the term literally means 'the rule of the father') manifests as a cultural system which is based on a 'dominator model' rather than a 'partnership model' of human relations. A dominator model describes social relations as basically structured on a system of hierarchy, division, and separation, which functions along the lines of 'power over' others rather than 'power with' (the partnership model). Such a model of human social organisation is central to the formation of patriarchy. However, Eisler's definition fails to focus sufficient attention on the systematic domination of one gender over another. This definition of patriarchy must therefore be extended to include the manifestation and institution of male power and dominance over women and children.

Feminist theories vary in nature, content and consequence, but such theories share five common perspectives. Firstly, feminist theorists articulate the notion that men hold power in all the important areas of society - legal, social, familial, religious and political. Secondly, women are (and have been traditionally) systematically denied equal access to such power (Daly, 1978; Dworkin, 1974; Jagger & Rothenberg, 1984; Thomas, 1993). Not only are women within patriarchy denied power, but are discriminated against, abused, controlled and oppressed. Their personal, sexual, social, religious, academic and occupational lives are regulated and governed by men (Daly, 1978; Davis, 1991; Dworkin, 1974; Pateman, 1989; Thomas, 1993). Women are thus relegated to limited and limiting stereotypical sex roles (Braidotti, 1991; Burman, 1990; Bushwell, 1989; Daly, 1978; Schneider, 1984; Smart, 1992). Thirdly, gender relations are not viewed as either natural or immutable but as historical and socio-cultural productions, subject to reconstitution (Elliot & Mandell, 1995; Jagger & Rothenberg, 1984). Fourthly, feminist theorists tend to be explicitly political in their advocacy of social change (Jagger & Rothenberg, 1984; Elliot & Mandell, 1995). Fifthly, feminism does not imply that women are either totally powerless, or totally deprived of rights, influence and resources, or that men only dominate women. It is recognised that they also dominate other men. This male over male domination is more easily socially identified as 'the race-class-power' arrangements which favour men over other men who belong to other racial groups, such as white over non-white, and class differentiation such

as rich over poor, or the employed over the un-employed (Jagger & Rothenberg, 1984).

Against the background of these five perspectives lies the patriarchal cultural and historical view of women as somehow inferior or inadequate/lacking; a view that is pervasive and damaging to women, not only for their psychospiritual development, but at all levels of personal and interpersonal endeavour. This view is embedded within socio-cultural organisation and institutions, as well as in the structure of language and consciousness itself.

In order to illustrate the feminist perspective that women are abused and discriminated against within patriarchal cultures because of their gender, examples from three social realms - occupational, educational and sexual - are described below.

3.2.1 Examples of control over women in contemporary patriarchal cultures

In the occupational realm, many women are discriminated against. In North America, women's salaries are 88% of men's salaries even when such women have the same experience and qualifications as their male counterparts; that is, women are discriminated against in terms of their remuneration (Gerhart, 1990; Glick, Zion & Nelson, 1988; Martinko & Gardner, 1983; Saltzman, 1991). Not only is there discrimination concerning women's salaries in the work place, but many women suffer more professional difficulties in the advancement of their careers than do men (Altman, 1985; Daily, 1993; Kanter, 1977; Lorber, 1989; Williams, 1992). Moreover, as recently as 1976, sexual harassment of women at work was not legally recognised in the United States of America; that is, women had no legal protection from inappropriate sexual attention by their male employers. This is not to say that men are not also sexually harassed at work, but a larger number of women continue to be sexually harassed (Dworkin, 1974; Fitzgerald, 1994; Gutak, 1985; MaCann & McGinn, 1992; Riger, 1991).

In the educational realm, for several centuries in the European world (1500 - 1780), women were denied access to schools, universities and educational training facilities (Achterberg, 1991; Daly, 1978; Ussher, 1989). In Britain, women have only been allowed entrance into universities during the past 100 years, and even then, what women have been permitted to learn has been restricted

(Graham, 1987; Howe, 1984; Renzetti & Curran, 1995). Until recently (1930 - 1940), most women's school education and educational opportunities prepared them not to assume public leadership roles, but to better fulfil their 'natural role' in life as well groomed partners for their working husbands (Renzetti & Curran, 1995).

Finally, men's control over women is also located in the realm of women's sexuality. The epitome of male sexual control over women is reflected in the ancient and present day misogynous practices and systematic atrocities of female genital mutilation (removal of the clitoris and all or part of the labia), and its concomitant infibulation (use of thorns to partially sew up the vagina to ensure male control of penile penetration), large scale rape, and the often painful rites of defloration of a virgin girl (Barrett, 1992; Bartky, 1990; Braidotti, 1991; Burman, 1990; Daly, 1978; Davis, 1991; Ramazanoglu, 1989; Ussher, 1989, 1991). An average of 12 million women in Northern Africa suffer each year from the experience of female genital mutilation and infibulation (Daly, 1978; Ussher, 1989). These social-sexual rituals primarily express male domination and control over female sexuality and sexual activity.

3.3 TRANSPERSONAL FEMINISM

Transpersonal feminism is a contemporary body of knowledge that is inclusive of contemporary feminist discourse. In addition, it presents a perspective that focuses not purely on cultural and ideological gender relations, but on the two basic structural elements or dimensions within human consciousness. These two dimensions of consciousness are termed the Feminine and the Masculine. The Feminine and the Masculine refer to an innate universal, archetypal pattern in the human psyche, and are not restricted to one gender but are present in both men and women.

Transpersonal feminism draws its philosophical foundations and theoretical presuppositions from various sources, such as ancient history, which is based on the archaeological discoveries of ancient civilisations, ancient mythology and art, mostly of Western, mid-east European and Greco-Egyptian origin. These theoretical assumptions are frequently symbolised in art and archetypal imagery, and expressed in certain folklore and fairy tales (not exclusively Western).

Several current scholars have been instrumental in documenting the philosophical and theoretical assumptions of transpersonal feminism, and their work has contributed significantly to the present day discourse of transpersonal feminism. The theoretical assumptions of transpersonal feminism are described below.

3.3.1 The theoretical assumptions of transpersonal feminism

According to transpersonal feminist writers, ancient history reveals that the Feminine and the Masculine consciousness had an oppositional but complementary relationship. This was expressed, for example, in ancient mythology, symbolism and art. Palaeolithic (prior to Neolithic, and lasting about 30 000 years) and Neolithic (10 000 BC - 4 300 BC) art and burial sites depict the Feminine - expressed symbolically as the Goddess - as co-existing peacefully (side-by-side) with the Masculine - expressed symbolically as the God (Colgrave, 1990; Eisler, 1987; Gimbutas, 1988; Shinoda-Bolen, 1990a; Whitmont, 1983, 1990). In ancient times, both these primordial archetypal opposites were valued and honoured, and were expressed in everyday cultural and social organisation which was characterised by equality between men and women (Eisler, 1987; Sjo and Mor, 1987; Ucko & Rosenfeld, 1967; Woodman, 1990, 1993; Woolger & Woolger, 1990). In certain psychospiritual traditions, such as Buddhism and Taoism, this harmony between the archetypal Feminine and Masculine has been mythologically symbolised as the sacred marriage or hieros gamos (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Campbell, 1974; Colgrave, 1990; Eisler, 1987; Shinoda-Bolen, 1990a), or in the popular Chinese Yin-Yang symbol which reveals two opposites of light and dark enfolded within each other and within a complete circle, each containing the seed of the other.

In order to describe these two aspects of consciousness and how they relate to each other, transpersonal feminist writers commonly use the ancient Chinese symbols of yin and yang. Yin represents the Feminine consciousness and is "the energy of centripetal force, associated with inwardness, gathering together, cohesion and relatedness. It is associated with the elements earth - the abundant ground that connects and sustains us as human beings - and water - the fluid graceful mother of life" (Welwood, 1990, p. 146). From within this perspective, like the generous accommodating earth, yin nurtures the ripening of individual beings. "Whether we are male or

back of a lion, symbol of the sky/heaven forces. She is fearful, piercing and thunderous as a storm, destroying and merciless. She does not incarnate nature and birth, regeneration and life, but death and a venomous power of hostility and vengeance. In contrast, Hera (Yin-Goddess) is the epitome of life and regeneration. She is concerned with drawing people together in marriage, she symbolises fertility and parenting, and love that is harmonious and quiet. Her home is as precious as a temple of safety, protected from the forces that would shatter the realms of relatedness and intimacy.

The Yang energy or Masculine consciousness is expressed in, for example, the Greek God Zeus. Zeus, like Ishtar, is a fighter, a warrior who hurls thunder and lightning. As the Great Father, he is the undisputed head of the Olympian family. Zeus rules the sky and is known for his fiery rages and for hurling the gods about the palace. He establishes himself as ruler over the earth by defeating the goddess of the earth - Gaia. In contrast, Pan, the god of earth or vegetation, expresses the Yin-Feminine consciousness. Pan is the embodiment of nature and nurturance, of growth and life rather than of aggression and domination. In his fertile abundance he reflects the changing seasons of the earth and the promise of birth and renewal.

Jungian analysts Baring and Cashford (1991) assert that the Feminine as an archetype inspires and focuses a perception of the universe as alive, sacred and whole, and in which humanity and all life on earth participate as her children. The Feminine consciousness contains a constant underlying vision expressed in a great variety of Goddess images - the vision of life as a living unity. The Feminine is therefore a specific way of being, of relating to the self and other, and of reacting to life experiences which is expressed in different images, behaviours and emotional responses. For example, the Feminine aspect of the psyche prefers process to product, meandering and enjoying the pleasure of the journey rather than, as in the Masculine opposite, determining a goal and moving directly towards it in a straight line (Colgrave, 1990; Shinoda-Bolen, 1990a, 1990b; Woodman, 1980, 1990, 1993).

One of the principle assumptions put forward by transpersonal feminist writers is that, within patriarchal cultural history, the Feminine consciousness is no longer considered to be complementary and equal to the Masculine, but is systematically alienated and distorted and ideologically exiled to one gender - the female. As a result, the Feminine is culturally censored and

limited in its full expression. Part of this limitation of expression is demonstrated in the reduction of the Feminine to the traditional feminine values placed upon, for example, nurturance, care-giving, compliance, dependency, submission, instinct, subjectivity, intuition and being closely connected to nature (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Eisler, 1987; Estes, 1992; Keen, 1992; Shinoda-Bolen, 1990a, 1990b; Stone, 1976, 1990; Whitmont, 1983, 1990).

In addition, these writers argue that, in contrast, the Masculine consciousness is given a higher value, both culturally and historically. It is apparent in certain social behaviours and psychological traits such as objectivity, reason, rationality, control, domination and aggression. Furthermore, the Masculine consciousness has been traditionally rooted in one gender - the male.

Another fundamental assumption is that there is an over-development of and collective identification with the Masculine consciousness - manifested in the historical and cultural emergence of patriarchy - and that this has resulted in the glorification of the Masculine consciousness, its principles, and behavioural, social and psychological attributes. As a consequence, the Feminine has traditionally been not only alienated and distorted but repressed and relegated to the shadow/underground world of the collective and personal psyche where it has been culturally stripped of its power and forced into submission to the Masculine (Estes, 1992; Shinoda-Bolen, 1990a, 1990b; Sjo & Mor, 1987; Stone, 1976, 1990; Woodman, 1980, 1990, 1993). Thus the emergence of patriarchy has caused an imbalance of the Feminine and Masculine in the collective psyche. This, it is argued, has affected the socio-political interactive level of human relations (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Eisler, 1990). Women, who have embodied the patriarchal ideology and perception of the Feminine, have been systematically disempowered, dominated and abused; the assumption being that the abuse of women goes hand in hand with the abuse of the Feminine (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Estes, 1992; Ferguson, 1980; Houston, 1987; Shinoda-Bolen, 1990a, 1990b; Singer, 1990a).

The present relationship between the Masculine and Feminine is clearly expressed in ancient Greek mythology. For example, Jungian analyst Shinoda-Bolen (1990b, p. 218) points out that:

Metis was a pre-Olympian goddess of wisdom and first consort to the sky god, Zeus. He tricked her into becoming small and swallowed her when she was pregnant with Athena. Only when Athena had grown to adulthood did she emerge

from her father's head, and then had no knowledge that she had a mother at all.

On a metaphorical level, Metis represents the Feminine who was culturally swallowed or disempowered by the Masculine consciousness, here symbolised as Zeus. This story represents the assumption that the Feminine is disempowered and swallowed. Furthermore, transpersonal feminism assumes that, with the development of the image of the Masculine swallowing the Feminine, patriarchy has sought to vehemently sustain its values of control, domination and disempowerment of women and the Feminine consciousness, only allowing the Athena/Feminine and women to emerge if they adhere and conform to its values. In this respect, within patriarchy women, like Athena, have traditionally lived within male-Masculine created gender stereotypes that have reinforced women's positions of powerlessness and service to men; and service to the collective identification of the Masculine consciousness.

The lost and swallowed Feminine and its values are also reflected in religious belief systems. For example, in the Judeo-Christian religion there is no longer a Feminine dimension of the divine, since patriarchal cultures are structured in the image of a masculine sky-god who is beyond creation, ordering it from without; he is not within creation/nature, as were the mother goddesses before him during the so-called Goddess cultures (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Gimbutas, 1988; Sjoo and Mor, 1987). This domination of nature is discussed later.

The assumptions of transpersonal feminism may appear to be pessimistic and to show little vision of re-balance and future equality between the two dimensions of consciousness, and thus in human relationships between men and women. However, this is not the case. On a positive note, transpersonal feminism asserts that this state of affairs is changing - the swallowed Feminine is now seeking ways to re-emerge in all her wholeness and completeness (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Estes, 1992; Ferguson, 1980; Houston, 1987; Singer, 1990a; Sjoo & Mor, 1987; Starhawk, 1987, 1989). From this perspective, if human consciousness is again to achieve a balanced harmony between these two essential ways of experiencing life, as mythically expressed, for example, in the sacred marriage, this Yin-Feminine consciousness must no longer be repressed from human consciousness (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Eisler, 1987; Perera, 1981; Shinoda-Bolen, 1990b; Singer, 1990a; Stone, 1976, 1990). In other words, the Feminine, as an aspect of human consciousness, cannot be eradicated or forever relegated to the shadow/underground world,

but is actively searching for ways to be restored to full (ancient) complementarity with the Masculine consciousness. Moreover, the Feminine consciousness is re-emerging not only as a personalised image of a female deity/Goddess, as expressed during the Goddess cultures, but as that which the image represented - a vision of life as sacred and whole, in which all life participated in a mutual interconnected relationship, and where all participants were dynamically alive. In this respect, the restoration of the Feminine consciousness is a return to a balanced human consciousness rather than the emergence of a new consciousness.

According to this perspective, the dominant mythic image of the present day is 'the God without the Goddess', meaning that the two essential aspects of consciousness are out of accord with each other. However, it also means that this imbalance of consciousness is presently seeking ways to heal itself. This involves the return of the repressed Feminine.

3.4 THE ANCIENT GODDESS CULTURES

The transpersonal feminine perspective offers different interpretations of history and cultural evolution to those that have been widely accepted in the past. One of the fundamental interpretations of history made by transpersonal feminism concerns the existence of peaceful cultures that viewed the Goddess as the source of life and in which men and women were equally venerated and honoured. Such cultures celebrated the Feminine consciousness as a wholesome and equal partner to the Masculine consciousness. The transpersonal feminist approach to the historical transformation of culture and the relationship between the Feminine consciousness and the Masculine consciousness is described below.

Recent anthropological, archaeological and historical research reveals that there were once ancient Goddess cultures in which the Feminine, symbolised and mythologised as the Goddess, was valued for thousands of years and expressed in rituals, ceremonies, art (rock paintings, sculptures and pottery) and in everyday life. In Palaeolithic and Neolithic times, the Goddess, a female creative principle, usually painted or sculpted as a female figure, was venerated by both women and men as the life-giving power of the universe (Gadon, 1988; Gimbutas, 1982, 1988; Mellaart, 1967, 1970; Shinoda-Bolen, 1990b; Singer, 1990a; Stone, 1976, 1990; Ucko & Rosenfeld, 1967). Moreover,

women were priestesses, empowered and powerful, and the supreme deity was female - an earth goddess - rather than a male sky-god (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Barnard, 1981; Eisler, 1987; Gimbutas, 1982, 1988; Mellaart, 1967; Singer, 1990a; Stone, 1976, 1990).

In the context of mythology, stories exist depicting a time when the Yin, or the Feminine, was not yet ruled by the male principle or the Masculine consciousness, a time when the wisdom of the mother was still honoured and followed. Ancient legends tell of an earlier period in human history and cultural evolution when life was harmonious and peaceful. The Judeo-Christian Biblical mythology of a Garden of Eden portrays women and men as living in peace and partnership with each other and nature, before a male sky-god, who was angry, jealous and vengeful, decreed that women be subservient to men. Moreover, the ancient writings of the Greek poet Hesiod tell of a golden race which worked the lands in peaceful abundance before a warrior race brought massive physical destruction and cultural chaos. In addition, the legend of the glorious civilisation of Atlantis which sank into the sea depicts a social structure of egalitarianism and a culture in which women and the Goddess played a pivotal role (Gimbutas, 1982; Luce, 1968; Mellaart, 1976; Sjoon and Mor, 1987).

In the context of Neolithic art, human consciousness was expressed as being peaceful and honouring the earth and nature, as well as life, women and the Feminine. In Neolithic art, neither the Goddess nor her son-consort carry the emblems we have learnt to associate with violence and war - spears, swords, daggers and the thunderbolt - the symbols of killing and death. Instead, life-sustaining and peaceful nature elements are depicted, such as the moon, the earth, the sun, water, butterflies, serpents, fish, birds, horned bulls, cows, and dogs, to name but a few. For example, serpents and butterflies are usually intertwined with images of women giving birth - perhaps a symbol of metamorphosis, of the transformative powers of the Goddess/women. Like the serpent that sheds its skin, or the butterfly that was once a caterpillar, this is a common rebirth motif which was an integral part of the Goddess cultures, symbol of her powers of regeneration, restoration and life (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Eisler, 1987; Gimbutas, 1982; Levy, 1963; Stone, 1976, 1990).

Everywhere, in murals and statues, and votive figurines - we find images of the Goddess. In the various incarnations of Maiden, Ancestress, or Creatrix, she is Lady of the waters, the birds and the underworld, or simply, the divine Mother

cradling her divine child in her arms (Eisler, 1987, p. 18).

Neolithic art reveals that in these cultures women were not subordinated to men, but were independent, strong, powerful and active in all life spheres. In Cretan art, women are shown as priestesses, captains of ships, and sometimes worshipped as leaders and healers (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Eisler, 1987; Noble, 1991; Reis, 1991).

Eisler (1987) and archaeologist Gimbutas (1988) make the crucial theoretical point that the Goddess cultures were not based on a social organisation of domination but rather on equality and partnership. Such equality extended to the realms of spirituality where men too were equal contributors with the priestesses in spiritual initiation ceremonies. They enjoyed a spirituality that was not based on women being the only spiritual leaders and officials.

Moreover, in addition to the evidence from ancient European art and mythology, and recent archaeological discoveries, certain historical records and translations of ancient texts suggest that these Goddess cultures were civilisations that developed technologies for life-sustaining activities, such as tools for tilling and reaping the lands, or bowls for collecting and sharing food, rather than developing technologies for life-taking/destroying and conquering, as are characteristic of the later cultural evolution of patriarchy (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Eisler, 1987; Gimbutas, 1988; Mellaart, 1967, 1970, 1975; Stone, 1976, 1990)

Alternative interpretations and assumptions of the ancient historical and archaeological data do exist. However, it is important to bear in mind that most of what is known about prehistoric human life and human cultural evolution has in fact been based on the male-orientated interpretation outlined above. Some scholars interpret Palaeolithic art in terms of the conventional stereotype of primitive man - blood thirsty, warrior-type hunters and fighters (Eisler, 1987; James, 1959; Stone, 1976, 1990). One of the assumptions of such scholars is that prehistoric 'man' was the Palaeolithic artist. However, feminist writers point out that such assumptions are male-dominated notions of prehistorical social organisation, and that it was in fact the women who were the rock painting Palaeolithic artists (Gimbutas, 1982; Ucko & Rosenfeld, 1967). Another assumption, basic to the idea of man as the Palaeolithic artist, is that hunting dominated the activities and imagination of prehistoric man (Gimbutas, 1982, 1988). In drawing attention to this bias, feminist

writers argue that Palaeolithic wall paintings were interpreted as relating to hunting even when they showed women dancing. Similarly, the evidence of female-centred forms of worship, and the reverence shown for the female body and the capacity to give birth, were either ignored or classified as merely male sex objects, they were perceived as obese erotic Venuses or barbaric images of beauty (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Levy, 1963; Stone, 1976, 1990; Ucko & Rosenfeld, 1967).

Feminist writers argue that such patriarchal interpretations of prehistoric existence, and their model of man, support the existing dominant patriarchal ideology and paradigm of reality. In this regard, such alternative interpretations have traditionally denied the existence of the Goddess cultures, even when discoveries suggestive of the reality of the Goddess cultures were made, because it is not in the best interest of those maintaining the patriarchal system to accept that such cultures did indeed exist. These cultures pointed to a social and political system that was much more egalitarian (based on a 'partnership' model of human relations) than the patriarchal system of domination.

3.5 THE EMERGENCE OF PATRIARCHY

Based on recent historical and archaeological evidence, writers have concluded that the emergence of patriarchy was brutal, systematic and gradual - spanning more than a millennium from 4 300 BC to 2 800 BC (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Eisler, 1987; Gimbutas, 1982, 1988; Stone, 1976, 1990; Ucko & Rosenfeld, 1967). The emergence of patriarchy began with the first of three Kurgan invasions (4 300 BC) from the dry arid north of Old Europe into southern and mid eastern Europe (Gimbutas, 1982, 1988; Mellaart, 1970; Prigogine & Stengers, 1984). The Kurgan invaders developed technologies for increasingly effective destruction of the lands and people rather than a technology for life-giving activities as in the previous Neolithic, Goddess-centred, peaceful cultures (Eisler, 1987; Gimbutas, 1982, 1988; Toffler, 1980). In this regard, the Kurgan invaders were violent warriors.

For the next several millennia:

All over the ancient world populations were set against populations, as men were

3.5.1 The impact of the devaluation of women and the Feminine on the archetypal level of consciousness

The cultural transformation and devaluation of women impacted upon and was reflected in the archetypal-mythic level of human consciousness. This new consciousness, which gradually began to identify only with the Masculine (consciousness), devalued the Feminine consciousness, (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Eisler, 1990; Shinoda-Bolen, 1990a, 1990b; Singer, 1990a; Sjojo & Mor, 1987; Stone, 1976, 1990; Whitmont, 1983, 1990). The Feminine Goddess in ancient European mythology was reduced to the subordinate status of consort of a more powerful male god or to mortal mother of god (such as Mary in the Bible), or swallowed, like Metis by the powerful god Zeus in Greek mythology, or humiliated and raped by the gods (as was Persephone or the Sumerian goddess Ninlil by the god Enlil). In Christian mythology, her traditional symbols of regeneration and life were now interpreted as evil. The goddess (Eve) was consequently viewed as the source of evil and sin (Eisler, 1987; Shinoda-Bolen, 1990a, 1990b; Sjojo and Mor, 1987; Stone, 1976, 1990; Whitmont, 1983, 1990; Woodman, 1980, 1990). Instead, in keeping with the cultural transformation that resulted from the emergence of patriarchy, a male sky-god was viewed as the creator of the universe (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Barnard, 1981; Eisler, 1987; Gimbutas, 1982, 1988; Mellaart, 1967, 1970; Singer, 1990a; Stone, 1976, 1990; Toffler, 1980). Such legends served a very important social purpose. They all symbolised and justified the imposition of male domination.

In this respect, the new world (of patriarchy) was deprived of the archetypal Goddess and was now ruled by gods of war, revenge and violence (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984; Toffler, 1980). The Goddess on the mythic level, and hence women on the socio-political level, were denied power, discriminated against, stripped of their spiritual power as priestesses, and no longer viewed as equal participants in the process of life. Instead they were now dominated and exploited. Women quite literally became 'the incubators for male sperm' (Eisler, 1987).

3.5.2 The fear of women and the domination of nature

Related to men's control over women within patriarchy is their fear of women and women's

(reproductive/regenerative) powers, which is closely associated with their fear of nature and nature's (regenerative/creative) powers. In this regard, women and nature are intimately connected. Both are culturally viewed as the embodiment of the creative power that men perceive as the Feminine (Metzner, 1993; Wilber, 1993). From this perspective, the abuse and domination of nature/earth is the attempt by patriarchal cultures to subdue and control the mysteries of the Feminine.

The highly developed world religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, all arose in a climate of discourse that devalued women and nature/earth (Wilber, 1993). nature was traditionally and culturally split from spirit. This point is discussed further.

In the Biblical book of Genesis it is written, "go forth and multiply, and subdue the earth and its creatures and you shall have dominion over them". "It cannot be denied that as a matter of historical fact, domination, control and exploitation have been ... man's guiding values in relationship to nature" (Metzner, 1993, p. 179). Embedded within this ancient patriarchal anthropocentrism, which is supported by religious rationalisation, is a heartless lack of empathic identification with the earth and nonhuman life forms. This approach has resulted in a massive global eco-crisis in the final years of the twentieth century (Metzner, 1990, 1993; Wilber, 1993). In this regard, patriarchy has produced a male human species that is convinced that it can know everything and subordinate everything, and which demonstrates a reckless, destructive and exploitative approach to the planet. This is not to say that women do not exploit the earth and contribute to the reduction of its resources. However, throughout the millennia, men within patriarchy have gained the power to control the earth through their development of technologies such as the iron plough, which has resulted in greater food production but also greater soil erosion. Rapid deforestation of vast woodlands initially took place in order to feed the growing iron foundries and metal shops needed to make iron ploughs, tools and weapons, and to supply wood for the growing populations and ships for the navies of the warring monarchies (Metzner, 1993).

Against the background of both the feminism and transpersonal feminism perspectives, it seems that patriarchy, as the dominant cultural organisation, protects and preserves its ideology and constructed cosmology by 'ritual enactments' of its value systems.

A ritual enactment is defined as a socially sanctioned significant event or act which has sacred-religious support; an enactment is an act or event which may dramatise and personify the overarching ideology of the dominant society, and which aims to perpetuate that society's values and mores. Thus defined, a ritual enactment is a socially sanctioned event or act that dramatises, and achieves the aim of maintaining the present dominant ideology, in this case, patriarchal ideology.

Within this perspective, ritual enactments of patriarchal ideology have taken many forms and manifested in different ways and social situations throughout history.

For the purposes of this research, three ritual enactments of patriarchal ideology have been chosen as they delineate the extent of the abuse of women, their victimisation and disempowerment within patriarchy. The three ritual enactments selected are the menstrual taboos, rape and the witch hunts. As a reminder, they serve as hermeneutic lenses through which to understand the case material to be presented in Chapter Five.

3.6 MENSTRUAL TABOOS AS RITUAL ENACTMENT OF PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY

Menstrual taboos serve to disempower women within patriarchal cultures and, as such, form a ritual enactment of patriarchal ideology. Based on a search in the Social Sciences Index (CD-ROM) from 1983-1996, and in the PsychLit (CD-ROM) from 1987-1995, it is found that there is remarkably little phenomenological-psychological research into the phenomena of menstrual taboos or the experience of menstruation from a woman's point of view.

Since the onset of patriarchy menstrual taboos have been established and enforced as social law (Britt-Marie, 1994; Chaturvedi & Chandra, 1991; Chrisler, 1988; Davis, 1991; Downing, 1992; Du Toit, 1988; Elliot, 1992; Frazer, 1959; Havens & Swenson, 1989; Hays, 1974; Novak, 1921; Rothbaum & Jackson, 1990; Severy, Thapa & Askew, 1993; Shreeve, 1984; Ussher,

1989, 1991; Weideger, 1982).

The very approach of menstruous women to new wine or ripe fruit caused these products to ferment and become uneatable, the seeds in the garden to become withered and, if stood in the shade of a fruit tree, the fruit to fall to the ground. ... Their reflection tarnished or dimmed mirrors and rusted blunted blades of steel. Metal objects became covered with rust, and if dogs licked such objects they became rabid and their bite fatal (Natural History VII, 64ff; XXVIII, 77ff).

It is claimed that the menstrual taboo epitomises the fear of women and the fantasies of men. It can be traced back as far as records are available, across cultures and social groups, and is still prevalent today (Ussher, 1991, p. 22).

The menstrual taboo is almost universal, taking different cultural forms or appearances (Kingston, 1980; Novak, 1921; Ussher, 1989, 1991; Weideger, 1982) and associated with various beliefs concerning the effects of menstruating women on society (Downing, 1992; Ussher, 1989). In many traditional and contemporary patriarchal cultures, women's blood is viewed as polluting or dirty (Barrett, 1992; Daly, 1978; Ussher, 1989, 1991).

In this respect, women, as members of a subordinate group, are perceived to be unclean and contaminated by their menstrual flow. They are "marked as different and deficient ... contaminated in body" (Ussher, 1989, p. 22). For the menstruating woman, characteristics such as mood swings, depression, being more prone to accidents, less competent, manifesting poor concentration and irrationality, are perceived to be the norm around the time of menstruation. But these factors are stereotypes about menstruating women; a historical and cultural perception rather than a reality-based experience of women (Britt-Marie, 1994; Chaturvedi & Chandra, 1991; Chrisler, 1988; Du Toit, 1988; Frazer, 1959; Hays, 1974).

By defining women as polluted, contaminated and unclean, these stereotypes strengthen the belief that the reproductive potential of women is a handicap (Ussher, 1989). In Western patriarchal societies it is this 'handicap' that is emphasised and pathologised.

Not only are women viewed as contaminated or unclean during menstruation but they are also punished. Many women are forcibly separated from normal social activities during this time. For example, in certain traditional African cultures and South American rural societies, many women are confined to menstrual huts (Downing, 1992; Hays, 1972; Ussher, 1989, 1991; Weideger, 1982). During the last century, in the Western world, menstruating women were forced by the medical profession to take 'rest cures' (Ussher, 1989).

In ancient Persia, women were put into isolated rooms, often with little food and air, and "any woman who menstruated for more than four days" - that was viewed as normal and acceptable - "was seen as evil incarnate" (Ussher, 1989, p. 43).

At the end of the four days any woman who still menstruated was given one hundred lashes, and sent back into seclusion for five more nights. At the end of this time if she continued to menstruate, she was given four hundred lashes because she was possessed by an evil spirit. Only then could the purification ceremonies begin (Weideger, 1982, p. 97).

Novak (1921) has written about certain ancient tribes of North American Indians who punished with death any squaw who concealed her menstruation and then had sexual or social contact with men who were unaware of her 'condition'.

In Jewish custom and tradition, menstruating women are barred from co-habitation with men in order to avoid contamination and contagion (Fishman, 1993; Hays, 1972). A woman is considered unclean for a minimum of five days while she is bleeding, and for seven white days after that. It is believed that the uncleanliness of menstruation can be transmitted to other people, especially men, and also to all food utensils that she may handle. During the time that she is deemed unclean, she is forbidden to have sex with her husband (Fishman, 1993; Schneider, 1984). She must then complete the ritual of immersion at the mikveh before she is considered untainted. In effect, Jewish women who observe the Jewish law will experience a great part of their lives and a normal bodily function as unclean. Considering that the vast majority of women will menstruate for a continuous period of between seven to ten years during their lifetime, it is astonishing to realise that effectively this seven to ten year period in all Jewish women's lives is viewed as unclean.

However, within patriarchal cosmology, it is denied that the Feminine is active and creative; rather it is the Masculine only that is viewed as both creative and the creator - 'Maker of Heaven and Earth' (Braidotti, 1991; Burman, 1990; Bushwell, 1989; Chodorow, 1978; Daly, 1978). In order to sustain such a cosmology, men, who hold political power over women, have ensured that women's blood is viewed as polluting, dirty and a source of contamination. In this way, women (and women's creative power) are disempowered. Women are culturally viewed as 'the Other' (Ussher, 1989), the inferior sex, to be controlled and their power thwarted and denied, just as the creative Feminine is denied power within patriarchy, and just as the earth is dominated and controlled. This (abusive) cosmology, supported and legitimised by religious dogma and culturally institutionalised, sustains the power of men and their power over women (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Campbell, 1974; Colgrave, 1990; Eisler, 1987; Shinoda-Bolen, 1990a).

Many men in patriarchal cultures do not question patriarchal assumptions about the so-called pollution of women's blood, but rather use the cultural and social systems to uphold their erroneous beliefs concerning women. However, this view is changing as certain men have begun to heal their relationship with women and ultimately with menstrual blood. This is evident in the numerous men's movements that have emerged over the past 20 years in the Western world which have attempted to constructively deal with men's fears in regard to women. (Although healing relationships with women are not the only objective of such movements). This movement towards healing the relationship with women has fundamentally emerged out of such men's initial acceptance and honouring of the Feminine Yin wisdom within themselves, and correspondingly, their renewed reverence for the earth (Bly, 1991; Keen, 1992; Kipnis, 1991).

In conclusion, patriarchal values are perpetuated through social customs and taboos. The menstrual taboo is one such taboo that seeks to control women's creative power, and is thus a ritual enactment of the patriarchal view of women: women are inferior, to be controlled (just as the nature/earth is controlled), and their power denied.

3.7 RAPE AS RITUAL ENACTMENT OF PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY

Female rape (where the perpetrator is male) within patriarchal cultures is a ritual enactment of

patriarchal ideology and, as with the menstrual taboos, is abusive to women and maintains the women's position of powerlessness. As a reminder, the description of female rape forms a hermeneutic lens for the understanding of the case material to be presented in Chapter Five.

A core group of feminist writers has been selected in the documentation given below of the social phenomenon of female rape. Female rape is described by this group as an act of domination within patriarchy. These writers are: Brownmiller, (1986), Caputi, (1988), Davis, (1991), Pateman, (1989), Sheffield, (1990), Smart, (1992), Ussher, (1989, 1991), Walker (1979), and Ward, (1988).

In South Africa rape is legally defined as intentional, unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman or girl without her consent. This definition of rape is a limited definition as it fails to take into account that boys and men may also experience rape. However, the key aspect of a rape event is that it is done to persons who are in politically powerless positions, for example, men in prisons, women, and children. Feminist writers thus argue that an expanded definition of rape must include this political aspect. Rape is unwanted or forced sexual activity - by violence or the threat of violence, or subtle persuasion and bribery - with persons who are in positions of powerlessness. It may take several forms such as fondling of the genitals, penetration of objects into the vagina or anus, oral and anal sex, forcing the adult or child to watch pornography, or exposing and forcing such individuals to participate, against their will, in sexual activity.

