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EDITOR'S NOTE

One of transpersonal psychology's many ongoing tasks is to study the linkages among a wide range of psychospiritual experiences, practices, teachings, and methods.

Addiction, a serious problem globally, is not often linked to positive transcendent experience. In the opening article, however, both are examined in terms of their effects on consciousness. Many controversial issues revolve around consciousness alteration, and Ralph Metzner proposes a number of ways to better understand the many subtle factors involved.

When the founding editor, Anthony Sutich, launched this *Journal* in 1969, psychodynamic theory was generally thought to be unrelated to transpersonal practice. Both orientations have evolved considerably in twenty-five years, and today William Dubin brings them together in the training of psychotherapists.

Another, and perhaps more unusual, linkage is considered by Springs Steele in his application of the multistate paradigm in education (see *JTP* 21, 1) to the spiritual path of the sixteenth-century Carmelite mystic, John of the Cross. John's transformational system is known for its reliance on "emptying" and its "dark night" metaphors. Viewed from a contemporary multistate paradigm, this four-hundred-year-old teaching can also be seen as a specific psychotechnological system.

Among meditators and Eastern spiritual teachers, Western phenomenological methods of research have met with a mixed reception. Among phenomenologists, meditation has offered a tempting but elusive topic for research. Linda E. Patrik examines the prospects for linking the two systems and concludes, with significant reservations, that it is possible. Equally important, she also provides two examples of applied phenomenological method, thereby demonstrating a strength of numerous studies in transpersonal psychology: a willingness to test theory in the crucible of experience.

ADDICTION AND TRANSCENDENCE AS ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Ralph Metzner
Sonoma, California

To an unbiased observer of human nature, it would appear that addictions, compulsions and attachments are a normal and inevitable part of human experience. To this same observer, a visitor from another world perhaps, it would probably also be evident that searching for transcendence, for expanded or heightened states of consciousness, is an equally pervasive and natural human activity. The purposes of this paper are to 1) propose that considering the fixated, repetitive nature of addictions, it is possible to describe them as contracted states of consciousness; and 2) contrast addiction with transcendence, which involves an expansion of consciousness, sometimes to the point of visionary or mystical experience.

What is addiction? The first point I would like to make is that addictions and compulsions (which I regard as the broader, more encompassing term) are exaggerated or pathological expressions of normal and natural human behavior. Most, if not all, people have compulsive and addictive tendencies. When the behavior becomes so habitual as to dominate the individual's life to the detriment of interpersonal and occupational functioning, then we have the clinical diagnosis of addiction or dependency. Millions of people have identified themselves as addicts of one kind or another, and such labelling of compulsion as a condition or "disease" has undoubtedly been helpful and therapeutic for many individuals. However, like all metaphors, the disease metaphor has its limitations, and it has been justifiably criticized by some for encouraging a conception of addiction as a fixed, unchangeable condition. If, on the other hand, we regard clinical addiction as merely the extreme on a continuous spectrum of behavior, then learning to recognize, identify and somehow deal with one's addictive or compulsive tenden-

*addictions
and
compulsions
are
exaggerated
or
pathological
expressions*

cies becomes a normal process of human development, a kind of maturing or growing up.

As an alternative to the disease model, some define addiction as an attitude that seeks for sources of satisfaction exclusively in the external, material world. This is then contrasted with an attitude of psychological-mindedness, or interiority, or spiritual growth, all of which involve directing attention inwardly, to interior states and experiences, away from the external world. This is also a very broad definition, which would also make addiction a normal part of human experience, since an exterior orientation, a focus on the acquisition and consumption of material goods, is widely regarded as a dominant feature of the collective consciousness of Western (if not all) humanity. In the Asian spiritual traditions, including Yoga, Hindu Vedanta and the various schools of Buddhism, "attachment," "craving" or "desire" are seen as root processes of human consciousness, and the primary obstacles to "liberation," "enlightenment" or "self-realization." "The source of suffering is craving," states the second of Buddha's Four Noble Truths, after the first, which asserts the universality and inevitability of suffering.

*many
addicts
crave
a certain
experience,
a state
of
consciousness*

Yet there is a problem with this definition of addiction as a seeking of external objects, because what many addicts crave is a certain experience, a state of consciousness, rather than a material object. The object may just be desired for the sake of the experience it induces. There are forms of compulsive behavior, for example gambling or sexuality, in which the person's attention is clearly focused on the inner experience, or the "rush," and the external "object" is, in a sense, secondary or irrelevant. A further complication is the possibility of becoming addicted to spiritual experiences. The kind of detached, meditative states that are advocated in the spiritual traditions as the antidote to craving and attachment, can themselves become the objects of compulsive pursuit. There are compulsive meditators, who use the quest for spiritual experience to avoid confronting unpleasant aspects of their own external or internal world. Psychedelic drugs which, under favorable circumstances and with the appropriate intention, can produce transcendent, expanded, even mystical states of consciousness, can also become the objects of addictive or compulsive drug-taking behavior. So the contrast between an external, addictive orientation and an interior, spiritual addiction cannot be so sharply drawn as might at first appear.

Some years ago, Andrew Weil, in his book *The Natural Mind* (Weil, 1986), made the point that the drive to alter one's consciousness is a pervasive and natural feature of human consciousness, as can be seen in the predilection children have for activities such as spinning, swinging or turning upside down. This pattern can be seen as well in the sensation-seeking behavior of adults in situa-

tions of extremity or danger, and in the never-ending quest for “rest and relaxation” from the active mode of doing and working, through entertainment, tourism, aesthetic enjoyment, sports and the like. Modulating our consciousness is not only a universal human urge, it appears to be widespread in the animal kingdom as well, as Ronald Siegel has documented in his book, *Intoxication* (Siegel, 1989).

Furthermore, through the twenty-four-hour *circadian* cycle, a regular modulation of states of consciousness between waking, sleeping and dreaming is built into our physiology, from birth to death. In recent years, a second endogenous cycle has been identified by Ernest Rossi (1991) and others: this is the ninety-minute *ultradian* cycle of doing and resting, left-brain and right-brain, sympathetic and parasympathetic activation that puts us, every ninety minutes or so, into a light, hypnotic interior trance, filled with creative imagery and possibilities of self-healing and restoring our energies. States of consciousness are constantly changing. It appears to be of the essence of consciousness that it goes through periodic fluctuations. Consciousness is wavelike, rather than static. When we are asleep, we typically descend through four phases to deep sleep, then ascend again to the lightest state and go through a phase of dreaming accompanied by rapid eye-movement. When we are awake, this also is not a uniform condition: rather, the degree of alertness constantly fluctuates as we oscillate between moments of high arousal and brief “micro-sleeps.” In addition to the multiple regular cycles and periodic fluctuations of consciousness, we are susceptible to a diversity of more or less common or unusual catalysts or triggers of altered states, including drugs, foods, sounds, rhythms, visual stimuli, movement, aesthetic enjoyment, natural scenery, stress, illnesses, injuries, shocks, as well as various practices deliberately designed to alter consciousness, such as breathing exercises, hypnosis, meditation, shamanic practices, religious rituals and the like.

*states
of
consciousness
are
constantly
changing*

Elsewhere (Metzner, 1989) I have pointed out that historically there have been two main metaphors for consciousness, one spatial or topographical, and the other temporal or biographical. The spatial metaphor is expressed in conceptions of consciousness such as a territory, a terrain, or a field, a “state” one can enter into or leave, or as empty space, as in Buddhist psychology. The spatial metaphor, if unconsciously adhered to, would tend to lead to a certain kind of fixity in one’s perception or worldview. It would perhaps lead to a sense of consciousness as “static,” and a craving for stability and persistence. From this point of view, ordinary waking consciousness is the preferred state, and “altered states” are viewed with some anxiety and suspicion—as if an “altered” state is automatically abnormal or pathological. In many ways this is the attitude of mainstream Western thought toward alterations of con-

sciousness. Even the rich diversity of dreamlife and the changed awareness possible with introspection, psychotherapy or meditation is often regarded with suspicion by the dominant, extraverted worldview. For example, it is unlikely that one could become a presidential candidate in the United States if one has ever been in psychotherapy—because it would suggest mental illness or deficiency in health.

The temporal metaphor for consciousness is seen in conceptions such as William James' "stream of thought," or the stream of awareness, or the "flow experience," as well as in developmental theories of consciousness going through various states. Historically and cross-culturally, we see the temporal metaphor emphasized in the thought of the pre-Socratic philosophers, Thales and Heraclitus, in the Buddhist Teachings of impermanence (*anicca*), and in the Taoist emphasis on the flows and eddies of water as the basic patterns of all life. From this point of view, wavelike fluctuations of consciousness are regarded as natural and inevitable, and health, well-being and creativity are linked to one's ability to tune into and utilize the naturally occurring, and the "artificially" induced, modulations of consciousness.

*space
and
time
as
metaphors*

According to Immanuel Kant, "space" and "time" are the *a priori* categories of all thinking. It seems appropriate that these are the two most common metaphors we have come up with in our reflections on consciousness. Perhaps the most balanced way to think about consciousness would be to keep *both* the spatial and the temporal metaphors in mind. We can recognize and identify the structural, persistent features of the perceived world we are "in" at any given moment, *and* we can be aware of the ever-changing, flowing stream of phenomena in which we are immersed. Although Heraclitus is believed to have said, "You can't step twice into the same river," what he actually said was, "When we step into the same river, it is always different water flowing past." This is a statement in accord with the dual perspective I have here suggested.

ADDICTIONS AS CONTRACTED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

A useful book that summarizes and integrates social psychological research on addiction is Stanton Peele's *The Meaning of Addiction* (Peele, 1983). In this book, Peele identifies the main features of what he calls "addictive experience" or "involvement." In other words, this is an analysis in terms of the state of consciousness of the addicted person. Addictive experiences or involvements are defined as "potent modifiers of mood and sensation." When a drug or behavior has the ability to produce an immediate, effective and powerful modification of mood and sensation, then there is the potential for the development of an addictive or compulsive in-

volvement. This definition identifies an addictive experience as a particular variety of altered consciousness. An altered state of consciousness may be defined as a time-limited state in which the patterns of thought, of feeling or mood, of perception and sensation, are altered from the ordinary or baseline condition (Metzner, 1989).

The relative role of genetic, biochemical, sociocultural, personality, and situational factors in the development of addictive involvements is still a matter of considerable controversy. Some believe that genetic, biochemical conditions create a predisposition to becoming addicted, and that personality and situational factors act as triggers or catalysts. Others argue that the addiction is completely learned and that biochemical/genetic factors only predispose the particular choice of the addictive object or behavior. Much more research is obviously needed to sort out the relative contributions of these different contextual factors. In this essay I am focusing on the experience, on the phenomenology of addiction.

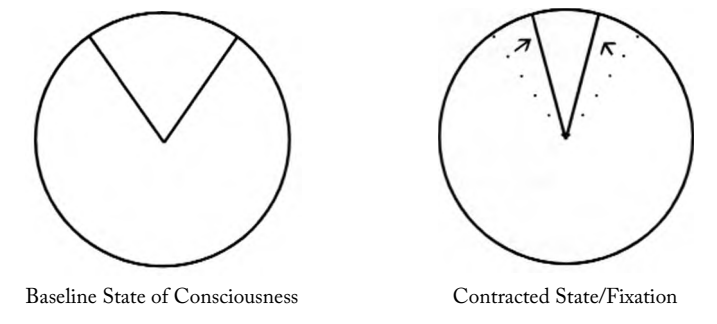
If we examine addictive experience as an altered state of consciousness of a certain kind, we can compare it with other kinds of altered states of consciousness. I propose that addictive experiences, compulsions, and attachments involve a fixation of attention and a narrowing of perceptual focus—in other words, a contracted state of consciousness. This is in contrast to transcendent or ecstatic or mystical states which involve a moment of attention and a widening of perceptual focus—in other words, the classic expanded state of consciousness. “Transcendent” means “above and beyond,” and “ecstasy” is from the term “exstasis”—out of the static condition, out of the usual state of consciousness. Addiction and attachment, on the other hand, involve the opposite direction, as we have seen: fixation, repetition, narrowing and selectivity of attention and awareness.

*contraction
contrasted
with
expansion
of
consciousness*

We may think of consciousness as a spherical field of awareness that surrounds us and moves with us wherever we go. Taking a horizontal plane section of this sphere, we then have a circle of 360°, which we could say is the circle of potential awareness. So, in this model, there is a three hundred and sixty degree circle of potential awareness, of potential focus of attention. (Actually, of course, the sphere has many more than 360 degrees, but the circle will suffice to illustrate the point.) Then, in contracted, fixated states (see Figure 1), attention is selectively focused on only 30°, or 15°, or even 1°—just the object of desire, the craved sensation, the bottle, or the pipe, to the exclusion of other aspects of reality, other segments of the total circle.