Raped women are emotionally scarred for life. Women survivors of rape may respond to the experience in different ways; emotional affects such as anger, depression and loss of trust may be felt by some women, while others may feel the whole spectrum of emotional responses ranging from rage and fear to despair, disillusionment and suicidal ideation. No emotional response from any woman is predictable. However, there are some common emotional responses by women to the experience of being raped, such as a sense of immediate loss of power. They may also feel the humiliation, outrage and/or fear of being dominated in such a degrading way, and of being unable to control who has sexual access to their bodies. Many women survivors fear being raped again.

From the perspective of transpersonal feminism, the most pervasive patriarchal ritual which denies women's power, and which encapsulates their physical and emotional helplessness and trauma, is rape. Rape, as a ritual enactment of patriarchal ideology, serves to brutally maintain the oppression

of women. Research has concluded that the overwhelming majority of rapists are men and the fact that women are penetrated with bottles, maize cobs, broomsticks, fingers, chains, fists, knives and sticks, suggests that rape is carried out for reasons other than the release of sexual tension and frustration. These reasons can be defined and comprehended within a specific political and cultural context: the rape of women is viewed as a direct consequence of the historical and cultural unequal power relations between women and those who hold political power - men. In this respect, rape is understood not only as sexual assault but as an act of political domination over women. When men have political power over women, certain of them will choose to embody this power by and through the act of rape. In this regard, rape is viewed as masculine control and power over women. It is, like the menstrual taboo, another ritual enactment of patriarchal ideology, and once again women's power is denied.

Linked to the political domination and denial of power embodied in rape is the inherent violence of rape. Feminist writers argue that all rape involves some form of violence - from overt violence to threats and subtle persuasion, or bribery such as in incest and date rape. Rape as an act of violence, and its corollary, fear, serve to terrorise women and to maintain the patriarchal definition of women's place. In this respect, rape is viewed as 'sexual terrorism' because it is a system by which certain males intimidate and, by intimidating, control and dominate females (Sheffield, 1990). From this perspective, the terrorism of rape is viewed as so pervasive that it seems to have become the natural order of things, and to include female targets of all ages, races and classes. Rape as sexual terrorism, just like any other form of political terrorism, consists of 'indiscriminateness, unpredictability and ruthless destructiveness' (Sheffield, 1990). In this regard, rape is indiscriminate violence against women; and every woman is a potential target. Moreover, rape, as institutionalised violence against women, is an elaborate system of terror that requires the development of mechanisms other than sustained violence to achieve its goals. Therefore, strategies for ensuring a degree of voluntary compliance have been developed. Sexual terrorism is maintained by a system of sex role socialisation that in effect "instructs men to be terrorists in the name of masculinity and women to be victims in the name of femininity" (Sheffield, 1990, p. 63).

The inherent violence of rape is most markedly noted in war. Rape is sanctioned by male authority as 'a natural and logical part of the inherent violence of war' (Brownmiller, 1986). In the context

From within the current feminist approach, in addition to the menstrual taboos and experience of female rape, the social phenomenon of the witch hunts is understood as another form of ritual enactment of patriarchal ideology. The witch hunts were the direct consequence of the systematic persecution of women, and specifically of women's healing powers (Achterberg, 1990; Reed, 1986; Starhawk, 1987, 1989; Ussher, 1991; Valiente, 1987). As a reminder, the phenomenon of the witch hunts is described below because it functions as a hermeneutic lens for the understanding of the case material.

Historically, the instances when women were recognised and respected as healers occurred when the cosmology of the existing cultures and religions recognised a deity that was primarily female and feminine. This was evident during the Goddess cultures when the earth-mother rather than the sky-god was honoured (Ehrenreich & English, 1974; Starhawk, 1989). In the more recent traditions, women who functioned as sanctioned healers, within the orthodox framework that viewed the supreme deity as a male, were the rare exception. Some women worked as abbesses and were affiliated to the Christian Church, but the majority of women were eventually only permitted to work as aides and nurses to male doctors/healers.

The advent of patriarchy created a cultural milieu in which women as healers (and their healing skills) were distrusted (Achterberg, 1990). By 900 BC this cultural environment had gradually developed into a systematic devaluation of women as healers. By the twelfth century in Europe and in England it became difficult to practise as a female healer. Women were persecuted for being healers. However, some women, scattered mainly throughout rural Europe and England, continued to work as medicine women.

Such systematic abuse culminated markedly in the thirteenth century. A series of events occurred during this period which effectively created and contributed to a sociopolitical environment of suspicion, fear and mass poverty, a social environment that would dictate the future of women as healers. These events were the great plague known as the Black Death, the Hundred Years' war between England and France, and the extreme ecological stress and starvation caused by the cooling down of the northern hemisphere. The resultant changes in temperature impacted on farming practices, thus causing major starvation all over Europe and England. A further event was the Christian Church's rise to political power.

Achterberg (1990) asserts that the reason for the rise in power of the Christian Church (which will be referred to as the Church) was primarily that it offered, if its laws were strictly maintained and followed, spiritual nourishment, a guarantee of entry into heaven and a better life to a population which was starving, diseased, suffering and at war. Such an offer seemed desirable to a population which was predominantly poor, illiterate and superstitious.

At the end of the thirteenth century, the Church decreed that women were forbidden to practise as healers. The theological sanction for this decree was the 'Doctrine of Original Sin'. The Doctrine of Original Sin documents the religious idea that women were responsible for the evil in the world. The Church, and thus men, interpreted the creation story in such a way that woman, through disobedience to a male god, and through forming a relationship with the serpent - the devil (no longer the ancient symbol of regeneration/rebirth and transformation of the Goddess culture) - ate of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge (once represented as the source of wisdom and life), and tempted man to eat also. In so doing, she brought evil into the world and became the evil temptress (Baring & Cashford, 1991; Dworkin, 1974; Notestein, 1911).

In this context, the Church maintained that it had the exclusive power to absolve the sin/evil of the world (Daly, 1973; Ussher, 1991). The Church, through systematic indoctrination, reinterpretation and transformation of ancient mythic stories, ensured that all women were then cast into the roles of evil temptress, wicked woman and therefore in need of control (by men). "The Doctrine of Original Sin was critical; any established Church dependent on an economic power-base of unquestionable obedience would collapse if it were not considered the gateway to heaven by significant numbers of people" (Achterberg, 1990, p. 67). This doctrine would later be used to justify beating women without overt cause, except that they were of an evil nature and needed to have the evil beaten out of them. The doctrine became an excuse for the torturing and killing of hundreds of thousands of women during the Inquisition and the witch hunts (Dworkin, 1974).

Medicine women were especially persecuted because as healers they had power (to heal). In order to reduce such power, the Church and the government sought to enforce legislation of the healing profession. All those who then practised healing without a licence from the College of Physicians, established in 1518, were condemned. Women were prohibited from any form of education, and especially from becoming licensed healers: effectively they were stripped of their healing power

(Daly, 1978; Dworkin, 1974; Ehrenreich & English, 1974; Ussher, 1991). In this respect, women practising as healers were then labelled as evil 'witches'. This charge became the single most effective way for men to gain a monopoly over women in the healing profession. Since women were no longer officially allowed to practise as healers, it became widely accepted that their knowledge came from the devil (Achterberg, 1990; Gage, 1972).

Moreover, the social phenomenon of labelling women as witches was not restricted to Europe and England but also took place in North America until the seventeenth century. Judging by the accounts and records of the witch trials in both Europe and America, the persecution of women as witches during these centuries was systematic and brutal.

The witch hunts are interpreted by feminist writers as organised crime committed against women, and particularly women as healers. Witch hunting was established by the fourteenth century, and lasted until the early seventeenth century (Achterberg, 1990; Dworkin, 1974; Ussher, 1991). By the end of the fourteenth century, most of the women who were once known as great healers, such as Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), had been forgotten (Achterberg, 1990; Ehrenreich & English, 1974; Evans, 1978).

Once a woman had been arrested, the brutal torture accompanying her 'confession' ensured that virtually no woman was found to be innocent. In addition, an arrest usually led to death. Transcripts have been published of many of the trials each bearing testimony to the sadism of the accusers. Achterberg (1990, p. 83) has documented a typical scenario adapted from a report of the first day's torture of a woman accused of witchcraft in Possneck, Germany, in 1629:

First, she was put on the ladder, alcohol was thrown over her head and her hair was set afire. Strips of sulphur were placed under her arms and ignited. Then the torturer tied her hands behind her back and hoisted her to the ceiling, where she hung for four hours while he went to breakfast. On his return, he threw alcohol over her back and set fire to it. Placing heavy weights on her body, he jerked her up to the ceiling again. Then he squeezed her thumbs and big toes in a vice, trussed up her arms with a stick, and kept her hanging until she fainted. Then he whipped her with rawhide. Once more to the vices, and then he went to lunch.

After his lunch she was whipped until blood ran through her shift. The next day, it was reported that they started all over again, but without pushing things quite as far as before.

"In England, however ... women were usually hanged" (Achterberg, 1990, p. 84). In the rest of Europe and America they were tortured and then either burnt alive at the stake or boiled in oil (Achterberg, 1990; Ehrenreich & English, 1974; Ussher, 1991).

Often a so-called witch mark was identified on a woman's body by the male witch/women hunters; a mole or unusual birth mark was enough proof. Many times, women were stripped naked, shaved, and their genitals probed by men for 'evidence' of their evil and sexual relationship with the devil. This practice served to justify the sexual molestation of women (Achterberg, 1990; Ehrenreich & English, 1974; Evans, 1978; Gage, 1972; Gardner, 1954; Harris, 1974; Starhawk, 1989).

From the feminist perspective, the process of persecuting women who were healers and medicine women can be viewed as a process which pathologised women who had powerful knowledge, who worked in strange and different ways, and who, because of their knowledge, challenged the existing social and political order. Moreover, Achterberg (1991) writes that the moral and ethical crux of the persecution of women was that witch hunting was women hunting, or at least it was the hunting of women who did not fulfil the male view of how women ought to conduct themselves.

Furthermore:

Witchcraft in different manifestations has been documented since records have been kept, since the written word became a means of transmitting and perpetuating belief and ideology. And witches have always been women, in reality and in imagination (Ussher, 1991, p. 43).

Women as witches became the personification of the discourse which positioned them as evil and did not recognise or accept their healing potential and power.

Every society has its scapegoats, every society has the Other, the Outsider, the

alien. Women as the Other, are already presented in all patriarchal discourse, but as witches women are doubly guilty, for being both women and wicked (Ussher, 1991, p. 43).

One of the major contributions of the feminist critique of the witch trials is the recognition that many of the women who were condemned as witches were practising as healers or midwives, and were therefore a source of wisdom and support rather than of evil or wickedness (Achterberg, 1990; Daly, 1973, 1978; Ehrenreich & English, 1974; Evans, 1978; Gardner, 1954; Harris, 1974; Starhawk, 1989).

In a culture where illness and sickness were conceptualised within a theological doctrine, women healers were often the only ones able to offer reliable treatments and remedies, using their knowledge of natural herbal cures, tested and perfected through trial and error. However, at the height of the witch hunts, the Church and government increasingly invoked moral and theological arguments to defend their own monopolistic control of medicine and its secrets (Daly, 1978; Murray, 1971; Ussher, 1991).

The witches were often the successful healers or physicians in the community:

Witch-healers are persecuted for being practitioners of 'magic'. It was witches that developed an extensive understanding of bones and muscles, herbs and drugs, while physicians were still deriving their prognosis from astrology, and alchemists were trying to turn lead into gold. So great was the witches' knowledge that in 1527, Paracelsus who was considered the 'father of modern medicine', had burnt his text on pharmaceuticals, confessing he had learnt from the sorceress all he knew (Ehrenreich & English, 1974, p. 15).

Some men were also accused, but in sporadic circumstances where witchcraft and heresy had not been delineated. There was 'a run on' politicians during the reign of Queen Elizabeth 1, and on high ranking German officials during the mid sixteenth to seventeenth centuries (Achterberg, 1990).

3.9 THE IMPLICATIONS FOR WOMEN OF PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY

The implications for women of millennia of patriarchal oppression and discrimination is therefore widespread. Women are not only negatively affected in the occupational, educational, sexual, reproductive, social and political spheres of their lives, but on the level of both the personal and the archetypal-collective unconscious. Women's consciousness has surely been moulded and influenced by the systematic degradation of their values, their bodies, and their stories. Generation after generation of women has been exposed to all forms of covert and overt patriarchal dismissal of women's wisdom and intuition, repression of their healing knowledge, ridicule of talents and strengths, misinterpretation of their reproductive power, and demeaning of their sexuality.

The biographical and archetypal COEXs that inform women's personal lives within patriarchy are in part created as a result of the intergenerational repression of the Feminine and the denigration of all that is female and particular to women. Typical COEXs for a woman may be:

"As a woman I am inferior."

"As a woman I am the eternal victim."

Implicit for women in such COEXs is the idea that the archetypal nature of consciousness is phenomenologically expressed in ways which are different to those of men. Women's lives are lives of disempowerment. This does not mean that men do not feel disempowered, but women's lack of power is historically institutionalised and culturally reinforced daily (from birth) by a socio-political system that values men and the Masculine consciousness above all else. Is it possible that the nature of women's consciousness may change? Is it possible that within patriarchy women may still somehow reclaim a sense of power and control? Feminism is adamant that only through the restructuring of society on all levels will women ever gain power and equality. In contrast, transpersonal feminism approaches the possible future of women in a more positive light. It articulates that the potential for socio-political transformation is rooted in the notion of the re-emergence and integration of the Feminine consciousness into human consciousness in such a way that the consciousness of all human beings will become a balanced system of both Feminine and Masculine aspects. It is not explicit, however, that this transformation of consciousness is primarily rooted within the spiritual rather than the political sphere. However, it does seem that

the return and restoration of the Feminine consciousness is possibly the return to a spiritual consciousness. In other words, the notion of the re-emergence of the Feminine consciousness brings with it potential for transformation at the archetypal and spiritual dimensions of the psyche. The implication is that women, regardless of the context (eg. patriarchy, abusive relationships), may have access to this spiritual-Feminine consciousness. They may therefore begin to reclaim a (lost?) sense of power and control, as well as a reconnection to the spiritual Feminine wisdom within, and a deepening value of their own sense of worthiness and significance. In doing so, they can transcend the biographical and archetypal COEX of victimisation and disempowerment.

3.10 THE PERSECUTION OF THOSE SEEKING ANCIENT WISDOM AS RITUAL ENACTMENT OF PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY

Feminist discourse includes the assumption that historically and in modern life agents of socialisation such as the Church or the government have maintained the patriarchal ideology of domination or 'power over' as a basic organisation of human relations. However, certain feminist writers indicate that these agents or social structures are precarious in that they are upheld by a system of indoctrination, censorship, and intimidation as well as through fear and different forms of violence (Chodorow, 1978; Elliot & Mandell, 1995; Steinem, 1994; Weedon, 1987). From this perspective, patriarchy is maintained through the abusive use of power, and as such is viewed as a dictatorship in which complete allegiance to the system is demanded, and any deviance from it is either systematically suppressed or disciplined. A historical example of an agent of patriarchal socialisation that maintained the system of patriarchal ideology, and demanded complete allegiance, is the early European Christian Church. This Church actively engaged in the suppression of various forms of gnosis, paganism, witchcraft and shamanism which did not conform to the Christian cosmology and thus to the patriarchal ideology.

This European suppression of the ancient gnostic vision of life, termed the ancient wisdom, is documented below as it pertains directly to the case material.

The term 'gnosis' means direct experiential knowledge. Used within the context of spirituality, it refers to a personal and experiential understanding of 'God' or the transcendent rather than on one

mediated through a social hierarchy of male ordained priests and bishops.

In most religious traditions there is a conflict between experiential religion and formal religious practice, between the esoteric practitioners who value the call to inner transformation through direct experience, and the guardians of the exoteric order who train conformity of the individual to group ideology and behaviour (Edwards, 1992a, p. 17).

In this respect, the gnostic approach to epistemology and to a vision of life included the honouring of the Feminine earth as a living, spiritual, conscious, and life sustaining organism (Singer, 1991). Gnostic systems also accepted the notion that spirituality and nature are not separate or in opposition to one another. This view was in direct contradiction to the development of Western (patriarchal) consciousness as articulated within Christianity. The Christian Church vehemently declared a split between nature and spirit (Metzner, 1990, 1993; Singer, 1991). In this respect, the gnostic vision of life was antithetical to the dominant patriarchal ideology which no longer valued, for example, a Feminine consciousness, or perceived the planet as a living organism. Rather, as described earlier, patriarchal cultures are structured in the image of a Masculine sky-god who is beyond nature/creation, ordering and controlling it from without. This patriarchal logic alleges that if 'man' is split from and beyond earth/nature then 'man' can control it. A consequence of this worldview was the exploitation, raping and subduing of the earth/nature in the name of a Christian male God (Metzner, 1990, 1993; Singer, 1991).

During the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the work of Galileo, Copernicus, Isaac Newton, Johannes Kepler, Francis Bacon, and Rene Descartes, supported the concept that the earth was no longer alive and no longer the centre of God's creation (the medieval worldview), and a paradigm shift towards a mechanistic-materialistic worldview occurred.

However, the story of the Church's suppression of the gnostic vision reaches back to an earlier period in human history, during the first two centuries AD, when Christianity spread from Judea to the Roman Empire and across Europe. At this time the Church became a violent oppressive force which brutally suppressed gnosis and persecuted individuals who valued and honoured the ancient wisdom inherent in gnosis, (even the gnostic texts were lost until many were rediscovered in the

1950s) (Doresse, 1960; Pagels, 1979).

Moreover, Christianity became the only accepted form of religion in much of the Western world and, as a result, gnosis and gnostic writings were treated by the Christian Church as heresies (Doresse, 1960; Pagels, 1979; Singer, 1991).

Gnostic images were disparaged or demonised, while Christian chapels were built on the sacred sites of the gnostics. In the eighth century, the Frankish emperor Charlemagne, supported by the Church, caused to have cut down the Irminsul, a great ash tree that represented the centre of the holy world of the Germanic people. This act was an attempt to convert the gnostics, pagans, and earth religions to Christianity (Metzner, 1990, 1993).

However by the Middle Ages, the Christian Church had, to some extent, incorporated the Old European beliefs, such as gnosis and paganism, that had not been totally exterminated earlier or had secretly re-emerged. Ancient seasonal festivals turned into Church holy days, and some of the god and goddess images were transformed into Christian saints. The dominant pagan-to-Christian transformation of sacred imagery was that of the image of Mary, which was essentially the Christian retention of the ancient Goddess culture's notion of the Feminine within the Divine.

As indicated, this violent suppression by gnosis and the persecution of the Christian Church of those seeking ancient wisdom lies within the context of patriarchy, a system of domination, dictatorship and authoritarianism. In this regard, Christian mythology tells a disquieting story. In the Biblical myth of the Garden of Eden, Eve was eternally punished for disobeying and defying Jehovah's orders to not eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Any rebellion against the authority of the ruling male priesthood, which represented Jehovah's direct command, and that of men in general, was made into a sin. Both authoritarianism and (male) dominance were solidly justified and reinforced by the same dictum that modern totalitarians still preach to their followers; accept what authority says is the truth and the way things are; don't think, just obey. To question authority or to seek independent knowledge was punishable (Singer, 1991).

From this perspective, the suppression of gnosis occurred because gnosis threatened the Church's precarious power and existence (Eisler, 1987; Singer, 1991). Thus, individuals daring to seek

ancient wisdom, or other forms of knowledge that were contradictory to the prevailing worldview, were committing a serious crime. Such was the struggle between the orthodox Christians and the gnostics.

In the twelfth century the Church began to be concerned about the loss of followers to reformist movements such as the Cathars in Provence. It then launched the internal crusades and inquisitions against those it suspected and accused of heresy, including the Cathars and the Templar knights (Doresse, 1960; Pagels, 1979).

In the succeeding centuries (1400 - 1800) the Church, often in conjunction with the government or monarchies of the communities concerned, continued to abuse its power; for example, by persecuting pagan witches who were accused of being in league with Satan. This was the start of the infamous witch hunts, as documented earlier, which ranks as one of the most horrific "misogynistic holocausts" in human history that "not to this day has been fully acknowledged, or much less atoned for" (Metzner, 1993, p. 183).

During the fifteenth century the emergence of the Protestant Reformation saw an increase in the power of the Church. This power lasted throughout the scientific revolution of the sixteenth century and the start of the Industrial Revolution of the late seventeenth century. This state of affairs was achieved through an agreement between the Church and the scientific domain. Each agreed not to interfere in the affairs of the other. Thus two paradigms of reality were created, the scientific and the religious, both of which enjoyed large support from the people (Metzner, 1993; Singer, 1991).

During the Middle Ages, individual gnostics whose beliefs were inimical to the dominant values of the Church (and patriarchy), as well as other individuals who were curious about alternative visions of life (and living), encountered forceful resistance, torture and/or imprisonment and death. Gnostics and pagans alike lived in fear, and in order to survive, they kept hidden their beliefs and sacred scrolls or ancient writings, or attempted to explore such ancient writings in secret (Doresse, 1960; Pagels, 1979).

3.11 THE RITUAL OF SACRIFICE AS RITUAL ENACTMENT OF PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY

A further ritual of the abusive use of power is the ritual of sacrifice; however, this ritual was not always used as a means of controlling people. In this regard, as is reflected within Palaeolithic mythology, the Goddess was traditionally the symbol of fertility and of the sacredness and unity of life in all its aspects; she was also the symbol for transformation and rebirth. Included in the goddess mythology was the myth of the hunter, which was concerned with the drama of survival and the taking of life as a ritual act in order to live. The myth of the hunter suggested a seemingly irrevocable aspect of life, the continuous rupture of the sacred unity of all things in order to live and survive. In the myth of the hunter, animals and humans compete with each other for survival, and the life of the one often means the death of the other. In this context, rituals of sacrifice arose out of the need to restore a ruptured unity, every disturbance of this unity must be compensated by a ritual offering, a sacrifice (Baring & Cashford, 1991). The ancient peoples believed that death was part of life, in fact that it was necessary for the renewal of life. The Latin word for sacrifice means 'to make whole or sacred', and this seems to have been interpreted in the sense of restoring to the whole something that had been lost in order to allow life to continue. In this respect, the renewal of life was associated with the shedding of blood. Blood was regarded as the spiritual life-force itself, and the blood of a sacrificed animal or human was allowed to soak into the soil - returned to the body of the earth-nature, in the belief that the life-force would be resurrected or regenerated in another form.

However, the emergence of patriarchy witnessed the rise of the mythic image of the 'God-from-the-mother' figure, which symbolised the gradual separation of human consciousness from the original matrix (a term derived from the Latin word for mother, *mater*). It is suggested by Campbell (1988) that the rise of the God-image parallels humanity's new awareness of the laws of natural life, and how best to cooperate with nature in order to live and eat. By the early Bronze Age, the creative principle was located within a male God-image rather than the female Goddess image, and men were seen to embody this generative principle more than women. In this context, a king, who personified fertility and was thought to be both human and divine, was ritually sacrificed in order to celebrate the regenerative spiritual life-force within nature. However, by the late Bronze Age, war became a magical way to avoid death through the extermination of other tribes whose shed

blood was believed to fertilise the soils of the conquerors and increase the divine power of their king-god. As violent wars continued between tribes, the ritual of sacrifice - to make whole - transformed its meaning. Humanity became aware of death, not as a spiritual process in the eternal cycle of life, death and regeneration, but as something separate from the whole, and as something that disconnected people from one another. This was the birth of a consciousness of human mortality in the sense that death was to be feared and not honoured as a part of the whole. Baring and Cashford (1991) assert that this was the moment when spirit was split or ruptured from nature.

Humanity's act of becoming aware that it was not one with the animal and plant kingdoms ruptured the wholeness of the divine order by splitting consciousness into a 'duality of perceiver and perceived'. When this split in consciousness between spirit and nature occurred, it was experienced as a psychospiritual wound that continually challenged humanity to understand its relationship to nature and "to heal the separation within ourselves between our human and animal natures" (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p. 162).

It is proposed by Campbell (1976) that the one way to heal the wound or split from nature was through the ritual of sacrifice, for humanity still needed to belong to the whole and the fear of becoming irrevocably separated from it was the driving force behind human and animal sacrifices. The ritual of sacrifice served to restore the lost feeling of unity. But it also served as an atonement which would appease or avoid the wrath of the gods incarnated in nature. Human sacrifice, then, was a ritual of appeasement of the darker side of nature, the side that was experienced as destructive, withholding, fierce and powerful, expressed through violent storms, earthquakes, volcanoes and tidal waves. Humanity began to fear death more and more, for it was no longer viewed as a spiritual event in the web of life and regeneration.

In this respect, Baring and Cashford (1991) write that the ritual of sacrifice became a ritual or spiritual act in which people compensated for 'the feeling of impotence' in the face of forces of nature which they could not comprehend or control. In psychological language, the act of sacrificing a human being was an unconscious defence against fear, fear of the power and unpredictability of nature which was now separate from humanity and fearfully uncontrollable. "In the ritual of sacrifice human beings project and focus the fear of death on a specific human or animal, so that the slaying of this particular human being is at the same time a slaying of this fear,

for the death of the other substitutes for their own" (p. 162). It is assumed that this fear is unconscious, for if it were conscious it would be made clear that it is of humanity's own making and does not exist in the nature of things; so it is the fear itself that must be sacrificed.

3.12 SUMMARY

This chapter has described the principle assumptions of the discourse of feminism - defined as a discourse that articulates the position and experience of women within patriarchal societies. Five common assumptions have been delineated, while three examples of women's oppression and discrimination from within the occupational, educational and sexual spheres, have been provided to illustrate these assumptions. It is against this theoretical background that transpersonal feminism has emerged. Transpersonal feminism has been defined as a contemporary body of knowledge that is inclusive of feminist perspectives but focuses on the two structures of consciousness - the Feminine and the Masculine. One of the principle assumptions of transpersonal feminism is that within patriarchal cultures the Feminine consciousness is alienated, repressed and ideologically exiled to the female gender. Within both feminism and transpersonal feminism is the shared notion that patriarchy is perpetuated through ritual enactment of its ideology. Ritual enactment is defined as a socially sanctioned event or act that dramatises and maintains the dominant ideology of patriarchy. This notion of ritual enactment of patriarchal ideology is highlighted through the description of three rituals that are specifically aimed at disempowering women - the menstrual taboos, rape and the witch hunts. It is proposed that patriarchy has affected both the personal and collective levels of consciousness. Moreover, it is suggested that women's consciousness may thus be characterised by complexes and COEXs of inferiority and disempowerment. In this regard, transpersonal feminism holds the view that this pessimistic situation is changing in the form of the re-emergence of the Feminine consciousness. It is suggested that this emergence is a return to a spiritual consciousness which has the potential for transformation at the archetypal level of consciousness. The implication is that changes at this level will impact upon the human relations. It is suggested that if the Feminine consciousness is accessed by women, they have the potential, at this spiritual level, to reclaim a sense of wholeness, worthiness and Feminine spirituality. They may also dis-identify from the archetypal and personal COEX of being the victim - abused and inferior, even though the socio-political context may not alter.

Patriarchy preserves its ideology not only through ritual enactments that are abusive to women, but through ritual enactments that negatively impact on all human interactions. Certain forces and institutions or 'agents of socialisation', have been established in order to maintain the system. In this way, patriarchy is maintained through an abusive use of power. This notion is illustrated by the descriptions of the persecution of those seeking ancient wisdom and the ritual of human sacrifice.

The conceptual framework of feminism, and particularly transpersonal feminism, as well as the patriarchal ritual enactments of the menstrual taboos, rape and the witch hunts, serve as a hermeneutic lens through which to conceptualise the case material to be presented in Chapter Five.

3.13 CONCLUDING COMMENTS IN THE LIGHT OF CHAPTERS ONE, TWO AND THREE

As indicated in the previous chapter, past-life therapy is a particular modality of transpersonal psychotherapy, the emergence of which was not originally honoured as a channel of therapeutic healing. Several past-life therapists indicate that past-life experiences, regardless of the source, are therapeutic and transformative healing stories that emerge from the unconscious. In this sense, past-life images, like dreams, serve to articulate psychological and spiritual realities and the crises and dilemmas of the human psyche both within the personal psyche and within the collective unconscious. In this context, it is assumed that some past-life experiences will be archetypal in nature. If this is the case, the implications of millennia of patriarchal oppression against women and the systematic devaluation of their stories must surely impact upon the structure of consciousness - the focus of transpersonal psychology. For millennia women have been exposed to all forms of patriarchal rejection of their wisdom and intuition, their skills and strengths and their basic human rights to equality and freedom. As Jung (1928) warns, nothing in the psyche is lost and the contents of the collective unconscious - the archetypes - reveal "truths that belong to no time" (p. 190). What then is the nature of consciousness as experienced by contemporary women within patriarchal cultures, and can it be expressed through experiences of nonordinary states of consciousness such as past-life experiences and images? Can women find healing and affirmation in an encounter with the depths of their psyches through the medium of past-life experience? Does

this healing extend to women who have been exposed to a culture that for the most part dismisses their story? Can past-life experiences in therapy bring about a reclamation of inner power and a re-emergence of the Feminine consciousness and spiritual awakening for women, despite the discriminatory attitude towards the Feminine and towards women within patriarchal societies? In other words, what is the archetypal significance of past-life experiences and scenes for women within the context of patriarchy?

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This research is a phenomenological-hermeneutic case study of a middle-aged woman who will be referred to as Amanda. It focuses on a series of past-life experiences that emerged spontaneously during her transpersonal psychotherapy.¹⁴ Before the aims and procedure of the research are presented, previous research carried out on Amanda's therapy process will be described, and this serves as a context in which to locate the present aims of this study.

4.1.1 Previous research

As Amanda's psychotherapy process was considered unusual by the therapist (because of its focus on intensive experiential work in nonordinary states of consciousness), he had started systematically to record (audio-tape) the psychotherapy sessions from mid-1991. During the following months, various research projects were implemented. Thus, a considerable data base on Amanda's psychotherapy existed before the commencement of this present study. However, before any research on her therapy process was started, and before she even began therapy in January 1991, the researcher had already established contact with her. It was this earlier contact that provided the context of trust from which an earlier study had been undertaken (Knight, 1991). This earlier study focused on the examination of the symbolic representation of a series of Amanda's past-life experiences. It was discovered that the past-life stories were symbolic of her own life situation, and confirmed the literature on past-life work that describe how past-life content may be influenced by the life circumstances of the individual. For example, one past-life scene concerned a woman's love for a man who later abandoned her, leaving her with feelings of grief and pain. Amanda

¹⁴ Amanda's biographical details and therapeutic history are described in the following chapter, and where a full account of these specific past-life experiences is provided.

herself had an affair with a man who abandoned her, leaving her with feelings of loss and rejection. This same research was later published (Knight, 1996d).

In the following year (1992), the researcher initiated another research project on Amanda's therapy experience, the goal was the exploration of the symbolic meanings of another series of her past-life experiences (Knight, 1992, 1993). It was concluded that the past-life scenes again confirmed the literature that past-life experiences may map onto the present dynamics of an individual. In 1995, the researcher executed a further study on Amanda's therapy, focusing on one past-life experience (Knight, 1996b). On examination of this past-life scene, it was discovered that the transference dynamic of the current therapy situation was re-enacted in the drama of the past-life scene. It was suggested that the past-life scene served as a projective screen in which her unresolved erotic feelings for the therapist could be confronted.

Other research projects on Amanda's therapy process and transpersonal experiences were also conducted.

Edwards (1991b, 1992a, 1992b, 1994, 1995),

Garbett (1992),

Renzon (1993),

Du Plessis (1995).

The qualitative case study research by Edwards is the most extensive of all the research done on Amanda and spans several years. This research covers a wide range of the transpersonal experiences in her therapy such as past-life regression (cf. Chapter Two), encounters with spirit guides (cf. Chapter Two), a shamanic crisis (cf. Chapter Two), the Kundalini arousal or energetic phenomena of the subtle body (cf. Chapter Two). His principle argument in his research is that her therapy process could be viewed as contributing to the psychospiritual process of spiritual emergence. He suggested that her experiences could be understood as a healing process of purification, initiation and empowerment in which she was reclaiming a sense of her worthiness.

Garbett's (1992) research is a descriptive case study of Amanda's experiences of spiritual emergence and thus also corroborates Edwards' research. Garbett focused on the nature and meaning of four varieties of transpersonal experience: past-life regression, the Kundalini

awakening, encounters with spirit guides, and experience of the metacosmic void. It was discovered that Amanda's experiences were found to correlate well with the descriptions found in the literature.

Renzon's (1993) phenomenological case study explored Marian's transpersonal experience of the healing temples of ancient Greece, in particular, the Asclepian tradition. It was concluded that Amanda's experiences matched those found in the literature on the Asclepian healing arts and their holistic approaches to therapy. The experiences were meaningful for Amanda and she felt re-connected to the sense of herself as a healer.

The case study research by Du Plessis (1995) examined Marian's experience of energetic phenomena of the subtle body, with particular reference to the Kundalini awakening. The result of this research confirmed the existing literature on the experience of the Kundalini awakening as well as suggested that her experiences of the Kundalini could be viewed as a spiritual emergence.

In an overview of the research done on Amanda, it is noted that the research projects by Renzon (1993) and Du Plessis (1995) did not focus on Amanda's past-life experiences in therapy, while Garbett's (1992) research covers a variety of transpersonal experiences, one of which is past-life experience. Garbett's research, however, did not extend existing theory on past-life experiences, rather it confirms the existing literature. The early research initiated by the researcher on specifically Amanda's past-life experience, like Garbett's research, only confirms current theory on past-life experience in therapy.

The recent research of Edwards (1994, 1995) explores the collective and personal significance of some of the past-life experiences, and he has suggested that these experiences are reflective of the deeper archetypal experience and struggle of women within patriarchy. It is this more recent research that stimulated interest and debate, and resulted in this present case study.

4.2 AIMS OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH

As suggested by the literature, past-life experience in transpersonal psychotherapy has the potential to facilitate healing and transformation. Moreover, past-life experience may articulate psychological and spiritual realities and the crises and dilemmas of the human psyche both within the personal psyche and the collective unconscious. Against the background of feminism and transpersonal feminism, women's experience of the oppression of patriarchy must, in part, influence unconscious processes. Could past-life experiences act as a channel in which unconscious content from the collective and personal realms of the unconscious be released, not only in the service of healing and self-transformation, but, of equal importance, and as Edwards (1994) suggests, in the re-emergence of the Feminine consciousness within a woman within contemporary patriarchy? Except for the extensive research of Edwards, it is apparent that, to date, there are no documented descriptive-hermeneutic case studies that investigate the role of past-life experience in women in the recovery and restoration of the Feminine consciousness within contemporary patriarchal culture, and the archetypal significance for women of past-life experience. In addition, excluding Edwards research, there are no phenomenological-hermeneutic case studies that show the process of a woman's inner healing and transformation through a series of past-life experiences.

The aims of this research are to:

- 1) document and faithfully describe Amanda's past-life experiences that occurred during selected psychotherapy sessions;
- 2) engage in a hermeneutic dialogue between Amanda's past-life experiences (data/case material) and contemporary transpersonal literature, and, in so doing, to evaluate and extend existing theory;
- 3) uncover the archetypal significance of past-life experience and its relationship to the re-emerging Feminine within patriarchal culture. This will encompass the study of some of Amanda's past-life scenes as ritual enactment of patriarchal ideology;
- 4) show how the past-life stories and images contribute to the process of inner healing and transformation.

As the aims of this as with all research dictated the research approach, a combination of the phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches was considered appropriate.

4.3 PRINCIPLES OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL AND HERMENEUTIC RESEARCH APPROACH

I realised that it was not up to us to dictate what the human psyche should be like in order to fit our scientific belief and worldview. Rather it is important to discover and accept the true nature of the psyche and find out how we can best co-operate with it (Grof & Grof, 1990, p. 24).

The above statement indicates the need for an approach to research in psychology that would best illuminate the human psyche. The approach adopted in this research that would best allow the researcher to understand Amanda's psyche is phenomenology. Such an approach is "characterised by the attitude of openness to whatever is significant for the proper understanding of the phenomenon" (De Koning, 1979, p. 122). This attitude of openness is embodied in the theoretical principle of phenomenology, espoused by Husserl's (1970) dictum, 'Back to the things themselves'. In this light, Stones (1986, p. 67) concludes that:

It would be a gross misunderstanding of the phenomenological insight to argue that there is a phenomenological method. There is no such thing! Rather, there is a certain phenomenological framework or approach within which phenomena are understood.

This approach demands that the participant's experience, that is, Amanda's experience, is central to the research process (Fischer & Wertz, 1979; Giorgi, 1970, 1992; Kruger, 1989; Stones, 1986; Wertz, 1985). Giorgi (1975, 1985), a pioneer of the phenomenological approach, argues that the phenomenological researcher's aim is to remain true to the lived-experience of individuals within their life-world and reality. Thus:

The fundamental point of departure of phenomenologically-based research from

traditional natural scientific research is that priority is given to the phenomenon under investigation rather than this being secondary to an already established methodological framework (Stones, 1986, p. 63)

The phenomenological principle of allegiance to the lived-experience functioned as a guideline for conducting this research (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Using only phenomenological descriptions of phenomena does not always provide a precise scrutiny of the phenomenon (Packer & Addison, 1989). Hermeneutics, however, moves beyond phenomenological description in that the goal of hermeneutic research is the interpretative-dialogue between the phenomenological description of lived-experience and the existing theoretical conceptualisation (Miller & Crabtree, 1992). It is for this reason that the hermeneutic approach is also adopted.

According to Packer and Addison (1989, p. 277), the interpretive process may be identified as the

... working out of possibilities that have become apparent in a preliminary, dim understanding of events. And this pre-understanding embodies a particular concern, a kind of caring. It provides a way of reading, a preliminary initial accessibility, a stance or perspective that opens up the field being investigated.

This interpretative process often makes use of existing literature that acts as a hermeneutic lens through which a deeper understanding of the phenomena may be obtained (Edwards, 1993). This process is termed 'the hermeneutic reflection' (Packer & Addison, 1989). In this present research, the literature on past-life experience, and the process of past-life work in psychotherapy, as well as the discourse of transpersonal feminism, will be used as hermeneutic lenses through which the deeper implications of Amanda's past-life experience will be accessed.

Another aspect of the interpretative process is not primarily concerned with the understanding the phenomena, but rather is concerned with rigorously developing and testing existing theory, a process known as 'the hermeneutic dialogue'. The existing literature, which has served as a hermeneutic lens, in turn becomes the theoretical framework that undergoes evaluation and

modification through dialogue with the case material (Packer & Addison, 1989). In this phase of the research, Amanda's case material will be employed to engage the existing transpersonal literature in interpretative dialogue. This will permit the transpersonal literature to be evaluated and extended. How this was approached in the present study is a methodological procedure which will be described later on in this chapter.

The method of interpretive sciences is consonant with the hermeneutic view of understanding experience. The method is simple: it is dialogue. We come to understanding, we establish meaning - mutual co-understanding by the age-old dialectic method of question and answer (Steele, 1982, p. 346).

It is important to note that there are some interpretations that are better than others. Packer and Addison (1989), for instance, suggest that we should not surrender to the chaos that anything goes. Moreover, Biling (1991) advises that the way out of such potential chaos is to employ reasonable argument. In this respect, Packer and Addison (1989) assert that argument is the key to interpretive research.

The hermeneutic-dialogue, which is also described as theoretical-heuristic work (Edwards, 1993), does not necessarily imply that the experience of Amanda is no longer primary. On the contrary, her experience remains the guiding principle in the interpretive work, and, in this regard, the researcher has striven to remain constantly within the broader phenomenological perspective.

In attempting to combine the insights of phenomenology with the rigour of hermeneutics in the exploration of past-life experience, there is a tentative move towards the position adopted by Ricoeur (as described by Louw, 1990, p. 147):

Ricoeur's own thought develops into what might be termed a 'hermeneutic phenomenology'. From the hermeneutic tradition ... he obtains insights into the content of reflection so that his reflections focus on the fundamental questions about the meaning of being. And from phenomenology he gains insights about the form of reflection; namely, the need for methodological rigor, certainty and necessity.

Accordingly, the research method applied in order to achieve the research aims must be appropriate in that it facilitates the establishment of the phenomenological principles and hermeneutic goals of interpretation of Amanda's past-life scenes. In this context, and in terms of psychological research methodology, Romanyshyn (1971, p. 107) states that:

The method becomes an integral part of the problem studied, and ... it develops in accordance with, rather than independent of the ways in which the problem is approached. ... It is the unique demands which indicate the method rather than the method which limits the problem.

4.4 PRINCIPLES OF CASE STUDY RESEARCH METHOD

The case study research method has come to be recognised as an important research tool in the social sciences, and more specifically, within the discipline of psychology and psychotherapy (Edwards, 1990, 1991a, 1993). The term 'case study' implies that a limited number of units of analysis (often only one), such as an individual, group or an institution, are studied intensively (Bromley, 1986; Eckstein, 1975). As there are a limited number of analytic units, the case study method enables accurate and detailed descriptions of the phenomena under scrutiny that are later used to generate a conceptualisation that embodies general principles (Edwards, 1990; Mitchell, 1983). This may be achieved by remaining as close as possible to the context in which the phenomenon occurs (Bromley, 1986; Mitchell, 1983; Yin, 1984, 1994). "The resultant conceptualisation opens up essential qualities of the case being investigated and is tested, refined and extended by a series of subsequent case studies" (Edwards, 1990, p. 362). This is similar to Bromley's notion of building up of case law in jurisprudence.

Although case studies tend to be descriptive and utilise all forms of relevant data, they also play key roles in theory development (Bromley, 1986; Miller, 1991; Mitchell, 1983; Yin 1984). This is an important consideration since the present research is not just the description of Amanda's past-life experience, but is also aimed at theory development. The development of theory entails a distinction between two phases; the phase of discovery and the phase of theory verification and extension (Bromley, 1986; Edwards, 1993; Glaser & Straus, 1967; Mahrer, 1988; Maslow,

1973). Case studies lie on a continuum from description through to theory testing (Edwards, 1991, 1993).

In the present case study, the phase of discovery or 'context of discovery' utilises phenomenological description - without interpretation. The phenomenological principle of remaining faithful to the data guided the research process of the procedures of data collection, the reduction of the case material to manageable proportions, and the identification of the themes that emerged from the content of these past-life experiences. These methodological procedures are presented later. At this stage, the research is a phenomenological case study. In this regard, Giorgi (1986) called for the restoration of description as the cornerstone of the process of discovery, without which the notion of verification is meaningless.

As indicated, this present study is concerned with developing and evaluating existing theory on past-life experience, thus the present research is also a hermeneutic case study rather than remaining a phenomenological case study only. This involved the process of an engagement with existing transpersonal literature. The process is describe further on, together with the selection of the hermeneutic keys.

4.4.1 A note on the use of a single-participant in case study research

The individual case study, or situational analysis is the bed rock of scientific investigation (Bromley, 1986, p. ix).

The use of single-participant case study research is not a new development in psychology (Bromley, 1986; Edwards, 1989, 1990; Kratochwill et al. 1984; Mitchell, 1983), particularly within the context of psychotherapy (Barlow, 1981; Strupp, 1981, 1988). Nevertheless, research based on one participant has been the source of conflictual debate for a considerable time because there has been a historical focus on quantitative methods modeled on natural science. This has resulted in the neglect of the ecological, naturalistic case study method using single or small numbers of participants (Bromley, 1986; Edwards, 1989, 1990; Kiesler, 1981; Mitchell, 1983).

In psychotherapy, it is the idiographic methods that constitute a significant aspect of clinical research (Edwards, 1990). "Theory and practise (in psychotherapy) have largely advanced by the accumulation of clinical wisdom based on extensive experiences with individual cases" (Edwards, 1990, p. 359). In this regard "the case study has played a central role in clinical psychology" (Kazdin, 1981, p. 183). Thus, what is known about psychotherapy has mostly come from clinical single-participant observations.

4.5 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Below is described the research process which includes the data sources, data reduction of sessions, identification of themes, selection of hermeneutic keys or lenses, and process of hermeneutic reflection and dialogue.

4.6 DATA SOURCES

There were seven data sources:

- * archival material and archival summary;
- * a detailed biographical account written by Amanda;
- * eight consecutive taped and transcribed verbatim psychotherapy sessions;
- * written reports by Amanda on the selected past-life experience;
- * Amanda's private journal;
- * the therapist's notes on the sessions;
- * interviews and spontaneous conversations with Amanda.

4.6.1 The archival material and archival summary

With Amanda's assistance archival material on her therapy process (which include a total of 163 sessions), was collected by John. The material comprises the therapist's sessions notes and numerous good-quality audio-tape recordings of most of the psychotherapy sessions from the

Based on the archival summary, these particular sessions were selected as a sample of the entire psychotherapy endeavour because their content was characteristic of the overall therapy process. Moreover, these eight sessions contained transpersonal experiences (content) that were also found in the other parts of the psychotherapy process, even though the actual experiences were qualitatively different, that is, no single past-life story was exactly the same.

These eight sessions contained sufficient past-life material to form a data base that could be used to explore her past-life experiences in therapy. By selecting consecutive sessions it was possible to explicate the progression - and the emergence - of various past-life themes and experiences within a limited period.

The selected period (February - April 1992) was based on a cross-section of her therapy in the early part of 1992. As described earlier, psychotherapy began in late January 1991, and during that year, two research projects on Amanda - Edwards (1991a), and Knight (1991) - had already been executed. The one project focused on the early part of 1991, while the other on the psychotherapy process which had occurred approximately six months later. In the following year (1992), a further four research projects had been implemented - Edwards (1992a), Garbett (1992), and Knight (1992, 1993). None of these projects had focused on the early part of 1992. Consequently, these eight selected sessions were chosen so that they would not overlap with the other research, and would thus form part of an extensive data base that was emerging.

4.6.4 Written reports by Amanda on the selected past-life experience

To obtain a more complete account of Amanda's past-life experiences that were not clearly articulated in the sessions, the researcher asked Amanda to provide further written details. A written account was required to prevent any misinterpretation of the experiences by the researcher, thus rendering the data more reliable (Edwards, 1990, 1991a; Yin, 1994).

This was achieved by giving the transcripts of each session to Amanda so that she could be reminded of what had taken place in each particular session. She was asked:

Please describe, in as much detail as possible, your thoughts, feelings and perceptions during the past-life experience.

These written reports were repeatedly re-read to gain an overall understanding of her experience. Where further clarity was needed, follow-up interviews were conducted. There were three such follow-up interviews.

4.6.5 Amanda's private journal

Amanda allowed the researcher limited access to her private journal (only during the time that the selected psychotherapy sessions took place: February 1992 to April 1992) in which were recorded her insights into the past-life experience and the psychotherapy process. She would write in her journal regularly - almost three to four times a week. In addition, a few hours after a psychotherapy session, she would often write brief notes.

4.6.6 The therapist's notes on the sessions

The therapist notes on the selected sessions from the archival material were consulted. These notes were fairly brief (half to a full page) and were written by the therapist shortly after each session was completed, usually on the same day. Such notes mainly comprised his description of what had transpired during the session, and words that Amanda had used while in a nonordinary state of consciousness.

4.6.7 Interviews and spontaneous conversations with Amanda

'Structured' and 'unstructured or open ended' interviews (Miller, 1991; Miller & Crabtree, 1992; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984; Yin, 1984) with Amanda were conducted with the intention of clarification and elaboration in order to further develop an accurate and in-depth understanding of Amanda's lived-experience. Questions asked during the interviews were used to obtain both

'factual and opinion information' as well as the phenomenological description (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Factual questions asked for objective information such as age or level of education, while questions seeking opinion were focused on her beliefs, attitudes, insights and feelings about her various experiences. Structured and unstructured interviews contained all three types of information seeking questions (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

During the interviews aimed at obtaining phenomenological description, the primary allegiance was to her experience.

Examples of questions asked in:

(A) Unstructured interviews

"Tell me about your relationship with your first husband".

"Tell me about your psychotherapy".

(B) Structured interviews

"What is your understanding of the Mila regression?"

"When did the sexual abuse start in your second marriage?"

The majority of the interviews (nine) were tape-recorded, and detailed notes were taken during the remainder of the interviews. In the structured interviews, a set of questions was given to Amanda prior to the interview thus allowing her time to reflect on her answers. The structured interviews were mainly follow-up interviews with the aim of further clarification and amplification.

Interviews took place, at her own convenience, during mid-April to mid-August 1992, and each interview varied in duration, but, on average, would last for one and a quarter hours. The setting for the interviews was in her home which allowed for the development of a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere.

In order to enhance the validity of the conclusions, no leading questions were asked.

A summary of the unstructured and structured interviews is recorded below:

Total unstructured interviews = 6	
Case history/biographical data	1
Whole therapy experience	2
Specific past-life experience	2
Selected transcribed sessions	1

Total structured interviews = 7	
Case history/biographical account	1
Past-life experience	5
Selected transcribed sessions	1

Total of all interviews = 13

Additional important data were collected during spontaneous conversations that often occurred - three times a week - between the researcher and Amanda. Such conversations would focus on her experiences in psychotherapy, and occurred between the days on which interviews took place. These types of conversations continued for several months, allowing the further insights of Amanda to be continually recorded.

With her permission, the researcher would record, in written form, the conversation. It was often impossible to record simultaneously because such conversations would take place in settings where no pen and paper were nearby such as during a walk. The researcher's written notes of the

conversations were verified by Amanda.

The interviews provided additional information for the explication of the data material.

4.7 THE PROCEDURE OF DATA REDUCTION AND HERMENEUTIC DIALOGUE

In the following section, the procedure of data reduction and hermeneutic dialogue is described in detail

4.7.1 Data reduction of sessions

As the transcripts from these eight sessions was voluminous, it was necessary to reduce it into manageable proportions so that the researcher was able to work with it in a coherent fashion. This process involved the data being reduced to eight synopses, stripped of redundancies and repetitive remarks, while remaining faithful to Amanda's past-life experience but elucidating it descriptively.

The data reduction of each of the eight psychotherapy transcripts from the eight sessions (the raw data) was achieved by reading each transcript repeatedly in order to gain an overall perspective (Stones, 1979, 1986; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Each of the eight transcripts was summarised into an extended synopsis, retaining key words or phrases that best described her psychotherapy process and the past-life experience. The principle used in generating this procedure was to focus on and not lose any detail of the past-life experiences while summarising the other events and experiences in the session. Once this had been achieved, each extended synopsis was further reduced to a narrative synopsis. This latter process focused on integrating the extended synopses with other relevant material from the interviews as well as from other data sources, described above, such as the biographical account written by Amanda, written reports by Amanda on the selected past-life experience and her private journal. In the case of her journal and the therapist's notes, confirming evidence for Amanda's understanding of her past-life experiences in the sessions were provided. The principle used in generating this procedure was to integrate all the information gained or to use the multiple data sources in order to furnish a more complete context in which the therapy process

as a whole could be understood. Special attention was given to understanding what the past-life story was about and the phenomenological experience of the past-life story. These narrative synopses are presented in the following chapter.

To ensure validity of the reduction process, two procedures were implemented. The first involved inviting Amanda to be a 'co-researcher' (Edwards, 1993) in that she was asked to participate in this stage of data reduction. Her participation involved her reading the reduced material and providing commentary on whether the reduced data accurately portrayed her experiences. When the reduction failed to achieve this, she informed the researcher so that feedback could be used to re-write the data in such a manner that it confirmed her experiences. In this respect, validity thus concerns whether case histories, case synopses or interview summaries faithfully portray the experience and behaviour of Amanda and are free from selection bias. There is, of course, the risk that researchers may select material that favours a specific perspective. Consequently, the second procedure adopted was to use two independent judges, both of whom were experienced qualitative researchers within the field of psychology and who held a PhD in psychology. These judges were each given the summaries, the reduced synopses and the original raw data. They were requested to evaluate the faithfulness of the data reduction (Edwards, 1990, 1993; Packer & Addison, 1989; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Both judges confirmed the veracity of the reduction process.

4.7.2 Identification of themes

The identification of themes within the past-life scenes and images was guided by the principles enumerated by Taylor and Bogdan (1984) and by Ritchie and Spencer (1994). Taylor and Bogdan (1984) point out that the first step in the process of the identification of themes is that of 'familiarisation of the material'. This step - 'discovery phase' - has the aim of 'reading and re-reading the data' in order to gain a sense of the recurring patterns that emerge. However, Ritchie and Spencer (1994) caution that the term 'reading', as it appears in hermeneutic methods, refers to more than just a superficial reading but rather a 'full immersion in the data'.

Ritchie and Spencer (1994, p. 180) further add that themes that emerge as a result of this immersion in the data involve "both logical and intuitive thinking. It involves making judgements

about meaning, about the relevance and importance of issues, and about implicit connections between ideas". With regard to the present research, the identification of the themes was the result of both an intuitive sense of the case material and the consulted theory, (described in Chapter One, Two, and Three), which served as an initial accessibility to the data (the process of hermeneutic reflection), (Packer & Addison, 1989).

During the process of identification of themes, focus was placed on categorising the images and scenes according to their content. For instance, one of Amanda's past-life scenes included a woman being tortured, while another scene saw a woman being erroneously accused of being a witch and yet a further scene disclosed a woman being raped. These imaginal scenes were identified as containing the theme of the abuse and disempowerment of women. Consequently, a common meaning bound the images and scenes. In terms of the validity of the process of identification of the themes, Welman (1995, p. 181) states that:

In a hermeneutically-based thematic analysis, validity does not rest upon the question of whether other researchers would identify the same themes from the same data, nor upon the statistical importance of images making up a theme. Rather, validity has to do more with the extent to which the identified themes are useful in understanding the phenomenon being investigated (author's emphasis).

Welman argues that the evaluation of validity comes from whether the reader finds the identified themes useful for further reflection. In the light of his statement, this research process utilised the themes identified in such a manner as to broaden the scope of understanding of the past-life scenes. The themes that emerged in the past-life scenes are presented in Chapter Five and discussed in Chapter Six.

4.7.3 Selection of hermeneutic keys

The appropriate selection of hermeneutic keys or lenses is critical in that such hermeneutic keys need to furnish an accurate understanding of Amanda's past-life scenes and images, without imposing the theoretical discourse onto the case material. Nevertheless, the theoretical orientation

is necessarily influenced by the themes that emerged from within the past-life experiences as well as the research aims. Some of the selected hermeneutic keys for this research are presented in Chapter Two and Three and outlined below:

- 1) Past-life experiences are healing stories that emerge from the unconscious and, as such, are a source of therapeutic potential (cf. Chapters One and Two);
- 2) Past-life experiences articulate psychological realities and the dilemmas of the human spirit both within the individual psyche and the collective unconscious. Past-life experiences need not be questioned in regard to their literal occurrence. Rather, they can be interpreted as metaphoric images and scenes that articulate an inner process in which blocked feelings and unmet needs are acknowledged and released, while repressed and denied aspects of the psyche are recognised and expressed (cf. Chapters One and Two);
- 3) The COEX system and the notion that the COEX system may manifest in the past-life story: it is through working with the past-life story that a negative COEX can be discarded and psychospiritual transformation can occur (cf. Chapter Two);
- 4) Past-life experiences may contribute to the psychospiritual process of spiritual emergence (cf. Chapter Two);
- 5) Past-life experience in psychotherapy is a transpersonal experience which, like other transpersonal experiences, occurs in a holotropic mode of consciousness (cf. Chapter Two);
- 6) The discourse of feminism and transpersonal feminism (cf. Chapter Three) and the notion of the re-emerging Feminine (cf. Chapter Three).

The remainder of the hermeneutic keys are presented in Chapter Six prior to the phenomenological explication of each past-life scene. These additional hermeneutic keys are specifically related to the third and fourth research aims and are:

- 7) The notion of ritual enactments of patriarchal ideology (cf. Chapters One and Three);
- 8) The menstrual taboos as ritual enactment of patriarchal ideology (cf. Chapter Three);
- 9) Rape as ritual enactment of patriarchal ideology (cf. Chapter Three);
- 10) The witch hunts as ritual enactment of patriarchal ideology (cf. Chapter Three);
- 11) The persecution of those seeking ancient wisdom and the ritual of sacrifice as ritual enactment of patriarchal ideology (cf. Chapter Three);
- 12) The transference phenomenon in psychotherapy (cf. Chapter Six);
- 13) The notion of the inner child (cf. Chapter Six);
- 14) The disempowerment of women and the Feminine within patriarchy (cf. Chapters Two and Six);
- 15) The ancient healing wisdom as practised during the Asclepian tradition (cf. Chapter Six).

4.7.4 Process of hermeneutic dialogue

As this present study is also concerned with the evaluation and extension of contemporary transpersonal literature, Amanda's past-life experiences are employed in a hermeneutic dialogue with these theoretical perspectives. Consequently, the perspectives are evaluated and/or modified. For example, the hermeneutic key of "rape as ritual enactment of patriarchal ideology" was used to gain an initial understanding of one past-life scene which depicted a woman being raped. As the researcher gained familiarity with this past-life scene and the woman's feelings of being raped as well as Amanda's feelings about the scene, it was possible to confirm the feminist notion that rape, in part, is an act of violence and patriarchy's attempt to disempower women. By further examination of the scene, the data also confirmed the existing transpersonal literature on rape as being the desacralisation of a woman's sexuality. Nevertheless, the past-life experience of being raped, an image from the unconscious of Amanda, helped Amanda to face the trauma of her own personal story of sexual pain and humiliation, and thus gain a sense of healing and wholeness. In this way, the data revealed that such past-life experiences may not be merely an image but rather, an image that has the power to restore a sense of worthiness and personal transformation personal. Moreover, the past-life scene is not only a personal story of disempowerment but is embedded in the wider collective story of the disempowerment of women within patriarchy.

In order to ensure that this interpretative process was not reduced to a careless 'anything goes' method, the centrality of Amanda's experience was maintained and the suggestion of Biling (1991) regarding the use of reasonable argument in the light of the literature, was implemented.

CHAPTER FIVE

CASE PRESENTATION

5.1 AMANDA'S BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

At the time of the research, Amanda was a 53-year old twice-divorced woman, and a mother of three adult children, one of whom was married. She had not remarried and neither was she involved in any romantic relationship. Amanda was living alone in a small town from where she often commuted to a nearby coastal village for the weekends. She was currently reading for an Honours degree at the local University.

Amanda's early childhood was spent in England where she had been born to wealthy parents. She reported being looked after by a "stern and seemingly unaffectionate nanny", and she experienced her early childhood as lonely and disciplined. Amanda was afraid of her father whom she experienced as "distanced and unavailable". "My father thought of and responded to women as if they were second class citizens. I never felt any affirmation from him as a girl or a woman". Two years later her brother was born. He became her companion and child-mate, and this eased her early years of loneliness. Her sister was born nine years later.

During her early teenage years, Amanda fell in love with her first boyfriend who shall be known as Anthony. For the next seven years, they had "an intense and intimate relationship". They explored their sexuality in many "beautiful" and different ways, but refrained from full sexual intercourse for fear of her becoming pregnant. It was a time of sexual awakening and authentic love. When this relationship ended, she experienced a deep sense of loss, abandonment and disappointment.

At the age of 21 years (1960), Amanda moved to London to take up paid work. About three months later she met her first husband who was a South African. They dated for nine months and in January 1961, at the age of 22 years, they married. Amanda and her husband then came to live in South Africa. She found the transition and change "exciting, romantic and very different" to anything she had ever experience before.

This marriage lasted for eleven years, during which time she gave birth to three children. Shortly after the first four years of marriage her husband started to engage in brief extra marital affairs which left her feeling "betrayed and abandoned". He also began to spend more and more time drinking in the pubs "with his pals". Her marriage began to deteriorate. Within this marriage she often felt inadequate and oppressed as a woman. This oppression came in many forms. One was her sense of fear of speaking out her inner wisdom for she felt that he would laugh at her and make her feel stupid and silly. Another was his attitude towards her menstrual cycles: he viewed this as distasteful and she would have to hide away her tampons from him. During the following three year period, she had a few brief but "meaningless" sexual liaisons with men. Her marriage became increasingly unhappy. Eventually, in March 1972 they were divorced.

In June of the same year, she met and had a brief affair with a man. He ended the relationship in August.

She met her second husband in October 1972 but did "not actually marry him for nearly three years" (in February 1975). Initially, the "relationship was a happy and exciting one", but after about three years of marriage her husband became "increasingly jealous, abusive and possessive". As was the case with her first husband, he started to have short-term intermittent relationships with other younger women. This continued for the most part of the marriage. "This was emotionally devastating", leaving her depressed and alone. She began to take anti-depressants for a short while. After about six years of marriage he began to sexually abuse her, forcing her into sexual practise that she found "uncomfortable, degrading and, at times, painful. ... I always thought that I was worthless and totally inadequate as a woman, I thought that there was no help for me, that no one could understand what it feels like to be so helpless and a victim". She also felt that her inner wisdom had to be kept suppressed for she was afraid of his mocking gestures when she did speak or do something that was grounded in her intuition. Moreover, her experience of menstruation was also kept hidden from him as he viewed her menstrual blood as something disgusting and to be hidden. She nevertheless had difficulty in breaking away from him, for a part of her still loved him. She finally left in October 1987, after twelve years of marriage, although they were only divorced in August 1989. In this regard, Amanda stated that, "in my relationships with men which did not go well, I always thought that there must be something wrong with me, with my sexuality. The men that I was with never acknowledged that maybe the problem was with them".

In September 1987, while still married, she met and had an affair with a married man who shall be known as Richard. It was a spasmodic relationship as he moved to another country and she could only visit him in the summer months. Nevertheless, this relationship was "very passionate, very affirming and meaningful". He encouraged her to go to university, and gave her a sense of self-worth and inner strength. The relationship was "very painful" for her, however, because she always hoped that he would leave his wife and family and stay with her. This did not happen. He eventually broke the relationship off with her in mid 1989. She was left alone, abandoned and overwhelmed with grief and loss.

In January 1988, during this separation period and before the divorce was finalised in 1989, she registered at the local University and began to study towards a Bachelor's degree. Towards the end of her first year of study (December 1988), her mother became seriously ill, necessitating her return to England to care for her. She returned to South Africa in February 1989 to continue her studies.

During mid 1990 she had begun to attend a meditation group at the home of her future therapist - John. She felt "immediately drawn to him", and gradually realised that she was in love with him, but that he showed "no particular interest" in her. In that same year she decided that she wanted to go into therapy with John. She had heard about his experiential and transpersonal approach to therapy from a friend who had already been in therapy with him for nearly two years. At the beginning of 1991 she entered into therapy with him.

In early January 1992, a few weeks prior to recommencing therapy (and shortly before the eight selected sessions for the research occurred) her mother and brother-in-law died within days of each other. This left her feeling deeply depressed.

She continued her studies, however, and became a grandmother for the first time which she said was a "joyous occasion" and "very rewarding experience". During 1992, her therapist went overseas for three months thus breaking her therapy process. This left her feeling "alone, abandoned and angry". It was "a difficult and testing time". Nevertheless, she worked twice weekly with another therapist (a woman) during this period.

In early 1993, she returned to therapy with John, but soon began to discuss formal termination of therapy by mid July. She also registered for a Master's degree, and became a grandmother for the second time. Finally in July 1993 she terminated therapy and went overseas for six months. The end of her regular therapy was experienced as extremely painful, and left her feeling tearful, alone and with a deep sense of loss.

When she returned to South Africa in early 1994, she felt that she needed a few sessions to help her integrate her experiences and feelings of the past six months. Accordingly she approached John and made arrangements to have four sessions - which she felt "were enough".

5.1.1 Amanda's therapeutic history and an analysis of session type

Amanda's therapy spanned just over three years, from 1991 to early 1994 - twelve months in 1991, nine months in 1992, seven months in 1993, one month in 1994.

Amanda's psychotherapy with 'John' began in late January 1991, approximately 12 months before the initiation of this research study. She formerly terminated with him in mid-1993. She had a further four informal sessions in the early part of 1994. Shortly thereafter, she approached another therapist and had regular sessions with this second therapist until March 1995. She had previously 12 sessions with this same therapist during 1992 while John was overseas for three months.

The majority of Amanda's therapy sessions could be described as experiential in that they entailed non-verbal work as well as techniques such as bodywork, clay sculpting, and guided imagery. These techniques facilitated the experience of nonordinary states of consciousness. In this respect, the character of most of the experiential sessions accords with Grof's (1988) holotropic therapy except that in Amanda's case there was never any need for hyperventilation to initiate the transpersonal and perinatal levels of consciousness. In such sessions, Amanda would recline on a mattress and with closed eyes, breathe deeply and slowly. She would then spontaneously and effortlessly move into various transpersonal and perinatal experiences, and painful early childhood memories.

Most of her therapy experiences involved vivid imagery, physical pain and assorted unusual sensations in various parts of her body as well as intense emotional release and catharsis. After these experiences, Amanda's consciousness would return to everyday waking reality. At this stage, she sometimes felt disoriented and tearful. Shortly after, the therapist would leave the room and she would rest alone, have a cup of tea, or sleep for half an hour. Following this, the therapist would return to the room, and they would discuss her experiences during the session. This provided her the opportunity to begin to integrate - and give meaning to - her experiences. On return to her home, she would normally feel physically exhausted and go to bed early.

Amanda's experiential and altered states therapy process was often facilitated by the use of bodywork. The use of bodywork involved various forms of touch by the therapist of her body. This would involve him sensitively placing his hand on an area of her body that was tense or rigid such as the solar plexus, and invited her to breathe into the body area to release the blocked emotions or trauma. Sometimes, such blocked emotions would need more rigorous massage or pressure.

The bodywork sessions formed a major part of Amanda's therapy. It was from bodywork sessions that the selected past-life scenes and images arose. The majority of bodywork sessions normally lasted two hours. She also had "talk sessions" in which there was integration and exploration work through discussion of the material. These were on separate days and not part of the bodywork/regression sessions.

1991: Total = 56 sessions	
Exploratory/cathartic	10 (Includes first session)
Bodywork/Regression	35
Exploration and integration	11

*1992: Total = 52 sessions	
Exploration and integration	25
Bodywork/Regression	18
Guided imagery	8
Clay sculpture	1
* The data for the research are from this year. During 1992 there was a three month break between mid July and mid September.	

1993: Total = 50 sessions	
Exploration and integration	17
Bodywork/Regression	10
Guided imagery	11
Clay sculpture	3
Work with her drawings	8
Closing ritual	1

1994: Total = 4 sessions	
Exploration and integration	1
Clay sculpture	2
Work with her drawings	1

Grand total: 162 sessions	
Exploratory/cathartic	10
Exploration and integration	54
Bodywork/Regression	63

Guided imagery	19
Clay sculpture	6
Work with her drawings	9
Closing ritual	1

(Source of analysis of session type: Edwards, 1994).

Guided imagery sessions "differed from the bodywork sessions in that there was a more explicit focus on imagery, there was more explicit direction from the therapist in the exploration of the images and they were not facilitated by bodywork" (Edwards, 1994, p. 3).

Exploration and integration sessions were "talk sessions" in which Amanda spent time discussing and integrating her experiences from the previous bodywork/regression sessions. These sessions were only single sessions of one hour duration, and did not have any cathartic or guided imagery work, and Amanda always remained in her normal waking consciousness.

5.2 THE PREVIOUS YEAR'S PSYCHOTHERAPY PROCESS (1991)

In order to situate the eight selected psychotherapy sessions, a summary of the previous year's (1991) therapy process and psychological themes is documented.

Amanda's therapy process involved her confronting numerous biographical memories, perinatal and transpersonal experiences as well as encounters with energetic subtle phenomena. However, prior to her therapy commencement, for almost ten years she had been interested in "a personal spirituality" - a personal experience of the "Spirit" rather than an intellectual understanding. Shortly before commencing therapy, she had reached a stage in her life where she was exploring the deeper meaning of her existence amidst all her own personal stories of betrayal, fear, loss and disempowerment.

In the beginning of 1991 Amanda began her therapy with John. She had had no previous therapy experience or experience of intensive nonordinary states of consciousness. At the time of beginning therapy "she ... could not have anticipated just how radical was the process that she was about to

step into" (Edwards, 1994, p. 2).

In the actual therapy room, once Amanda had spontaneously entered into a nonordinary state of consciousness and she began to experience and express a wide spectrum of intense emotions and bodily sensations throughout her body. These somatic sensations, often uncomfortable and at times "extremely painful", would usually focus on a specific body part such as her solar plexus or brow. In due course, the story behind the bodily pain would emerge. She would then start to experience various images or say words that arose from her unconscious. Often, if the session was a bodywork/regression session, a past-life story would then surface. These past-life scenes were mostly traumatic. The emotional pain of these scenes would often cause her to sob deeply with grief, loss and hurt, or to scream out in pain and torment. As indicated in Chapters One and Two, her transpersonal experiences are not necessarily interpreted as literal but can be understood as metaphoric experiences.