The comedian Richard Pryor did a performance about his cocaine addiction, which was filmed and can be seen on video. It is an

FIGURE 1
BASELINE AND CONTRACTED STATES



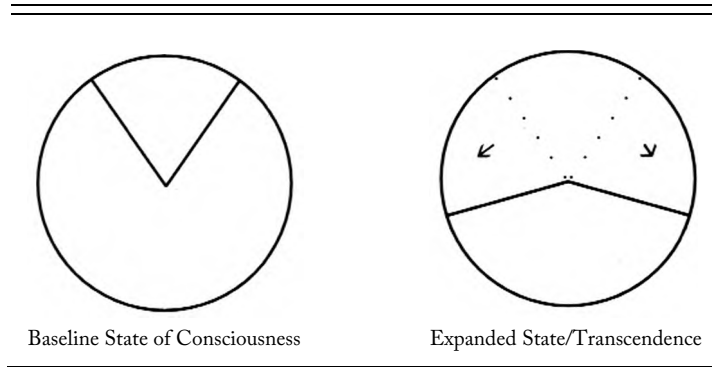
*complete
contraction
and
fixation*

awesome performance, in which he describes living a life-style that became more and more restricted, until he was isolated from all other relationships except the one with his crack pipe, which had become repetitive and ritualistic. He does not work or socialize or communicate with anyone—only the pipe with which he talks, and which tells him: “This is all you need.” One smoke after another, and nothing else matters; nothing else can capture his interest or attention. Awareness and attention are completely contracted and fixated.

By contrast, in terms of the 360° circle of potential awareness, in transcendence and ecstasy, awareness and attention expand (see Figure 2) from the normal or usual “baseline” (which might be 30° or 60°) to a wider arc of 90°, or 120°, or 180°, or even 360°—a fuller range of awareness. A similar step-wise expansion of consciousness takes place every morning when we wake up. Interestingly enough, people who took LSD (a prototypical consciousness-expanding substance) often reported that their range of visual perception had expanded to 360 degrees, so that they felt they could see out of the backs of their heads. Possibly this is a literal interpretation of what is an experience of psychic awareness, or sentience, expanding to a complete, all-around field. We do have the possibility of being aware of what’s happening behind us, of sensing subtle energy currents in our immediate vicinity, not necessarily based on visual perception.

Sentience, awareness, or attention can be thought of as a kind of beam that can be focussed on a very narrow point or band, or can take in much wider arcs and areas of the total circle of potential awareness. This awareness/attention beam changes its focus and range constantly, and narrowing or widening it are obviously normal and natural capacities. In addition, in unusual states of consciousness including addiction and transcendence, a contraction or expansion of awareness may be triggered by external stimuli.

FIGURE 2
BASELINE AND EXPANDED STATES



Another area of human experience in which selective narrowing of attention occurs is in the mother-infant bonding situation. The linguistic affinity of the words “bonding,” “attachment,” and “addiction” already points to their psychological similarity. This was brought home to me in a very vivid way when I was watching my infant daughter and her attachment behavior toward the maternal breast. She would be moving around, gurgling and wiggling her limbs, and then suddenly she would start focusing on the breast. She would start to cry, and all her movements were toward her mother, with her attention completely focused in on the breast. I then lost the ability to distract my daughter or capture her attention. I could no longer say, “Here, look at this,” and have her follow me with eye and hand movements. I suddenly realized that this was the same kind of narrowing of awareness and attention as would occur in a drinker, focusing only on the bottle, or myself focused only on “I want that chocolate cookie, now!” or the junkie, on the drug.

The attachment or addiction process, then, can involve an immediate or very rapid alteration of mood and sensation, including both need satisfaction and anxiety reduction. By focusing awareness and attention on the object or experience we are craving or wanting, awareness ceases to be engaged with other aspects of our experienced reality, particularly pain, fear, or anxiety. There is a genuine need to reduce pain and fear, and this need is immediately and effectively satisfied. There is a narrowed focus, a fixation of attention. Then there is repetition of these steps, and gradually, over time, a kind of ritual may develop.

*alteration
of
mood
and
sensation*

The ritual aspect of addictions and compulsions is very significant. I once worked with a man who had a self-described sexual addiction that involved compulsive viewing of pornography and visits with prostitutes in which he always placed himself in submissive and degrading positions. It was extremely repetitive and ritualistic

behavior—and no other kind of sexual activity had any attraction for him. Even the orgasmic sexual fulfillment seemed to be secondary to the peculiar satisfaction gained from ritualistic repetition.

The ingestion of drugs that produce dependency often seems to become associated with ritualistic behavior, which is compulsively repeated in the same way, over and over. Freud also spoke of a “repetition compulsion” in neuroses. This is true of the narcotic drugs such as opiates, depressants such as barbiturates, psychiatric tranquilizers and antidepressants, and stimulants such as amphetamine and cocaine. Ritualistic ingestion is quite obvious and well-known in the case of the socially sanctioned and commercially promoted addictive substances, including alcohol, tobacco and coffee. In these situations, the ingestion ritual forms part of the advertising message promoting consumption. Ingestion rituals are also evident in the case of food addictions, especially those involving sugar, wheat products and meat. Food ingestion rituals become painfully distorted in the binge and purge behaviors of those with “eating disorders,” who may be, among other things, trying to forcefully control their addictions.

*the
development
of
dependency*

The immediate or very rapid modification of mood and sensation produced by such drugs and foods is one of the factors facilitating the development of dependency. Alcoholics often remark upon the empowerment they feel when their chosen drink first hits the stomach: immediately the anxiety or frustration is lifted, there is an experience of relief from pain, or, in the case of stimulants, relief from the feelings of impotence and inadequacy. The sense of power comes from the immediacy of the change of state. Any unpleasant aftereffects, which may be well-known to the addict, are too far removed in future time to override the immediate feedback.

The power to instantly alter one's state of consciousness, especially to move it from painful to pleasurable or even neutral, may generalize from the physiological drug effect to the ritualistic behavior surrounding it. For the smoker, just pulling out the cigarette and preparing it for lighting may already have some anxiety-reducing effects. Similar considerations apply in the case of the activity addictions, including compulsive sexuality, gambling, shopping or working, where the ritualistic repetition of certain behaviors, in itself, seems to be able to reduce anxiety and change one's consciousness. Being a workaholic in recovery myself, I am aware that by becoming absorbed in routine tasks I could avoid dwelling on other anxiety-provoking aspects of my life. The fact that “working hard” is an essential ingredient of the European and American (especially Protestant) work ethic, and that obvious social rewards are associated with it, does not alter the basic dynamics. When “working hard” is associated with an extreme narrowing and fixation of attention, to the exclusion of other pursuits and interests, it

becomes compulsive “workaholism.” Family and other social relationships may be impaired, and even work productivity and resourcefulness can decline—justifying the diagnosis of addiction.

Similar processes of fixation, attachment and ritualistic repetition can be observed in relationship addiction, or the co-dependency pattern that has now so often been described in the literature on addiction. In a relationship addiction, or compulsive co-dependency, there is a narrowed focus of attention on what the other person thinks or feels or wants or dislikes, to the exclusion and neglect of awareness of what I think or feel or want or dislike. In this way, I can avoid paying attention to what I really need or want, and what the situation might really call for. More and more, the whole focus of the relationship becomes what the other person wants, to the denial of my own interior awareness. If the other person in a relationship is doing the same kind of focusing on the partner, it is easy to see how communication becomes extremely confusing and problematic.

*co-dependent
relationships
and
communication
problems*

Transcendent experiences and expansions of consciousness may also powerfully modify mood and sensation, but in a way that is quite different: the entire range of experience, the continuum of sensation and perception, is extended and made more fluid. Terminal cancer patients, who were given LSD and compared its pain-reducing effect to that of morphine, said that with the psychedelic they still felt the pain, but it wasn’t as painful anymore; and there were many other experiences that also occupied their attention (Grof & Halifax, 1977). Generally, the consciousness-expanding psychedelics have not led to addiction, and narcotics addicts tend not to like them. The effects are too unpredictable, too varied, too subtle and too delayed, to allow the kind of immediate pain- or tension-relief the addict is seeking.

Nevertheless, there is some evidence to suggest that, in rare circumstances, transcendent experiences themselves, whether induced by drugs, or by meditation, or by physical practices such as running, can also become the objects of addiction. If someone is taking psychedelic drugs, such as LSD, or empathogenics, such as MDMA, repetitively, with a similar kind of change of state involved (to the exclusion of other interests, and the eventual neglect of family and other responsibilities) then again there is the classic pattern of addiction and abuse. The pattern has also been observed with some meditators, who may avoid dealing with intrapsychic or interpersonal conflict by constantly and compulsively meditating. Teachers in the Asian spiritual traditions talk about the possibility of spiritual addiction, or “spiritual materialism,” and warn of becoming attached or too fascinated by unusual, ecstatic, or visionary experiences—which are disparaged as “illusions.” The compulsive meditator or user of psychedelics becomes addicted to that tran-

scendent experience itself, so they just want to keep repeating the transcendent experience over and over which, of course, is not possible. There is an inherent self-limiting factor in these kinds of experiences: you can't keep transcending, you have to have something to transcend from. Or, as some have said, the ego first has to build some boundaries, before it can dissolve them in unitive states of consciousness.

TRANSCENDENCE AND DISSOCIATIVE PSEUDO-TRANSCENDENCE.

Transcendent or ecstatic experiences, like the classic accounts of mystical or cosmic consciousness, involve a widening of the focus of attention, an expansion of awareness beyond the boundaries of the ordinary or baseline state. Thus, such experiences involve the opposite of the addictive contractions of consciousness. Awareness and attention, instead of being fixated and narrowed, are extended and widened. It is a process of detachment rather than attachment, of dissolution or loosening rather than fixation. When LSD was first discovered, it was recommended to the psychiatric profession for the purpose of "psychic loosening" (*seelischen Auflockerung*); and LSD-therapy is still known in Europe as "psycholytic" (Grinspoon & Bakalas, 1979).

*contractions
and
expansions
are
normal
and
natural
processes*

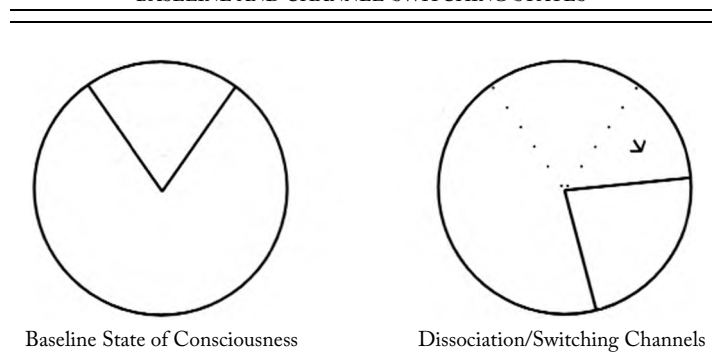
Both contractions and expansions of awareness are normal and natural processes, and we are generally familiar with the phenomenology of such state changes. Psychedelic drug states were originally and aptly described as "consciousness-expanding" experiences. Meditation practices, such as "Transcendental Meditation" (TM), clearly aimed to produce a kind of unitive state of consciousness in which the conflicts and dualisms of ordinary consciousness would be dissolved or transcended. However, on closer examination, this process of transcendence is much more complex. There are at least three different processes related to transcendence that need to be distinguished.

We need to distinguish between true transcendence and a kind of pseudo-transcendence, or dissociation, that could be called—as an analogy—"channel-switching." If you have your focus of attention on some object or event in your exterior or interior world, the analogy would be that it's like looking at a program on a TV channel. One could sharpen the analogy here, by imagining that you have a mini-TV screen strapped to your eyes so that you don't see anything else except that. So the focus or fixation of attention and perception is on the images being presented to you. We might call this the "attachment mode" of perception. If I am depressed, or sad, or watching some exterior event or activity, I am perceptually attached, or focused, or fixated, on that depression, or sadness, or perceived event.