In her bodywork/regression sessions, she would experience and relive painful early biographical memories, for example, of being sent away to boarding school where she felt "abandoned by her mother", of how she felt "lonely and unloved" as a little girl, and raised by a "heartless" and cold nanny, or of the "domineering patriarchal father" who never affirmed her developing sexuality and womanhood, and of the painful loss of a teenage love. Later in the same year there was evidence that this hurt and wounded little girl was also beginning to heal through the brave confrontation of such childhood traumas. She said such words as "I know I am OK inside", "I am learning to love myself", and "I invite love into my life".

She would relive other biographical experiences that involved the theme of betrayal, humiliation, sexual abuse and rape. She worked with these feelings of betrayal by both her husbands when they had extramarital affairs, and of her feelings of powerlessness when her second husband forced her into degrading sexual activities and demanded sex daily from her. Such sexual abuse and trauma is reflected in many past-life scenes in which she was sexually abused and raped. In one session she focused on the painful separation from her children when she got divorced from their father.

Amanda also experienced material from the perinatal level during her first year of therapy. She reports that she remembers her own birth process - into a room "filled with bright lights" and hard

cold surfaces, and of the emotionally uncaring attending nurse. She had one intrauterine (pre-birth) experience and of hearing a conversation between her parents in which she heard her father's strong anger and disapproval at her mother for being pregnant. As a result, she felt "unwanted, rejected and an inconvenience" even before being born into this world.

Early in her therapy process in 1991, she began to have transpersonal experiences, the most common experience being past-life scenes as documented by Grof (1988), Grof and Grof (1990) and Lucas (1993). Such transpersonal experiences were randomly interspersed with other biographical material, intrauterine and birth experiences. However, most of the early part of the therapy process in 1991 was focused on transpersonal experiences rather than biographical and birth/perinatal experiences.

The intensive past-life experience often came to her as images and then later bodily sensations. The past-life stories were psychologically rich and diverse, spanning millennia - from ancient cultures to more contemporary societies. In each of the past-life stories she was either male and female as well as young and old. The stories were sculptured by various psychological themes that seemed to be playing out in her personal life and issues, such themes as "I am no good", "men hurt me", and "men I love always leave me".

Some of her past-life scenes were filled with immense grief and loss, abuse, brutality and cruelty, and yet, there were some scenes of heroic gallantry and romance. Nearly all her past-life stories, however, centred around her being the victim. She did not ever experience herself in the reverse role as 'the victimiser' as described by Woolger (1987).

In most of her bodywork/regression sessions there would be one or sometimes two past-life scenes which she experienced as "healing" in that she would often make connections between the content of these experiences and her own personal psychological conflicts and dilemmas, and thus gain a deeper insight into her dynamics and interactions with significant others (Edwards, 1994, 1995; Knight, 1991, 1992, 1996c, 1996d).

Occasionally in the regression sessions she encountered "spirit guides" or "spirit beings" (cf. Chapter Two) who brought messages of comfort and direction with regards to her therapy process.

This encounter with the spirit guides usually followed lengthy and intense bodywork/regression sessions. The spirit beings offered her "a healing and nourishing presence" in the sessions. They would present themselves to her as supportive entities that contributed to her healing and strength by providing her with words of comfort and wisdom through direct verbal transfer. Initially she did not see these spirit beings but rather she would "sense their presence". Later in 1991, however, she had clear visual impressions of these spirit guides as having "feathered wings".

Amanda frequently experienced the Kundalini energy (cf. Chapter Two) or Shakti rising up her spine, and sometimes this energy would focus on a particular 'chakra centre' (cf. Chapter Two), such as her solar plexus, heart or brow. "It is what flows between them, connects them with each other and unblocks, heals, cleanses, and releases energy in them". She would sometimes need to arch her back to allow the energy to flow freely. This experience often resulted in a deepening insight into her inner life and relationships, and a deepening commitment to her spiritual process (Renzon, 1993).

Amanda experienced several painful shamanic-like initiation ceremonies (often in temples) in which her 'third eye' or brow chakra, symbolised as the seat of insight and intuition, was opened (Mookerjee, 1989). As a result she had a sense of herself as a "healer".

She also had several "profound and powerful" transpersonal experiences of entering the "place of potential" - similar to the description of the 'metacosmic void' (Grof, 1988) (cf. Chapter Two). In this enigmatic and "healing place" she would feel and experience that she was in a "pool" where there was "everything and yet nothing" because "everything there was still potential ... where everything was an immense pool of latent energy ... a place like the sea ... the liquid state of all things ... the source out of which all creation arises" into existence. From this "place of potential" she would move beyond and into a different place - the metacosmic void - "a place beyond anything and everything ... which is still, empty, primordial and silent".

Amanda said that, guided by an "inner wisdom", she journeyed into nonordinary states of consciousness that "healed" her and gave her a sense of clarity, a holistic vision of the future, and a deeper meaning for and direction in her life. She believed that her therapy was an initiation into something "not yet known". She felt as if she was been trained or prepared for some task in the

future.

5.2.1 Amanda's psychotherapy process as a process of spiritual emergence

In the light of the above description of her previous year's psychotherapy process and experience, her therapy may be viewed as a process of spiritual emergence as described by Grof (1988), and Grof and Grof (1989, 1990) as documented in Chapter Two.

Spiritual emergence may manifest in a variety of forms (Grof & Grof, 1989, 1990). Within the classifications of spiritual emergence as described by Grof and Grof (1989, 1990), Amanda's spiritual emergence took the form of the Kundalini awakening, a shamanic crisis, and the emergence of past-life experience (Grof & Grof, 1989, 1990; Edwards, 1991b, 1994, 1995; Du Plessis, 1995; Garbett, 1992; Knight, 1993, 1996b; Renzon, 1993; Sannella, 1987, 1989). The manifestation of the Kundalini awakening as a particular form of spiritual emergence, resembles the descriptions of the awakening of the Kundalini energy or serpent power (Mookerjee, 1989; Grof & Grof, 1990).

In addition to viewing Amanda's spiritual emergence as a Kundalini awakening, another form of her spiritual emergence was manifested as a shamanic crisis (Grof & Grof, 1989, 1990). The shamanic crisis (cf. Chapter Two) resembles the initiatory crises of shamans - the traditional healers of certain ancient and contemporary cultures. In this regard, the so-called shamanic illness which marks the beginning of the healing career of many shamans/healers, is a process in which individuals enter into nonordinary states of consciousness and experience unusual visionary experiences of the kind typically involving a journey to the underworld or the dead. "There one is attacked by vicious demonic entities and exposed to unimaginable ordeals culminating in experiences of death, dismemberment, and annihilation" (Grof & Grof, 1990, p. 67). The final destruction of the individual is by specific animals which appear to function as initiators of the shamanic initiatory crisis. Characteristic of this form of spiritual emergence is the rich and wide spectrum of transpersonal experiences that contribute to a deepening awareness of reality that is normally hidden to ordinary human perception. These unusual experiences may include: profound connection to the universe, the forces of nature, and the world of animals and plants: contact with

various deities, spirit guides and 'power animals' - helpers in animal form. In addition to that which is described in Chapter Two, such experiences are often punctuated by unusual dreams, and the ability to communicate with the spirit realms or ancestors of a particular culture. Many individuals suddenly feel a need to express themselves artistically - through painting, poetry, dance, songs or rituals. Some individuals may develop insights into the nature of many psychiatric disorders and find positive ways of healing such disorders.

The emergence of past-life scenes and images (cf. Chapter Two) is another variety or form of spiritual emergence. "Individuals participating in these dramatic sequences maintain a sense of individuality and personal identity, but experience themselves in another form, at another place and time, and in another context" (Grof, 1988, p. 87). Moreover, these transpersonal experiences are claimed to be meaningful psychological phenomena with potential to be healing (Bache, 1990; Grof & Grof, 1989, 1990; Woolger, 1987).

As indicated earlier, various transpersonal and perinatal experiences, and biographical events and memories, form part of the transformational process of spiritual emergence. In terms of Grof's (1988) cartography of the human psyche, the most common transpersonal experiences that arose in Amanda's therapy process and which transcended spatial and temporal boundaries were group identification and group consciousness, past life scenes, entering the metacosmic void, experiences of identification with inanimate matter, identification with planetary consciousness, embryol and fetal experiences, encounters with spirit guides, collective experiences, experiences of planetary evolution, and experiences of cosmic consciousness. Amanda also sometimes confronted experiences from the perinatal level of consciousness (Grof, 1988; Grof & Grof, 1990). However, these experiences were brief and did not constitute a significant proportion of her therapy process. From the biographical level of consciousness, she experienced emotionally distressing and traumatic regressions to early childhood scenes and memories.

One category of experience which appears more than once in the eight selected sessions is termed 'group identification and group consciousness'. This experience refers to an experience of 'extension of consciousness and melting of boundaries'. The intensity and depth of such experiences can reach extraordinary proportions. The common denominator of these extraordinary experiences is the quality of physical and emotional experience or the circumstances which brought

these people together. "The subject has a sense of becoming an entire group of people who share some racial, cultural, national, ideological, political or professional characteristics" (Grof, 1988, p. 50).

The participant can experience a sense of 'tuning into' the group consciousness of, for example, all the Jews who have been persecuted, or the Christian martyrs persecuted by the Romans, or the victims of the Inquisition who were tortured, or the religious zeal of the Muslims on their way to Mecca, or the devotion of the Hindus at the time of worship by the river Ganges. In this context, Grof asserts that it is possible to also experience the totality of the suffering of all humanity and of the human condition.

In these experiences, participants lose a sense of their own individuality and identity and identify with the group. The experience does not involve a sense of having been a specific person in the group, however, (as in a past-life experience) neither does it have the quality of being a memory. In this regard, participants merge experientially with an entire group.

Grof (1988) asserts that numerous descriptions of transpersonal experiences of this kind can be found in the spiritual literature as they existed in the lives of various saints, prophets, sages and great religious teachers of all ages. As a result of modern conscious research, these transpersonal experiences are available to anyone under special circumstances such as experiential therapy (for example, Holotropic Breathwork).

5.3 THE NARRATIVE SYNOPSES OF THE EIGHT SELECTED PSYCHOTHERAPY SESSIONS

As mentioned, the present research is based on eight sessions of Amanda's psychotherapy process which occurred between the 26 February and 1 April 1992. The narrative synopses of these eight sessions, which were formulated according to the procedure documented in Chapter Four, are documented below.

In addition to the data from these eight sessions, the material gathered from other sources, (such as

interviews as described in Chapter Four), that is used to elucidate the therapy session material is indicated in italics.

Moreover, the researcher has remained faithful to Amanda's experience (as outlined in Chapter Four), and has not attempted, therefore, to interpret the following documented material.

During all the bodywork sessions an assistant named Charles was present. In order to facilitate further clarity, a broad overview of the selected sessions is recorded below.

5.3.1 An overview of the selected sessions

Session	Type	Date	Past-life characters
One	Bodywork	26/2/92	Alphonse and Armand
Two	Exploration	28/2/92	No past-life experience
Three	Bodywork	4/3/92	Mila
Four	Bodywork	10/3/92	Darion and Angelique
Five	Exploration	13/3/92	No past-life experience
Six	Bodywork	18/3/92	Marta
Seven	Bodywork	24/3/92	Alma
Eight	Bodywork	1/4/92	Rose and Althus

5.3.2 Session One

This session took place on the 26 February 1992. It was a bodywork/regression type of session and was two hours long.

At the start of this session Amanda discussed her need to have more therapy and support from John (the therapist). She had a "tremendous need for extra contact with him" during the days between therapy sessions. The therapist made himself available to receive scheduled telephone contacts (twice a week at lunchtime for ten minutes only), and arranged an extra therapy session early the following week.

Following this, for about fifteen minutes she spoke about her academic work and demands. Amanda felt stressed by the academic demands and found that it was really quite hard to balance inner work with the external world of deadlines, research proposals and seminars. Shortly after this discussion she stated "I don't think I need to talk any more. I feel apprehensive but ready to begin the session". She lay down on the mattress and got ready to begin the bodywork/regression process. Charles, the assistant, entered the room.

Almost immediately after lying down on the mattress and closing her eyes, Amanda tensed up her body, tightening her muscles. For a few moments the therapist encouraged her to breathe into the tense places in the shoulders, and to try and relax. Amanda felt anticipatory anxiety and excitement as she lay down. She always liked to work in this way and found that her most important inner healing occurred as a result of working in this way. Very soon she remarked, "it's hard ... I'm kind of struggling with something". She began to cough and her breath was shaky and shallow. Within a few seconds she began to sob deeply. The therapist encouraged her to give herself permission to let the crying out. She then began to sob more deeply and loudly. She choked and coughed, and coughed again. Amanda said that she felt intense fear at this point. She was not sure what this fear was about. She cried out, "it feels like something attacking me (sobs)". She was invited by the therapist to "just connect with the fear". As she progressed deeper into the experience she was aware at this stage that her head ached and that the pain focused around the brow chakra. The Kundalini energy had focused on her brow chakra, causing her a lot of pain.

At this point she then moved into a past-life scene and she said, "if I scream, if I make a noise, they will come and torture me again (sobs)". As she cried the therapist reassured her that, "they can't come and get you now". Very soon she began to sob more loudly (two minutes) and then said:

A: It's sore. No, please take that thing away. I'm not doing any harm (sobs) ...

I'm only reading books. I'm only reading books. Let me go (sobs). Take it off (sobs wildly). Please, I'm not hurting anybody. Leave me in peace with my books ... It's so sore with that thing clamped to me (sobs). Please stop. Please stop (sobs more wildly).

...

T: They put something round your head?

A: Mmm. I can't move. It's fixed to the wall (sobs wildly).

T: Tell me your name.

A: Alphonse. (A man).

T: Alphonse?

He had been chained to the wall with a steel band around his head which was fastened to the wall. He felt that he was being violated by this unjust treatment, but he felt powerless and too afraid to fight against it.

A: (cries more)

T: What year is it Alphonse?

A: (sobs wildly). It's so sore, so sore. 1527.

He was feeling a lot of physical pain, fear and alarm for he felt that he was not going to survive the trauma of the torture.

T: 1527. What country do you live in?

A: (sobs). Belgium (sobs). In the Low Countries.

T: Why are they persecuting you?

A: (sobs). Because of the books. Because I'm learning from the books.

The Church had thrown him in prison and had him tortured. The books he had started to read resulted in him being persecuted. He had felt shocked and frightened for being punished so harshly for only reading these books. He felt a sense of injustice as he believed that his deed had not warranted the treatment he received. He also felt dismayed and sad that he had been caught for he felt that he was not doing any harm or hurting anyone.

T: Who wrote the books?

A: Scholars (cries and gasps).

These ancient scholars knew of a different way of life, a different approach to life and how things were once.

T: Who are the people who are persecuting you?

A: (moans and gasps). It's partly people in the Church, and partly government officials. They don't want me to know all those things. They put that thing round my head.

He felt afraid, unprotected and vulnerable.

Over the next few minutes the pain around his forehead increased, and he screamed and cried out, "it hurts, my head hurts". Alphonse continued to struggle against his restraints but, and at this point said, "it's no good. I can't. It makes my head ache and ache". Alphonse experienced a sense of weariness, futility, helplessness and hopelessness. He had no means of escape and was in pain with "that thing ... (band) around his head". He was exhausted. Moreover, he felt dismayed by the injustice of it all for he believed that the books should have been open to others.

While in the jail he felt that he had learned from the books something that made him realise that "there was another alternate way of being, another way of doing things ... and working and relating to others". Alphonse then said, "I see the narrowness of the way people do things and the way they behave. The way they see things is so narrow and twisted (sobs)". He felt sad and discouraged that the people were not open to new ways.

During the next few minutes it emerged that Alphonse had found "the secret texts" through a "secret group" called the "Lucians". He felt excited and overjoyed to have found these ancient scrolls. He knew that he was not allowed to read them but he felt enthusiastic about learning. However, when he was caught he was filled with fear, sorrow and anguish for now he would not know what else was written. He also felt helpless and frustrated about not having the freedom to explore the secret text without fear.

get above those forces (trembling breaths).

Amanda felt that somehow the abusive pattern of her own persecution for not only seeking spiritual wisdom but for inner knowing or "seeing" would be broken. She also felt that these "huge negative forces" that were experienced in the session were "like energies that entered people and made them become fearful, power hungry and controlling". She felt that her work in this world was to try and "get above these forces", to go beyond them and not be afraid to "speak out the wisdom", or seek spiritual growth, and what she could "see intuitively". For so long she had to suffer by not speaking up when things were being done wrong because she had been afraid to. Now she knew that she had to go beyond her fear and start to speak her wisdom and openly seek spiritual knowledge. "This is the way to break the pattern".

After this past-life scene, Amanda had the sense that she had briefly encountered spirit guides and the Kundalini energy at her brow. "The Kundalini energy at my brow chakra at the start of the session was somehow related to my inner sight into the negative forces which drove people to do terrible things". She experienced the spirit guides as supportive, bringing her comfort and strength that helped her to endure the rest of the therapy process. For a short while (three minutes) she made chanting sounds (mama mama mama mama... noona noona) which changed to rapid breathing. She did not have a sense of the meaning of the chanting, but it felt like she wanted to worship. She experienced a deep peaceful and serene feeling as she connected to a whirlpool of spinning energy of love.

In the next few minutes, in a frightened and small voice, she said, "no, no...". The therapist encouraged her to repeat the words. She felt "immense fear and a need to fight something that she could not see yet". A few minutes later she felt ropes tied around her body. She had become involved in another past-life experience which took place "1 000 years ago".

She experienced herself as a 14 year old boy called "Armand", thrashing wildly, kicking out and fighting against the ropes. (As this happened she had kicked out repeatedly against the mattress). But the ropes were too strong and his grappling was futile:

T: What's your name?

T: Just a body, mmm.

A: It's like looking at those people and their power, and forces which are pushing them.

T: And you can see those forces that push people?

A: Mmm.

T: To do what they do?

A: That whole great force of fear and anger and ... performing those acts to keep people in a state of fear and to keep their power. Those leaders kept their power by doing that, by making other people fearful. Just perpetuating that whole cycle of power, and then fear, and then power and then it goes on and on. We have to break it now, break it.

Amanda, while still in nonordinary state of consciousness, was able to leave his body at the moment of death, and could understand that there are people who will use their power to dominate others and create fear in others, and through this fear, maintain their power. She felt sad and discouraged by this, and longed for a time when people would not be driven by fear. "Its an abusive use of power". She then stressed that it is now time to "break this pattern" of abusive power:

T: Is that just for you?

A: No, there are so many of us.

T: Tell me about the many, and the breaking of the pattern.

A: Moving into a new consciousness so that we understand how to break those old patterns. So many people moving.

T: And what's your part in all of this?

A: Understanding all that fabric of what's gone before. Finding the strength to be part of a movement into the new, and all the things I have to do in the new consciousness. ... I'm breaking all that right now and moving into a new being.

Amanda felt that she was part of "this process of an emerging new consciousness". She felt that historically the consciousness of humans has been Masculine, but now this is changing, becoming more balanced with the Feminine. "People are beginning to question basic assumptions about

themselves and their world ... I am doing this ... questioning my life and world too"

Towards the end of the experiential part of the session she was aware that she had been a victim but was now "finished with being a victim":

T: So you've been a victim?

A: Mmm, in this life too. It's finished now.

T: What's finished?

A: Being a victim, being helpless.

T: Just say that: I'm finished with being a victim.

A: I'm finished with being a victim.

T: Just look back at Armand, lying on the rocks, and say that: I've finished with being a victim.

A: I've finished with being a victim.

T: Can you picture Alphonse in his cell?

A: Mmm.

T: Say the same.

A: I've finished with being a victim (breathes deeply).

Amanda felt that not only her experiences of not being able to speak out or speak her wisdom had made her into a victim, but also the other times in her life when she found herself fearful and being abused and controlled by others. These other times were, for example, in her marriages, where she felt that she could never speak out against the things her husbands did to her because she was afraid of them and their power. This made her feel defenceless and impotent. Other times are when she has felt a victim of sexual exploitation and abuse in her marriages. She was powerless to change the situation for many years, and lived under circumstances which were intolerable to her but which she felt afraid of, and helpless to escape from.

As the therapist continued to engage in bodywork, helping to release some sadness that had come up for Amanda, she began to feel the Kundalini energy rise up her spine and enter her head. She experienced the energy as "healing and strengthening". For a short while she moved into a stretched out position that allowed for the free-flow of this energy. This experience was of several

minutes duration, and then she let out a high vibratory sound. After this she began to cry and moan loudly. As the energy moved up through her body to the top of her head she felt "as if I'm part of the energy flow":

It's as if I became part of the energy fields. It's not me at all any more (deep sighs). It's like vibrating from very deep energies right down here. Vibrating with energies from here and coming right out at the top. Just flowing through and out (breathes quietly). I need to sink away to renew myself, to sink away.

Then suddenly she sensed that the spirit beings had returned and were encouraging her. She sobbed quietly. This sobbing turned to low whimpering sounds and then silence for a few minutes. In the silence she had entered into the metacosmic void where she felt pleasantly "empty but whole".

After about ten minutes of silence she opened her eyes and said that "it is all finished". She rested for about 30 minutes.

Afterwards the therapist and Charles joined her and they all discussed her experiences in the session.

In this discussion Amanda said that she had the sense that she had been "battling" with so much. She was not sure how much of her pain had actually been unblocked, but had the belief that by connecting and identifying with the collective lives of the group people in the scenes, she could then get a wider perspective on the whole pattern of why people did certain things.

With regards to the past-life scenes, "the sacrifices made the people very afraid of the power of the leaders. It was a way to maintain their control over everyone, keep everyone in fear".

For the next five minutes they discussed the collective need to "break patterns" of abusive methods of controlling people. She felt that so many other people are working with breaking away from abusive relationships and situations. They then talked for five minutes about her own personal need to become assertive and empowered, particularly in relation to men. Amanda felt that part of her

own process lay in no longer "buying into the role of victim".

In the following five minutes she spoke of "the spirit beings" and how they helped her during in the session.

The session ended.

5.3.3 Session Two

This session took place on the 28 February 1992. It was an exploration and integration type of session and was one hour long.

During this session themes of abandonment, love and rejection were paramount.

Amanda felt "desolate" and "fearful" that the therapist would "leave her" or that he would stop the therapy. They discussed her fear of being abandoned by the therapist for ten minutes. Her voice was shaky and small. This lead on to her expression of feelings around longings for a relationship with a partner, and how, at the moment, she felt lost and lonely without someone in her life. She yearned for a man, and complained that she had not had a relationship with a man for several years now.

In the following ten minutes she hesitantly spoke of her romantic feelings for the therapist and of her longings to have a sexual relationship with him. This was the first time that she expressed strong romantic attachment towards the therapist. She was anxious that the therapist would withdrawn from her once he knew that she has these particular feelings for him - "I'm afraid that you may want to find me another therapist now". He then told her that he was already committed to a relationship with someone else and was not available for a relationship with her. This information was a disappointment for her and was experienced as a deep rejection and loss.

After this conversation she then discussed her academic demands, complaining that the honours

course she was doing was "extremely stressful and demanding". However, such pressure also helped her not to constantly focus all the time on the therapy process.

In the next few minutes she shared how she had experienced "a lot of Kundalini energy over the last few days", which had given her support in that she had felt strengthened by the energy.

Due to her feeling depressed and despondent, they then agreed to set up further scheduled telephone contacts for the following week (twice a week for ten minutes at one o'clock in the afternoon).

They discussed this for five minutes. Then the session ended.

5.3.4 Session Three

This session took place on the 4 March 1992. It was a bodywork/regression type of session and was two hours long.

At the start of this therapy session she talked happily and excitedly about her experiences in a dance/breathwork workshop facilitated by the therapist which made her feel healthy and alive.

After this talk she lay down on the mattress and began to allow herself to enter into a relaxed state. Soon she began to make whimpering and moaning sounds which became gasping and trembling breaths. The therapist encouraged her to breathe gently and focus on where the sounds and energies were coming from. She was emotionally supported and allowed to express herself freely. In the next few minutes these moaning and gasping sounds became deep sobbing and she cried out "it's sore in my throat!". The sobbing continued for quite some time till the crying turned into screaming and wailing sobs. She felt that she was being choked. Amanda was afraid and anxious and had a sense that she needed to fight the choking sensation.

A: (wild sobbing). No, no, no (fights with therapist).

T: Say no. Let's hear it.

A: (wild sobs). You can't choke me. You can't choke me.

T: Say that. You can't choke me.

A: You can't choke me, you can't. No, no, no. No, you can't, you can't, you can't.

This was not a past-life scene but "something new". Amanda felt that she had shifted into a deeper level of inner exploration. She felt that this was going to be something big. The choking sensation continued for the next several minutes. She began to scream again, and this became wild, deep sobbing in which she tried to swallow and said, "it's so hard, it's so hard ... it's so sore, it's so sore". Amanda did not know exactly what had happened then but she felt a panic and an overwhelming fear of not being able to breathe - as if someone was choking her. She had the sensation of a hand against her throat. She felt that there was something, on an emotional level, in her throat, blocking and yet wanting to come out. This choking continued for several more minutes until she began to experience physical pain around her brow chakra or third eye. At this point she entered a past-life scene and said:

A: (gasping, whimpering breaths - wailing, gasping sounds - high crying sobs - screams - screaming sobs - rapid gasping breaths). They're pressing on me.

They're pressing on me there (wild sobbing).

T: They're pressing on you here, on your head, mmm.

A: (wild screaming sobs).

T: O.K. Let's find out what it is that's pressing there.

A: (gasping, wailing sobs).

T: Let yourself see, let yourself see.

A: (screaming, gasping sobs).

T: Let the sound out now.

A: (screaming sobs).

There was "immense pain" for this past-life character called 'Mila' as well as anxiety and uncertainty about what may happen during the initiation. Mila did not realise at the time how forceful it would be, and found the pain of it was overwhelming.

It's unbelievable. I can't tell you how sore it is. It's worst than the worst toothache you can imagine, or the worst headache you can imagine. ... But I was mostly just aware of enormous pain ... it was just excruciating.

Amanda explained that this pain related to the activation of this sixth (brow) chakra centre by the

up that understanding, to open up that eye". This opening of the third eye was through the (Kundalini) energy that had focused on her brow and had brought about a deeper awareness and wisdom as well as insight.

After this she coughed and then continued to dialogue with the therapist:

T: Mila, what is the name of your people? Or your city?

A: Arta. Arta is the city.

T: How did you come to be initiated? Did you want to do that, or did they choose you, or what happened?

A: I've always been in the temple. I was brought up there, trained for this (wailing cries - wild sobbing). Oh, the pain, the pain, the pain (gasping, screaming sobs). Chanting, chanting. They say the chanting will help to take the pain away. They're all chanting.

T: So listen to the chanting. Listen to the chanting. Hear it clearly.

The chanting was experienced as "beautiful". She saw a group of people coming towards her with "big bowls with petals floating on them". They washed her head with water and then "anointed" her head with oils. Over the next few minutes she felt a throbbing pain in her head, and felt vulnerable although much less fearful. The chanting of the priestesses soothed her discomfort. Following on there was a time of silence for about two minutes.

As the past-life story continued to emerge, Mila was conscious of the "beauty and loving care of the priestesses". Mila was then "marked with a deep green dye at the centre of her forehead or at the place of her third eye". She observed that the mark she had received was the same mark that each of the priestesses carried on their forehead. It was the mark of acceptance and membership into the spiritual community of priestesses and it made her feel that she belonged. Her pain lessened suddenly, and although still a little anxious and unsettled, she began to listen to instructions from the priestesses to remain quiet and "get used to the sensitivity" in her brow.

The past-life experience then ended.

In the next few minutes she began a mournful high, wailing, vibratory sound which lasted about two minutes. (This was a different vibratory sound to the one in session one). It turned to chanting which, for her, felt like a hymn or song of worship. (It was different from the chanting in session one). Simultaneously, she pressed her head to the ground in a posture of worship. She felt that she was in a place of sacredness and beauty. Then the high, loud wailing sounds started again, and yet there were moments of short silence. Then the mournful wailing began again. She changed her body positions to allow the energy to flow through her body. She experienced pain and grief and began to cry:

T: Breathe right into the pain of it. Let it all wash away.

A: (deep sobbing). It hurts so much, it hurts so much (wild sobbing).

In the following minutes she remembered her second ex-husband and how he had sexually abused and humiliated her. For quite some time this pain and grief was expressed in deep, wild sobbing which turned to whimpering breaths and later to deep sighs. She then experienced the Kundalini energy which had made her feel more grief. Amanda felt that the Kundalini energy had activated her heart chakra and triggered and unblocked her memories of the sexual abuse. (These sexual abuse memories, as mentioned earlier in this chapter), relate to her marital sexual experiences which left her with a sense of humiliation, loss of power and a low self-esteem). She experienced deep inner pain and grief but also a sense of empowerment. "I found that the experiences of the Kundalini energy and the third eye opening ... healed the sexual wounding in this life ... the sense that I was a helpless victim. I had lost my own sense of self, my own inner strength. Even as a young girl I felt trapped ... powerless. The Kundalini energy connected me again to my power. I felt my own strength in having that 'eye' opened. This is incredibly empowering".

As she quietened down she began to feel the Kundalini energy moving through her body and centering around her heart. Amanda explained that the energy opened up her heart and she had an inner sense to stay focused. As she remained focused she felt a sense of peace, well-being and wholeness, as if the healing energy had washed and cleared away her heart pain. On the physical level she felt her heart pounding and as if there were channels of energy pouring into her heart

chakra and cleansing and purifying the pain there. As she felt the movement of this healing energy she entered into the "place of potential" for about six minutes. This experience made her feel vulnerable.

After this she had the sense of "spirit beings" talking to her. She experienced them as comforting. They said, "this is the Alpha and the Omega, this is where it all begins. This is where it all ends".

She then began to return to her normal waking consciousness. After this, she slept for about 30 minutes. Afterwards, together with the assistant Charles, she and the therapist discussed her experiences.

She felt that the past-life experience was about the need to get back in touch with her own intuitions and inner knowing.

I learnt that as a woman I am valuable, that I have power, and that my spirituality is important to me ... I am a woman, and Mila reminds me of my own spiritual power as a woman ... I have understood more about myself, not just on an intellectual level but on a bodily level as well ... I have fully experienced all the pain around the third eye opening, and I have now been able to step aside and allow the potential of my spiritual awakening to become a reality, to be a healing.

During the discussion which lasted 25 minutes, she felt that she could rely on and believe in her own inner wisdom in her daily life and contact with people. In this regard, she felt that she had reclaimed a part of herself once lost, forgotten and repressed. "This came about through the Kundalini which opened my heart and brow chakra". Mila represented a huge "spiritual opening" and growth of insight and awareness into her own sense of self, potential and inner strength. The Kundalini energy opened up her knowledge of her "ability to be a healer, a wise person, a therapist".

I found that the experience of the Kundalini energy healed the wounding in this life, the sense that I was a helpless victim. In my marriages I felt worn down by the emotional abuse. My second husband humiliated and used me. And I could not speak out to him. I had lost my own sense of self, my own inner strength. I felt

shut away, I was not allowed to speak out. I felt helpless. The Mila regression ... connected me again to my own strength.

The session ended.

5.3.5 Session Four

This session took place on the 10 March 1992. It was a bodywork/regression type of session and was two hours long.

At the start of this session Amanda was "enveloped by a kind of sadness" which was "partly connected" to her mother's recent death (two months previously). She felt that she had not yet fully discussed her feelings about the death. Amanda felt that the death of her mother was extremely painful and she did not feel that she was ready to talk about it with the therapist, although she had discussed it briefly with her close friends.

She also felt that part of her sadness was "connected with the wider planetary process ... I feel the earth's sadness and its struggle to survive". Amanda had often had experiences in which she felt that her body boundaries had extended and she could identify with the earth's processes and its struggle to survive the abuse of humanity. She also felt that she could feel, "the pain and sorrow of the earth" and its attempt to survive.

In the next few minutes she lay down on the mattress and the therapist called Charles into the room. She felt nervous and yet excited. The anticipation of working in this way was both challenging and exciting for her. She then began to breathe deeply into what feelings there were in her body. Suddenly, with trembling breaths she said, "it's sore ... there's so much sadness". Amanda felt as if she was in a sea of pain.

This was the start of the grief work which lasted 20 minutes. During this part of the session she

remembered the painful separation and abandonment by her mother when she was an infant. She bitterly remembered nannies and not her mother taking care of her. She had always wanted her mother to be with her and to take care of her, instead only the nanny seemed to be available. This experience left her feeling abandoned and lonely. She sobbed for several minutes.

She also had sorrowful memories of being sent away as a little girl to boarding school and feeling abandoned by her mother:

A: (deep, whimpering sobs). I hate to leave home, leave my mother, leave all the things she's set up there, and all that she made it to be (deep sobbing). I couldn't get to her. I couldn't get to her (sobs deeply).

T: Talk to your mother.

A: I can never get to you. You're always sending me away (deep sobbing). ... It's like a great big wound there (sobs deeply). It goes so far back (sobs deeply - wild sobbing). It's sore, it's sore (wild sobbing). There's so much I never said and now she's gone (sobs wildly). I never said so many things (sobs deeply).

As she continued to connect with and work with these early and emotionally distressing memories she began to sob wildly. In the next minute she mournfully cried out, "I just want to be loved and to be held, and to be close to another human body ... It's so lonely ... so lonely (sobs)". The experience of this grief triggered her strong needs to be loved and involved in a relationship with a man - something she desperately wanted.

In the next five minutes she experienced immense physical pain around her heart, and became quite fearful of the intensity of the pain - as if she were having a heart attack. Amanda felt as if her heart chakra had opened up and inner pain was pouring out. She had a visual image of being in a sea of pain. She experience anguish and uncertainty, and she did not feel as if she would ever be free of all the pain. It felt as if she had fallen into a bottomless pit or well of endless (inner) pain. Nevertheless, she stayed focused on this pain and in the following minutes she spontaneously entered into a past-life scene.

In this scene she experienced herself as a young woman called "Angelique" who was a member of a

youth group movement during a war.

Angelique had been ruthlessly gang-raped in a ditch by the invading enemy soldiers - "I've been raped by them (sobbed wildly) ... my body is so battered and bruised. I'm frightened, I'm frightened of what they're (the soldiers) going to do now". She felt immense fear and experienced her body as being torn apart. She also felt a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness.