Switching the channel is a kind of transcendence, in the sense that you are no longer watching the program to which you were previously attending. If you are depressed, and you are able to “switch channels” somehow, you would have “gone beyond” the depression. Antidepressant drugs could be considered “channel-switching” drugs; probably most psychiatric mood-altering drugs function in this way. Some forms of psychotherapy, such as the use of affirmations, and some other kinds of interventions or distractions by friends (what the French call *“changer les idées”*), could be understood in this way. You are able to change the focus of your attention, away from the distressing or painful contents that were preoccupying you. What I am calling “channel-switching” here may be quite similar to dissociation, as seen in hypnotic trance states and in certain reactions to trauma. In terms of the model of 360° of total potential awareness, channel-switching (see Figure 3) involves directing attention at another segment of the circle: from one 60° arc to a different 60° arc. But this would not involve an expansion of consciousness, merely an alteration. To say this is not to deny the possible therapeutic value of such redirection of attention.

*“channel-switching”
and
alteration
of
consciousness*

FIGURE 3
BASELINE AND CHANNEL-SWITCHING STATES



The effect of the psychoactive, mood-altering drugs can, I believe, best be understood in terms of this channel-switching analogy. They are consciousness-altering, whereas the psychedelic drugs are truly consciousness-expanding. Alcohol, for example, just switches your channel of attention and awareness. It doesn’t expand your awareness or perception. It switches the focus of your attention, so that, for example, instead of feeling tense or anxious, you may feel relaxed and euphoric—at least for a while, until the depressant effect spreads to more and more aspects of cognitive and sensory-motor function. The same is true of other depressant drugs: they shift the focus of attention from anxiety to relaxation. Because they bring about this change of mood-state effectively and rapidly,

we learn that we can “escape” painful inner states and a fixation-addiction can easily develop.

The stimulant drugs, including cocaine, the amphetamines, and also nicotine, trigger a shift of the focus of attention, without an expansion of awareness. With these drugs there is often a switch from feelings of powerlessness, inadequacy and impotence, to feelings of powerfulness, competence and sexual arousal. The so-called cocaine “rush,” or the amphetamine “speed” feeling is the feeling of being “on top of the world,” full of competence and power, immediately after ingestion. A personal story may illustrate this phenomenon. Years ago, when I was in my twenties, I was once driving across the country with two friends, and we were taking turns driving, day and night. One night I took an amphetamine pill in anticipation of my late night driving shift. Then our car broke down, and we had to camp out in a field, to wait for mechanical assistance in the morning. Of course, I was sleepless all night, my eyes wide open, my mind racing. I fantasized myself doing all manner of grandiose projects, and actually felt some of the exhilaration of accomplishment followed, of course, by deflation in the cold, grey light of dawn.

*stimulants
and
the
sense
of
powerlessness
and
helplessness*

I have often wondered whether the pervasive and spreading attraction of cocaine and other stimulants, as well as of nicotine, a comparatively mild stimulant, is not in some way a reflection of the increasing sense of powerlessness and helplessness that so many people feel, in our fragmented society, marked by profound social inequities and dislocations. Perhaps, too, there is a personality or temperament difference between those who are drawn to the depressants to escape anxiety in a passive manner, and those who are drawn to the stimulants, and the activity addictions, for switching to a state of feeling powerful and competent.

Rage addiction (in German called *Tobsucht*) or compulsive violence, which is often, though not always, associated with sexual aggression and abuse, may also be understood as a learned, fixated response to early and repeated feelings of inadequacy and powerlessness. Assaultive and destructive behavior temporarily switches the perpetrator’s attention and awareness away from painful feelings of inadequacy and impotence, and fear of even deeper helplessness. Having once learned a “way out” of extraordinarily painful feeling-states, the road to addiction and compulsive repetition is easily followed.

I would like to quote here from a fascinating article on “The Ritualization of Hatred and Violence in Racism,” by Maya Nadig, psychoanalyst and Professor of European Ethnology at the University of Bremen, in which she analyzes the psychological attitude of the neo-Nazi skinheads. She writes:

The emphasized potency in the paramilitary dress and gear allows the young men to defend against feelings of threatened manliness. . . . The culture of violence is sought in an addictive manner, in order to overcome feelings of paralysis, powerlessness and emptiness. . . . The jointly organized episodes of brutality afford a kind of “rush” experience, in which external boundaries and interior insecurities are dissolved. The perpetrators experience themselves as omnipotent and just, and representing a cleansing energy that restores order” (Nadig, 1993).

The addictions to shopping and gambling may develop because these activities momentarily shift attention away from feelings of worthlessness, where a great deal of identity and self-esteem are tied up with how many material possessions one owns or how much money one has to spend. Shopping may give one the momentary illusion of an increase in possessions and greater self-worth based on spending. The advertising media know this “consumer complex” and play on it to maximal effect, as one can readily observe in any suburban shopping mall, where the powerful, constantly repeated subliminal message is: “Buying is good,” “You are good and beautiful when you buy.” The compulsive gamblers, likewise, can toy with the illusion, and the possibility, of suddenly winning large sums. Having material possessions, or even being close to the possibility of monetary wealth, can give feelings of worth, prosperity and social esteem.

The process I describe as “channel-switching,” a pseudo-transcendent method of altering one’s consciousness, may also be involved in what is popularly referred to as “head-tripping.” This is the kind of compulsive intellectualizing that has also been characterized as a “thinking addiction.” Here again I can readily identify one of my own addictive tendencies. In early adolescence I learned that I could switch my attention and awareness from the painful feelings that tended to be localized in my heart or abdominal regions, to the head: I could think, read books, write, talk and get social and interpersonal rewards for cognitive activity. If I am “tripping” in my head, in the realm of thoughts and ideas, I can avoid really feeling and learning from my emotions and bodily sensations. For many, this is the easiest form of escape, the easiest and least noticed form of addictive fixation. Psychoanalysis calls it the defense mechanism of intellectualizing or rationalizing. Perhaps because the head is spatially located above the rest of the body, the notion of transcending or climbing above, by directing attention to thought-processes in the head, comes easily to mind.

*compulsive
intellectualizing*

Channel-switching is probably also an appropriate analogy to use in describing spiritual addiction, or compulsive meditation practice. I once had a client who was a former practitioner of TM. She was quite nervous and anxious, except when she was meditating, which was twice a day for twenty minutes. In TM, one concentrates

on a specific, selected mantra—and the mind can exclude nearly all other thoughts. While she was meditating, she was not anxious; when she was not meditating, she was anxious. So it was a shift in focus, in attention, a channel-switching, not a true transcendence, not an expansion of consciousness.

*transcendent
states
and
"the
bigger
picture"*

For true transcendence, with consciousness expansion, the analogy would be that you still watch the images on TV, but you step back from it, or remove the screen from your face, and you also see what is around you in the room, and through the window, outside the house. You can still perceive the TV images, but you realize that it is a TV, with this and other programs, and there's a great deal else going on as well, within you and in the space around you. The transcendent state includes the former narrower focus of attention and more. You get the bigger picture, as it were, the context—the awareness that there's a whole world out there, and that you have a choice as to where to direct your attention. You're not switching away from the prior focus, but expanding awareness: perhaps from a 30° arc to 90° or 180°, which would include the former 30°. True transcendence dissolves fixations and expands contracted forms of perception. "The doors of perception are cleansed," as William Blake put it, and which is also the phrase that Aldous Huxley used as the title for his book on his mescaline experiences.

Mindfulness meditation (*Vipassana*) can produce true transcendence, because in mindfulness meditation, you don't try to hold concentration on some chosen object or subject. You simply observe and note the continuous stream of sensations, feelings and thoughts. Whatever comes up, you just note it. You just observe it. You don't go away from it, you don't try to leave it, you don't try to concentrate on something else. You also don't analyze or interpret it, as you would in psychotherapy. Just let it come up, and let it pass away. Thoughts arise and pass. All aspects of experience are included; none are excluded. That's why mindfulness meditation produces a gradual transcendence, a gradual, progressive detachment and disidentification, that can include the former contents of consciousness, as well as elements of a larger whole.

In the addiction-recovery movement, as exemplified in the writings of John Bradshaw, and other teachers, as well as in the basic Twelve Step teaching, tremendous importance is given to acknowledging and validating the horrible and painful experiences that one has had: the pain, shame, guilt, grief, loneliness, abandonment, abuse, humiliation, despair and so on. This acknowledging of the pain and shame is seen as essential to freeing oneself from the addiction. We can understand this from the point of view of the process of true transcendence, where everything is included (as compared to channel-switching, as usually occurs in the addictions, where we try to run away from confronting the demons).

A final distinction that can be made is between transcendence, as “going beyond,” and transformation as “becoming different.” Transcendence is an altered state of consciousness that is always temporary; this includes all mystical experiences, expansions of consciousness and ecstasies. Transformations are lasting changes in the structures and functions of consciousness—of mind, of emotions, of perceptions, of identity, self-image, and so on. You could shift your awareness, or even expand your awareness, but the underlying pattern that got you into that state of consciousness in the first place is still the same. To bring about transformations in the underlying personality structures may involve psychotherapeutic or process work, i.e., going into the deeper layers of the body-mind system and actually undoing the *samskaras*, the karmic pattern that caused you to go into that kind of behavior in the first place.

William James (1901), in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, posed the question about the difference between these two as follows: he asked if a “conversion experience,” which was his term for transcendent experience, would necessarily lead to “saintliness,” i.e., better, more moral, more humane behavior. His conclusion: not necessarily. It would depend a great deal on what the personality was like before the experience, and whether changes in behavior and life-style were appropriate. For someone who is already more or less doing their life’s work, a mystical or ecstatic experience might only confirm them in knowing their path, rather than radically change their behavior.

*transcendent
experience
and
moral,
humane
behavior*

The spiritual traditions throughout the world all recognize transcendence experiences of some kind, and many of the spiritual practices are known to bring about heightened states of perception, such as clairvoyance, precognition and telepathy. In yoga these are called *siddhis*—“powers”—but the traditions universally tend to warn against seeking or wanting them too much. They warn: don’t be too eager to have these visions; they are only illusions and can distract you. I believe the traditions give that warning because they recognize there is a potential for getting hooked on transcendent experiences. One would end up just doing the meditation in order to have those experiences over and over again. If you do that, you’re stuck on the means rather than the end, or what is called “spiritual materialism.” So traditional teachers often say, “Keep going on, until total liberation, or self-realization, or enlightenment, which is beyond all dualistic visions or experiences.”

Practices leading to ecstatic, transcendent experiences have been a central part of all the world’s spiritual traditions, including shamanism, regarded by many as the oldest religion and healing

practice on this Earth. Some of these practices have involved hallucinogenic, vision-inducing plants, and others have used trance-inducing methods such as drumming, movement, fasting, isolation, ordeals, vision quest, chanting and many others. Any of these methods can be pursued in a compulsive, addictive manner when they lead to fixations and contractions of awareness. The traditions warn against these tendencies.

CONCLUSION

*the
undent
virtue
of
moderation*

Very briefly then, what are the implications for the individual? Since we all have addictive potential, tendencies to compulsions, we must learn to balance genuine need satisfaction with spiritual practices of true transcendence or consciousness expansion. We need to learn to consciously focus our awareness when that is needed, and expand our awareness when that is indicated. This is another way of stating the ancient virtue of moderation. It is excessive use, the repeating over and over, far beyond the point of actual need, that gets us into the addictive pattern.

We can see in the addiction-recovery movement a genuine religious revitalization movement that describes the transformative spiritual path of freeing oneself from addiction. This path may begin with “hitting bottom”—accepting the worst in oneself, going on through a period of assessing one’s strengths and weaknesses and repairing damaged relationships, and ending with a reintegration into social life. We can compare this pattern of recovery with the traditional Asian teachings concerning the transformation of attachments, and with the Western traditions of psycho-spiritual transformation. In some ways the addiction-recovery model is close to the traditional Western religious conception, as portrayed in Dante’s *Divina Commedia*. First there is the descent into hell; then there is the painful and laborious ascent of the mountain of purgatory, where character is transformed; and, finally, there is ultimate transcendence into the spiritual worlds or “paradise.”

By contrast, the Asian model, both Buddhist and Hindu, is much more one of progressive detachment through meditation. In the Wheel of Samsara, in each of the six worlds there is a Buddha figure, teaching the way to transcend or be liberated out of that world. Whatever realm we are in, according to Buddhist teaching, we can, through spiritual practice, transcend the false dualities and conflicts, and attain insight and liberation from the Wheel of Births and Deaths.

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THE USE OF MEDITATIVE TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING DYNAMIC PSYCHOLOGY

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A quiet, centered, meditative state allows one to look in different directions. One can remain centered and explore higher states of consciousness, or, if balance is lost, psychodynamic defensive structures can be explored. Since I am a therapist and a supervisor and not a spiritual leader, most of my experience has been in using meditative states to create conditions in which psychodynamics can be surveyed. The position of relaxed, focused, or open attention provides a contrast to the usual obsessional chatter, physical tension, and anxious concern which frequents awareness during ordinary consciousness. Thus, meditative states can provide a groundwork for experiential teaching of psychodynamics.

*meditative
states
as a
groundwork*

This paper is an elaboration of my earlier work, "The use of meditative techniques in psychotherapy supervision," (Dubin, 1991) which focused on being with the client as contrasted to doing something to, with, or for the client. The effort was to correct the imbalance of much training which centers on examining, analyzing, and doing. While being with the patient is the ground and surround of treatment, there is also a theoretical content that has to be learned. It became apparent that students learned a great deal about psychodynamics when we analyzed what got in the way of their ability to "be" with themselves and others during meditative exercises.

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AN INTRODUCTION TO LEARNING

Real learning is demanding. I have found it useful to spend some time at the beginning of training giving an orientation to the process of learning. Fundamentally, the technical language of any new field is arbitrary. The map of the verbal symbols is not the territory of clinical experience. We tend to forget the lengthy frustrating process that we went through mastering the vocabulary, syntax, and semantics of our mother tongue. Someone had to say “red” while pointing to balloons, cars, dresses, and apples in order to help us abstract the *color* red from whatever object happened to be colored red. Since it is common for students to develop psychological symptoms when they begin to meditate, meditative exercises can provide clinical experiences that can be labeled with the technical vocabulary of dynamic psychology.

*meaning
emerges
from
connections*

I instruct students to read the authors of the fundamental theories and the major modifications: Freud, Kohut, Jung, and the like. When they read Freud, they often complain that they have the feeling that they are starting in the “middle of the movie,” and ask for an introductory text. They complain, “Why can’t he write in simple English?” The answer is that simple English does not contain the technical words. The language appears enigmatic because students do not have a rich web of associations that they can relate to the abstract symbols of technical expression. Meaning emerges from connections. In the beginning the pupil is frustrated by a lack of associations. The only way to acquire the associations is to move back and forth between the abstract level of theoretical writings and the concrete level of immediate experience. If the student experiences his or her own ignorance as a narcissistic insult, then learning can be impeded. Developing a tolerance for proceeding in the face of *not* knowing is crucial for learning. I had a marvelous statistics professor, Helen Walker, who said, “If you do not understand, continue to read to the end of the chapter and then go back and read it again.” She also said that if it is not clear in one text, find another one on the same subject. Then, of course, one had to do the computational exercises. The job of the teacher is to explain the process of learning to the students, to help resolve ambiguities, and to support them through their frustrations.

THE MEDITATIVE TECHNIQUES

Most of the techniques that I use evolved over a period of years of work with advanced doctoral candidates in psychotherapy supervisory groups which take place over an academic year. The students are bright, psychologically oriented, and highly motivated to learn. I have found it necessary to take active leadership in structuring the exercises, providing consistency, and underlining the need for

discipline in the work. I do the meditations with the students. The emphasis in this context is on teaching psychology. It is not aimed at spiritual development *per se*. Thus, it is important to orient oneself to the place of psychodynamics on the “spectrum of consciousness” (Wilber 1977, 1980, 1983; Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986). Most spiritual disciplines focus on helping the individual to disidentify with his or her self, to become aware of having no ego and no boundaries. Most Western psychology focuses on separation and individuation and the development of an autonomous discrete self, and/or on a self-in-relationship (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver & Surrey, 1991). The major focus of psychodynamic psychology is on the movements from the pre-personal to the personal levels of development. Wilber’s clarification of the pre-personal/transpersonal confusion (Wilber, 1983, chap. 7) has untangled the concept of pre-personal merging from transpersonal “fusion without confusion.” Entering meditative states helps students to make observations in either direction, back to personal and pre-personal stages, and ahead to transpersonal levels. The major focus in the training of psychologists (as contrasted to spiritual seekers) is on the earlier developmental stages. Difficulties at the initial stages interfere with truly advanced levels of development. In addition, most of the people coming for help from psychologists have intrapsychic and interpersonal rather than transpersonal concerns.

Since the focus of psychological training is on the self in relation to other people, I generally start out with a meditative exercise which is a contemplation of an object. However, it is easier to start with an inanimate object rather than another person. Almost any simple object can be used. I have an affinity for beach stones. So I give each student a stone and say, “This is a client. Be with your client.” Depending on the context, the instruction could be changed to, “This is a friend, lover, significant other (or whatever is appropriate). Be with your...” I take a stone myself and begin contemplating it. After about ten minutes an important additional instruction is given, “Notice the difference between thinking about your client, examining your client, analyzing your client, and *being* with your client.” At the end of about a total of twenty minutes I say, “When you are ready, finish your session.” I allow the students to sit quietly for a few minutes, and then I go around the group and ask each student to share his or her experience. Each pupil’s account is explored in as much depth as the student will allow. This processing provides most of the raw material for the teaching of dynamics.

*the
focus
is on
self
in relation
to
others*

The exercises are prefaced with instructions about the instructions. There are two essential directions which run through all the exercises. The first is to suspend all expectation of outcome. Preconceptions tend to block the immediacy of experience. Helping to clarify the distinctions between thoughts about experience and the direct immediate experiences themselves is central to the work. The

second is to follow the instructions precisely as they are given. The particular wording of each instruction is important. Analysis of misinterpretations and difficulties following the instructions is a vital part of the teaching.

The distinction between being with someone and doing something with or to someone is a theme that is established early and continues through all of the work. Relating to a stone highlights where one is in his or her development. From one point of view the stone contemplation can be used as a projective technique. However, the design of the task is quite different from the usual projective techniques. A Rorschach asks the subject to give structure to the relatively unstructured ink blots and try to say what *they are*, and to move on to the next perception. The task is to examine, delimit, make constructions, and to label. It is an examination of an I-It relationship as contrasted to the sustained I-Thou relationship of the stone contemplation. Each approach has its domain of utility. The stone exercise tells us very little about how clever or inventive the student is. However, it does reveal which of the student's characteristic defenses interfere with his or her ability to suspend usual preoccupations and enter into open relatedness.

*the
Stone
exercise
reveals
characteristic
defenses*

The classical psychoanalytic view of psychodynamics has to do with compromise formations which are the result of efforts to resolve conflicts. This is essentially an intrapsychic psychology that attempts to explain the interplay of forces and structures within the mind. While it is also important to acknowledge that analytic theory includes genetic, structural, economic, and adaptive points of view in addition to the dynamic point of view (Rapaport & Gill, 1959), the essential focus is on what goes on within each individual. However, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the exercises take place in an interpersonal setting. The students have a relationship with the teacher and the other students in the group, and these are potent factors which provide the context for all the exercises. A major class of impediments to the work are concerns about how others will evaluate one's responses to the exercise. Needless to say, relationships of trust have to be built between the teacher and the students, and among the students themselves, if the work is to reach meaningful depth. The very process of exploring the impediments to trust becomes another vehicle for illustrating and teaching dynamics.

The transpersonal psychological view is more encompassing than the classical psychoanalytic theory. Wilber's metaphor of spectrum of consciousness and transpersonal development (1977, 1980, 1983) and Tart's explorations of discrete states of consciousness and discrete altered states of consciousness (1992) offer a comprehensive, viable framework. The concept of "states" deserves some elucidation. The mathematical notion of state space is a powerful

abstraction which can be broadly applied. One of the most accessible ways to think of “state space” is to think of the three unrelated, orthogonal, variables of ordinary three-dimensional space (length, width, and height). For example, any point in a room can be thought of as a three-tuple vector having values for length, width, and height. A vector is a quantity which has a magnitude and a direction. To make it concrete, think of a point in a room three feet from one end of the room (length), four feet from one side of the room (width), and five feet from the floor (height). That point within the room space is the resultant (a vector) of the values of the three dimensions that define the room space. The resultant of the three values can be thought of as the state of the system of variables. Mapping these concepts into psychological concepts is straightforward. Wilber attempts to do this in his spectrum of development, laying out fundamental variables of development (Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986, chap. 3). The first variable in his schema is along the hierarchy of succession of the basic structures of consciousness. The second is the transition stage, which is the implementation of the structure at each rung on the ladder of development. The third is the self-system which does the climbing. Wilber’s metaphor clarifies his system:

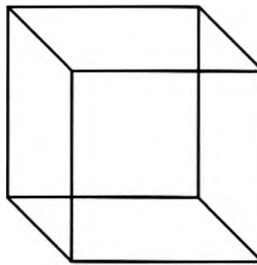
The basic structures themselves are like a ladder, each rung of which is a level in the Great Chain of Being. The self (or the self-system) is the climber of the ladder. At each rung of that climb, the self has a different view or perspective on reality, a different sense of identity, a different type of morality, a different set of self-needs, and so on. These changes in the sense of self and its reality, which shift from level to level, are referred to as transition structures, or more often, as the *self-stages* (since these transitions intimately involve the self and its sense of reality) (Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986, p. 76).

I find it very useful to keep the variable value distinction firmly in mind. In the above quote the ladder is a variable. The rung that an individual has attained is a value. Unfortunately, many psychology students are disturbed by mathematical concepts and resist using them. The sparse map of abstractions feels dreadfully unlike the complex territory of clinical ideation and affect. It takes frustrating work to learn the abstractions and how to apply them. However, much of the confusion and factional wrangling among the various theoretical schools could be untangled if some basic mathematical concepts were applied to psychological thinking. A good example is the concept of the domain of a function. A function is a mathematical operation. To make a concrete example, let’s make the function division, e.g., a divided by b . In this case a and b are variables. We can assign any real number to the variable, a (the numerator), and all but one number, 0, to the variable, b (the denominator). We can assign 4 to a and 2 to b . If $y = a/b$, then in this case y would equal 2. This function works just fine with all numbers with one exception. If $b = 0$, then the result of the division

*the
variable
value
distinction*

is indeterminate. The domain of the function $y = a/b$ is true for all real numbers except the case in which $b = 0$. We simply do not know how many times 0 can be divided into a number. The answer is “non-sense” when we attempt to apply a function outside of its domain. Extending the idea of the domain of a function we could say that each theoretical concept has a range of validity and utility. An important part of the study of theoretical concepts is learning and keeping in mind the domain of the concept. Good examples of domain violations are Wilber’s description of the category error of fundamentalism that emerges when one tries to apply spiritual insights into the domain of ordinary sensory historical consciousness, and of scientism when one tries to reduce spiritual insights to sensory experience (Wilber, 1983). An additional illustration of domain confusion is the pre-personal/transpersonal fallacy.

FIGURE 1
NECKER CUBE



Another useful approach to the discussion of states is ambiguous figures. The simplest example is a Necker cube. Look at Figure 1 until you see it flip back and forth from one state to the other. The connectionist theorists tell us that there are 2 to the 16 (2^{16}) or 65,536 possible states of a binary network that could be used to model the cube (Rumelhart, Smolensky, McClelland & Hinton, 1986, p. 11). However, due to the adaptive constraints of our perceptual system there are two, or maybe three, ways in which the cube is commonly seen. The point here is that of the many possibilities, we tend to see things in a few repetitiously consistent ways. Note that when you view the cube one way that it is impossible to view it another way. It feels like you are stuck and cannot see the other view. Each of the states tends to preclude all of the others. This kind of either/or splitting pervades much of our clinical work. A patient put it aptly, “I think in ‘completelies.’ He is completely good or completely bad.” I believe Tart (1992) was describing something like the ambiguous figure effect when he discussed discrete states of consciousness. It is not even necessary to experi-

ence dramatically altered states of consciousness like dreaming or drug states to see this phenomenon operating. These shifts and periods of getting stuck are also the stuff of mundane sensory consciousness. Transference states are powerful clinical examples of ambiguous figures in operation. The neutrality of the therapist provides the ground of vagueness that the patient structures according to his or her own needs and concerns. The dysfunctional tedium of the repetition compulsion can be thought of as the strong pull to form old structures out of the ambiguities of new experience.

Another illustration of states and changes of states is spinning the *dreidle*. A *dreidle* is a four-sided top which is used during the traditional Jewish holiday, Hanukkah, as a game of chance. While the top is spinning, it is in a state of dynamic equilibrium, balanced on its pointed bottom. As the energy imparted to it at the beginning of the spin dissipates, it begins to lose its balance. Finally, it wobbles, falls, and comes to rest on one of its four sides. It lays in one of these states until someone spins it again. There is a high energy state of stability in constant change, and a low energy state where it is stuck in one of four predefined positions. The meditations help us to move from our relatively small number of fixed mental/behavioral states to a condition of balance which is fundamentally different from all of the more fixed states. There is an equilibrium in the midst of constant change. When we are no longer able to maintain the balance, we fall into one or another of our old mental/emotional states.