At this stage it emerged that before she was raped, Tomas Avlov, the leader of the resistance group and her lover, had been captured, leaving her alone. "He's gone, and I can't help him. And he's not there for me (sobs wildly)". She had to now cope without his support. This made her feel abandoned, anxious, and very frightened.

After the experience of being raped, she cried out, "I'm frightened of what they (soldiers) might do next (sobs wildly). Terrible things happen all the time". She was fearful of being raped again, and of the soldiers' aggression and physical violence - "they beat us up, and they rape us". Because of this threatening situation she felt more alone, insecure and disillusioned. There was no one there for her, to help her out of a terrible situation.

As a freedom fighter she and the other men and women had been fighting...

A: (whimpering sobs) ... against those people who've taken over the country and now there are soldiers everywhere (whimpering sobs). We just want freedom and justice and peace. There's no peace. There's been so much war. So many broken buildings and there's not enough to eat (sobs). Those terrible soldiers everywhere (sobs deeply).

She experienced anger because of this invasion, and felt that her efforts to free and defend the country from the invaders was impossible and hopeless, yet she wanted to keep on trying, she felt she needed to help. But the overriding experience was one of a sense of desperation for justice and peace in her land. However, there was no food and she had begun to starve. This made her feel anxious and frightened.

The past-life scene ended.

In the next minute Amanda began to cry. In the following few minutes her crying changed to wild sobbing and then to whimpering moans. When the past-life experience had faded she felt the inrush of the Kundalini energy. This lasted six minutes. She experienced this Kundalini energy as healing, and it seemed to help her cope with the next stage of the session.

As this happened she was aware that another past-life scene had begun to emerge. In this scene she felt "huge, powerful beams of light" exploding through her head. The light seemed to come from somewhere external and was directed into her forehead with great intensity and force. Amanda explained that the Kundalini energy often came from outside her body from the crown level, and when it entered, descended to her brow. She felt that the Kundalini energy had triggered the brow chakra, and the pain was this process of the Kundalini energy activating the chakra. The beams of light were experienced as spiritual forces or energy from outside the body.

As the beams of light penetrated her head, she went into a past-life scene.

T: What was your name?

A: (trembling breaths). Darion.

T: Darion. How long ago was this Darion? When did you live?

A: (gasping breaths). About 6 000 years ago.

T: 6 000 years ago. And what were your people called?

A: The Eolians.

T: The Eolians?

A: Mmm.

T: The Eolians, mmm. And how did these beams come into your head? Were you doing some special training or did they just come?

A: Mmm. I had to go and stand in the place, stand in the place.

T: Were you training to be ... were you a man or a woman?

A: A man.

T: A man. Darion. And were you training to be a priest?

A: Mmm. I had to stand in the special place and be exposed to the beams of light

(sobs deeply). It's sore, it's sore there.

Darion experienced an enormous amount of intense physical pain and felt anxious, fearful and distressed. He did not know if he could take the pain any longer and was worried about his survival. This light continued to focus on the head with such intensity that Amanda became unconscious during this part of the session for one minute. When she was conscious again, the scene of a ritual in a temple re-emerged.

T: It was too much, was it?

A: Too much (sobs deeply).

T: So what happened to you, Darion?

A: (sobs deeply). They held me there. They made me stay there (sobs). They held me in that place (sobs wildly). The beams in my head, they're going in and going in (sobs wildly - choking, gasping sobs). It feels as if it's (his head) going to split open. It's going to split open (sobs wildly - wailing, screaming sounds).

Amanda said that, "it was terrible. It felt like ... some huge force coming beaming into your head and everything's going to burst apart". He could not control the power of the beams of light and he felt no control over what was going on.

After the "initiation that all the priests had to go through in order to have their third eye opened", the other priests supported and took care of Darion. They gave him "special things" to build up his strength so that he could "continue with the initiation process".

After this past-life experience Amanda felt vulnerable and physically weak. She felt as if all her "chakra centres" were exposed and that the Kundalini energy was moving through her body but concentrating on her brow chakra. The experience made her feel scared and unsure of what to expect. For a while she lay on the mattress and surrendered to the energy flow, sensing that it also connected her to her heart chakra. She experienced pain, loneliness and sadness, and had visual images of being torn apart and exposed.

In the next few minutes her breathing patterns changed, alternating between short, rapid breaths and

small trembling breaths. This lasted for three minutes. In the following minutes she experienced "huge amounts of Kundalini energy" again, and described this experience as, "like huge streams of energy coming through my hands, and my fingers, and clearing and cleansing and releasing the pain". She experienced the energy as "healing" and transformative. Amanda explained that once the energy had opened up her brow and heart chakras, it became a healing energy in that she felt that the blocks at her brow had been opened, purified and released. She realised that she had moved into a deeper sense of intuition and inner wisdom.

She then began to let out a prolonged, deep vibratory sound, similar to the vibratory sound made in session three. This vibratory sound then turned to sobbing:

A: (deep, wild sobbing). It's so deep, it's so deep (deep sobbing). It goes back 2 000 ages (shuddering sobs).

T: Mmm. And what is it that goes back so far?

A: The fear and anguish (deep sobbing).

T: 2 000 ages? Is this one person's pain?

A: It's that, and also connected with all pain somehow (wild sobbing).

She identified this ancient collective pain as, "the pain and anguish of all women". She felt that she could understand the pain that women have had to endure throughout the ages. This identification with women often occurred when the past-life experience focused on abuse of women.

She continued to sob deeply and wildly, but soon the breathing became quieter, followed by a short moment of silence (one minute).

The bodywork part of the session ended with an experience of spirit beings "talking to me, protecting me, and allowing me to rest". She felt "united" and "at-one with these beings ... It's like there's no skin, and no boundaries. All these realms of being just merge into each other". Amanda felt as if she was connected to the realms of these spirit beings and that she had become part of them, as if she had no body and personal ego. She had "transcended to a spirit place of pure consciousness".

She soon returned to waking consciousness and felt a sense of fragility and child-like defencelessness.

Amanda rested alone for 30 minutes. Afterwards there was a short discussion about her experiences with the therapist and Charles.

In this discussion one of the first things that she said was, "it just feels like a lot of unfinished stuff ... I'm feeling horrible. Sad and mixed up, and like things aren't finished properly". Amanda felt that she needed to go back into the experience and try to complete what she felt was uncompleted. However, she realised that the therapist was not going to allow this (due to time constraints: they had already been working for two hours). This realisation made her feel uncomfortable and uneasy for she now would have to deal with the unfinished business by herself. The therapist talked about how, in most therapies, there are always "things not finished ... It's almost par for the course".

In the discussion about the past-life scene as Darion, Amanda said that, "it was pretty uncomfortable", (the pain of the light penetrating Darion's forehead), but that it was also healing in that she could channel the energy through the brow chakra and feel it opening and releasing her into a deeper spiritual wisdom. "The opening of the third eye was experienced as an opening to my own inner wisdom".

This past-life experience of Darion connected her to another kind of pain, women's pain. "It wasn't a specific scene or a specific memory. Just it felt universal and ancient". She expressed that, "it was ... unlike the Kundalini energy but would come sort of pouring in and cause that kind of anguish about women's pain ... and I would scream ... I felt it from a bodily level".

She experienced the Kundalini energy as healing her past memories and hurts of sexual abuse and sexual inadequacies as a woman. (These sexual abuse memories, reoccur in other sessions and describe her negative experience of marital sexual intercourse in which she felt degraded, helplessness and worthless). In this regard, Amanda explained that the Kundalini energy activated and released previously repressed memories of past experiences of sexual abuse. This energy was experienced by her as "healing" in that she could reclaim her sexual power and wholeness. She knew that she didn't need to feel such pain any longer but could let it go as she felt she was and is

a whole sexual person.

Amanda explained that she intuitively knew her experience of an energy was the Kundalini energy, "it was a deeper knowing". She had however, read the latest material on the Kundalini energy and felt that her experiences fitted the description of the Kundalini energy with minor difference.

At this point in the discussion Amanda said:

In both Mila and Darion there is a re-living, a remembering of a lost spiritual part of myself ... Mila and Darion represent a huge spiritual opening and growth of this insight and awareness ... I see Mila and Darion as stories that invite me to get in touch with my own intuitions again.

In the next five minutes she again discussed her feelings of discomfort and her sense that things were unfinished. Nevertheless she did say, "I suppose I'm lucky in that it doesn't happen that way very often. It's not like going on with unresolved business every week". The therapist encouraged her to find ways to deal with her sense of things not being finished.

In the next few minutes she commented again on the Angelique scene which seemed to pick up themes of abuse and abandonment - "Angelique was very overwhelmed with the abandonment, and having to deal with a lot of abuse all by herself". As Angelique she felt feelings of isolation, sorrow and helplessness.

They then briefly discussed time schedule for the next session.

The session ended.

5.3.6 Session Five

This session took place on the 13 March 1992. It was an exploration and integration type of session and was one hour long.

In this session the themes of love and loss of love are central.

Amanda again expressed her romantic feelings for the therapist. She saw herself as "connected" to him and interacting with him "in a personal way". She spoke of her support for him and his own personal pain which she felt she understood. Amanda reiterated that she felt afraid of expressing these romantic feelings for fear of being rejected by him, and so she did not go into any detail with him about such feelings. However, she wanted him to know that she cared for him. He told her again that he was not available for a relationship with her beyond the consultation room. This session was experienced as very painful and she felt "as if her heart had been torn from her chest". She was left with a "sense of emptiness".

After a few minutes of silence she talked vaguely and generally about her understanding of love - sometimes one has to "let go of love". At this stage she felt deeply rejected by him and wanted to hide her vulnerability and woundedness. She did this by becoming intellectual about love in the session.

After this in a shaky voice she said, "I'm tired of being a lonely person ... the emptiness is scary". She expressed that her loneliness was painful and she longed for a relationship with someone special. This longing had been experienced over several years. It was experienced as a painful longing in that she never gave up hope, feeling that someday a man will come into her life.

She then shared her fears of going into a "black hole" of depression because the thought of giving up so much, of "letting go of love", was "quite overwhelming", and she was not sure how she would cope. She was so hurting at this point that she felt she would not be able to cope and would disintegrate into inner chaos and "deep dark black depression" and never come out. She was afraid of the intensity of the pain and that the therapist did not really care for her.

The therapist offered supportive words.

After a few minutes of silence, the session ended.

5.3.7 Session Six

This session took place on the 18 March 1992. It was a bodywork/regression type of session and was two hours long.

The opening discussion centred around Amanda's feelings of anger and resentment about having Charles in the therapy sessions. Amanda felt that she could not discuss her sexual desires for the therapist while he was present in the room. They talked about this issue for ten minutes. It was agreed that if she wanted to work in this way, she had to understand the conditions that the therapist felt he needed to set up in order for him to work. She grudgingly accepted.

In the next minute Amanda related a "powerful" dream that she had a few days before. The dream was of giving birth to a stillborn child in a kitchen. "Even though I recognised it was dead, and there was a lot of sadness round that, it was like I want to deal with this in my own way". Some days later she had been meditating and experienced "an extremely powerful image or vision" in which she went to a mountain pasture to bury the dead infant, but she suddenly saw, to her surprise and delight, that the baby (a girl) was alive. At this stage in the session she had a clear sense that the image of the baby girl in the dream and the visionary experience was "somehow connected" but she did not know how.

In the next minute she returned to a discussion concerning the limitations and "restrictions of the therapy" framework, and her frustration at how therapy was now "set up" (with Charles being present). They discussed her resentment for a few more minutes and later she changed the topic.

In the next few minutes she said, "it seems now that I've got to the stage where I can work with my own stuff, and be centred in my own stuff, and yet at the same time be aware of where the other people are at".

In the next moment she said, "I have a sense of working with a lot of heart energy now". She was

then encouraged to "breathe into the heart". Quite soon she began to make sounds. It was deep moaning sounds which changed to rapid trembling breaths and progressed into high wailing sounds which then became screams and gasping noises. This lasted for several minutes. For a few short moments she made whimpering sounds. In the next few minute Amanda began to sob deeply. This sobbing became piercing high screams and gasping sobs as if in deep pain. At this point a past-life scene emerged.

A: (deep sobbing). It feels like I've been slit open from here to here.

T: Right up from ... mmm.

A: Slit open (sobs deeply).

She experienced this 'being slit open' as excruciatingly painful.

T: Stay with that. Stay with being slit open. Stay with the feeling. Breathe into it and find out what it's about when you're ready to.

A: (deep sobbing).

T: Just breathe gently into the process. Breathe gently into the process.

A: (deep, whimpering sobs). I feel so helpless (sobs deeply).

In the next few minutes the story emerged. Amanda experienced herself as "Marta", a woman living in an ancient community "6 000" years ago. She was struggling to give birth to a baby girl. Women "helpers" had to perform an emergency caesarean:

T: So they cut you open?

C: Mmm.

T: And they took the baby out?

C: Mmm. It couldn't come out otherwise (whimpering sobs). They're telling me that the baby will be all right. It's going to live.

A: They've lifted that child out now. They're trying to save it, to save it (sobs and whimpers). Somebody else caring for me (gasping, whimpering breaths). I don't know about the child. My body's so sore (sobs deeply - whimpering sounds).

The entire birth process was experienced as long and painful with enormous anguish and distress. Amanda felt that she was no longer in control of the birth process, and this made her feel anxious, powerless and dependent on the other women to help her.

She then softly said:

A: (deep, wailing sobs). There's so much pain too about how that child was created. So much pain there too (sobs deeply).

T: You know where the child came from?

A: The father's gone away, he's gone away (sobs deeply).

T: Is he coming back?

A: No (sobs deeply).

She had felt abandoned and sad and longed for him to return.

T: And the father?

A: Emilion.

T: Emilion.

A: Mmm (whimpering sobs).

T: And you were lovers?

A: Yes (sobs).

T: And has he deserted you?

A: It was only for a time.

T: He returned?

A: No. He's gone. He was here for a time. And now he's gone (sobs).

T: Oh, all right. You never expected him to stay?

A: Uh, uh.

T: But you hoped that he would?

A: Mmm (whimpering sounds). He doesn't know about the child (sobs deeply).

For quite some time she sobs wildly.

"The loss of Emilion was very sore ... very painful for Marta ... and the pain of loss was deep. She had to suddenly cope without him". She was so much in love with him and "he had left her alone without knowing he had fathered a child with her".

The experience of Marta had connected her to her own pain and sense of sadness and loss around love and failed relationships with men. In the session she remembered Richard, the man whom she had a love affair with. She felt a spiritual bonding with him and an intense need for him to remain with her. However, he returned to his wife, leaving her alone and without his love. She also had recollections of her young love with Anthony and how he had also left her. She was reminded of how she had had hopes for happiness in her marriages but that she had been unhappy, and later abused and abandoned.

Amanda had also felt that the therapist's earlier rejection of her as a sexual partner was another form of abandonment. Moreover, he was about to leave the country which added to Amanda's sense of abandonment and rejection.

In the next moment she said:

A: (deep, whimpering sobs). And there are other parts inside me which hurt when I think about him (deep sobs).

T: What do you need to say to Emilion?

A: I love you. I want you to come back (sobs deeply). I want you to come back and be a father to my child (sobs deeply).

Marta had never experienced such enormous grief and pain.

Marta's pain triggered Amanda's own sense of being abandoned. She remembered her own experiences of loss of love and this made her feel despair and immense grief. She had memories of her relationships with her husbands which had left her feeling disappointed and inadequate for as the relationships failed she felt she was responsible. But all she wanted was to find a secure relationship which did not end but endured and became a source of joy and celebration. This never happened. Marta's message was "the pain of losing love".

T: Say that again. Emilion, I want you to come back.

A: (sobs deeply). Emilion, I want you to come back. I want you to come back. I love you so much (sobs deeply). It was all cut off in the middle. Cut off (choking sobs). There's so much more. There's still so much more. A whole new life there now too. Life with the child. I want to send messengers out to find you. To tell you. Ask you to think again. And come back (sobs deeply - whimpering breaths).

Marta had felt abandoned, sad and betrayed for she wanted to be with him but he had gone, leaving her to cope alone with the birth of their child.

As the session progressed, it was revealed that Emilion was a teacher. "He teaches the understanding of the gods and goddesses. He teaches the history of the peoples. He teaches people how to learn to become wise themselves". He was a visitor to her land and had come to share and explore his knowledge and spiritual practices ("practices of the temple"). She admired him and felt that he was "so beautiful. So strong. So wise". But Emilion left to return to work in his own land.

In the following minutes she indicated that the past-life experience had ended. When the past-life scene ended it left Amanda with a deep sense of abandonment, despondency and sadness.

There was more deep sobbing for several minutes.

Amanda explained that, "Emilion in that lifetime is John in this lifetime. I believe that I had, and still have, a deep bond or karmic connection with John, and that we had been lovers in a past-life. I desperately wanted him to know how much I loved him". Amanda explained that the scene also triggered her desires to have a sexual relationship with John. She reported that:

I did not want him (John) to leave not knowing that I loved him, that he had symbolically fathered a child, a child which for me was the embryo of my love, which I had hoped would germinate and give birth to a relationship with him. I

desire to have a full relationship, the hope for a relationship had suddenly died. However, the image of a baby in the vision was discovered to be alive. The life of the baby represented a love that need not be potentiated in a sexual relationship with John or anyone.

She discovered that she was not less of a person if she was not in relationship with John or a man. She could "let go" of the need to find fulfilment in another person. However, with regards to her other experiences of sexual relationships with men, she discovered how much energy she had put into the relationship for a fear that its failure would be experienced as a comment on her sense of self-worth. Through the images of Marta she became aware of the psychological script decision she was playing out: 'I am only worthy as a person if I am in a relationship with a man'. She realised that she did not need to find her sense of value within another man but that this sense of value lies within her.

T: And Marta? Did you get a sense of what happened to her? Did she live through her Caesarian section?

A: Mmm.

T: She did?

A: Ya (laughs). I didn't get any kind of further sequences. It was just a sense that she went on and I think the child survived.

Amanda realised that Marta, despite being abandoned by Emilion and thus without his support, did cope with the trauma of the birth, and gave birth to a baby girl who also survived the ordeal.

Amanda was overwhelmed with grief, betrayal and pain. She explained that the experience of Marta brought back floods of memories of the disappointments and loss of potential relationships with men. During her lifetime she had longed for genuine love and commitment, but she never seemed to find this. Her grief centred around this loss of potential and the unrecognised mourning for the loss that had not been felt until now.

In this lifetime I have also lost love. My two husbands abandoned me and betrayed me. The one left me for the pubs, and the other one had affairs with other women. My parents also abandoned me at a very young age. I remember nannies taking

care of me instead of my mother. She was not there for me. I remember feeling abandoned when I was sent to boarding school. I felt so alone and I hated it. Then there was Anthony. he left me too ... And there was Richard. I wanted him to stay with me but he went back to his wife and I was left alone again ... all this loneliness.

In the next moment there were a few moments of silence.

Afterwards they briefly discussed next week's session time.

The session then ended.

5.3.8 Session Seven

This session took place on the 24 March 1992. It was a bodywork/regression type of session and was two hours long.

At the start of this session Amanda felt pressurised by the demands of her daily life and responsibilities. "The pressure outside is enormous ... the academic pressure ... Actually I'm finding it unbelievable what I'm being asked to do".

Later she discussed her experiences of circle dancing with a guest Sufi teacher from England. She found it to be "very affirming and spiritual".

She also discussed the need and value for her to listen to the therapy tapes of all her past therapy sessions as it helped her to "integrate" her issues. Amanda had begun to take home the therapy tapes and transcribe some of them. She had found that she gained more clarity into her conflicts and issues by doing so, and could then share her insights with close friends.

She then talked about her feelings of the last few sessions. "I'm getting a more intense sense of what's going on and a sense that things have become quite a lot more powerful". She felt as if

there was "a movement into new (psychological) territory". She felt excited about this movement and as a result, much more "centred and kind of available for other people and their stuff and their problems". She felt that she was beginning to deal with her own emotional pain and could integrate them instead of denying or repressing them. As a result, she found herself much more willing to listen to others and their problems.

She then discussed her experiences during the past days of the Kundalini energy rising up her body. These Kundalini experiences were becoming more frequent. She experienced the Kundalini as "good and healing". She was not afraid of the energy, but welcomed it and directed it towards her heart, imaging that it was penetrating her heart and healing the pain and sadness.

Ten minutes later they were both ready to begin the bodywork. She then lay down on the mattress while the therapist fetched Charles.

At the start of this part of the session she said, "it feels like my whole body's just sort of throbbing with energy". It is an "energy between the solar plexus and the heart". This energy seemed to be more powerful than usual, but she could cope with its intensity and not panic. For quite some time she shifted from feeling tense to fearful. She made various sounds ranging from whimpering, gasping breaths to deep moaning to high wailing sobs. Six minutes later she said, "there's tears down there again. There's tears ... It feels like grief". She felt as if her heart had become a sea of pain, and that there was a lot of crying that needed to come out and be heard and healed. She battled to allow the tears to come out, "it's sticking ... I just want to lock it away ... part of my body wants to go on doing that, and yet part of me wants to cry it out". There was a conflict in 'letting go of the pain' or withholding the (pain and) tears. She felt afraid of losing control, and that she would never stop crying if the tears did come out. The therapist encouraged her to cry (she decided then that she would release her tears), and a short moment later she began to cry loudly:

A: (deeper sobbing).

T: O.K. Let it out now.

A: (deeper sobbing). It's gone too deep. It's gone too deep. I can't. It's too deep (deep sobbing). It's so deep.

T: Very deep. Very, very deep.

A: (deep, gasping sobs).

T: A very deep wound.

A: It feels like very deep, right deep in the earth. Just layers of rocks and things. I can't even get to it. It's buried under so many layers of something (whimpering breaths turn to deep sobbing).

For nearly a full ten minutes she sobbed deeply. She felt that her pain was so huge that it reached deep down into the bowels of the earth. In the next few minutes she suddenly repeated the words "no" in a small and fearful voice. This was followed by piecing screams for almost one minute. At this point she had entered into a past-life scene. She could see herself out in a desert and men pulling her down to the ground, and holding her down. She was very frightened and confused. Then more words come:

A: (sobs). It's so dried up, I can't breathe. I'm being pegged down in the desert and I can't breathe, I can't.

T: So you're lying in the desert, you're lying in the blazing sun, mmm?

A: (whimpering sobs). Mmm.

T: Have you been left to die, mmm?

A: Yes (sobs).

T: So your body's been tied down. You're out in the open sun , mmm?

A: (whimpering breaths).

In the following few minutes more of the past-life story emerged: she was a "21 year old" woman called "Alma":

A: (gasping, whimpering sobs).

T: Let yourself see.

A: (whimpering sobs). I've got to die. I've got to die (sobs).

T: Ya.

A: (deep sobbing).

T: Are you a man or a woman who's been pegged out to die?

A: A woman (sobs).

T: A woman, mmm.

A: There's a peg there, a peg there where you've got your hand (solar plexus).
Right through me (sobs deeply).

T: Is the peg right through your body?

A: (sobs deeply). Yes (sobs deeply) ... The sun's beating on my head (sobs
deeply).

T: You're being punished for having done something? Mmm?

A: It's something about being a woman (gasping sobs).

T: Mmm. About the sort of woman you are, or ...?

A: (trembling sobs). It's just because I'm a woman (trembling, whimpering sobs)
... Because of my (menstrual) blood.

T: And they do this to all women?

A: Some, to make them an example.

T: Oh. So you're being made an example?

A: (wailing sobs).

Alma felt a sense of "indignation" for being punished for being a woman. She felt "helpless" to escape from such a cruel punishment.

In the next seven minutes the story emerged more fully: Alma was pegged out in the desert by the "rulers of the land" - "men of the council" who held the power and authority. The male dominated community called the "Berbers" lived out in the dry desert lands "in tents made of skin".

After some more whimpering sobs the therapist asked:

T: Did you do something that you were chosen for this?

A: (sobs). Women are unclean. I was made an example. Separated from the
others. Put out in the desert for the vultures. Picked clean by the vultures (deep
sobbing) ... They (the men) do it sometimes to remind everybody that women are
unclean (whimpering sobs).

At this point in the session, Alma connected to "the pain of all women". She could contain their

"anguish and suffering in her body". As she lay on her back in the desert, alone, and tied up, with a peg through her body, she could identify with other women's pain, and how they must have suffered. She had also felt that this pain extended to all women's pain throughout history. Alma had images of suffering women - "women beaten, abused, tortured, raped and murdered in all ages, in all life times". Amanda had the sense that "this abuse and victimisation and oppression of women had been going on for centuries" (Amanda's emphasis).

The men "held the political power" and were the leaders. It was a very oppressive, patriarchal society in which "the women were subjugated and forced into inferior positions". The men wanted the power over women and they gained it by making "rules and taboos for women" which were oppressive - "the women were totally oppressed". They never had a life of their own. They could never develop as people. "This society was an example of patriarchy in its extreme ... Alma was the victim of a society based on patriarchal concepts".

There were numerous wailing sounds and at this stage she cried out, "no, I don't want to die like this. I don't want to. I don't want to (wild sobbing)". For several minutes she sobbed and moaned:

T: Mmm. Have you seen them do this to other women Alma?

A: Yes (sobs).

T: Is this a public thing, done in public?

A: Mmm (choking sobs).

T: How often do they do this?

A: Whenever they feel they want to punish women (choking sobs).

T: Is that because of specific things women do, or is it just because they want to keep women in their place?

A: Because of what women are. They're frightened of what women are (sobs). ... They're frightened of our connections with the earth and with the moon, and of the way our bodies are.

In the next three minutes Amanda's breath was short, rapid and trembling, and she was gripped by fear. She then spoke again about why women were pegged out in the desert:

A: Because of their blood.

T: Because of their blood, mmm.

A: (whimpering sobs).

T: Is it just when they're menstruating that they're unclean? Or are they always unclean?

A: Giving birth is unclean.

T: Mmm.

A: (whimpering sobs).

T: And what do you feel about that Alma?

A: I don't believe it (sobs).

T: You don't believe it. Just say that: I don't believe it.

A: I don't believe it. I don't believe it (sobs deeply). There's nothing wrong with those things (sobs). ... There's nothing wrong. There's nothing wrong with being a woman (sobs). ... There's nothing wrong with being a woman (sobs deeply, coughs).

Alma could understand that the men wanted to kill her because they were afraid of her connection to the transforming life processes of the earth and the moon, and the capacity to give birth. The men were "afraid of the women's power" to bear children. She knew that they were confused about the mysterious forces that transformed the seasons of the earth and the moon phases, and how these forces were similar to the mysterious forces in a woman's body, and how that life could be sustained from the milk of her breasts. The men had made the experience of birth to be something disgraceful and dirty. They wanted to somehow control women's reproductive power. In their fear of and control over women they had "created taboos and restrictions" around women which had made Alma feel "discriminated against", and unable to change the situation. At this stage, Alma had connected to an inner knowing that her body and its functions were "not unclean" but part of the sacred process of bringing life into the world. She felt that her blood was "a normal and natural part of being a woman" and a source of honour and not dishonour - as something to be acknowledged as good.

Alma also knew that the men were, in their confusion and domination of women, controlling and dominating the earth as well. This knowledge that the earth was being abused and hurt was

connected to Amanda's experience at the start of the session in which her pain and tears felt as though they were reaching deep down into the earth, as if the earth was also grieving.

In the next moment she suddenly became aware that as Alma she was going to die alone. The other women were forbidden to come to her. She was afraid and not allowed to cry out, and in excruciating pain:

A: (deep, wild sobbing) ... It's so hard to be a woman, it's so hard (wild sobbing). It's so hard for all women (deep sobbing - prolonged). ... (high, wailing sobs - deep gasping sobs - moaning, whimpering sounds - breathing quietens). It's about understanding all women through there (third eye). Their grief and their pain (whimpering sobs). There's so much (deep sobbing).

Amanda felt that Alma was able to intuitively (through the third eye or brow chakra) understand how all women felt when they were abused because of their menstrual blood. She felt their grief and anguish.

She then cried for a full minute. This crying was more a high-pitched wailing and moaning, which turned to crying and then screaming.

In the following minutes the scene of Alma faded. The crying turned to quiet sobbing moans. The therapist supportively encouraged her to keep breathing, and soon she began to breathe more easily.

In the next minute her breathing became very slow. In a near-suspended breathing state she experienced the "place of potential" for about one minute. This 'place' was similar to a previous experience of a realm beyond normal consciousness in which "everything was pregnant with potential ... a place of stillness and silence that was waiting to become something". Then the breathing changed and the Kundalini energy began to move in her body. "It's like waves of energy coming in ... it's like having to take the huge Kundalini energy into that place beyond (the void) ... it's vibrating, moving ... through the chakra centres ... the energy now is clear and open". This experience of the Kundalini energy lasted about three minutes. She felt as if she was now cleansed and purified of her pain.

Afterwards she rested alone for 30 minutes. Immediately after this, the therapist and Charles joined her to discuss her experiences during the session. She was tired but had clarity of thought.

They discussed the Alma scene of being pegged down in the desert:

T: And there was actually a peg right through your body?

A: When you pressed there on the solar plexus I knew that the peg was right through there.

T: Yes, right. So it wasn't just that you were roped down with pegs?

A: I think I was tied down in other ways as well, but it was like ...

T: There was actually something right through your body?

A: Mmm. And being forced to lie on my back and face into the sun so that was sort of beating into my head as well.

T: You mentioned the feeling of being unclean.

A: I didn't feel unclean, but that was the sort of cultural belief that women are unclean.

In the next ten minutes they discussed the almost universality of the belief in women's blood as unclean and polluted. As Amanda had a degree in Anthropology she was fairly well informed of these taboos, and shared her knowledge with the therapist. Amanda did not personally feel that menstruation was a "curse". Rather she "enjoyed it" and saw it as "a symbol of being a woman". It demonstrated the cycle and rhythm of life, and to menstruate was a pleasing and satisfying experience, although she has had experiences (as mentioned earlier) where she has not always felt this way, specifically within her marriages where she felt as if her menstruation was "unclean". As a reminder, Amanda had been made to feel ashamed about her menstruation and had to hide away her tampons for fear that her husbands would see them and scorn her. This conversation changed to discussing feminism and how women (and men) want and need to be equal and empowered in their relationships. Amanda felt that there was a need to let the Feminine consciousness enter again into human consciousness, but that it must not be a swing to the matriarchal way of things where women dominated men. This would not be healing.

Amanda believed that Alma had connected to a deep "Feminine consciousness" that had a wisdom

concerning "the sacredness of life, birth and death". Alma could then understand that her menstrual blood was to be valued as part of the sacred process of birth and life. Although Amanda had experienced this Feminine consciousness, she felt that the Masculine consciousness "should not now be denied and seen as bad", rather there should be a balance of these two energies.

The experience of the Feminine consciousness did make her feel "good" about herself as a woman.

In the next five and final minutes they discussed her experience of the Kundalini energy which was an "earthy healing energy ... washing over me". The Feminine consciousness seemed to be connected to the energies of the Kundalini and the earth. They were interconnected and worked with each other in a spiritual and healing manner which brought her more in touch with nature, and her body and beauty of her menstrual blood, sexuality and womanhood.

The session ended.

5.3.9 Session Eight

This session took place on the 1 April 1992. It was a bodywork/regression type of session and was two hours long.

In the opening part of this session Amanda complained again about the academic pressure. "The pressure has been unbelievable".

In addition, she recalled how during the last week she had felt "incredibly vulnerable ... and helpless". She did not know what this was all about but experienced it as uncomfortable and lonely. Amanda had made contact with a close friend during the past week and shared these feelings with her. She had also written a letter to the therapist to describe how vulnerable and lonely she felt. She felt that she needed to have an extra therapy session but was reluctant to ask as she felt that she should be able to cope with her feelings without always needing the therapist.

In the following minutes there was a short discussion and therapy arrangements for the next two

weeks were made.

Amanda then lay down on the mattress while and the therapist called Charles into the room. She closed her eyes as usual and immediately felt that she was "whirling around". Amanda said that this experience felt like being dizzy and "close to fainting". This experience lasted for a few seconds and then she began to breathe in short gasping breaths. The therapist encouraged her to "keep breathing". This lasted for quite a while with only the sound of her breath becoming more rapid. Then suddenly there was a high wailing scream which became loud screaming sobs. In the middle of a sob she cried out in a panic-stricken voice, "no, no, no!". In the next minute she began to cough and scream. This turned to wild sobbing and gasping moans. Again, but more urgently, she cried out, "no, no, no, no, no". Amanda felt as if she was choking but was confused and a little panicky because there were yet no images or scenes, but only this overwhelming sense of trying to breathe. In the next few minutes, between the sobbing and screaming, Amanda said:

A: I'm choked (gasping breaths - gasping, coughing sounds). I'm choked (deep sobbing - wild coughing, sobbing noises) ... I hate it ... I can't fight it (sobs) ... They're choking me (deep sobbing) ... There's a rope around my neck.

She felt terrified and overwhelmed by what was happening.

T: There's a rope round your neck, ya.

A: (wild, gasping sobs).

T: Who is this with a rope round her neck? Is this a man or a woman?

A: (gasping sobs). A woman.

T: A woman, mmm. What's her name?

A: Rose.

T: Rose. How old are you Rose?

A: 19 (whimpering breaths).

T: Where do you live?

A: Huntingford.

The past-life scene was "in England, and the community was one of simple country outdoor people

anyone but simply wanted to be of service and only "wished to help people, heal them, cure them ... make their pain go away ... she was a compassionate healer" who had learnt "an enormous amount of knowledge of healing medicines".

In the next few minutes she began to cry again.

As Rose stood on a wooden platform with the noose around her neck, she was desperately searching the large gathering and cheering crowd for her beloved:

T: What's his name?

A: Edwin.

T: Edwin, mmm. Is he there at your hanging?

A: I don't know (sobs deeply).

T: See if you can see him.

A: (wild sobbing).

T: Just breathe into that. Let yourself see.

A: (gasping sobs) ... I can't see him, I can't see him. It's just a blur. There are so many people down there (sobs deeply). Where is he? (sobbing increases - gasping, trembling breaths). He is not there.