*equilibrium
in the
midst
of
constant
change*

Yet another metaphor which illustrates the tendency to fall into established patterns comes from Francis Galton. An ideal solid of classical physics is a billiard ball. When the ball is struck, it will settle on any point of its spherical surface as a direct function of the forces acting on it. However, in biology and mental life there are not continuously variable changes. Changes tend to move in somewhat grainy increments. Imagine taking the ball and grinding flat planes of facets all over its surface, like the exposed face of a round-cut diamond. If the ball were pushed, it would no longer settle on any point of its surface. It would come to a rest only on the preset flat spots. The meditative exercises tend to push us off our accustomed ways of functioning. As we lose focused, quiet, and centered attention, there are reoccurring tendencies to fall into preset modes. One of the general instructions of the meditations is to observe and simply note what is happening without trying to alter it in any way. As the students proceed with the meditations, they become aware of the shifts of states that take place. These observations are the experiential raw data which demonstrate psychodynamics.

The idea of repetitious states of behavior is so important and ubiquitous that a metaphor from biology may be helpful. Imagine

the twisted ladder of the double helix of DNA splitting down the middle, as it does in cell division. Each half of the helix swims around the surrounding molecular soup. It picks out just the right sequence of chemicals to reproduce itself. Of the astronomical number of possible combinations only one is chosen. An error could have disastrous consequences. In the swarm of possibilities in the world of inner and outer experience, we select the precise ones that replicate our psychological expectations and structures. Freud called this tendency the repetition compulsion. Truly new behavior is like a mutation. Mutations can be beneficial, inconsequential, or harmful.

*centering
exercises*

Centering exercises are given to help produce conditions of balanced, open awareness. Thus, the next series of exercises concentrate on the individual turning inward and focusing on internal processes. Learning to focus and direct attention is an important preliminary skill to learn for many forms of meditation. The first meditation was a contemplation of an external object, a beach stone. In the centering and focusing exercises, one's own self and inner psychophysical activity becomes the object. The focus is intrapsychic. A good exercise is breath counting. The instruction goes, "Follow your breathing. When you breathe in, count 1. When you breathe out, count 2. In, 3. Out, 4. Then start the count at 1 again. Do not change your breathing. Simply observe it. The purpose of the counting is to help you become aware when you lose your focus. It is easier when you start out to close your eyes." I generally allow at least twenty minutes. Then I say, "When you are ready, open your eyes, and just give yourself a chance to remain as you are with your eyes opened." We sit together for a while, and, when I have a sense that someone is ready to respond, I ask him or her, "What's happening?" I then go around the group, working with each person individually, exploring his or her experience. Another instruction is given shortly after I start working with one of the students. I gesture to the whole group and say, "Allow yourself to stay in the state that you are in as I work with each of you, and be aware of what is happening." The rationale for this is to help the student to sustain balanced, centered attention under a variety of conditions. It also encourages them to remain engaged while they are not the center of the group's attention.

I would just like to note in passing that nothing is said about relaxation or about any gains that one might get from meditating. As mentioned above, comment is made about suspending all expectations of outcome. Whatever benefits may emerge from the meditations are seen as welcome side effects, but they are not stated as a goal. Indeed, what frequently happens as the students start with the breath counting is they begin to experience their underlying pain. A large part of what psychodynamics is about is the handling of pain. Most of us operate on the pleasure principle. We strive to maximize

pleasure and avoid pain. Psychological defenses and compromise formations are efforts to avoid distress.

Since I do not have clairvoyant vision, I do not close my eyes at the start of the breath counting meditation when working with new students. I noticed that one student's heart began to pound when she did the exercise. When we started to discuss her experience, she said that she had a tightness in her throat. Physical symptoms are commonly reported during the meditations. The treatment of the symptoms can be used as a vivid demonstration of psychodynamics. I asked her if she would be willing to do an experiment. She agreed. I instructed her, "Allow yourself to feel the tightness in your throat. Do not try to change it or to make it go away. Simply focus your attention on it, and experience it." I faced her and sat with her in an open, receptive way. When it seemed appropriate, I asked, "What is happening?" She said, "My chest is tight. That's where I always get stuck." I inquired, "What happened to the sensation in your throat." "It is gone." I then repeated, "Allow yourself to experience the tightness in your chest." I waited. She began to cry. We then reviewed her experience of going through the sequence of symptom formation, symptom displacement, and release of affect. This was the start of a process that went on with her over a period of several months. She would have a symptom. I would ask her to focus on the symptom *without* trying to alter it. The symptom would simply dissipate, move to another part of her body, or she would have a release of affect with meaningful associations.

It was also important to spell out what is meant by experience, that is, to point out what to look for. By experience I mean thoughts, images, memories, dreams, daydreams, songs that come to mind, feelings, and what is often overlooked, bodily sensations. After students begin to spontaneously report them, consciousness of subtle-level phenomena is also explored—that is, alterations in body image, time, sensations of energy, light, and awareness of the feelings and thoughts of other group members. Often there is resistance to engaging in the process of just allowing experience to follow its own course. Analyzing the resistances to bare awareness is central to the teaching. It should be noted that students frequently have resistance to reporting subtle experiences for fear that they will be thought of as pathological symptoms. It is not uncommon for them to report having had altered states as children and of learning not to discuss them. Validating subtle-level experiences is an important part of teaching from a transpersonal perspective.

*what
is
meant
by
experience*

The process of symptom formation and resistance is well understood by dynamic psychology, whereas the spiritual traditions tend to view it as noise to be disregarded. As a Zen teacher put it, "When

you begin to sit, the water that runs is rusty. Continue to let it flow, and it will run pure.” While this saying is true, most of us continue to be distracted by the rust, and impede the flow of water before it streams clean. Let’s follow the student’s resistances. She wanted to cry but was afraid that she would be judged negatively by me and the others in the group. To translate this process into analytic language is to say that she had a transference resistance. She wanted me to think well of her, and was concerned that crying would lessen my evaluation of her. The urge to cry was choked off and emerged as a lump in her throat. She had a wish to cry, and the conflicting idea that crying was unacceptable. The symptom of throat constriction was an unconscious compromise formation.

*a
paradoxical
effect*

The instruction to focus on the symptom rather than try to get rid of it has a paradoxical effect. My conjecture about what happens internally is that the blockage of the flow of feeling, the stasis, is released when one focuses on the sensations of the symptom. My personal experience focusing on symptoms is that it feels like the subtle energies are released, allowing me to move to another state. The mechanism is illustrated in the case of a muscle spasm. When the muscle is made even tighter by squeezing, the proprioceptors send a message to the brain that the muscle is too tight, and a homeostatic impulse to release the muscle contraction is transmitted back to the muscle. I have used this technique of focusing on the symptom thousands of times in my practice. It works almost every time, *if* the patient is willing to try to do it. After using the procedure for years I have recently found references to it in the Buddhist literature. It is a kind of mindfulness meditation that has long been used in the Zen and Vipassana traditions. In Goldstein’s words:

What is it that is reactive? Our minds are reactive: liking and disliking, judging and comparing, clinging and condemning. Our minds are like a balance scale, and as long as we’re identified with these judgments and preferences, likes and dislikes, wants and aversions, our minds are continually thrown out of balance, caught in a tiring whirlwind of reactivity. It is through the power of mindfulness that we can come to a place of balance and rest. Mindfulness is that quality of attention which notices without choosing, without preference; it is a choiceless awareness that, like the sun, shines on all things equally (Goldstein & Kornfield, 1987, pp. 18-19).

Mindfulness has the effect of separating pain from suffering. Life is attendant with pain. It is an inevitable part of living. Pain, itself, is merely a sensation which continually changes in quality and intensity, whereas the meaning that we give to the pain is the suffering. Suffering has the effect of turning pain into misery. In many situations we can alter the significance that we give to pain and thus reduce suffering. Yet there is a great deal of resistance to contemplating pain. First of all, it hurts, and it generally *is* a signal of

danger to be avoided. The difficulty occurs when the kinds of protective actions that are taken have the immediate effect of reducing the pain but the long-term result of perpetuating it. The outcome is addiction and/or other repetitious, dysfunctional behavior. In the analytic tradition this is the shortcoming of the pleasure principle, and the basis of the necessity to learn to tolerate immediate distress by using judgment, delay, and reality testing.

One of the roots for the meaning of the German word for anxiety, *angst*, is contraction. Following the work with the student, after the constriction in her throat was released, she felt a tightness in her chest. It commonly happens that symptoms begin to move around the body when one begins to focus on them. From an analytic point of view the shifts might be thought of as an undoing of displacements, or blocks. Wilhelm Reich describes these blockages in his work on character analysis (Reich, 1949). Whether one calls the energy that is blocked libido, orgone, *chi*, or *prana* is more a matter of tradition than of clinical significance. The essential point is that there usually is a symptom change of some kind, or the symptom dissipates after a few minutes, and anxiety usually disappears. She indicated that she “always” got stuck with chest tightness. When she focused on the tightness, it tended to relax a bit, but it took several more sessions and a change in the meditative exercises before the function of her chest tightness became apparent.

After the students get experience with the centering and focusing on themselves, I start a series of interpersonal meditations. The next group of meditations start out with turning attention inward as before, but after about ten minutes I pick a partner for each member of the group and have them move their chairs so that the partners face each other. After they have a chance to settle down again I say, “Be with each other.” I will sit with the odd member of the group if there is one, or by myself if the pairing is even. Most students find being with another person is harder than being by themselves. Indeed, simply maintaining inner balance with one’s eyes open, without focusing on someone else, is trying for many neophytes. Contemplating a partner often kindles conflicts and is fertile ground for illuminating psychodynamics. Issues of intimacy, acceptance, and sexuality come to the fore. Since the groups run for a full academic year, we have an opportunity for every member of the group to be with every other member. Being with a peer rather than the teacher provokes a different set of transferences. In the processing of these experiences I give the students an opportunity to check out with each other how well their impressions of the partner actually coincide with the partner’s experience.

After several weeks of going around and pairing up with other members of the group, the student we have been following finally had an opportunity to be with me. She went through her usual

*a
series
of
interpersonal
meditations*

progression of symptoms: pounding heart, tightness in her throat, constriction in her chest, and crying. Work with the group over several months had demonstrated to her that it was safe to be open and reveal embarrassing reactions. This time when she got to the tightness in her chest, she was able to stay with it until she tolerated an opening. Her chest relaxed and she became embarrassed because she was having sexual feelings. She related memories of earlier periods of sexual acting out. This is a classical example of reversing a conversion reaction. In analytic language she had a conflict about allowing herself to have sexual feelings in relation to me. On the one hand, there was the drive derivative to have sexual feelings, and on the other there was the prohibition against them. The compromise formation of tightness in the chest was the outcome. I did not think it prudent at the time to ask her, "Is it only your chest that was contracting?" It is also interesting to note she had associations to earlier sexual activity and to her conflict with it. This struggle was revived in the teaching situation.

*observing
symptom
formation
as it
emerges*

One of the important powers of the meditative exercises is that they allow the students to become quiet enough to observe symptom formation as it emerges, and as it transforms under conditions of mindfulness. It is a rather straightforward matter to put the theoretical labels on their reactions while they are still immediate.

I like to think of this kind of teaching as doing scientific experiments in the sense that Wilber outlines (Wilber, 1983, p. 44):

First, the abstract principles of data accumulation and verification.. .. valid data accumulation in any realm has three basic strands:

1. *Instrumental injunction.* This is always of the form, "If you want to know this, do this."

2. *Intuitive apprehension.* This is a cognitive grasp, apprehension, or immediate *experience* of the object domain (or aspect of the object domain) addressed by the injunction; that is the immediate *data*-apprehension.

3. *Communal confirmation.* This is a checking of results (apprehensions or data) with others who have adequately completed the injunctive and apprehensive strands.

1. The instrumental injunction is: If you want to know about psychodynamics, then focus your attention inward and be by yourself and/or with another person.

2. The intuitive apprehension is: Simply allow yourself to become aware of whatever is happening without censorship or expectation of any particular result.

3. The communal confirmation is: Share your experience with the others in the group to see if there is a *communality* of perceptions and apprehensions.