Her sense of fear deepened and her crying became more wild. She was desperate to find Edwin, and felt more and more alone, abandoned, defenceless and hopeless as she realised that he was not there. The cheering crowd added to her sense of loss, hopelessness and aloneness. She felt small, confused and insecure. After several more minutes of wild sobbing, the therapist encouraged her to let her fear and pain out. She sobbed deeply for one minute. The loss of Edwin was experienced as very painful and she felt an enormous amount of grief well up inside her. Her sense of abandonment by Edwin was greater than her sense of fear and defencelessness in being labelled as a sorceress. This pain of loss continued to remain right up until the moment of death. She sobbed deeply. There was then a brief period of silence when she began to breathe more gently and slowly. Suddenly Rose died. Amanda experienced a "spinning out" sensation at the time of the death:

T: ... Can you look back on her body and tell me what you see?

A: All that wisdom being choked.

T: Mmm. You can see her hanging?

A: Mmm.

T: You say the wisdom is being choked?

At this point she felt deep grief and mourning that "all her wisdom would now be lost ... choked back forever". The wisdom of the healing medicines would die with her. At this point she again sobbed for a further two minutes with grief and anguish for the loss of her wisdom. Again at this point she had the feeling that "she was not evil" or doing wrong. She felt a sense of injustice and sad regret concerning her death and the loss of her healing knowledge.

There was another period of silence (two minutes). Amanda breathed quietly.

The Rose scene ended.

In the next minute a second past-life scene emerged and she began to experience enormous pain around her eyes:

A: (wild sobbing - screaming, gasping sobs). Oh no, no, no, no. No, no. No, no, no (wild, screaming sobs - loud screaming cries - gasping breaths). My eyes. They're doing something to my eyes.

In the next ten minutes the story emerged. She was a 17 year old boy called Althus who had just had his eyes burned out. Althus lived "1 000" years ago in the city of "Melthas" in the country of "Midia". At this point in the session she screamed wildly and loudly for almost two minutes.

Then she stopped screaming:

T: Can you tell us about yourself Althus? What happened to you?

A: Knowing too much. Reading too much.

T: Oh, you've been reading, mmm. What have you been reading?

A: The scrolls. All the scrolls. I wasn't supposed to be there. A big room where

they keep all the scrolls.

T: So what were you doing with all those scrolls?

A: I wanted to learn. To learn. I wanted to learn all the wisdom in the scrolls.

T: Why weren't you allowed to learn the wisdom of the scrolls?

A: It was the property of the priests. I wasn't supposed to be there. I wasn't supposed to look. It's their property (rapid, whimpering breaths).

Althus had experienced fear and alarm when he had been discovered by the priests reading the ancient scrolls for he was not allowed to read them. The priests had forbidden access to the them. He had felt that he could sneak in and read the scrolls while the priests were out. He knew he would be punished if caught but took the risk as he felt determined to learn the wisdom in these scrolls. However, when caught, he was "condemned and tortured for reading ancient forbidden scrolls" and experienced as sense of hopelessness and helplessness. He was then taken outside by "the (Christian) priests" who "burnt out his eyes as punishment". He experienced terrible pain and immense fear when his eyes were burnt out, and felt that this punishment was unjustified, gruesome and cruel.

At this stage in the session he let out several long choking sobs and cries:

A: I wasn't doing anything wrong. I just wanted to understand (deep sobbing). I wanted to understand (deep, choking sobs).

The injustice and horror of his experience of being tortured so brutally was felt again and again. He also felt dismayed and discouraged that he had not been allowed to read the scrolls for they contained a wisdom that he had not known before. He felt that the scrolls should be open to people who had a right to know about the wisdom in them.

Later a small group of women found him and put "pads" on his eyes to try and soothe his pain. He felt some sympathetic support from them, and a little relief from the pain he was feeling.

At this point the past-life scene ended.

In the next ten minutes she began to experience the Kundalini energy. During this time she softly cried. Amanda felt saddened by this experience of a young boy who wanted to only explore the wisdom in the scrolls and was punished for doing so. She also felt angry that the Church had censored access to the scrolls. Shortly after this sense of anger and sadness she experienced the Kundalini energy again. She then had an experience with spirit guides which left her feeling supported and peaceful. When this experience ended she returned to normal waking consciousness.

About three minutes later she indicated that she needed to rest. The therapist and Charles left her alone for 30 minutes. Later they returned to discuss with her the past-life experience she had just had in the session.

Amanda explained that Rose was "a healer" who was "victimised because she held specific knowledge of herbal medicines which could cure others". However, the community (the men) were suspicious and resentful of her. Amanda stated that:

1491 was the time of the so-called witch hunts in England, where women were hunted and labelled as witches, tortured and burnt at the stake or hanged or drowned in a river or pond. People lived in fear and suspicion.

Rose was not able to do her work freely, and had to hide her healing skills from some of the people for fear of being harmed in some way. She never thought that she would be accused of being a witch. Rose was a gentle and innocent person who was unaware that certain people had begun to gossip about her skills. These people, mostly the leaders of the community (the men), were jealous of her healing abilities. She was a country doctor and went about her work believing that she would come to no harm if she was careful who she mixed with. But suddenly she was accused and sentenced, without trial, to die.

Amanda felt that "Rose had triggered a sense of myself as a healer". She felt a need to develop and explore her healing skills. Amanda had felt that she had a gift of healing but through fear of being mocked by the men she had been involved with in a sexual relationship, she had learned to repress her healing talents. She felt that she would be misunderstood, and her skills ridiculed, so she kept silent and did not work as a healer. According to Amanda this experience of Rose triggered feelings of bereavement around the denial and loss of her healing skills.

However, nearly ten years latter and prior to this scene, she decided to explore her healing talents and began to participate in a local training programme in the healing arts of message. Slowly she began to recovery her sense of being a woman healer. The scene of Rose helped her to continue to get back in touch with her healing skills.

Concerning the second past-life experience, "Althus ... represented the story of persecution for seeking ancient wisdom which was jealously kept by the Church and priests". She also spoke about how she had felt for a long time restricted in her search for spiritual wisdom. Even as a child she was afraid to be spiritual for fear of being mocked by her father. For the next five minutes, she spoke about how she had grown up in a strict religious family but had "never experienced God". She also felt that and that religion today is dogmatic about how spiritual issues and activities should be experience and expressed.

In the final ten minutes she talked about the experiences of the Kundalini energy and that it felt for her to be "healing ... cleansing and clearing out all the pain around these last two past-life scenes".

The session ended.

5.4 THEMES IDENTIFIED IN THE PAST-LIFE EXPERIENCE

These past-life scenes described above can be grouped, according to their content, into six broad themes. This was done according to the procedures described in the previous chapter. The themes will be discussed in the following chapter. These themes are:

- * the theme of the abused and powerless woman (menstrual taboos and rape);
- * the theme of the persecution of women's healing power;
- * the theme of persecution for seeking ancient wisdom;
- * the theme of the ritual of sacrifice;
- * the theme of sacred ritual of spiritual initiation;
- * the theme of loss and abandonment.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

As indicated in the Preface of the thesis, traditional Western psychology has afforded little credence to the significance of transpersonal experiences as psychological presence in the process of psychospiritual transformation. The perspective of Cartesian science has promoted a particular view of psychological life and development which generally demands a literal objective approach to a largely phenomenological experience. In this chapter, an attempt is made to shift away from literalism and to foster a poetic investigation of, and approach to, the treatment of transpersonal experiences. In so doing, transpersonal psychology is placed philosophically within the poetic tradition. As a reminder, the poetic tradition moves away from reductive explanation and logical reduction of Cartesian science, and embraces a mode of understanding - a particular way of thinking - that seeks to reclaim the inherently metaphorical character of psychological life. The meaning of psychological life is thus enriched when experiences are not sacrificed to a purely literal interpretation.

As indicated in Chapters One and Two, past-life experiences need not be questioned in regard to their literal occurrence. Rather, they can be interpreted as metaphoric scenes and images. From within this perspective, the case material described in the previous chapter is approached from a metaphoric position. No attempt is thus made to enter into the debate whether the past-life scenes that comprise the case material are literal occurrences. In this respect, it is crucial to note that the past-life scenes and images are open to several possible interpretations, ie., they are multi-determined. The understanding, therefore, of the past-life scenes and images as metaphoric scenes and images is one such possible interpretation.¹⁵

¹⁵ Although the past-life scenes have been presented in a way that they appear as if they are literal occurrences, this is the result of remaining faithful to Amanda's experience. No attempt has been made to suggest that the past-life scenes should be treated literally.

As one aim of the thesis is - to uncover the significance of past-life images and experiences, and their relationship to the concept of the archetypal Feminine consciousness - it will be shown that Amanda's past-life experiences confirm the notion described in Chapter Two that past-life experiences articulate psychological realities and the dilemmas of the human spirit both within the personal psyche and the collective unconscious. In other words, her past-life scenes portray not only her personal individual story of abuse but dramatise the historical struggle with unresolved archetypal forces within the collective psyche. The approach in this chapter is that Amanda's past-life scenes and images, as metaphoric scenes and images, articulate an inner process of spiritual emergence in which blocked feelings are released, while repressed and hidden aspects of the psyche are expressed. In this way, it will be shown that past-life experiences are fundamentally healing stories of the unconscious, and as described in Chapter Two, are a source of therapeutic potential.

The process of examination of the past-life scenes is as follows:

Against the background of feminism and transpersonal feminism, and within the broader context of transpersonal psychology, the first part of this chapter focuses on the examination of six of Amanda's past-life scenes which are understood as ritual enactments of patriarchal ideology. Three of these six past-life scenes relate specifically to ritual enactments against women, and have been thematised according to their content: The theme of the abused and powerless woman. The first past-life scene is concerned with a woman called Alma. This scene is understood within the framework of the ritual enactment of the menstrual taboos (cf. Chapter Three). The second past-life scene focuses on a woman called Angelique. This scene is understood as the ritual enactment of rape (cf. Chapter Three). The third past-life scene is concerned with a woman called Rose. The understanding of this scene is deepened through the use of the hermeneutic lens of the ritual enactment of the witch hunts (cf. Chapter Three). On the personal level, these scenes are embedded within the story of Amanda's sense of abuse and victimisation. For each of these three past-life scenes a separate phenomenological-hermeneutic explication is presented.

The remaining three of these six past-life scenes (not specifically related to women's experience within patriarchy) are understood as related ritual enactments of patriarchal ideology: The abusive use of power through the ritual of sacrifice (cf. Chapter Three), and the persecution of those seeking ancient wisdom (cf. Chapter Three). Such ritual enactments are used as hermeneutic lenses

for the basis of the explication of these three past-life scenes. Two of these three past-life scenes are concerned with the male characters of Alphonse and Althus. Their combined story is phenomenologically and hermeneutically explicated as a single theme: The theme of persecution of those seeking ancient wisdom. It is suggested that on the personal level, these scenes reflect Amanda's experience of living within a patriarchal culture that does not affirm her own wisdom but fearfully forces her to repress it. The final past-life scene of this set of three past-life scenes focuses on a boy named Armand. This scene has been thematised according to its content: The theme of the ritual of sacrifice. On the personal level, this scene embodies Amanda's experience of the darker side of patriarchal spirituality. It is examined within the framework of human sacrifice.

In the second part of the chapter, the seventh past-life scene is presented and concerns a woman called Marta. Its theme of abandonment and loss of love triggers Amanda's awakening to the Feminine. It is suggested that it is a story that reveals not only Amanda's personal individual story of loss and yet empowerment and spiritual healing, but embodies the historical trajectory of the archetypal struggle and dilemma of women within intimate relationships in patriarchal society. This past-life scene is examined differently from the previous past-life scenes. This new format was chosen because it was felt that this would be the best way to elucidate this particular past-life scene because of its complexity. This new format involves the use of four hermeneutic keys rather than one. Each key is presented and then employed to deepen the appreciation of the underlying personal and archetypal dimensions that the scene reveals. The hermeneutic lenses or keys are; the COEX system, the transference phenomenon in psychotherapy, the inner child, and the previously documented historical process of the disempowerment of women and the Feminine within patriarchy (cf. Chapter Three).

It is suggested that this past-life scene foreshadows the emergence of Amanda's archetypal figure of a woman called Anita - an empowered priestess - who, it is suggested, embodies Amanda's transformation - the shift from a victimised and abused woman (as expressed through all these past-life scenes but specifically the first three scenes presented in this chapter) to an empowered woman. In this regard, it will be shown that this Anita image represents the transformation and healing that can be experienced in past-life therapy.

The remaining two past-life scenes (the eighth and ninth) have been thematised according to their

content: The theme of a sacred ritual of spiritual initiation. The one past-life scene involves the initiation of a novice priestess called Mila, while the other past-life scene concerns an initiation of a priest known as Darion. It is suggested that these scenes, like the other past-life scenes, are archetypal images that relate to the wider historical narrative of humanity and its unfolding spiritual and cultural process. In this respect, they are viewed as contributing to the process of transformation and spiritual emergence, although all her past-life scenes may be viewed as contributing towards the process of spiritual emergence. On the personal level, these past-life scenes embody Amanda's spiritual awakening and Feminine empowerment. The phenomenological-hermeneutic explication of the combined scenes is presented. The conceptual framework of spiritual emergence (cf. Chapters One and Two), and the related process of initiation and empowerment (cf. Chapter Two), are employed to understand the past-life scenes of Mila and Darion.

6.2. THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL-HERMENEUTIC EXPLICATION OF THE PAST-LIFE SCENE OF ALMA

Details of the past-life scene of Alma (session seven) are found in Chapter Five (cf. 5.3.8).

From the perspective of transpersonal feminism, the past-life scene of Alma is a dramatic depiction of patriarchy's rejection and fear of women's power. Against the background of the menstrual taboos (cf. Chapter Three), the past-life scene of Alma will be explored. The significance of this scene is discussed from within three interconnected levels or stages. Firstly, within the context of Alma, a woman living in a historical society and her experience of abuse and victimisation as a consequence of the menstrual taboos of that society. Secondly, within the background of the description of the menstrual taboos, the impact of patriarchy's rejection of feminine sensibilities on the personal life of Amanda, and her experience of disempowerment of, and alienation from, the Feminine. Thirdly, the archetypal significance of the scene in relation to women's dilemma of powerlessness within patriarchal culture. These points are discussed below.

As a reminder, Alma belonged to the Berber community and lived in the desert in "tents made of skin". This was a patriarchal community and the male "rulers of the land" ruthlessly oppressed and

controlled women's lives. Alma was forced by the men into a position in the society that distorted and denied her reproductive power. Because Alma was a woman and menstruated she had been selected - "I was made an example" - and taken into the desert to be tortured and killed. However, it seems that she had experienced a strong incongruence between the brutally imposed male idea of (a) women's menstrual blood and women's (reproductive) power, and (b) women's connections to the earth and the moon (nature), and her own personal experience and belief system.

In the Berber society, the male perception of women's menstrual blood was that it was "unclean" and contaminated. These men viewed women's power to give birth as something dirty and a source of shame. But Alma did not have this view. Her experience starkly contrasted and contradicted this patriarchal assumption. Rather, in connecting to a "Feminine consciousness" and wisdom, she experienced a powerful inner knowing that her blood was not shameful or dirty, but a valuable and wholesome part of the process of birth and life. As a result of this Feminine connection, Alma knew that there was "nothing wrong with being a woman". She felt that her menstrual blood was "a normal and natural part of being a woman", integral to the process of life itself.

Despite the abuse, she had not lost touch with her feminine dignity and power, but was an empowered woman who understood the wisdom and beauty of her (menstrual blood and) creative power. She had not been disconnected from this deep inner wisdom. In this regard, the past-life scene tells the story of a woman who succeeds in remaining in touch with her own feminine sensibilities and power despite the male notions of her menstrual blood. Paradoxically, although helpless and abused, in remaining in touch with her inner wisdom, Alma was an empowered woman.

The significance of this scene points to the fundamental and collective fear of the Berber men of Alma's reproductive power. The ritual of torture can be interpreted as an embodiment of their power to devalue women's power to give birth. Moreover, it is suggested that the Berber men were reacting negatively towards Alma's reproductive power because such power was connected to nature. From the transpersonal feminist perspective, women's reproductive/creative potential within patriarchy has traditionally been negatively viewed as closely linked to nature, and men have feared and culturally denigrated this intimate relationship. This fear of men of women's relationship to nature is evident in the past-life scene when Alma pitifully cries out that her torture

and abuse is primarily because "of what women are ... of our connections to the earth and the moon". The regenerative powers of nature were seen by the Berber men as the same regenerative powers of Alma. Women, such as Alma, embody life and death and are thus a fearful reminder to men of immortality (cf. Chapter Three). It is not surprising then that the men's attitude towards Alma, other women, and their connections to the earth and the moon was one of "suspicion and fear". From this perspective, as women bleed they are the embodiment of creative potential, and their bodies and menstrual blood a reflection of nature's creative cycles of life and death.

Secondly, the metaphoric and archetypal significance of this past-life scene is linked to, and mirrored in, the personal history of Amanda. As evident from the case history documented in Chapter Five, the COEX of pain, humiliation, abuse and powerlessness is played out again and again in her personal story. Amanda's negative experiences as a younger woman reflect the experience of Alma in the sense of the male perception of menstruation. In her first marriage, Amanda felt that she could not share with her husband her feelings and experiences around menstruation because he found it distasteful. She then learned that her menstrual blood was something unacceptable, to be kept hidden and unspoken, rather than welcomed and honoured within their relationship with him. Likewise, her second husband also viewed her menstruation as distasteful and ugly, leaving her with feelings of shame, as if she were "unclean". As a result, she initially thought that there must be something wrong with her, and that her menstrual blood was indeed something shameful, to be hidden away.

Their response to her menstruation typifies certain men's attitude towards women's blood, embodied in the historical and cultural creation of the menstrual taboo (cf. Chapter Three). The sense that there must be something wrong with her became an experiential stencil for how she viewed herself in other relationships with other men - "in my relationships with men, which did not go well, I always thought that there must be something wrong with me, with my sexuality".

As her menstrual patterns are seen by the significant men in her life as something distasteful and to be hidden away, so is her own sense of value and power as a woman stripped away and repressed. She herself colludes with the sense that maybe there is something wrong with her as a woman - "I always thought that I was worthless and totally inadequate as a woman."

controlled and forced into a powerless position where her reproductive power was rejected and ridiculed, and where she consistently experienced a sense of male oppression. The archetypal significance of this scene lies in male fear and suspicion of women's relationship to nature which, it is suggested, is the root cause of the menstrual taboos.

The archetypal pain and victimisation of women is striking when Amanda relives this horrific and brutal past-life scene. Amanda experientially identifies with all women's pain - "this abuse and victimisation and oppression of women had been going on for centuries". In this regard, it is as if the archetypal story of all women's abuse and disempowerment within patriarchy is forcing itself into Amanda's consciousness as she relives this past-life scene.

This past-life scene is related to the following two past-life scenes (Angelique and Rose) in that it also dramatises patriarchy's abuse of women which, from the perspective of transpersonal feminism, is rooted in male fear of women's power and the associated repression and fear of the Feminine.

6.3 THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL-HERMENEUTIC EXPLICATION OF THE PAST-LIFE SCENE OF ANGELIQUE

Details of the past-life scene of Angelique (session four) are found in Chapter Five (cf. 5.3.5).

From the perspective of transpersonal feminism and the feminist analysis of rape presented in Chapter Three, it is suggested that the past-life scene of Angelique dramatises patriarchal ideology of control and domination over women through the act of rape. This scene is therefore embedded within the wider collective story of women's abuse and disempowerment within patriarchy. This is discussed below.

As a reminder, the backdrop for this past-life scene is a war, and, as such, vividly captures a cultural system that values war as a route to power and domination over others. Angelique, as a freedom fighter, is actively engaged in the process of resisting the invading soldiers, but she suddenly finds herself alone and discouraged when Tomas, her lover, and the leader of the

resistance group, is captured. Defenceless and vulnerable, she is left with a sense of fear, insecurity and an overwhelming sense of abandonment. She is suddenly alone, unprotected and terrified. It is then that she is attacked and gang-raped by the enemy soldiers - "my body is battered and bruised". During a time when she was most vulnerable, she is taken by surprise and unable to fight the men. She is disempowered by the soldiers through the act of rape. Left alone after the rape she feels an overwhelming sense of helplessness and anxious terror of what may happen next - "Terrible things happen all the time." In this war torn country, Angelique's brutal gang-rape becomes a norm in a methodology of attaining power over women - "they beat us up and they rape us".

Raped and abused, Angelique's sense of pain, abuse, hopelessness and yet yearning for peace and justice is a personal yearning for a world without rape and violence - a lamenting cry for peace.

The past-life scene and images of Angelique speak of the collective sexual abuse and pain of women within patriarchy, reflected in the personal individual pain and sexual humiliation in the life of Amanda. The Angelique scene triggered a painful memory of Amanda's experience of years of marital rape in which she had been subjected to repeated sexual abuse and denigration. Her first husband had often forced her into having sex when she had not wanted it, leaving her feeling humiliated and worthless. This same man had betrayed her by becoming involved in extra-marital affairs, often returning home late at night from his mistress's bed to her bed to demand immediate sexual gratification, which left her feeling humiliated.

Her second husband had equally deprived her of power and dignity as a woman through the denigration of her sexuality in such abusive ways that she reported feeling useless, worthless and unattractive. He achieved this abuse by regularly coercing her into participating in certain sexual acts that she found "uncomfortable, degrading and, at times, painful". In addition, she felt that he took sadistic pleasure in her sense of helplessness and inability to stop the sexual abuse. She was powerless within both marriages to claim her body as her own during these experiences of rape and sexual abuse.

It is suggested that the sexual abuse, rape, and feminine disempowerment Amanda experienced in both of her marriages were the result of the unequal power relations between her and her husbands.

Amanda's husbands, like the soldiers in the scene of Angelique, chose to express their power over her by and through sexual abuse, leaving her with feelings of powerlessness and inadequacies - "I always thought that I was worthless and totally inadequate as a woman, I thought that there was no help for me, that no one could understand what it feels like to be so helpless".

Transpersonal feminism argues that rape is not only about power but also about the desacralisation of sexuality. From this perspective, both of Amanda's husbands had desacralised her sexuality - sexual activity had become a means of domination and power over Amanda rather than as a vehicle of intimacy and spiritual connection. Sex for Amanda had become dislodged from its spiritual source, and, as a result, she had experienced a deep sense of alienation from her own spiritual centre. Only by reliving the image of Angelique did she realise how her sexuality and spirituality had become split and separated.

In the context of reclaiming a wholesome sexuality, and as part of the process of purification and empowerment, Amanda confronted her accumulated pain and sexual disempowerment - "I have been sexually wounded, but ... I am also healing my sexual hurts and sexual inadequacies in this lifetime. I know now that I don't need to feel sexually abused, that I am a whole person now, a whole sexual person". She is no longer willing to be involved with men who do not respect and view her (and their own) sexuality as sacred. She has often remarked in recent years that she believes that the spiritual and sexual aspects of her life are connected, both facilitating inner transformation and healing.

On the archetypal level, the rape was an act of war, but also an act of violence not specific to war. It is proposed that the abuse, humiliation and degradation to which Angelique was subjected is the wider collective story of women's pain within patriarchy. This past-life scene connects with the shadow of the human collective unconscious with its images of violence, ruthlessness, rape and torture against women. This collective story of women's anguish is reflected in Amanda's sense, at the start of this session, of the grief and pain of all women that she felt reaches deep into the bowels of the earth to meet with the earth's pain - "I feel the earth's sadness and its struggle". From the perspective of transpersonal feminism, this sense of earth-pain and women's pain again draws attention to the intimate relationship between earth/nature and women. As a reminder, women were traditionally connected to nature during the Goddess cultures (cf. Chapter Three), but

such a connection was not one of abuse nor a source of exploitation, pain and oppression as it later became during the emergence of patriarchy. As indicated in Chapter Three, the transpersonal feminist perspective holds that the abuse of women within patriarchy is linked to the abuse of the earth (as represented by the Alma scene), and, as such, the earth-pain that Amanda feels becomes the pain of both the earth and women who are collectively abused within patriarchal cultures.

Furthermore, it seems that Angelique's sense of pain and hopelessness and cry for peace and justice, becomes not just a personal but also a collective yearning for a world without abuse and sexual violence (and perhaps a cry for more loving relationships with others). This is poignantly reflected in Amanda's longings at the beginning of the session "to be loved and held, and to be close to another human body". In the early part of the session, Amanda had felt broken, alone and overwhelmed by loss, pain and anguish which seemed deep and endless - "it's so lonely ... so lonely (sobs)". In this context, it is suggested that Amanda's experience echoes the fundamental loneliness of patriarchal consciousness.

Within this archetypal level lies the collective possibility of the confrontation of millennia of sexual abuse and degradation that make up the collective unconscious of women within patriarchy. This possibility envisions a healing, reparation and restoration of Feminine wholeness. In this regard, the past-life scene of the raped and abused Angelique is an urgent call for a collective acknowledgement of female abuse and disempowerment, and the transformation of the abusive cultural organisation of patriarchy which views feminine sexuality as something to be debased and violated.

6.4 THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL-HERMENEUTIC EXPLICATION OF THE PAST-LIFE SCENE OF ROSE

Details of the past-life scene of Rose (session eight) are found in Chapter Five (cf. 5.3.9).

On the archetypal level, the past-life story of Rose is the story of women's experience of the historical process of condemnation and devaluation of their healing wisdom and skills through labelling them as witches or sorceresses (cf. Chapter Three). On the personal level, the image of

Rose is embodied in Amanda's personal experience of the devaluation and disempowerment of her healing skills. Moreover, the image forms a series of past-life images that reflect her experience of abandonment by men. These points are discussed below.

As a reminder, Rose was a successful and skilled medicine woman who had power to heal others but she had been unjustly condemned by the men in her community for being "evil" and "a sorceress". However, like Alma, Rose experienced incongruence between the imposed male perception of women and their power. Rose felt that she was not doing anything wrong, that she was not a sorceress and evil. Because of this inaccurate labelling she felt misunderstood and scared.

From the perspective of transpersonal feminism, Rose's healing skills were devalued and condemned not because they were harmful but because she was (a) a woman, and (b) she had power (to heal). As a healer in this rural community she wanted only to heal people and "... make them well. She never wanted to hurt anyone, but simply wished to help people, cure them, make their pain go away". Within this male dominated community, her healing knowledge, intuition and wisdom were condemned primarily because it "threatened" and "challenged" the core belief system and "existing political and social structures of the society".

The image of Rose is a metaphor of the embedded social and political discrimination against women as healers. Women, such as Rose, with power who transcended, intentionally or unintentionally, the culturally-determined stereotypic beliefs of women's power, were punished, marginalised and condemned. In other words, the image of Rose is embedded in the archetypal story of patriarchy's process of controlling and limiting women, specifically their healing power. It was clear to Rose that only the men in her community were allowed to heal, i.e., access to the healing profession was restricted to men only. She experienced a sense of disappointment at, and sad rejection by, this male enforced discrimination. Her sense was: why not a woman healer? But she never had the opportunity to develop her healing knowledge and skills. As a reminder, within patriarchy, sexism prevailed so that any woman working successfully as a healer must, it was believed, be a sorceress and evil (cf. Chapter Three). But, from the perspective of feminism, underlying this notion was the patriarchal idea that women's healing power must be controlled and at best, thwarted. The ultimate male weapon of control over Rose was through labelling her a

witch which inevitably resulted in the successful suppression of her feminine healing knowledge and wisdom - "all her wisdom would now be lost ... choked back forever". Through the patriarchal values of domination and control, Rose was sacrificed to maintain an ideology that rejected and oppressed women's power to heal.

Moreover, together with her success and accomplishment as a woman healer, her "unusual and unorthodox" methods drew more and more negative attention and condemnation, and this was viewed as corroboration of her guilt as a witch. It seems that there is a stark contrast between her persecutors' understanding of witches and the simple healing skills of a country woman. This illustrated the profound restriction and misunderstanding of the healing arts as practised by women healers.

Amanda's personal individual story dramatises the attempts by patriarchy to dominate women and their healing power. The image of Rose's suppression of her healing wisdom is embodied in Amanda's initial loss of her healing skills. Amanda had felt that she had special gifts of healing, mostly in her hands, but she had learned to repress these healing gifts and intuitions because she did not feel safe, or find adequate support in her primary male relationships. She felt that she would be misunderstood, and her skills mocked, so she did not work as a healer.

Almost ten years after her second divorce, Amanda began to feel confident enough to explore seriously her healing talents (cf. Chapter Five). This transformation came about as a result of certain past-life experiences in psychotherapy which had the theme of the persecution of woman as healer. The experience of Rose, and the other past-life experiences, triggered enormous grief and pain around the loss of her own healing wisdom. But the loss and deep grief (of Rose) was also experienced as a process of initiation into a recovery and reclamation of herself as a woman healer. This is evident when Amanda says - "Rose had triggered a sense of myself as a healer".

At the time of her execution in front of a cheering mob, Rose hopelessly searched the crowd for her beloved Edwin. But she could not find him and experienced a deep sense of loss, abandonment, grief and helplessness. This painful loss was felt as more painful than the pain of being misunderstood and labelled 'a sorceress'. Despite the brutal experience of male rejection and condemnation there had been a man who was not rejecting and disapproving; a man on whom she

thought she could depend. She had searched in vain for him in the crowd, hoping that he would be there to rescue her. But he was not. This was experienced as a deep betrayal and loss. There was no man to save her now, to stop the abuse that she was experiencing. She had been abandoned.

This story of loss and abandonment by a male lover is a story that has emerged in the other past-life scenes documented in this research. In the previous past-life scene of Angelique, Tomas her lover is taken away from her. She felt abandoned and alone. In the past-life scene of Marta (discussed later, cf. 6.8), Marta's lover - Emilion - leaves her to return to his own country and people. Marta was devastated and left with an overwhelming sense of rejection, sadness and abandonment. It is suggested that each of these three past-life scenes (Rose, Angelique and Marta) is a metaphor for the archetype of abandonment.

These scenes mirror Amanda's personal life or COEX of abandonment by men. Amanda's relationships with men have been characterised by a sense of lack of support, security, and interdependency, and where the dominant emotional theme has been one of loss, betrayal and abandonment. Her marital and extra-marital relationships have ended when these men chose to remain married, or leave the relationship for another woman. Even her first school girl non-sexual romance left her with a deep sense of loss, abandonment and disappointment when it ended. This COEX of abandonment is repeated in many of her other past-life scenes, and it can be argued, is evident in the relationship with her male therapist whom she loved but experienced as having rejected and abandoned her.

6.5 SUMMARY

From the perspective of transpersonal feminism, the past-life scenes of women's abuse and disempowerment are metaphors for the wider collective story of the fundamental and systematic abuse and disempowerment of women within patriarchy. Not only are these archetypal scenes interpreted as ritual enactments of patriarchal ideology that serve to oppress women, but they are expressed in the personal life of Amanda, an ordinary middle-aged woman living in the final years of the twentieth century. In this context, it is as if the accumulative and collective pain of being a woman within patriarchy is forcing itself into the consciousness of Amanda, and demanding a

healing awareness through the process of purification and empowerment. As Amanda relives these past-life scenes of abuse, and confronts a lifetime of accumulated sexual wounding and disempowerment, she begins to reclaim a wholesome feminine sexuality and identity.

6.6 THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL-HERMENEUTIC EXPLICATION OF THE PAST-LIFE SCENES OF ALPHONSE AND ALTHUS

Details of the past-life scene of Alphonse (session one, cf. 5.3.2) and of the past-life scene of Althus (session eight, cf. 5.3.9) are found in Chapter Five.

Within the context of the suppression of ancient wisdom by the male-dominated Church (cf. Chapter Three), both these past-life scenes portray the Church as a system of human regulation, control and domination through the abusive use of power rather than as a source of spiritual support. In this regard, the past-life scenes are understood as ancient stories of the persecution by the Church of those seeking ancient wisdom. The scenes describe what happens to those who disobey the demands for complete allegiance to the system. On the personal level, the scenes embody Amanda's story of suppression of spiritual insight and wisdom and the search for spiritual knowledge. These two levels are discussed below.

On the archetypal level, the past-life scenes remind one of a period in history when the Church had enormous power and, within the patriarchal ideology of domination, brutally maintained control through the suppression of gnosis. As a reminder, in both past-life scenes the Church had decreed that ancient scrolls, found by Alphonse and Althus, which held a wisdom and knowledge contrary to the contemporary belief system, were heresies, and, as such, declared to be prohibited. Both past-life characters had felt a sense of outrage and injustice that this should be so.

The scrolls described a knowledge associated with an "alternate way of being, another way of doing things ... and working and relating to others". As such, the knowledge threatened the prevailing paradigm of reality, and the Church and government officials fiercely protected the dominant ideology both by control of others as well as access to information. Alphonse experienced this punitive and controlling attitude and cried out in dismay - "They (the Church) don't want me to

know all those things ... they wanted to keep all the knowledge (to themselves)".

Likewise, Althus experienced the Church as controlling and abusive. For the same reasons of maintaining the dominant ideology, the Church had also prohibited access to ancient wisdom by owning and withholding it - "it was the property of the priests ... (and) jealously kept by the Church and priests". These two past-life scenes and images are a metaphor for the archetype of a patriarchal society based on domination and suppression of that which could threaten its precarious authority and power - gnostic wisdom.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the brutal suppression of gnostic wisdom by the Church is understood as a mechanism of control and the maintenance of their power. In order to preserve power, not only through censorship, the Church had persecuted those who sought out an "alternate way of being". Both scenes describe the sense of helplessness and horror at being persecuted for reading the forbidden texts. According to Amanda's experience, "Althus ... represented the story of persecution for seeking ancient wisdom". When he had been caught reading he felt immense terror as he was "condemned and tortured" by "the (Christian) priests" who "burnt out his eyes as punishment". He felt a sense of injustice as he felt that he was not doing anything wrong and that the punishment was unjustified.

Likewise Alphonse too had been persecuted and tortured. He too had felt a sense of pain, surprise, horror and injustice. He felt that the 'crime' of reading forbidden scrolls did not warrant such brutal punishment. He knew that the hooded monks had previously persecuted others for similar reasons, and felt afraid of them. But he also felt that he was not hurting anyone, and felt disillusioned and sad that his actions had been so harshly viewed by the Church.

Both Alphonse and Althus had experienced a sense of hopelessness and helplessness when they were condemned and persecuted, effectively for disobeying the Church. In this regard, both scenes depict the abusive use of power by the Church of those who dare disobey their laws - to seek independent knowledge was a serious punishable crime.

On the personal level, Amanda's experience of the Alphonse and Althus scenes highlights an important psychological theme, or COEX, in her own life; namely, the suppression of her spiritual

growth, inner wisdom and intuition (gnosis) through fear of being punished or mocked by the men in her life, men that represented the world of domination, suppression, rejection and control. It is suggested that this psychological theme first emerged when Amanda was a little girl growing up in her father's house. Her father represented a male world of rejection. She was afraid of him and his world, and described him as "distanced and unavailable", leaving her with a strong sense of abandonment and loss of "affirmation" of her emerging identity as a little girl. In later teenage years, Amanda experienced her father as a towering, fearful and "domineering patriarchal father" who never supported her developing femininity, sexuality, intuitive nature and spiritual growth. Rather, she grew up in an atmosphere where her developing sense of self and her wisdom (intuition) was never nurtured, honoured nor acknowledged by her father. Instead, she experienced insecurity and uncertainty concerning her sense of femininity which was coupled with a fear of speaking out or expressing her own intuitive wisdom. In order to survive, the young Amanda began to create mechanisms of psychological survival that included becoming silent - withholding her inner knowing. Her voice of intuition was silenced early, and her yearning to seek spiritual insight mocked.

This theme of the suppression of inner knowing (gnosis) and the search for spiritual wisdom recurs repeatedly during Amanda's experience of adult relationships within her two unsuccessful marriages. During these marriages, she felt restricted and inhibited, unable to speak her wisdom for fear of being punished. It is suggested that these marital relationships had dwarfed her own spiritual growth as they became increasingly persecutory and abusive.

Amanda's experience of the Alphonse scene particularly highlights her belief in the existence of "huge ... powerful ... negative forces" or energies that somehow penetrate people and changed them into "controlling and fearful people". It seems that 'the Kundalini energy' that was focused at her brow chakra at the start of the session was related to her insight into the negative forces "which drive people to do terrible things". The brow chakra (cf. Chapter Two), which plays a pivotal role in Amanda's past-life theme of a sacred ritual of spiritual initiation (to be discussed), is located in the centre of the forehead and is related to insight or inner knowing (intuition) that is obtained from beyond the five senses. The brow chakra or 'third eye' is the centre from which personal psychospiritual development occurs. In her experiences, the activated brow chakra had opened her awareness to these negative energies that entered other people and caused them to prevent her from

speaking her wisdom or what she could "see intuitively".

In this regard, the archetypal scenes embody her personal experiences of being persecuted for seeking spiritual wisdom and for her inner-knowing. She had experienced fear in situations where she knew it would have been wise to speak her wisdom but had withheld or drawn back. After the Alphonse scene had ended, Amanda had the sense that her life's work now was to "get above these forces", to go beyond the patterns of fear and abuse and liberate herself into an empowered person, in touch with her intuitive nature and spiritual power.

These two past-life scenes are metaphors for Amanda's struggle to overcome her experiences of being a victim. The persecutory stories of Alphonse and Althus were a warning to her to find ways of empowering and safe-guarding herself from being persecuted, from being a victim. Below is a recorded conversation during session one (Alphonse) which highlights this reclamation of her power:

T: So you've been a victim?

A: Mmm, in this life too. It's finished now.

T: What's finished?

A: Being a victim, being helpless.

T: Just say that: I'm finished with being a victim.

A: I'm finished with being a victim.

...

T: Can you picture Alphonse in his cell?

A: Mmm.

T: Say the same.

A: I've finished with being a victim (breathes deeply).

Amanda had decided to no longer identify as being a victim, she was now finished with being helpless and powerless, and in which her wisdom was thwarted and controlled by men in power. The past-life scenes call into question her past experiences of being controlled and 'imprisoned' as Alphonse had been by the Church.

However, on the archetypal level, beyond these personal concerns and conflicts that make up her personal life story, these past-life scenes become a vehicle for working out the planet's history of suppression of ancient healing wisdom and practice as documented by Metzner (1990) in Chapter Three. This feminine, intuitive spirituality that she feels and knows, a spirituality that has possibilities for the recovery of this Western twentieth century spiritually-alienated culture, was crushed and moulded to form an acceptable identity to fit both her father's dominating, brash, harsh and cold world, and the mocking, insensitive, abusive and unloving world of her marriages, both of which disconnected her from this deeper spiritual wisdom which was buried deep within her, and unaffirmed and unlived. Unable to connect with this spiritual source and wisdom, she was lost in a sea of pain and victimhood, as well as being alienated existentially, interpersonally and spiritually. In this context, this is not only the little girl trying to find her father's love and affirmation for her developing spirituality. It is also her sense of persecution in both her marriages. It seems as if it is an ancient Feminine wisdom, rooted in the wisdom of gnosis, withering and dying before the dominating power of patriarchy, embodied in the culture of Christian mythology and ideology that spans centuries.

6.7 THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL-HERMENEUTIC EXPLICATION OF THE PAST-LIFE SCENE OF ARMAND

Details of the past-life scene of Armand (session one) are found in Chapter Five (cf. 5.3.2).

The past-life scene of Armand depicts the theme of the ritual sacrifice of a child by religious leaders, called the druids. The druids instilled fear into the village community that lived on the sea cliffs. The ritual of sacrifice (cf. Chapter Three) in this scene was, however, used by the druids not as a sacrifice to honour the unity of life but rather to maintain a position of power and control over the individuals within the community. The image of Armand sacrificed to the sea gods is the image of a collective fear of nature's unknown uncontrollable forces. This is discussed below.

As indicated in the previous chapter, the past-life scene depicts a story of an ancient community in which a terrified and resisting young boy, called Armand, is forcibly sacrificed to the angry sea gods "to stop the storms". The people had experienced wild storms, believing that the sea gods were angry with them and had sent these storms. This scene portrays the anxiety of the people, and their fear and superstitiousness of the darker side of nature with its wild and threatening storms. These same fearful people were led by druids who had spiritual power and embodied a belief that the sea gods needed to have a child sacrificed in order to obtain the mercy and the goodwill of these angry sea gods. In this light, the druids demanded and initiated a ritual enactment that incarnated a spiritual belief in the necessity of offering the sea gods a sacrifice, an atonement, so that the community as a whole may survive. The sacrifice can be interpreted as a way of trying to control the unpredictable forces within nature - represented by the angry sea gods.

By perpetuating the ritual of sacrifice, however, the druids enjoyed the high status of political and social authority, which was endorsed by their religion. Through ritual they maintained their abusive power and authority over the community, which was fearful of, and victim to, both the power of the sea gods and the druids. The people were too afraid of the druids, caught up by a fear that was so great that it prevented them from rescuing and protecting the terrified Armand. Perpetuating the belief in the need to appease the sea gods was the way in which the druids could "maintain their control over everyone, keep everyone in fear ... Those leaders kept their power by doing that, by making other people fearful. Just perpetuating that whole cycle of power, and then fear, and then power and then it goes on and on."

Armand struggled to free himself but the ropes that bound him were too strong and he realised that he was powerless to control what was happening to him. He felt alone and defenceless. It is suggested that this image of the struggling and fearful child is a metaphor for the collective struggle and fear of a community burdened and disempowered by a spiritual system of oppression and forced child sacrifice. It is an image of fearful spirituality from which no one seemed to be able to escape, and all unwillingly submitted to. The image of Armand also represents the helplessness in the face of the darker side of spirituality. It is an image that informs one of the fears within spirituality of that which is beyond control (the storms).

An aspect of this past-life image is Amanda's own recognition of the darker, fear-based side of

spirituality. This experience of the fear within spirituality foreshadows an image in one of Amanda's clay sculptures made 15 months later. This clay image depicted two figures lying fearfully prostrate before an imposing image of a god. She had felt in awe of the god but her reverence contained a sense of timid submission to the force of the god. There was a sense that spirituality invoked a fearful respect for the unknown and the unyielding, and the uncompromising forces of nature beyond mere human control.

During this session, Amanda had a sense that now is the time to "break this pattern" of spiritual fear and the abusive use of power. She felt that she was part of a process of emerging into a "new consciousness" which was inviting her to examine her assumptions about herself, her beliefs and her world. In this regard, the scene of Armand connected her again to a sense that she has been a victim and a powerless person, but that now is the time to move away from being a victim.

A: I'm finished with being a victim.

T: Just look back at Armand, lying on the rocks, and say that: I've finished with being a victim.

A: I've finished with being a victim.

Another aspect of this past-life experience of Armand (also depicted in the past-life scene of Althus) was the facilitation of her understanding that part of her inner healing and spiritual emergence is a process of choosing to let go of limiting personal identities - "I've finished with being a victim" - and finding an identity based on empowerment, not fear.

It seems that Amanda's experience of the scene of Armand not only connected her to her sense of personal disempowerment and victimhood, but also to a sense of the collective experience of the abuse of power. She felt that the only way to overcome this collective abusive use of power was to develop and engage in a "new consciousness" which she felt is the integration of the Feminine into human consciousness. She felt that through this new consciousness there would be a "breaking of the pattern" of the abusive use of power.

As described in Chapter Three, the emergence and sustainment of patriarchy caused an imbalance of the Feminine and Masculine in the collective psyche. As a consequence, within patriarchy, the

Feminine consciousness, and all that it represents, is denied power. Through the experience of Armand and the opening of her brow chakra in this session, Amanda felt that the lost Feminine was returning again - and creating a new consciousness. This experience suggests that this swallowed or lost Feminine is now seeking ways to re-emerge or reawaken (cf. Chapter Three). Amanda's sense was that healing of the abusive use of power, illustrated by the druids, was through the restoration and integration of the Feminine in that the Feminine consciousness would bring a more balanced whole to a consciousness presently rooted only in the Masculine consciousness.

As indicated in Chapter Three, if human consciousness is to consummate a synchronised whole between the Masculine and Feminine - two essential ways of experiencing life - the Feminine consciousness must no longer be repressed from human consciousness. In this respect, it is suggested that the restoration of the Feminine consciousness is a return to a balanced human consciousness rather than an emergence of a new consciousness.

6.8 THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL-HERMENEUTIC EXPLICATION OF THE PAST-LIFE SCENE OF MARTA

The next past-life scene of Marta, with its theme of abandonment and loss of love, activated Amanda's awakening to the Feminine and depicts not only Amanda's personal individual story of pain, loss and yet healing, empowerment and spiritual emergence, but chronicles the historical trajectory of the struggle and dilemma of women within intimate relationships in patriarchal society. This is discussed below.

Details of the past-life scene of Marta (session six) are found in Chapter Five (cf. 5.3.7).

As indicated earlier, this section has a format or layout which is different from the previous sections in this chapter. Four hermeneutic keys are used rather than one to elucidate the meaning of the past-life. Each is documented separately before being employed to deepen the appreciation of the underlying personal and archetypal dimensions that the scene of Marta reveals. The hermeneutic lenses or keys are; the COEX system, the transference phenomenon in psychotherapy,

the inner child, and the previously documented historical process of the disempowerment of women and the Feminine within patriarchy.

6.8.1 The COEX system

The first hermeneutic key used to deepen the understanding of this scene is the COEX system. It was documented in Chapter One that the COEX system is a dynamic constellation of memories and associated fantasy material from different periods of a person's life. The common denominator is a powerful and intense emotional charge of the same quality. Each COEX has a psychological theme that characterises it, for example, a single COEX constellation may contain major memories of events that were humiliating or terrifying (Grof, 1990).

At first Grof (1990) believed that the roots of COEX systems primarily governed aspects of the psyche related only to the personal unconscious. However, he later realised that these roots reached back and penetrate into and dynamically interconnect both the perinatal level and the transpersonal realms of the unconscious. In this respect, a past-life scene of an individual may express a COEX that may also manifest in the personal life of that individual. In other words, biographical COEX constellations may manifest as past-life experiences.

As a reminder, COEX systems affect our emotional life and the way in which we view the world and others, as well as how we view ourselves. "There is a constant interplay between the COEX system of our inner world and the events in the external world" (Grof, 1990, p. 25). External events to us can trigger corresponding COEX systems within one. However, COEX systems can also shape the way we view the world, and through these views we act in ways that bring about situations in the external world that echo patterns in our COEX systems.

6.8.2 The phenomenological-hermeneutic explication

Within the framework of the COEX system, the past-life scene of Marta expresses a powerful COEX of abandonment and loss of love which re-emerges in Amanda's biographical COEX of

abandonment, betrayal and the loss of love. In this respect, Amanda said, "the experience of Marta had left me feeling in touch with my own pain and sense of sadness and loss". Throughout Amanda's life she had been overwhelmed by a sense of abandonment and loss of love. Marta had been desperate for Emilion, her lover and the father of her baby, to stay with her, to support her, and be a father to her child. She looked to Emilion to fulfil her desires for a relationship and for sexual union. When he had left she felt betrayed, helpless, rejected and alone. She was deeply in love with him. She had cried out, "I love you. I want you to come back (sobs deeply). I want you to come back and be a father to my child (sobs deeply) ... Emilion, I want you to come back ... I love you so much (sobs deeply)".

As a child, Amanda had felt abandoned by her mother and had distressing memories of being pushed off to boarding school where she felt alone, vulnerable and had experienced a sense of loss of her mother's love and protection. In later years, she felt the loss of love of both parents, and was often a lonely young girl. This COEX of abandonment and loss of love was again painfully experienced in her teenage relationship with Anthony. With him she experienced a youthful sexual awakening and passion unknown before. It was a beautiful and loving relationship in which she felt deeply in love and in which she encountered an intimacy and intensity that initiated her into womanhood. But Anthony left and the relationship ended leaving Amanda with a deep sense of loss of love and disappointment.

In Amanda's relationship with Richard, which took place in her later years as an adult woman, this COEX of abandonment and loss of love was again activated and experienced. This relationship was initially "very passionate, very affirming and very meaningful" (cf. Chapter Five). She experienced a depth of love that was similar in intensity to the young love with Anthony. She wanted Richard to remain in her life and to be a partner, but he too abandoned her, returning to his wife and family. She felt overwhelmed by loss of love, rejection and grief. She had been hoping that the relationship with Richard would last. In this relationship, she had searched not only for a lover but for a spiritual connection with him. She believed that Richard embodied the spirituality and sense of vitality which she found attractive.

Furthermore, in both of her marriages the same COEX system of rejection, betrayal and loss was enacted. In each of these sexual relationships Amanda had been disappointed and disillusioned, and

she had experienced a sense of failure as well as being alienated from the power and dignity of her repressed Feminine wisdom and intuition. All she wanted was to be loved and "contained" within a relationship. But this yearning to be loved had become dislodged and frustrated in a series of abandoning sexual relationships that had repeatedly left her feeling emotionally deprived, despondent and lonely. Like Marta, Amanda yearned to be loved and taken care of. In session four, this yearning for love was openly expressed in her tormented words; "I just want to be loved and to be held, and to be close to another human body ... It's so lonely ... so lonely (sobs)".

In each of her adult relationships with men, Amanda had wanted them to stay, to support her, and love her. When they left she felt unable to cope, just as Marta had felt vulnerable, insecure and desperate when Emilion did not stay with her. For both Marta and Amanda, there was an overwhelming sense of inadequate support.

It seems that within the past-life scene of Marta the COEX of abandonment and loss of love was enacted again and again in her personal life.

6.8.3 The transference phenomenon in psychotherapy

The second hermeneutic key is the notion of the transference phenomenon in psychotherapy. Although there has been much debate on this subject, documented below are only the main principles of the transference phenomenon within psychoanalytic and existential approaches of psychotherapy.

Due to the intimate nature of psychotherapy, the phenomenon of transference is inevitable, although, as Freud discovered, not restricted to the therapeutic relationship (Bollas, 1987; Singer, 1987; Wrye, 1994). Within the psychoanalytic school of psychotherapy, Freud (1915) observed that patients' significant long-standing childhood wishes, fantasies and expectations not only surface in consciousness but become attached (transferred) to the analyst. Freud understood that the transference process is the reenactment within a therapeutic relationship of a persistent childhood conflict, is an opportunity for the analyst to intervene directly in the patient's neurotic structure and to restructure the early personality through insight and 'working through' of this in vivo primal conflict. Freud felt that his patients recreated within the process of psychotherapy an exact equivalent of the conflict that had brought them into treatment in the first place. In this context,

transference represented both a resistance to remembering the old conflict and a golden opportunity to confront it in a current variation (Liechty, 1995; Wolstein, 1954). Freud therefore concentrated on the transference itself in order to discover what it was that the original conflict was all about (Phillips, 1980). Thus, transference within psychoanalysis was encouraged as its analysis formed an important part of the therapeutic process. In this light, the transference became a playground in which the patient's neurotic impulses could express themselves without any interference from the analyst (Phillips, 1980). Implicit in this is the notion that the neurotic impulses and conflicts are unconscious. However, in Freud's evaluation of the therapeutic relationship, he recognised the contrast between the transference relationship and the real relationship between patient and analyst, and he recommended that any real relationship should be sacrificed in the service of the therapeutic work with the transference (Erskine & Moursund, 1988; Jones, 1993; Phillips, 1980).

Some schools of psychotherapy, for example, existential psychotherapy, have developed in reaction to psychoanalysis. Developments within existential psychotherapy, which have mostly drawn their intellectual framework, directly and indirectly, from Husserl and Heidegger, have tended to react to the limiting classical psychoanalytic idea of transference. In contrast to their search for the disguised, unconscious infantile complex, the existential approach, with its phenomenological underpinnings, attempts an unbiased presuppositionless grasp of the patient's subjective phenomenal world (Ellenberger, 1958; Phillips, 1980).

Although the phenomenological existential approach has been criticised for limiting itself to the investigation of the subjective world of the patient, it views the transference relationship as an 'encounter' or 'meeting' between two equal people. The first and primary meaning of encounter when applied to the therapeutic relationship is that the latter is a real relationship between two people and not just an artificial relationship between patient and transference figure, as in classical psychoanalysis. The psychotherapy relationship is understood as one kind of human relationship which is different from, but no less real than, other relationships. If this encounter is approached as one in which one individual makes himself present to another, then the doctor-patient relationship must be understood as that particular relationship in which the doctor and patient each 'announces his or her presence to the other' (Phillips, 1980). In this respect, transference is viewed as a kind of encounter with a person in a real present, that is to say, a present which thoroughly temporalises itself out of the past and also completely carries in itself the possibility of the future

(Phillips, 1980, p. 139).

Another aspect of this relationship is that it is inherently healing. This is based on the experience that it is healing to share one's problems with someone who will listen, is where genuine conversation takes place there is already therapy and healing. However, more significantly, the relationship is healing in that the patient is offered a new perspective, a new way of relating or being-in-the-world (Yalom, 1980; Phillips, 1980). This notion of the relationship as healing is not vastly different from the psychoanalytic relationship. These two types of relationship are both healing, but the existential therapeutic relationship achieves this healing through the open encounter between two people, while the psychoanalytic therapist will present less of him or herself, remaining detached, reflective and distant as a real person (Ehrenberg, 1992).

Within the existential school of psychotherapy, the encounter between the therapist and the client is not just a repetition of earlier, unresolved, infantile, conflictual relationships as it is in classical psychoanalysis. Rather, it is an original meeting in which new ways of being-in-the-world are opened up for the patient (Boss, 1963; Yalom, 1980). Thus, transference phenomena in psychotherapy are the real feelings (as not just the unconscious infantile conflicts) of patients for their therapists in the present in which therapists try to allow the unfolding of their patients own being by being-in-the-world with them (Phillips, 1980; Singer, 1987).

The most striking difference between the two schools of psychotherapy is what has been described as the 'real' quality of the relationship of the one and the 'artificial' quality of the other. In the extreme, this distinction pits the cold, mirror-like analyst, evoking memories and fantasies from the patient's infantile past, against the intensely involved existential therapist, engaging completely with the client in the present (Phillips, 1980; Yalom, 1980).

However, the distinction between the two is not as extreme as may initially be assumed, particularly given the early psychoanalytic modifications. For example, Sullivan (1947), in his work with schizophrenic patients, felt that the interpretation of transference was made secondary in order to make real contact with the patient. However, while the interest in the real relationship was stimulated by work with schizophrenics, this interest also extended into working with neurotics. It has become clear that psychoanalysts see the need for acknowledgement of a real, non-transference

dimension within the therapeutic relationship in all analytic work (Phillips, 1980; Singer, 1987).

It is this psychoanalytic modification that has begun to dissolve several of the differences between the psychoanalytic approach to the therapeutic relationship and the existential approach. Both view the necessity of valuing transference-free reactions and experiences between the analyst and patient. However, psychoanalysis still continues to encourage work with the transference relationship - this has not changed - for in fostering it there is the aim also to resolve it. This can only be achieved successfully if the non-transference aspects of the relationship are acknowledged (Bollas, 1987; Erskine & Moursand, 1988; Wrye, 1994).

In summary, the psychoanalytic approach to the transference phenomenon in psychotherapy is to encourage its development in the service of infantile conflict resolution. Psychoanalysis has continued to foster the development of transference. However, it has also recognised and accepted non-transference responses in the therapeutic relationship - thus setting itself up to acknowledge that there may be a real relationship, beyond the transference dynamic, between analyst and patient. In contrast, the existential approach has traditionally viewed the transference phenomenon as an encounter or meeting between two equal people. Moreover, transference is not ignored, nor is it encouraged. In this respect, past-life therapy is similar to the existential school or approach. Past-life therapists recognise and accept that clients may bring into the therapeutic relationship a history. However, this does not necessarily become the focus of the relationship.

Within past-life therapy, the transference relationship may be one arena in which the COEX system is expressed and enacted. Moreover, the transference relationship itself may be mirrored in the past-life scene. This is argued below.

6.8.4 The phenomenological-hermeneutic explication

The COEX of abandonment and loss of love that is found in the past-life scene of Marta, and intimately linked to Amanda's personal history of abandonment, is played out in the therapeutic relationship. In this context, the transference relationship dramatises the past-life scene.

Amanda had put her yearnings for a loving relationship on the person of the therapist (as is evident in session two and five as well as indicated in some of her sessions during the latter part of the previous year of psychotherapy). Somehow, after years of disillusionment and loss, Amanda had taken a risk to love again, to open her heart to John (the therapist) who seemed to fulfil her expectations and longings. It was a risky thing to do for she was alone, vulnerable and wanting to be in relationship with John. Amanda felt that she and John had a "deep bond" between them and that they had been "lovers in a past-life". She remarked that he had "symbolically fathered a child, a child which for me was the embryo of my love, which I had hoped would germinate and give birth to a relationship with him".

Amanda was deeply in love with John, just as Marta was deeply in love with Emilion. Moreover, Amanda identified the past-life character of Emilion as John. Amanda's symbolic pregnancy - the fruition of their relationship - was a source of hope for her, a hope that John would become involved with her, and be a part of her life. But when John rejected her desires, she felt a deep abandonment, even though John still continued to work with her in psychotherapy. Likewise, Marta found herself pregnant with Emilion's baby, and also hoped that he would return to her, be a part of her future and help raise the child. Marta experienced a painful rejection and sense of deep abandonment and loss when Emilion did not return and become involved in a relationship with her.

Not only was Emilion no longer a part of Marta's life, but he left the country to return to his own land and people. He did not know she was pregnant. This part of the scene is also echoed in the transference relationship. Amanda's sense of loss of love of John was intensified when she realised he was about to leave the country for a period of three months which felt like a lifetime to her. Her feelings of rejection, betrayal and heartache deepened when she felt that John did not fully understand how much she loved him. She did not want him to leave her not knowing that she felt "pregnant with love for him". The birth process of Marta is a symbol of an important development in Amanda's psychotherapy process. Amanda felt that something big was about to happen, something new was about to begin. In session seven she said that she felt that "things have become quite a lot more powerful", and she felt as if there was "a movement into new (psychological) territory". However, John was not going to be there to see this 'birth', just as Emilion was not going to be there to see Marta giving birth.

Related to this was the fact that Marta had felt abandoned by Emilion when she was most vulnerable - about to give birth. She felt that he should have been there for her, to support her and help her cope with the drama of birth and to participate in raising the child - a product of their relationship. Likewise, Amanda felt that John was abandoning her when she most needed him. She was feeling vulnerable, uncontained and insecure, and felt that he should be there to help her deal with what was emerging as a result of their (therapeutic) relationship.

Moreover, Marta's birth process was traumatic. There was a dramatic struggle and intense physical pain in which she felt her body being opened up - "slit open". She was launched into a powerful (birth) process which was risky and yet transforming. However, the birth experience becomes a greater struggle for her when she realises that Emilion is not there for her. Yet, despite her absent lover and the conditions of deprivation and pain, Marta does endure and proceeds to give birth. Marta's birth process is a metaphor for Amanda's psychotherapy process. With its immense pain, difficulty, her sense of abandonment by John, and grief, Amanda also proceeds to give birth - to experience her psyche as being 'slit open' and to find within herself, despite the loss of John as a lover, a strength and endurance to face all the accumulated wounding, grief and despair.

Furthermore, Emilion was a spiritual man who taught "the understanding of the gods and goddesses" and "spiritual practices of the temple", and was admired by Marta because of this. Likewise, John was perceived by Amanda to be a deeply spiritual man and she had hoped for a spiritual connection with him as well as sexual love. This echoes the relationship she wanted with Richard. But John was just as abandoning, unavailable and remote to her as a sexual, loving partner as Emilion had been with Marta.

As Amanda begins to get into touch with her own sense of loss and grief, she begins to recover a hidden dimension within herself that is whole and complete and not dependent on a relationship (with a man). This process of recovery is depicted in the two images of a child and in Marta's baby which represent the psychological notion of the inner child. This is documented below.

6.8.5 The notion of the inner child

individual begins to accommodate the external demands of the environment. According to Jung (1963), abandonment is what initially defines the inner child in that 'child' itself means something evolving towards independence. In this context, this cannot take place without detaching itself from its earliest origins; abandonment is therefore a necessary condition for life. The experience of abandonment - actual, emotional, psychological or spiritual - becomes an initiation into life.

Abrams (1990) writes that it is thus a positive event because it sets the individual on the journey of individuation and discovery. Abandonment thus requires an acceptance of the human predicament of loss, the internalisation of this loss in the form of the inner abandoned child, as well as a call to face separateness, and to become aware of the self as apart from others. From this perspective, the challenge of abandonment is to accept the experience of orphanage and to acknowledge that one is ultimately alone, which, according to Hillman (1990), means taking responsibility for nurturing the inner abandoned child.

The inner abandoned child is closely related to the wounded inner child in that they are both developed through the recognition of the harshness of the external world which has the potential to rob the spontaneous, vital child of an openness and creativity toward the world. Childhood injuries such as sexual, emotional and physical abuse and neglect form the wounded child within the adult. Such an adult longs for love, acceptance, safety and understanding.

Rediscovery of this wounded inner child is often painful because it returns to consciousness the memories of these childhood wounds and injuries. Since woundings most often take place in the family, the reconnection to the wounded inner child often means facing the parents who abused and neglected. As with the abandoned inner child, the wounded inner child is healed through facing the fearful and injured self. It also means learning to understand parents' pain, failure and frustration because, as Abrams (1990) has stated, we have internalised these damaged parents as well. In this context, the wounded inner child represents the emergent symbol for this compassionate awareness.

Both the abandoned and wounded child metaphorically represents a wound to the Self, and the need to heal and transform this wound. The healing of the Self is often accompanied by the image of the inner divine child.

The appearance of the inner divine child symbolises a promise of renewal, rebirth, recovery,

transformation and spiritual fulfilment (Jung, 1958; Metzner, 1986). In this context, the emergence of the divine inner child is a manifestation of the Self, causing a restructuring of the personality to accommodate an expanded comprehension of meaning (Abrams, 1990), an integration that embraces the fullness of human potentiality (Whitfield, 1987). The inner child, therefore, represents the transformation of the individual and thus the leaving of the old familiar way and a step into claiming the new or forgotten. Singer (1990b, p. 49) states it in this way, "the archetype of the divine child tends to appear in advance of a transformation in the psyche". She describes one of the motifs of the inner child as fundamentally concerned with transformation, so that it will describe a process of individuation and spiritual awakening. In this context, the image suggests future developments which are still embryonic in the psyche but which have the potential for growth and change. Implicit in this perspective is the notion that part of this process of transformation is the reclaiming or recovery of lost or denied aspects of the soul, or the giving birth to a new part of the soul.

6.8.6 The phenomenological-hermeneutic explication

The concept of the inner child is used as a hermeneutic lens to deepen the understanding of Amanda's three images of a child; the first image of a child appeared in a dream and was stillborn, while the second image of the same child emerged in her meditation as alive, and the third child is Marta's baby.

Singer (1990b) posits that the archetype of the divine child tends to appear 'in advance of a transformation in the psyche'. In this context, it is hypothesised that the two images of a child and Marta's baby signify the advent and the emergence of something new, unknown or unaffirmed, something about to be born (into consciousness). As indicated in the session, Amanda felt that her psychotherapy process had reached a level where "things had become quite a lot more powerful" and she felt that she was now somehow moving into something new, into "new territory". At this time, her numerous art drawings depicted several babies and foetuses. It is as if these images of babies in her drawings represented her sense that something was about to happen. Twenty months later, these images of babies disappeared, to be replaced by a figure of a fully developed woman which Amanda called Anita (to be described later). In addition, two months before the start of her

entire psychotherapy process at the beginning of 1991, Amanda had made collages of babies and foetuses, again perhaps indicating that there was going to be something born in her, a hint of some new transformation within her psyche.

In this regard, this transformation into something new - new territory - seems to be closely related to the Feminine - its awakening and re-emergence. This aspect is discussed later; however, it is evident from her biographical history and her psychotherapy process that up until this session she had lost touch with her sense of wholeness and feminine vitality. She had felt incapable and incomplete as a woman - "I always thought that I was worthless and inadequate as a woman". Disconnected from her feminine sensibilities, she had initially thought that her sense of worth and feminine power was dependent on a relationship with a spiritual man like John. This aspect of her process is represented by the first image of the inner child - symbol of a possible transformation and awakening - being born dead. In this context, the death according to Amanda's interpretation, was "the loss of love and potential relationship with John". It is suggested that it is as if this stillborn child represents the loss of an awakening and a possibility, and thus the arrest of a development of the recovery of the lost and forgotten dimension of her psyche.

Moreover, a further development in the process of her transformation towards Feminine wholeness is that she not only discovers that this process may be potentiated by a spiritual man like John or Richard, but she learns that it need not be. In this context, she discovers that the route to her deep Feminine wholeness is not through a relationship with a man. This next phase of the process is represented by the second image of the same baby which is discovered to be alive. In this image, there has been a transformation - a baby dead is now found to be alive. It has recovered. In this context it is the lost potential or primal possibility that has been reawakened. This alive child represents and anticipates rebirth/renewal into something not quite in conscious existence and with promise of becoming. At this point in the psychotherapy process, Amanda is able to surrender to the loss of love of John and the potential for a relationship with him, and still continue to stay in touch with this process of awakening to a deeper whole Self. This is evident in that at the end of this session she says that she can "let go" of John, and still have the capacity to love and hold on to a sense of her own value as a woman.

This inner process of transformation - of moving towards a place of empowerment and healing - is

risky, precarious, and powerful. It is a process of birth - of a new dimension of herself, of reclaiming a lost and unaffirmed feminine dignity and wisdom. This part of the process is represented by Marta's baby which again expresses the emergence of something new in her psyche; it contains the seeds for, and possibility of, future transformation. As a poetic reality, this newborn baby (of Marta's) comes into being in difficult and uncertain circumstances, highlighting the demanding and risky aspects of the process of psychospiritual development.

In this context, the birth of Marta's baby symbolises the process of individuation, of becoming what she truly is. This is evident in the appearance, first noted by Edwards (1994) twenty months after this session, of Amanda's archetypal figure of a woman called Anita. Anita emerged in the form of an image and took root in her drawings and collages. Anita is an empowered woman in touch with her deep Feminine beyond the needs and desires of the external world. Marta's baby, as well as the other alive baby of her vision, perhaps foreshadows the emergence of Anita - a fully grown, empowered woman in touch with her Feminine power and no longer infantile, needy, dependent and powerless. In this context, Anita represents a part of Amanda's psyche that has achieved a deeper level of integration and Feminine wholeness, a recovery of her lost Feminine power and sense of worth. I shall return to Anita shortly.

6.8.7 The disempowerment of women and the Feminine within patriarchy

The fourth hermeneutic key is the recurring concept of the disempowerment of women and the Feminine within patriarchy (cf. Chapter Three). Feminist writers have documented that within patriarchy, male power is institutionalised as the legitimate 'power over' women and children. In other words, women within patriarchy are denied equal power to that of men. Not only are women denied equal power, but their lives are often regulated and governed by men. Women are thus relegated to positions of stereotypical subservience.

In addition, feminist writers have documented that women, because of their historically subservient position to men within patriarchy, have been repeatedly forced to depend on men. Related to this notion, some women have mistakenly identified their self-value and worth as being dependent on a man, preferably within a patriarchal marriage. This notion holds that in order to cope in

patriarchal society, women have had to deny their Feminine power and identify with the Masculine consciousness (cf. Chapter Three).

The disempowerment of women is linked to the disempowerment of the Feminine (cf. Chapter Three). The emergence of patriarchy and the desecration of the old Goddess cultures as described in Chapter Three, resulted in the systematic domination, abuse and repression of the Feminine consciousness, symbolised as the Goddess. Patriarchy, embedded in the cultural and historical identity with the Masculine consciousness, reduced the status of the Feminine - relegating it to the underworld of human consciousness. All that the Feminine consciousness had stood for was demeaned and interpreted by patriarchy as inferior and, at times, evil. In keeping with this ideological transformation and oppression of the Feminine, patriarchal culture viewed women as inferior, since women were forced to culturally embody the male notion of what was feminine.

Transpersonal feminist writers articulate the notion that the Feminine is now re-emerging in all her wholeness and completeness. She is emerging in both men and women, and brings to human consciousness a completeness that has been absent since the emergence of patriarchy. For women, this experience often initiates an awakening to their inner sense of power, wisdom and wholeness.

6.8.8 The phenomenological-hermeneutic explication

Amanda's past-life image of Marta depicts the historical process of the patriarchal cultural moulding and shaping of women's lives and the dilemma of women who are positioned as dependent upon a man.

In this regard, the Marta scene tells the story of how a young pregnant woman, alienated from her Feminine power and spiritual wisdom, becomes a needy and dependent women. She thought she could not cope alone without Emilion, and part of her distress was about having to face a future without him, a future seemingly empty and bleak. Her sense of dependency on and longing for him deepened when he abandoned her. She became desperate and wanted him to return - "I want you back". Without a connection to her Feminine wholeness, she was lost and searching for a rootedness within a relationship with him.

The theme of the alienation from the Feminine is enacted again and again in other past-life scenes in her psychotherapy process. In research conducted by Edwards (1991b) on Amanda's psychotherapy process in June 1991, nine months before the emergence of the Marta scene, there was a past-life scene of a woman called Rosamund, who, in order to cope, had to manage her dead husband's farming business and become like he was. In so doing, she was completely alienated from her Feminine wisdom and power.