This three-step process is then repeated, session after session, with each of the members of the teaching group and across teaching groups. Another point that Wilber makes is that in order to become a member of the group that attempts to confirm the experiment, you have to be competent and knowledgeable in the area of inquiry. As a psychologist I could not be a member of a medical team looking at a cardiogram to decide if a patient had a heart attack. Higher states of consciousness as well as cognitive science teach us that we are continually constructing our “realities” by the way we clump our sensations into perceptions, apprehensions, and abstractions. We resolve the ambiguities of raw percepts along the guidelines of our theories. If we do not know what to look for, we will not know what figures to construct out of the ground of the noisy play of the inner theater of consciousness. If you did not know that the Necker cube is an ambiguous figure, you might not wait to see its alternative views. Training teaches us schemas. We use the theories or schemas to impart meaning.

The kind of physical symptom formation and transformation described above is seen in most students. The experiment gets replicated and confirmed repeatedly. It is just this process of replication and confirmation that excites the students and imparts a sense of credibility and utility to the psychodynamic theories. The theory is learned from immediacy of experience.

*theory
is learned
from
immediacy
of
experience*

Another major class of symptom formation is withdrawal from direct experience into obsessional thought. This tendency to examine, to think about, and to analyze is an important part of professional training. Intellectual development and clear thinking is crucial to maturity. There is a distinction between being anti-intellectual and being trans-intellectual. A central contribution of transpersonal psychology is that there are ways of knowing that go beyond intellectual comprehension. The meditations are designed to impede intellectual activity and put it into a broader framework. To the extent that obsessional thought and intellectualization are psychological defenses, students become uncomfortable during the exercises. They go on fantasy trips, or get caught up in the concerns of the week. The inner dialogue is such a constant part of their lives that they do not believe it possible to be free of it when they want to. As they gain more experience with the meditations, they find that there are gaps in the inner noise. Then they start to think about what is happening and, perhaps, to think of the *Tao* that is not the *Tao*. It is just from this point of fragile balance that they are able to observe the leading edges of psychological defenses.

*using
good
clinical
judgment*

A different student illustrated another significant class of reactions to the meditations. She found that, when she began to become more open in the meditations, she began to grieve. She had had several losses recently, and, when she was not distracted by the demands of the week, her emotions grew to overwhelming intensity. She was afraid of being disabled by a flood of affect. This was not an instance of conversion into a somatic complaint or of isolation of affect in obsessional thought. Rather, it was a fear of fragmenting, of being traumatized by the intensity of her own feelings. She was concerned that she would not be able to function if she let herself continue. The whole issue of ego functions and ego strength is relevant here. It requires a considerable amount of fortitude to confront affect flooding. This student did prevail and by the end of the year felt more secure about her ability to allow and show her feelings without becoming overwhelmed. This is not always the case. The meditations are powerful, and the teacher has to use good clinical judgment and allow students to use their own defenses. Some students have come late to sessions consistently in order to miss the meditations. They run away before they have an opportunity to learn that their own homeostatic processes will balance them if they simply give them time to operate. Running rather than confronting discomfort illustrates the basis of acting out. To the extent that discomfort can be tolerated, the meditative stance of mindfulness can be ego strengthening. I am using the term "ego" in the technical, psychoanalytic meaning of improving the ego functions of frustration tolerance, reality testing, synthetic function, etc., not in the sense of egotism.

However, narcissistic preoccupation is a major consideration which runs through psychodynamic inquiry. The issue of self-concern is usually one side of a conflict. The classical conflict between a wish to do something and a prohibition against doing it comes down to fear of narcissistic injury. The great calamities of childhood (Brenner, 1982, chap. 6), fear of abandonment (object loss), fear of loss of love, and fear of being hurt (castration anxiety), all have to do with the question, "If I do, think, or feel this, then what is going to happen to me? Will you leave me, not love me, or hurt me?" These disturbances lead to the affects of unpleasure, anxiety, and/or depression. The narcissistic distress can lead to the question, "What am I?" A meditation for this will be discussed below.

It is important to extend the range of conditions during which students learn to maintain centered awareness. Over the years I have experimented with other meditations. I have found it useful to play tapes of music from various spiritual traditions. The recorded chanting of the Tibetan Tantric Gyuto Monks is a good place to start because most students are unfamiliar with it. The novelty of

the sound enables them to listen with “beginners’ minds.” The basic instruction has to do with simply being receptive and allowing oneself to resonate with the sound. I usually preface the meditation with a story about going to a piano lesson with my wife. My wife said to her teacher, “The musical score points to the music.” The teacher replied, “Yes, and the music points to something else.” Receptive listening is a good exercise for countering the usual obsessional clutter that interferes with focusing inwardly and merely being with whatever transpires. The Ravi Shankar recordings of Ragas, and Gregorian chanting, are more familiar but are also effective. The rationale for these exercises is to help the students become aware of occurrences which are “interior” to thinking. Wilber (Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986, p. 157) makes the distinction between inside and interior. The stomach can be located inside the body, but the mind cannot be localized at a fixed place. Somehow the mind is interior to the body. As the distractions of bodily sensation and mentation subside, awareness of more subtle manifestations emerges. After the student with the chest tightness was able to allow herself to open up to the flow of thoughts, feelings, fantasies, and sexual sensations, she described a circulation of energy and light in her chest accompanied by a feeling of rapture. She had a strong interest in religion and was proud of herself for having such an experience. I told her the Zen story of the student who reported to her teacher that during a meditation she had a vision of a radiant Buddha floating on a golden lotus blossom. The teacher responded, “Continue the practice and it will go away.” One of the serious traps in doing meditative practice is the inflation of pride that comes with “spiritual” accomplishment. There is also the danger of becoming an ecstasy junkie, a good example of being caught in the round of seeking pleasure and of avoiding pain.

*the
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of
inflation
of
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As the students become aware of some of the more subtle realms of consciousness, the limitations of psychodynamic thought become apparent. Freud summed up the limitations of psychoanalysis in his famous answer to his patient’s question:

Why you tell me yourself that my illness is probably connected to my circumstances and the events of my life. How do you propose to help me then? And I make this reply: ‘No doubt fate would find it easier than I do to relieve you of your illness. But you will be able to convince yourself that much will be gained if we succeed in transforming your hysterical misery into common unhappiness. With mental life that has been restored to health you will be better armed against that unhappiness’ (Freud, 1895, p. 305).

I have often said to my students that psychologists are not in the happiness business. Happiness, like health, is an emergent property. It is not something that can be pursued directly. Happiness and

health flower when the fully-rounded conditions for their appearance are in place. The Buddhists keep telling us that attempting to grasp at the specific things that we think will produce happiness or avoid pain results in suffering. From a non-attached perspective, chasing pleasure and evading adversity is what produces common unhappiness. One can never be free of the lumps and bumps of life, but one can start to learn not to amplify and distort them with old conflicts, fears, and wishes.

*an
age-old
meditation*

As students begin to have experiences of access levels of concentration (Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986, pp. 61-62), a framework broader than analytic thought begins to become apparent, and possibilities of being able to move beyond being driven by conflict begin to emerge. It is from the place of quiet, balanced mindfulness that one can observe the onset of the psychodynamic processes. After one has had conflict-free intervals, the operation of defenses grows more apparent. From this perspective it is easier to begin to disidentify from one's body and mind and relate more directly to what is. This raises the ancient question of, "What Am I?" An old meditation can be given to help clarify the issues of self-identification. The instruction goes as follows: "Sit quietly and ask yourself the question, What am I? Wait patiently for an answer. I might get the answer, 'Bill.' I would then say to myself, 'Bill is my name.' What am I? 'A psychologist.' Being a psychologist is my occupation. That is not what I am. What am I? Continue to ask, 'What Am I?' until you have a sense of rightness about the answer." Going through a whole catalog of answers to the "What am I?" question helps one to begin to separate from one's usual unquestioned identifications. The act of waiting for answers rather than trying to think up answers begins to tune one into intuitive rather than cognitive exploration. One enters an elusive realm when one seriously starts to question some of the assumptions about what one is. A major aspect of psychological defensiveness rests on attempting to maintain self-esteem. We rarely ask just what the self *is* that we try so diligently to protect. Identifications and introjection are important determinants of our reaction patterns. Questioning what one is can be both frightening and liberating. We struggle mightily to become something. Accustomed modes of reacting give us a sense of security and power. In usual states of sensory consciousness we experience ourselves as separate, bounded entities. Major issues of development center on being able to maintain positive self-esteem, a sense of cohesion, and stability of the self-representation (Stolorow & Lachmann, 1980). Meditative techniques frequently destabilize the self-representation. Students often become anxious, and may even become concerned about their sanity, when they feel alterations in their body image during meditations. Old states of longing for loving bonds are activated when they feel connected or merged with other members

of the group. Clearly, in these states the sense of self is altered. It is no longer so tightly bounded by the skin or so fully conditioned by appearances and accomplishments. Frequently a flow of energy is felt permeating one's own body and flowing into a larger field which encompasses others in the group. This is often accompanied with warm, loving feelings. If the energies descend to one's genitals, the feeling will likely also become sexual. Fears of being vulnerable and the concomitant old fears of rejection, misunderstanding, and physical harm surface. Concerns are also expressed about the appropriateness of allowing such intimacy in a teaching situation. Once again, all of these reactions are used as clinical data to illustrate dynamics.

The cycle of the work continues. As the year goes on, the students come to see the time of meditations as a mini-retreat. They look forward to being in a safe place where they can let down their usual defenses and be with themselves and with the other members of the group. It becomes a setting in which they learn about psychodynamics from their own replication of experiments in states of consciousness.

*the
cycle
of
work
continues*

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PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD AND MEDITATION

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INTRODUCTION

In recent psychological literature on meditation, the terms “phenomenology” and “phenomenological” are sometimes used rather loosely to refer to introspective reports given by experimental subjects about their experiences during meditation.¹ Some psychologists have even developed questionnaires and procedures, characterized as ways of operationalizing phenomenology, so that subjects’ introspective reports about meditation experiences can be quantified.² There is little, however, in this literature that would qualify as an extended phenomenological description of meditation.³

The vast majority of Western psychological studies of meditation either investigate objective measures (such as EEG activity, pulse rate, respiratory rate, blood pressure, responses to light flashes, etc.), or personality traits of the meditating subjects (such as suggestibility, expectations, arousal, tendency to continue meditation practice, responses to chronic pain, self-representation, etc.), or comparisons between meditation and therapeutic techniques (such as hypnosis, self-hypnosis, biofeedback, progressive relaxation, etc.). A few studies summarize categories of mental faculties and stages of meditation that are discussed in classical Eastern texts on meditation (e.g., *Visuddhimagga*, Tibetan *Mahamudra* texts, Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutra*).⁴

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meditation*

Generally in Western psychological studies, the approach is not phenomenological in the strict sense, because the experiences occurring to subjects during meditation are not described or analyzed

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in terms of how these experiences actually appear to the subjects themselves. If subjects' meditation experiences are mentioned at all, they are usually treated as causally related to physiological or psychological traits that the subjects themselves do not directly notice while meditating. Even though many researchers collect experimental subjects' own introspective reports on what they have experienced during meditation, researchers do not usually summarize these reports either in the subjects' own words or in terms approaching a standard phenomenological description.⁵ In sum, most recent Western psychological literature investigates the physiological or psychotherapeutic effects of meditation, not the subjects' own reflexive awareness of their meditation experiences.

Although there are methodological difficulties associated with subjects' introspective reports, several established researchers have started to re-examine the possibility of relying more heavily on subjects' own reports of their meditation experiences and have called for more phenomenological research on meditation.⁶ Responding to this call, a section of this paper offers a phenomenological description of two meditation experiences, following the methodological guidelines developed by Edmund Husserl, the founder of philosophical phenomenology.

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methods
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studying
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Additionally, this paper compares and contrasts Husserlian phenomenology with meditation as methods for observing and studying consciousness. Those who are familiar with both Husserlian phenomenology and Eastern yogic or meditative practices often notice a striking similarity between the phenomenological method and certain meditative techniques. In particular, a step in phenomenology called "the phenomenological reduction" (or "epoche") resembles meditative procedures of mindfulness by which one becomes aware of the fullness, variety and transiency of experiences in the stream of consciousness.⁷ Like mindfulness meditation, the phenomenological reduction is an intentional practice of observing and accepting all experiences, without allowing the usual, everyday attitude of "needing to do something, go somewhere, believe something, etc." distort or organize what is experienced.

Phenomenology and most meditation techniques share the rudimentary methodological aim of carefully observing the contents and processes of consciousness. They differ, however, in their ultimate purpose: phenomenology has the goal of being, in Husserl's words, "a rigorous science," which aims to identify the recurring or essential structures of the contents and processes of consciousness, whereas most yogic and meditative practices have an ultimate soteriological goal of spiritual liberation or enlightenment.

COMPARISON OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD AND MEDITATION

Phenomenology was initially developed as a philosophical method for examining and describing consciousness.⁸ Unlike many philosophical theories which propose systems of ideas that are meant to explain reality, phenomenology does not claim to have an explanation of the world or human nature; it does claim a method for describing (not explaining) human consciousness. The distinction between description and explanation is, for phenomenologists, the difference between attending to what is immediately given in consciousness (description) as opposed to inferring the causes of what is immediately given in consciousness (explanation)—in other words, description is a detailed account of what appears; explanation an account of what caused that which appears.

In this regard, Husserlian phenomenology⁹ and meditation are similar, for they are both methods, rather than explanatory metaphysical theories. They are to be performed, practiced and, over time, refined within one's own consciousness. One cannot truly understand either meditation or phenomenology without actually doing them. Moreover, neither of these methods necessitates a commitment to a specific philosophical theory of reality. In the East, meditation has accompanied a wide range of philosophical theories (Vedanta, Samkhya, Buddhism, Jainism, etc.) or has been practiced independently of any religious or philosophical theory. Similarly, phenomenology's explicit use of the phenomenological reduction (described below) amounts to a deliberate attempt to abstain from metaphysical commitments.

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Perhaps the most important similarity between meditation and philosophical phenomenology is that they are both methods for studying one's own consciousness. It is in this sense that both methods differ significantly from most Western psychological theories, which attempt to develop an objective, scientific approach to consciousness by studying—not one's own consciousness (at least not primarily)—but somebody else's. Most Western psychology is empirical and requires treating human consciousness as though it were a real object or occurrence, existing in a world independent of the researcher's mind and equally accessible to all scientific observers. Consequently, most psychological theories are based on interviews or experiments involving subjects other than the researchers themselves.¹⁰ Even if psychologists study their own consciousness (i.e., dreams, emotions, behaviors), most of them proceed as though this consciousness could as easily have belonged to someone else, as though introspective findings are equivalent to findings derived from the study of someone else. In contrast, meditation and Husserlian phenomenology can only be practiced

on, and they only disclose, one's own consciousness; they lose their methodological purity as soon as one imagines that they can be performed or practiced on someone else.

What distinguishes philosophical phenomenology from other methods for describing consciousness (including most introspective methods) is a set of two basic techniques, which Husserl called the phenomenological reduction and the eidetic reduction.¹¹

*phenomena
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The phenomenological reduction (or epoché) distinguishes phenomenology from most other descriptive methods used in psychology. It is a methodological step of stripping introspective data of their status as mental facts occurring within the real world. Phenomenology suspends the presumed metaphysical correlation between introspective data and a real world that is either "out there" or "in the mind"; in other words, introspective data are not treated as reports coming in from a real external world or even as contents of a real internal world. Instead, introspective data—or, more strictly, phenomena—are examined and described in their own terms, regardless of "where they might have come from" or what they may indicate about reality.

By suspending belief in any real world that the phenomenon "may have come from," the phenomenological reduction removes from consideration both the (presumed) reality status of the phenomenon and any possible causal link between the phenomenon and something else. Once engaged in the phenomenological reduction, the phenomenologist can neither attribute a reality status to the phenomenon under study nor infer the existence of something else as a cause or effect of the phenomenon. (The phenomenologist cannot even attribute reality to himself or herself.) Neither the content that is experienced nor the subjective processes of experiencing are regarded as either real or unreal; they are not regarded as clues for something real "beyond" them.

This methodological step of phenomenological reduction disengages consciousness from its customary attitude of assessing whatever is experienced in terms of how real it is. Instead, the phenomenologist becomes aware of the phenomenon itself, as it appears in conscious experience, with all of its qualitative richness. This qualitative richness is observed and described by phenomenologists without resorting to the concepts or categories that we usually reach for, which reflect the reality status of what is conceptualized or categorized. In fact, many of our concepts and categories are formulated because they organize our thinking about what is real; thus, for example, we have many more concepts (words) for material objects than for transitory emotional processes and sensation pulses because we tend to credit the former with more reality than the latter. By loosening awareness away from the typical ways that

we describe things, the phenomenological reduction also equalizes phenomena, because they are no longer observed and described with an underlying motive of ranking them according to reality status.¹²

Consequently, after the phenomenological reduction is enacted, hallucinations, dreams, perceptions, etc. are all accepted equally; there is no attempt to determine which experiences are real and which are illusory. This is one of the important implications of the phenomenological reduction for research on meditation. Meditation sometimes includes experiences that depart from our normal notions about reality (these experiences are usually judged to be hallucinations or waking dreams by the standards of ordinary consciousness), but the phenomenological reduction guarantees that all meditation experiences receive the same watchful acceptance.

When applied, the phenomenological reduction not only allows one to receive all meditation experiences equally, but it also bears some resemblance to the discipline of maintaining open awareness, which is developed in various meditation practices. The phenomenological reduction can be applied to meditation, and it is also kin to meditation.

The second methodological step that is central to phenomenology is the eidetic reduction. With the eidetic reduction, the phenomenologist attempts to identify the essential structures of human consciousness, rather than the ephemeral content or the purely personal features of individuals' consciousness. In brief, the eidetic reduction is a method of imagining possible variations of the phenomenon under study.¹³ Although all the variations of a given phenomenon could not be realistically imagined in a phenomenological study, since they are probably infinite, as many of these as possible are imagined.¹⁴

*imagining
possible
variations
of a
given
phenomenon*

What the phenomenologist looks for throughout this process of imaginative variation are two kinds of variations of the initial phenomenon: either (1) variations that no longer appear to be the phenomenon under study (i.e., counterexamples and limiting cases), or (2) variations that still seem to be examples of the original phenomenon, even though they include different features. The first kind of variation helps identify the limits of the phenomenon's essence, and the second kind helps reveal the phenomenon's essence. The essence or eidetic structure of the phenomenon includes all of its features that cannot be eliminated by imaginatively varying the phenomenon. Such features remain evident throughout the imaginative variation process despite attempts to imagine examples of the phenomenon that would lack these features. The essence is arrived at through the method of eidetic reduction; it is an accomplishment, rather than a pre-given fact.

*counter-
examples
or
limiting
cases*

For example, if a phenomenologist is studying night vision, she or he would perform an eidetic reduction by first having an actual experience of night vision and then by imagining a series of visual experiences which are variations of that first experience. Such variations will alter certain features of the first night vision experience; for example, one might imagine night vision in the desert, far from civilization, on a moonless, cloudy night; imagine night vision while driving; imagine night vision while orbiting in outer space; imagine night vision as synaesthetic with night hearing, etc. When the imaginative variations are similar enough to the first, actual experience to be experienced as examples of night vision, then the features they share with the first night vision experience will be potentially part of the essence of night vision, because these features have not yet been eliminated through the method of eidetic reduction. The features that are not shared are not part of the essence of night vision, since they can be eliminated by imagining an example of night vision that lacks those features. If the imaginative variations become so dissimilar that they no longer seem to be examples of night vision at all (e.g., imagining night vision while sitting on the sun, imagining night vision while dazed by a flashlight), then they are counter-examples or limiting cases. Such counterexamples and limiting cases reveal that the variation has been pushed too far, to the point of abandoning an essential feature of night vision.

This method of eidetic reduction is an experimental method in the sense that a working phenomenologist must actually imagine a large number of variations of the phenomenon, without knowing ahead of time how the phenomenon will appear in all of these variations, or which of its features will be resistant to variation. Philosophical phenomenologists do not examine the consciousness of many different people in order to arrive at statistical data or empirical generalizations about human consciousness; instead each phenomenologist observes his or her own consciousness, and then imaginatively varies it, looking for structural patterns that seem constant. A further step is reporting any discovered patterns to other phenomenologists, who also undertake the method of imaginative variation in order to test and corroborate the reported essence.

Are there methodological analogues to the eidetic reduction in meditation? In general, meditation techniques increase awareness of one's own current experience and discourage imaginative flights away from one's current experience. The kind of imagination occurring in daydreaming, for example, is usually considered an obstacle to meditation. Eidetic reduction is not daydreaming, however, since it includes deliberation about what features to vary imaginatively, as well as memory of the results of variation; eidetic reduction is a more systematic and controlled use of imagination.

Still, systematic imagining of a series of variations of whatever one is currently experiencing during meditation may be construed by meditation teachers and students as thought distraction or entertainment. Instead of remaining focused on one's current meditative experience, a phenomenologist treats the experience as a baseline experience that would then be varied in imagination. Thus, at least on the surface, the eidetic reduction violates most meditation instructions.

There are, however, occasional techniques used in various meditation traditions that approach imaginative variation. For example, a *metta* meditation practiced in the *Vipassana* tradition (e.g., at the Insight Meditation Center in Barre, Massachusetts) proceeds through a series of imaginative variations on the intended receiver of *metta*. The meditator is instructed to imagine sending loving kindness first to someone they love, then to someone they have just met, then to someone they may have only seen, then to strangers around the world. Although the purpose of this *metta* practice is to develop a subjective capacity, rather than to vary features of an experienced phenomenon in order to identify its essence, it does share phenomenology's eidetic procedure of moving methodically through a series of imaginative variations. Other examples from other meditation traditions could be mentioned.

Despite many similarities between phenomenology and meditation as methods for observing one's own consciousness, the two differ significantly in terms of their stated purposes. Phenomenology aims at observing one's own consciousness for the purpose of identifying and describing the basic structures of the processes occurring in consciousness, as well as the basic structures of the objects that one is aware of through these processes. "Objects" is meant here in the broad sense of any thing, event, quality, etc. of which one is conscious. Phenomenologists call the first kind of analysis, which focuses on subjective processes, "noetic analysis," and the second kind of analysis, which focuses on the objects of consciousness, "noematic analysis."

*differences
in
purposes
of
phenomenology
and
meditation*

Meditation also aims at observing one's own consciousness, but, as in Theravadan mindfulness practice, for the purpose of quieting the processes occurring in consciousness and, ultimately, for the purpose of achieving *moksha* or *nirvana*. Even though meditation is used to identify the basic patterns of consciousness, this is an intermediary step on the way to longer range goals of releasing the mind from patterns productive of suffering and illusion. In other words, phenomenology's basic aim is to describe consciousness, whereas meditation's basic aim is to change or purify consciousness.

It is possible to use phenomenology and meditation together. Specifically, one can apply the phenomenological method to medita-

tion in order to describe what happens when one meditates, and in order to identify basic patterns or structures of consciousness occurring in meditation experiences.¹⁵ A thorough phenomenological description of meditation experiences would be a three-fold description of (1) the conscious processes occurring during meditation, including any essential structures inherent in these processes (noetic analysis); (2) the objects one is aware of during meditation, including the essential structures of such objects (noematic analysis); (3) the correlations between noetic processes and noematic properties.¹⁶ A rigorous phenomenological description would also have to maintain the phenomenological reduction throughout, thereby eliminating presumptions and inferences about the reality statuses of (1) and (2).

*the
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forgoes
explanation
in favor
of
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Although less than a thorough phenomenological description of meditation experiences, the following section offers a descriptive sketch of two meditation experiences. Despite its incompleteness, it is phenomenological in method because it uses the phenomenological reduction and foregoes explanation in favor of description. What it does not include is a series of imaginative variations on the processes (noeses) or objects (noemata) of consciousness; in other words, it does not undertake eidetic reduction. Such variations were not performed at the time the two experiences were occurring. To try to perform them now, much later, would be methodologically slack.¹⁷

PHENOMENOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION OF TWO MEDITATION EXPERIENCES

Pre-phenomenological Note

Although it is not within this author's competence to provide a description of experiences occurring at advanced stages of meditation practice, it is possible to describe meditation experiences occurring at a more rudimentary level. The two meditation experiences described in the following pages occurred within the context of a meditation practice developed (on and off) over a fifteen year period; at the time these experiences occurred, this practice involved sitting in concentrative meditation for at least an hour a day. These are still beginner's experiences, according to the standards of Eastern meditation traditions such as Transcendental Meditation, Tibetan Buddhism, Southeast Asian *Vipassana* and Zen Buddhism. This neither negates nor devalues them as meditation experiences; they are what they are.

There are many kinds of meditation experiences, of which the following two probably provide a fairly representative range. The

first is an experience achieved during normal sitting meditation practice. Although fairly simple, this first kind of experience may not occur in every meditation session; it does not seem inevitable or even typical for beginners. It does, however, seem to occur increasingly with practice, so that one comes to recognize it as an experience that has happened before, during meditation, and as an experience that might occur again during any meditation session, without special techniques for inducing it.