Amanda too was alienated from her own sense of Feminine wholeness. This is evident in the fact that during her lifetime of aborted relationships with men she still adhered to the belief that her self-value was rooted in a relationship with a man. She had embraced the belief that 'I am only worthy as a person if I am in a relationship with a man'. This marks the depths of her disempowerment as a woman and her estrangement from the Feminine.

Both Amanda and Marta were faced with a dilemma. While being positioned as dependent upon a man, and needing a man, they would continue to be disconnected from the Feminine. When abandoned, there is a painful and desperate sense of loss, they don't know what to do or how to cope without a man. The future is empty and lonely, and all their desperation wells up as they continue to hope for a relationship to bring them a sense of security, stability and worth. But the abandonment by these men is in itself a healing process and the start of the reclamation of the lost Feminine. As Amanda faces abandonment by John, she begins slowly to recover a sense of her wholeness. Alone she begins slowly to reach within herself to find a sense of completeness and self-worth that is not grounded within a relationship with a man. This is evident at the end of the session when she discovers that she is valuable as a woman. Related to this process of empowerment is the scene where Marta, abandoned by Emilion, survives a birth process that is traumatic but one in which she does find strength and endures and gives birth. She accomplishes this transformative process without Emilion.

In this respect, on the archetypal level, women, such as Amanda and Marta, have had to live within patriarchal culture which has limited them to positions of dependency, and where they have been forced to conform to a culture that has institutionalised their survival and self-value as being rooted within a relationship with a man. Thus their own Feminine wisdom and power have been thwarted and denied.

Within the context of transpersonal feminist writings, the Feminine has begun to emerge in ordinary people like Amanda. As Amanda realises that her own sense of worth and value as a woman is completely independent of an external relationship with a man, she starts to awaken and recover the Feminine within her. She begins to get in touch with her deeper nature and knowing, with the source of her wisdom and wholeness.

In conclusion, as the memory of Marta's own bereavement and despair was relived, Amanda was able to let go of her own neediness and dependency on a man, and with it, the accumulated pain and disillusionment around lost love and possibilities. She was also able, through the empowering process of confronting her own abandonment and loss of love, to confront her deeply-held pain and reach within to find a sense of worthiness and empowerment in the centre of her despair; power within that was no longer dependent on a relationship of love, or on the loss of a part of her Feminine self and power in order to cope, as illustrated by the Rosamund image. She was able to begin the process of reclaiming her spiritual dignity, moving towards greater wholeness and completeness. In this regard, Marta demanded that Amanda access inner resources of healing by assimilating these hurts, woundings and lost potentials - 'unexperienced experiences' (Browne, 1990) (cf. Chapter Two) - in such a way that these hurts were no longer hungry demons, affecting her life and repeatedly drawing her back again and again into devouring, abusive and abandoning relationships. In this respect, Marta is the image of a spiritual emergence from victimhood, loss and despair to one of coping (without a man) and enduring a painful 'body-slitting' but transformative birth process despite the hardships and loss. It is an image that facilitated the start of a spiritual initiation for Amanda into the inner process of the start of the awakening of her Feminine power and wholeness. In this light, Marta also embodies the collective awakening and re-emergence of the Feminine, as described in the transpersonal feminist literature. As a woman moving towards the embodiment of Anita, she echoes the collective transition of moving from a consciousness 'without the Goddess' (as described in Chapter Three), to the re-emergence of the repressed Feminine and a balance within the human collective unconscious.

However, this awakening and recovery of the Feminine is an ongoing life process. Once in touch with the Feminine sensibilities Amanda must continue to work with its wisdom and power. Initially, after this session and even for some years after the termination of her psychotherapy, she still yearned for a relationship with John. This may be understood as Amanda's initial struggle to

completely trust and fully identify with her inner Feminine wholeness, and so she continued searching for an intimate relationship with John. However, as the passage of time passed, she gradually discovered that she could 'let go' of the need for a relationship with John and still remain in touch with her sense of completeness, to embrace a fuller and deeper dimension of the Feminine.

6.9 AMANDA'S PAST-LIFE SCENES AS CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROCESS OF SPIRITUAL EMERGENCE

As a reminder, the concept of spiritual emergence refers to an intensive evolutionary or developmental process of profound psychological transformation where individuals experience "a shift from an identity centred in the personal self, personal history and personal motivations" (Edwards, 1991b, p. 2) toward a more "expanded way of being ... (and) an increasing awareness of the spiritual dimension in one's life" (Grof & Grof, 1990, p. 34).

In order to work systematically with the material, these two past-life scenes have been thematised according to their content; the theme of a sacred ritual of spiritual initiation.

6.9.1 Images of a sacred ritual of spiritual initiation

The conceptual framework of spiritual emergence and the related process of initiation and empowerment (cf. Chapter Two) are employed to understand the past-life scenes of Mila and Darion. These scenes, like the other past-life scenes, are archetypal images that relate to the wider historical narrative of humanity and its unfolding spiritual and cultural process.

These images of Mila and Darion can be understood within the conceptual framework of a lost or repressed spirituality (ancient wisdom) or gnosis (Metzner, 1990, 1993; Pagels, 1979; Singer, 1991), as presented in Chapter Three.

Moreover, these images are viewed as the emergence of the particular ancient healing wisdom as practised during the Asclepian tradition and documented by Achterberg (1985), Houston (1987) and

Kerenyi (1960). Such a tradition, rooted in the Greek myth of Asclepius during the Golden Age of Greek culture around 900 BC, routinely participated in sacred healing ceremonies in temples called Asclepias, ceremonies which were wiped out by the latter Judeo-Christian traditions and religious mythologies (Metzner, 1990).

Some of the principles of the Asclepian healing process seem to be similar to some of these found in many experiential psychotherapy techniques today which involved the use of art, music, dance, drama, purifying baths, induction of nonordinary states of consciousness, communion with archetypal realities, healing through dreams and visions, and bodywork or massage. These methods and techniques were approached and used as sacred technologies which brought about not only physical health and well-being but also spiritual healing.

As a reminder, the past-life scenes of Mila and Darion depict the theme of a sacred ritual of spiritual initiation. The reader is referred to the documentation of the Kundalini awakening and the chakra centres (cf. Chapters Two and Five) as they pertain to the images of Mila and Darion.

6.10 THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL-HERMENEUTIC EXPLICATION OF THE PAST-LIFE SCENES OF MILA AND DARION

Details of the past-life scene of Mila (session three, cf. 5.3.4) and details of the past-life scene of Darion (session four, cf. 5.3.5) are found in Chapter Five.

On the personal level these two past-life scenes form part of a series of past-life scenes that initiated Amanda into a spiritual wisdom and intuition - "I see Mila and Darion as stories that invite me to get in touch with my own intuitions again". In this regard, the past-life scenes are fundamentally concerned with Amanda's reclamation of a "lost spiritual part" of herself, a "spiritual opening" and healing awareness into her own sense of self and strength. Through the opening of the third eye, they demanded from her a deepening awareness of the spiritual dimension within. Until this point in her process, she had been overwhelmed by a lifetime of humiliation, abuse, and abandonment, and was completely alienated from her spiritual source and power. In this respect, her experience concurs with the ancient Eastern notion that the brow chakra, once activated by the Kundalini

energy, is important in spiritual development of individuals as it opens up an inner dimension that is concerned with transformation and spiritual empowerment (Brennan, 1993; Bruyere, 1994; Crawford, 1990; Grof & Grof, 1990; Mookerjee, 1989; Sannella, 1987, 1989; Talbot, 1991).

In addition, it will also be shown that on the archetypal level these past-life scenes are the recovery of an ancient vision of a particular form of embodied spirituality that included a knowledge of sacred technologies that was supported and affirmed by the community, but which, within the emergence of Christian patriarchy, hardly existed, and when it did, it existed only in restricted and surreptitious forms. In other words, both these images portray an extraordinary ritual of spiritual initiation and empowerment which is alien to twentieth century Western culture.

These past-life scenes are the matrix out of which Amanda is drawn into a process of spiritual awakening and healing. As previously described, Mila and Darion were both part of a ceremony that catapulted them into a process of transformation. At the core of this ritual of initiation is the spiritual knowledge and power of the priests and priestesses who knew about certain sacred technologies, and how to direct, use and control them in such a way that Darion and Mila were recipients of spiritual energies and forces from outside of their body. The 'third eye' or brow chakra of Mila and Darion was painfully activated by this powerful energy force. These spiritual energies seemed to have initiated them into a powerful experience that overwhelmed them both. Darion felt as if his head would split open and he felt anxious and uncertain. At one point during the initiation he became unconscious, such was the power and force of these energies. Mila too anxiously experienced immense physical pain and often cried out in agony. But it was not experienced as a torture, rather as a powerful sacred process which had the intention of initiation into a deepening spiritual wisdom and empowerment.

It is suggested that the images enact an ancient spirituality (gnosis), and age-old healing arts and practices that are hardly known today but which openly functioned during the Asclepiad tradition (Achterberg, 1985; Houston, 1987; Kerényi, 1960). As mentioned, this ancient Greek tradition involved spiritual practices in temples (Asclepias) which used sacred technologies such as, for example, music, dance, art, active imagination, dreams, non-ordinary states of consciousness and bodywork.

Part of this extraordinary initiation ceremony in a temple involved other unusual and supportive rituals. Mila's head was washed with water carried in large bowls with flower petals floating in it. She was then anointed with oils. All of this was done in an atmosphere of sacred sounds of chanting, and caring verbal instructions from the priestesses of how to cope with the experience. Feeling sensitive and vulnerable, Mila was given a mark on her forehead which was a mark of acceptance into the spiritual community. This was another unusual aspect of the ceremony that denoted communal recognition and approval of the spiritual process and of Mila as an initiate.

On the personal level, Amanda's experience of these two past-life scenes - that portray the Kundalini energy's metaphoric opening and activation of the third eye - seem ultimately to be concerned with her psychological healing and spiritual empowerment. Her transformation was, like Mila and Darion, rooted in the experience of the Kundalini energy. In this regard, the images of Mila and Darion both activated the unusual spiritual forces or energies in Amanda. She too, like Mila and Darion, experienced the power and force of the Kundalini energy enter her body and activate a whole spectrum of emotional and physical experiences. As the Kundalini energy penetrated her brow and heart chakra, she was pulled into a deep transformational process that opened up the experience of healing, and a reconnection to a forgotten encounter with an ancient part of herself that was once lost, unspoken and unaffirmed.

As her heart chakra was activated by the sacred energy, she was launched into the painful and traumatic process of confronting her years of repressed painful memories of sexual wounding and grief which had left her feeling degraded, powerless and inadequate. Yet, she bravely faced her pain as she experienced in this session other images of being ripped apart and exposed, and of being in a "bottomless pit of endless pain and anguish". In so doing, she found healing.

As a reminder, the heart chakra, as a metaphor, is described as the transitional or transformational centre which relates to the transforming of a situation of emotional pain into a situation of healing. In this light, Amanda not only experienced a release of repressed biographical memories, but she also experienced a transition from a situation of emotional sexual grief to a situation of healing - "I found that the experiences of the Kundalini energy ... healed ... the sexual wounding in this life ... the sense that I was a helpless victim. I had lost my own sense of self, my own inner strength". She reconnected to her power, and her lifetime of hurts and sense of helplessness shifted to a sense

of wholeness and strength.

After the session in which the Darion scene appeared, Amanda experienced "huge amounts of Kundalini energy" which felt to her "like huge streams of energy" that was experienced as washing out or cleansing and purifying her pain around these specific sexual memories. A similar experience occurred after the Mila scene and the unblocking of painful memories: Amanda experienced channels of healing energy pouring into her heart, absolving and purging the emotional pain, and leaving her with a sense of well-being and peace.

Moreover, Amanda experienced a psychospiritual awakening that involved a deepening awareness of both her value as a spiritual woman with power, and her belief in spirituality as an important component in her life - "I learnt that as a woman I am valuable, that I have power, and that my spirituality is important to me ... I am a woman, and Mila reminds me of my own spiritual power as a woman". In this context, both past-life scenes represent a powerful archetypal process of accessing spiritual wisdom, knowledge and insight - "Mila and Darion represent a huge spiritual opening and growth". Darion was forced to stand in a certain place and exposed to the energy forces, while Mila's head was pressed down by the priestess which activated the brow chakra and the process of initiation into a deepening spiritual wisdom. It is suggested that the experience of Mila and Darion initiated her into her own process of, and access to, a spiritual dimension within. The experience of the initiation of Mila and Darion allowed Amanda to encounter her own spiritual power.

The "remembering of a lost spiritual part" of herself was the culmination of the emergence and reliving of biographical memories of victimhood, abuse, degradation and deep sexual grief. It seems that these memories were activated by the spiritual force of the Kundalini energy; the healing of which was a process of purification, and a testimony to a courageous spirit. Such images showed how her pain was embedded in the collective story that reach back into a history of the human struggle to find wholeness, meaning and spiritual connection within a patriarchal society governed by values of domination, separation and oppression, and in which sacred technologies and sacred rituals of initiation were not fully honoured and part of the culture.

Twenty months after these scenes, Edwards (1994) noted the appearance in Amanda's (Marian's)

therapy process of an archetypal figure of a woman called Anita. Anita has been mentioned earlier. In addition to what was described concerning her, "Anita is a priestess, a woman of great dignity and power who oversees a temple in which ancient healing arts are practised". This figure of Anita was interpreted by Amanda as a figure of empowerment, who called her "from a life overwhelmed by pain and victimhood, to a role of powerful effective leadership". Anita also played a role in the purification process because in "her temple all pain can be faced, all wounds can be tended and healed" (p. 8).

However, at this stage in her therapy process she experienced repeated past-life scenes of powerlessness, such as those of Angelique, Armand, Althus and Marta. At this time, Amanda was alienated from the power and dignity of Anita. It is suggested that it was impossible for Amanda to claim her own power, but the experience of Mila and Darion was the beginning of the reclamation of her power as represented by Anita. Anita is the final story of a more powerful reclamation of Amanda's inner wisdom, healing and dignity as a woman, unlike Rosamund who never finds her inner resources.

This personal healing of her sexual wounds and the reclamation of her spiritual power, through the activation of the sacred encounter of the Kundalini energy, draws attention to the intimate relationship between spirituality and sexuality. The image of Darion and Mila, and the painful process of the awakening into a spiritual dimension of life, had given Amanda access to inner resources that assisted her in facing all the trauma of the desacralisation of her sexuality. In her abusive sexual relationships, sex had been dislodged from its spiritual source and reduced to an experience of pain and powerlessness.

As indicated earlier, the repeated desecration of her sexual body and sexual being, which resulted in the alienation from her spiritual wisdom and feminine power, as illustrated in the past-life scene of Angelique, is a testimony to the patriarchal idea that spirit(uality) can be separated from the body/sexuality. In this respect, spirituality was once rooted in the wisdom of the body; the body was spiritualised. As described by Metzner (1990, 1993) in Chapter Three, the emergence of patriarchy saw a split in consciousness between the Masculine and the Feminine, and there was a subsequent process of splitting spirit from nature. When this split occurred, the body became a source of evil that needed to be transcended and its impulses subdued. The body was no longer

understood as a source of spirituality; spirituality was no longer viewed as embodied. There was a gradual alienation from the body/sexuality from spirituality and spiritual experience. On the archetypal level, Mila and Darion are metaphoric images that seem to represent a time when spirit was not split from the body. These images tell of an ancient time when spirituality was embedded in the physical body, and the body was the source of wisdom. Mila and Darion's bodies were understood to house a deeper knowing or spiritual insight. They were initiated through the body into a spiritual awakening and power. Although the experience of the opening of the brow chakra or third eye in both past-life scenes was experienced by Amanda as intensely physically painful, evoking feelings of fear, uncertainty and distress, Amanda had the sense that it was a necessary part of the process of spiritual initiation and awakening. She knew she had to endure the pain in order to have the third eye opened - to "open up that understanding, to open up that (third) eye".

Moreover, and perhaps more poignantly, these past-life scenes of an ancient ritual of spiritual awakening and empowerment represent a vision of positive and strong community support, affirmation and validation for this ancient spirituality and spiritual practice. Both Mila and Darion were supported through an intensely physically painful process by their respective initiators. The conditions for their spiritual initiation and transformation were far less deprived than Marta's. Darion was assisted by priests and given "special things to build up his strength", while Mila was lovingly supported by chanting priestesses. Nowadays there is little community support for a spirituality of this kind and that is not part of the dominant patriarchal ideology. This community support also contrasts with the scenes of Alphonse and Althus in that there was no support or encouragement for them but rather punishment and oppression for any other form of spirituality.

Furthermore, these images are archetypal images of an ancient cultural organisation in which spiritual practices involved both male and female initiators who were equal participants. As a reminder, during the early historical periods in which the Feminine aspect of the Divine was still honoured, spirituality and spiritual practice were not restricted to the Feminine consciousness (priestesses and women) but equally available to men. Darion was a man being initiated and transformed by men. He was in a sacred process that was male-centred and male-controlled but which had a deeply spiritual goal. These past-life scenes of Mila and Darion are concerned with a belief that both the Feminine and Masculine, and thus men and women alike, were once initiators of spiritual power and transformation. Spirituality, and its practice, was not the realm of the

Feminine and women only. Spirituality concerned both the Masculine and Feminine consciousness, and the male and female connection to a sacred spiritual wisdom and knowledge, grounded in the body. Whether or not these scenes are a literal remembering of a prehistoric spirituality, it is as if a spiritual knowledge and practice is (re) emerging from the personal and collective unconscious of ordinary people such as Amanda. In this regard, the images are visions of a lost and unaffirmed spirituality in which both the Masculine and Feminine equally participated.

In addition, it seems that Amanda's experiences of the sacred ritual of spiritual initiation of Mila and Darion activated not only her personal painful biographical memories of sexual abuse and degradation but the collective unconscious of the archetypal experience of women's pain and wounding. In this respect, it is evident that the legacy of sexual abuse and other forms of abuse is deeply imprinted on the collective psyche of women. This level of the psyche describes the historical predicament of women, and the historical forces that shape and transform a women's life in the latter part of the twentieth century. Amanda's pain and humiliation is captured in the story of women's pain. This is remarkably portrayed when Amanda, through her own suffering as a woman, identified with all "women's pain and anguish". She remarked that "it wasn't a specific scene or a specific memory. It just felt universal and ancient". This phenomenon of identification of women occurred again in session seven (Alma) where Amanda identified with the pain of all women and felt that, to repeat her words, "this abuse and victimisation and oppression of women had been going on for centuries". In the same session, as the past-life character, Alma, lay on her back in the desert with a peg through her body, she too identified with other women's pain. She had images of suffering women, "women beaten, abused, tortured, raped and murdered in all ages, in all life times". These transpersonal archetypal experiences of identification with 'women's pain and anguish', especially with regard to their sexuality, document the story of how many women have been used as vehicles for male sexual pleasure and as a means of expressing and ritualising men's (sexual) power over these women.

Several years later in mid-1995, having had time to integrate and make sense of her psychotherapy process, Amanda stated:

Every step that I have taken seems to be a step towards my own healing process and growth while at the same time being part of a greater planetary healing and

transformation process ... the cleansing and purification ... the experiencing of deep pain and grief ... the balancing of Masculine and Feminine energies within myself, have been part of my own journey, while at the same time contributing towards an emerging and radical change in the way we all exist on the planet (Edwards, 1995, p. 15).

Amanda's spiritual awakening and healing that is embedded in these past-life scenes of Mila and Darion also represent the archetypal journey of the collective planetary healing process. From this point of view, Amanda's experience of these two scenes is a vision of a return and renewal of the power, wisdom and beauty of ancient spiritual practices, and a spirituality that is embodied in a vision that remembers a more holistic spirituality that preceded the split of nature/body from spirit. The images are representations of the spiritual possibilities latent within the human psyche, and envision an alternate way of being that looks forward to the future possibility of the historical and cultural healing of this split.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

As indicated in Chapter Three, one of the principle assumptions put forward by transpersonal feminist writers is that within patriarchal cultural history, the Feminine consciousness is no longer complementary and equal to the Masculine, but rather is repressed and relegated to the shadow/underground world of the collective and personal psyche. There, it has been stripped of its power, and forced into submission to the Masculine consciousness. Women, who then embodied the limited patriarchal perception of the Feminine, began to be systematically disempowered, dominated and abused.

For millennia, women who have lived within a patriarchal system of domination and Feminine disempowerment, have nevertheless attempted to find their collective voice and express their (grief and rage and) needs for equality, and the collective recognition of their wisdom and intuition. Within Western cultures, the emergence of contemporary feminism is rooted in this attempt. However, it is the more spiritualised discourse of transpersonal feminism that has a new vision and a new voice, not necessarily a feminine voice but rather a collective voice. This new vision is concerned with the swallowed Feminine consciousness which, it is suggested, is now seeking to re-emerge in all her wholeness and completeness, and with this emergence, women (and men) are engaging in transformative processes and activities that serve as a channel for this re-emergence. Women such as Amanda.

Questions asked in Chapter Three such as; can women find healing and affirmation in an encounter with the depths of their psyches through the medium of past-life experience? Does this healing extend to women who have been exposed to a culture that for the most part dismisses their story? Can past-life experiences in therapy bring about a reclamation of inner power and a spiritual awakening for women, despite the current discriminatory practise against women (and the Feminine) within patriarchal societies?

Amanda's story gives some of the answers.

Based on the eight psychotherapy sessions that comprise the case material for this research, Amanda's psychotherapy process tells the story of great courage, pain, abandonment, sexual grief and loss. Yet, it is also a story of healing and an initiation into a profound spiritual awakening, empowerment and transformation; a confrontation with the depths of her own soul. The experience of past-life images and scenes collectively resulted in an initiation and healing transformation which included the fostering of a deepening journey of spiritual awakening and the recovery of lost or forgotten aspects of her psyche.

The process of transformation and healing, facilitated by a series of past-life scenes, called Amanda to authentically face and confront a lifetime of abuse, abandonment and disempowerment as a woman, some of her memories and COEXs echoed within the past-life story. These past-life scenes together weave a profound story that articulates a deep unconscious reality - the search for healing and spiritual wholeness in this late twentieth century Western world largely deprived of, and alienated from, symbolic, mythological and spiritual significance. When the past-life scenes and images are explicated, the overwhelming sense that one is left with is the power of the unconscious to heal, to initiate an individual spirit into a transformation and spiritual emergence in which deep wounds are acknowledged and healed. There is a bringing together of the alienated aspects of the psyche into an empowering whole, rooted within a dynamic spiritual core that seeks recovery, renewal and integration.

Edwards (1994, p. 5) states that Marian's (Amanda's) therapy address some questions. This research supports two of the questions which are as follows:

- (a) "How to find wholeness and completeness in oneself in the face of the painful matrix of emotions that arise in the process of forming intimate relationships with lovers, parents ... and then losing those connections through bereavement, abandonment, betrayal and the ongoing movement of people's lives".

- (b) "How to find feminine power and dignity after millennia of institutionalised

patriarchy and a legacy of millions of abusive imprints on the collective memory banks of humanity".

In addition, this research suggests that Amanda's psychotherapy process addresses two further questions:

- (c) How to embrace and embody a sacred and wise Feminine part of the self.
- (d) How the Feminine consciousness can be engaged with and lived out, despite the present patriarchal system of Feminine repression.

Question 'c' is highlighted within the past-life scenes of Mila and Darion which reconnected Amanda to a "lost spiritual part" of herself, and initiated a profound "spiritual opening" and healing awareness into her own sense of self, power and strength.

Together with these two scenes, the other past-life scenes were offered up by the unconscious as vehicles of healing and transformation in which Amanda's biographical COEXs were embedded. For example, and as referred to in the previous chapter, in the Marta scene, the COEX of abandonment and unworthiness emerged - "I am only worthy as a person if I am in relationship with a man". However, through an encounter with these past-life scenes and the images of abuse, humiliation and powerlessness, Amanda experienced a transformative shift from an identity based on being a victim and disempowerment, to one of dignity and empowerment as she slowly began to reclaim this Feminine power. Through confronting these beliefs, Amanda shifted towards a position of knowing that such negative COEXs ("As a woman I am the eternal victim") are not necessary, and can be changed.

Amanda's process of healing and transformation is most powerfully articulated in symbolic form, expressed as the archetypal image of Anita. Anita becomes a uniting symbol, bridging the conscious and unconscious, and dramatising the inner shift from victimhood, abuse and powerlessness to healing and wholeness. "Anita is a symbol of healing, empowerment and initiation ... Anita is not merely a spiritual helper. She is like a goddess who embodies the archetype of feminine dignity, power and wholeness" (Edwards, 1994, p. 19). As indicated in

Chapter Six, Anita appeared twenty months after these eight sessions, and, it was suggested that her presence was initially symbolised in the Marta scene as the inner child. This symbolic presence (the inner child) promised a potential future development within the psyche. Thus, through integrating Anita's archetypal energy, Amanda now feels that she has merged with Anita entirely, that Anita is her. In a recent note (February 1997) to the researcher regarding Anita (Appendix B), Amanda wrote:

If I evoked her presence, or was encouraged to do so by the therapist, I felt supported and strengthened.

Initially, Anita seemed an awesome figure. She was so strong, so centred, so wise and all-knowing, or so it seemed to me in my confused and wounded state. Yet, at the same time, her presence was comforting and I felt a deep need to work with her and to find out more about her.

Gradually the essence of what Anita represented seemed to merge with the essence of what I was discovering about myself. As I became stronger and more empowered I drew closer to her, until eventually we became one. At that time I drew a picture of a woman standing on the steps of a healing temple. The woman's shape contained another, smaller woman. In this way I portrayed the uniting of the Anita image with my own inner being.

Thus, as my own process unfolded, the image of Anita ceased to overawe me. I began to understand the depth of her ability to love and to heal; also her skill in teaching and guiding others.

Anita is the end-product of Amanda's shift from being a victim to an empowered woman.

In the light of the above, the research has shown how the past-life stories and images, as healing stories of the unconscious, contribute to the process of personal inner healing and spiritual emergence.

Furthermore, the process of the emergence and development of Amanda's past-life scenes accords with Woolger's (1987, 1993) three stages of past-life work as described in Chapter Three. Woolger traces out a developmental map of the three stages that a client may follow. These are, (a) identification, (b) symbolic and metaphoric exploration, (c) insight leading to creative productivity and service. Based on the case material, each past-life scene involved Amanda strongly identifying with each of past-life characters. She felt as if she had become, for example, Alma or Alphonse. Her experience was one of not only recalling but reliving the past-life scenes. The second stage - the symbolic and metaphoric exploration - was not reached immediately in the same session. Often the symbolic and metaphoric exploration did not occur in the following sessions either, but sometimes only weeks afterwards during her own quiet introspection. The reason for this can only be speculative. It is suggested that the intensive therapy process, with its rapid release of unconscious material in each bodywork session, may not have provided time for this level of integration to occur earlier. Finally, the third stage - insight leading to creative productivity and service - was achieved through a gradual process of a personal re-assessment of her inner world. As a reminder, Woolger (1993, p. 236) asserts that, at this stage "a subtle and almost indescribable movement of the recentering of the personality is experienced". This stage formed the matrix out of which she gave spiritual meaning to her experiences and in which, as documented in the body of this research, she was healed of a dominant COEX of "As a woman I am the eternal victim". It is suggested that the emergence of Anita represents the emergence of this third stage. With the help of Anita it seems that this stage was reached more quickly. Amanda said "It was as if her wisdom and power could assist me in my own healing process". (cf. Appendix B).

7.1 THE WIDER COLLECTIVE STORY OF THE RE-EMERGING FEMININE WITHIN PATRIARCHAL CULTURE

Perhaps more poignantly, some of Amanda's past-life scenes are not just a personal reliving and remembering of abuse and powerlessness, or of a lost and forgotten spirituality and gnosis, but some of these scenes reconnect to the re-emerging archetypal Feminine within patriarchal culture (as question 'd' above refers to).

Transpersonal feminist writers document that the Feminine is re-emerging. Within this discourse,

the trajectory of the historical process of the alienation and repression and yet re-emergence of the Feminine, mythically expressed as the Goddess, is played out in the spiritual journey of Amanda. Jung (1928) warns that nothing in the psyche is lost, and contends that, the contents of the collective unconscious - the archetypes - reveal "truths that belong to no time" (p. 190). In this context, in exploring the archetypal significance of some of the past-life scenes, and the impact they had on Amanda's personal life, these past-life scenes point to a dimension of reality that speaks of a wisdom of the Feminine as not only re-emerging but emerging as an empowered part of human consciousness (as it once was?). Some of the past-life scenes (such as Alma) are embedded in the wider collective story that if human consciousness is again to achieve a balanced whole between the Masculine and Feminine, the Feminine consciousness must no longer be repressed from human consciousness. It must no longer be pushed to the shadowlands of the underworld of the psyche. It must be returned and restored to a position of equality, power and dignity, just as women must again be empowered; their political, social, economic, legal and sexual power reinstated.

However, before the Feminine and women can be completely liberated, there needs to be a collective process of purification and empowerment: A cultural spiritual emergence. In this regard, the abuse and trauma of the Feminine need to be acknowledged and brought into the collective consciousness. The Masculine consciousness, however, and in Amanda's own words (cf. Chapter Five), "should not now be denied and seen as bad", but rather there needs to be a balance between the two. If the restoration and integration of the Feminine into human consciousness continues to emerge, a new vision may be realised that may (as once depicted in the Goddess cultures) honour all life as interconnected, and the Mother planet - Gaia - as the source and sustainment of life.

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APPENDIX A

The case of Bridey Murphy

This case, suggestive of reincarnation was investigated by Wilson (1981). The hypnotist, Bernstein, was an untrained and amateur hypnotist who regressed an American woman called Virginia Tighe in 1952. Bernstein put the suggestion to her that "she was back in a time before she was born". The session had been tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim by Bernstein. In the session Virginia 'recovered a memory' of being in a past-life a four year old Irish girl living in Ireland. In this hypnotic state, Bernstein questioned her and more details emerged. In an Irish brogue she reported the name of her father, Duncan Murphy, mother, Kathleen and herself, Bridey Murphy. She lived outside "the town" of Cork in the area she described as the "Meadows". Bernstein asked her to go forward in time and scan her life. 'Bridey' did so and more details emerged. At fifteen she was schooled by "Mrs Strayne" or "Strange" in "house things and proper things", and at the age of 25 married Sean Brian Joseph MacCarthy, son of a Cork barrister. The couple resided in Belfast, living on a cottage "at the back of Brian's grandmothers house", described as being on "Dooley Road". The couple were childless. "Bridey died in 1864 "as a result of a fall downstairs" and "breaking her hip" (Wilson, 1981, p. 74).

At the time Wilson notes that many people were convinced that this was not fantasy but evidence of the recovery of memories of a past-life. Convincing evidence seemed to be "the consistent Irish brogue, her use of strange Irish words, her wealth of factual information about nineteenth century Ireland, and her totally plausible life histories of ordinary people of the period" (p. 74). In addition, Virginia herself claimed that she had not read any books about Ireland in which she might have obtained the actual information that she produced while under hypnosis. Moreover, she had never visited Ireland.

Wilson claims that because of the ordinary life Bridey lived, the historical verification of her existence was impossible. "There was no way of proving it one or another and anyone, from whatever point of view, could do his own checking and twist the transcripts according to his own interpretation of their validity" (p. 76). Facts that could be checked, according to Wilson, revealed discrepancies. For example, the currency, the tuppence, that Bridey Murphy said she used during

her time was not in use. No evidence was found for the existence of not only Bridey, but her husband and parents, nor was there any record of a Dooley Road in nineteenth century Belfast. Wilson notes "All this could be explained by the absence of records at the time" (p. 77). Other factors which Wilson uses to confirm his idea that Virginia may not have recalled an actual previous life emerged from the biographical details of Virginia. Virginia had an Irish aunt who told her many stories, in her Irish brogue, of Ireland. Virginia was a young adult when she was exposed to these stories in the Irish accent. The implication is that these stories had long been forgotten, but under hypnosis, Virginia imitated the accent to which she had been exposed. The story she told could also possibly have been from this aunt - only to re-emerge as a past-life 'memory'.

A further factor that was brought to the attention of the media and Wilson is that a Mrs Bridie Murphy Corkell from Ireland lived across the street from where Virginia lived as a young girl. Wilson views this as possible 'evidence' that Virginia may have created an image of herself as a Bridey Murphy from Ireland and enacted this imaginative scene in the therapeutic context. This discovery was used to claim that the Bridey Murphy case was a hoax, and the active imagination of Virginia. However, Virginia, at the time of the regression did not know that Mrs Corkell was called Bridie and did not ever speak to her. Again, the fact that she did not know the name of Mrs Corkell or speak to her does not necessarily mean that the past-life story was evidence for fantasy. Nevertheless, it is rather peculiar that a woman living across the street would become a fantasized past-life character of Virginia. There are no explanations as to why Virginia recalled the name Bridy/Bridie when she was acquainted with the woman as Mrs Corkell. In addition, "to this day there seems no evidence for the idea that her maiden name or any part of her name was Murphy" Wilson, 1981, p. 79). This again suggests that there is no convincing evidence that the past-life memory was fantasy or memories from an actual previous existence. Although the existence of Bridey Murphy could not be historically verified, Wilson (1981) suggests that this case may be interpreted as a case for cryptoamnesia.

APPENDIX B

A note from Amanda, dated 24 February 1997, concerning the image of Anita

The background to this note is that in late 1996 Amanda decided to write a book about her therapy process. In early 1997, with this goal in mind, she wrote briefly about Anita. This is recorded here.

If I evoked her presence, or was encouraged to do so by the therapist, I felt supported and strengthened. It was as if her wisdom and power could assist me in my own healing process.

Initially, Anita seemed an awesome figure. She was so strong, so centred, so wise and all-knowing, or so it seemed to me in my confused and wounded state. Yet, at the same time, her presence was comforting and I felt a deep need to work with her and to find out more about her.

Gradually the essence of what Anita represented seemed to merge with the essence of what I was discovering about myself. As I became stronger and more empowered I drew closer to her, until eventually we became one. At that time I drew a picture of a woman standing on the steps of a healing temple. The woman's shape contained another, smaller woman. In this way I portrayed the uniting of the Anita image with my own inner being.

Thus, as my own process unfolded, the image of Anita ceased to overawe me. I began to understand the depth of her ability to love and to heal; also her skill in teaching and guiding others.