The second meditation experience is a rarer kind of experience, which does not seem easily achievable or sustainable by the beginning practitioner; its occurrence seems more unique and surprising than the first experience. It is an experience in which one's perceptions are intensified and integrated into a harmonious whole. In my own case, this experience lasted about an hour and faded off gently during the next two or three hours. It occurred midway through a meditation retreat, which involved eleven to fourteen hours of sitting or walking meditation each day for nine days. Briefly, this second, "heightened awareness" experience seems closest to an experience of the "buzzing, blooming confusion" that William James spoke of, minus the confusion. Instead of confusion, there is a sense of balance and blending in the experience. During a heightened awareness experience of this kind, at least one mode of perception (in this case, hearing) seems to become more alive and comprehensive.

a
"heightened
awareness"
experience

Phenomenological Description of a "Quiet Focus" Experience

It is an experience in which thoughts quiet down, making it relatively easy to concentrate on a single focus. This quiet focus experience seems to require some achievement, or at least patience, on the part of a beginning practitioner, in the sense that it may not occur right away during a session but may occur only fifteen to thirty minutes into a session, if it occurs at all.

Usually the quiet focus experience is preceded by a different kind of experience, which is very common during meditation and which is characterized by a stream of thoughts that seem to be spoken in the mind—i.e., chatter inside the mind. When this inner chatter experience occurs, it is usually difficult to focus on something other than the thoughts being immediately chattered in one's mind; one needs to use effort to turn one's attention away from the chattering thoughts back to one's chosen point of focus. But when the quiet focus experience occurs, it seems as though an alteration occurs within consciousness—as though the mind shifts gears—because the mind seems to become so much quieter in contrast to the (silent) noise of thoughts in the preceding kind of inner chatter experience.

Noetic Analysis Some thoughts still occur during the quiet focus experience, but they seem to fade into the background and become a faint whisper that is not as distracting as the noisy chatter that preceded it. Moreover, the thoughts that do arise during the quiet focus experience seem to be more slowly paced and even seem to be within one's own control, so that if one wants to eliminate them, one can, but if one wants to allow them their say, one can do that, too, without being drawn off focus. In general, then, the quiet focus experience differs qualitatively from what usually precedes it in consciousness by its overall hushed calm and by its more controllable focus.

More specific details about the nature of the conscious processes that occur in this quiet focus experience include the ease, naturalness and steadiness of focusing. One's attention centers with relatively little effort on some chosen point of focus (for example, the sensations in one's abdomen or nostrils); it seems to happen as easily as flipping a switch—all of a sudden, one can focus on the chosen point without deliberately trying to focus on it. There is still some felt sense of skill being needed to hold attention balanced on the point of focus, not allowing it to slip away, yet this skill seems almost effortless.

*the
naturalness
of
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experience*

The naturalness of the experience is the sense that one's attention rests on the focal point with a natural kind of inertia; it seems as though there is an inner, non-material gravity keeping one's attention where it should be, so despite small jiggles due to soft-spoken, background thoughts and to physical sensations in the body, attention does not stray from the focal point. There seems to be "nowhere else to go in one's thoughts, nothing else to do," except to attend to the chosen focal point; it just seems to be the right thing to do, and so it feels natural.

The steadiness of the focusing seems related to its ease and naturalness. With the onset of the quiet focus experience, attention becomes prolonged: attention seems to hover rather than flit from thought to thought. This steadiness seems to be responsible for a kind of absorption in the focal point; the longer attention holds on the focal point, the more it seems to embrace the whole of the focal point. This steadiness of focus is a very satisfying feeling; the experience seems so calm and so complete that its continuation is smooth.

Time seems to become irrelevant in the sense that there is no felt need to get on with things, no felt need for a sequence of thoughts, especially not for a sequence that implies progress or movement of thought. What was past and what might be future seem to be there in suspension but not truly needed. One almost has the sense that one could continue in the experience indefinitely; bodily sensations

do not alarm one enough to consider ending the meditation session; notions of what one planned to do that day seem fictional. (Eventually, however, when the quiet focus experience is “lost,” that is, replaced by another kind of experience, one returns to a sense that time matters and that a sequence of activities needs to be performed in the time that remains, i.e., in the meditation session, in the day, the week, the year, one’s lifetime, etc.)

Noematic Analysis One interesting feature of the object of awareness, when one’s focal point is the abdominal rising and falling of the breath, is that between an exhalation and the next inhalation there can be a fairly lengthy period of no movement, only deep hush. Each breath, comprising both an inhaling and exhaling phase, seems to be wrapped in a soft package of soundproof cloud, separated from the next breath; and it hangs there suspended until finally a new inhalation phase starts up. It almost seems as though one could stop breathing for a long time and nothing would happen—no damage—to consciousness. Thus even though breathing continues without deliberate effort, one wonders if and when the next breath will happen. Also it makes breathing seem like a sequence of separable events, each breathing phase surrounded by a void.

In sum, a quiet focus experience seems discontinuous with the experiences that precede it during meditation; it is characterized by relative silence, by ease and steadiness of focus, and by a sense of naturalness. Although a generally pleasant experience, it does not seem particularly rare or striking. One has a sense that this kind of experience can be repeated, and that it has, in fact, recurred, in a meditation practice that extends over months or years. In other words, it seems to be an accomplishment that comes with practice.

*discontinuous
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the
experiences
that
precede
it*

Phenomenological Description of a “Heightened Awareness” Experience¹⁸

It seems as though nothing escapes being perceived, and it even seems as though a limitless number of sounds could be included within attention—almost as though all sounds in the world could be embraced within consciousness at the same time—making the experience seem very full and rich. The experience seems to overflow with perceptual content and yet there is no sense of strain or frenzy in the experience; instead there is a feeling of security that all perceptual data, no matter how varied or voluminous, can be easily accommodated within the experience.

Moreover, all sounds are received equally; none seems to be given more attention than the others. All sounds seem equally vivid and important; none are heard as louder or softer, and none are conceived as more important or less important than others. In other

words, there does not seem to be a distinction between background sounds and foreground sounds (i.e., the sounds actually focused upon). Instead of such a sharp distinction between foreground and background sounds, there seems to be an expansion of awareness so that all sounds can be focused upon at once, without requiring a ranking for attention's sake. Thus the experience seems to be a pure hearing without preference or judgment.

Although the experience includes some identification of perceptual data (e.g., awareness that the sounds are of a cricket chirping, a car or airplane passing, a bird flying), there does not seem to be a commitment to identifying and cataloguing the sounds. Thus whatever identification there is, seems somewhat lackadaisical or superfluous. The sounds just seem to "come in and go out" without any attempt to retain them in consciousness or to examine their causes or significance. Moreover, there is no attempt to identify patterns in the sounds—for example, no effort to discover repetitions or causal connections amongst sounds. There is virtually no use of memory or anticipation in the experience; instead of searching for patterns in the sounds, one is simply immersed in perception, completely attuned to the full impact of the present moment, with all that it contains.

*a
seamless
unity
of
objects
and
sensations*

In such a heightened awareness experience one's surroundings appear to be a seamless unity of objects and sensations; not only is there no sensed distinction between different things (even when one can identify each individually), but there seems to be no distinction between a perceived thing, one's perception of the thing, and one's own consciousness. For example, the sounds appear to have different qualities of pitch, rhythm, etc., as well as the individuality of tones beginning and ending at different times. Yet the sounds also seem to belong with one another, as though they are part of a universal symphony; there is no conflict between the sounds. Further, there is a seamless quality in the experience such that everything perceived, including oneself, seems glued together into one huge bubble of experience. One seems to be inside this bubble, surrounded on all sides by a wealth of harmonious perceptions, while at the same time part of this bubble as well. Another way to describe this peculiar seamless quality of the experience is that one seems to be immersed in a highly active medium. What one experiences (e.g., sounds, the objects supposedly producing those sounds) are also part and parcel of this medium—they are not distinct from this medium—just as oneself is part of this medium. Thus there is an overall sense of blending, merging, integration and harmony of all ingredients of the heightened awareness experience—oneself, all perceptual data, and all the objects being perceived (e.g., a melting together of oneself, all the sounds of chirping, roaring, laughter, and all the birds, airplanes, people, etc.) into a unified, yet limitless whole.

One offshoot of this sense of seamless merging and “surroundingness” is that one seems to lose one’s normal sense of space and direction during the heightened awareness experience. Sounds do not seem to come from any specific direction; one does not seem able to locate the direction from which the sounds supposedly come. Instead, all the sounds seem all around. It is as though one is immersed in water and the sounds are simply in the water, too, rather than coming from a specific part of space. Distance seems less relevant than in normal perceptual experiences; one feels as though one can perceive things near or far with the same kind of awareness.

Even though this kind of heightened awareness experience is primarily perceptual, it does not exclude reflective thoughts about the experience itself. The vitality, intensity and comprehensiveness of the experience are usually noticeable within the experience. While on the one hand, one is alertly attentive to a wealth of perceptual data, on the other hand, one recognizes the qualitative difference between one’s immediate experience and the more typical kinds of perceptual experiences one has had in life. Thus even though one’s attention is engrossed in perception, one is able to reflect upon the altered nature of the experience and judge it as a heightening of awareness. There is a quality of surprise (at least for the beginning practitioner) in this reflective acknowledgement that the heightened awareness experience is truly different from the vast majority of perceptual experiences; one is rather awe-struck at the peculiar nature of the experience; one even wonders how the experience is possible at all.

This particular kind of heightened awareness experience does not, however, seem to be a mystical, ecstatic or extraordinary experience. The content of the experience is ordinary; the only thing remarkable about the experience is the quality of one’s awareness—not what one actually perceives. For example, one hears the same old sounds as one usually would—birds singing, wind blowing, people walking—only these sounds are heard all together so that they seem richer, fuller and more integrated than they would in a typical hearing experience. Even though the heightened awareness experience is satisfying, and usually one does not want it to end, the experience does not include positive emotions of joy, delight or ecstasy; the experience actually seems neutral in its emotional tone. Thus, during the experience, one even becomes convinced that such heightened awareness is accessible at any time, despite its rarity in one’s own experience. One imagines that perhaps it is an underlying level of all perceptual experience, only we just do not notice it.

*the
content
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experience
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A final important characteristic of such a heightened awareness experience is that it is relatively uninterrupted by thoughts. During

the experience, one's mind seems empty of the usual worries, memories, desires, daydreams and other kinds of thoughts that supplant one another in fairly rapid succession in one's stream of consciousness and that tend to unsettle one's concentration on a focal point. There are still thoughts, in addition to perceptions, during the experience, but they seem faraway, as a kind of muffled, undercurrent voice. They seem "weaker in voltage" than thoughts usually do in normal consciousness, so that they do not disturb or shake awareness of sounds. Also the thoughts seem trivial, like a passing breeze that does little more than flutter the edges of things. Thus, the heightened awareness experience seems to have openness and emptiness, not in the sense of being nothing at all; rather, it is an emptiness which allows everything in. Because the heightened awareness experience is not interrupted by distracting thoughts, it is fuller and more continuously smooth than typical perceptual experiences. There is a vivid plenitude of perceptual data without the mind feeling strained or overloaded—the "buzzing, blooming confusion" but without the confusion.

In sum, the kind of heightened awareness experience described above is a sustained perceptual experience characterized by a greater richness of perceptual data, by a relative absence of distracting thoughts, and by an overall sense of merging. During the experience, one seems to be aware of all perceptual data equally, without a ranking of data in terms of their relative importance, and without a sense of how near or far the perceived objects are. The experience seems rarer than other kinds of meditative experiences, and includes recognition within the experience of its unusual nature. Its effects last beyond the "official" end of a meditation session, gradually diminishing over the course of a couple hours.

CONCLUSION

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phenomenology
and
meditation*

It is tricky to combine meditation and phenomenology, but possible. Their common ground lies in their training of attentiveness to the processes and contents of consciousness. They both dispense with attitudes that allow "real world concerns" to dominate one's thoughts, emotions, body at the expense of reflexive awareness. They both are primarily practices rather than substantive theories.

What trained phenomenologists can bring to meditation is a similar practice of observing one's own consciousness closely, a methodological familiarity with suspending the demands, enticements and commitments of a supposedly real world, and an experimental procedure (eidetic variation) that can, when appropriate, be used to stretch and to test what one experiences while in meditation. What trained meditators can bring to phenomenology is a disciplined

patience and a subtle attunement, by means of which the finer details of the processes and contents of consciousness can be observed.

What may prove to be the biggest obstacle to their collaboration is the difference between the meditator's need to sustain meditation unbroken and the phenomenologist's need to experiment upon meditation experiences by intervening with eidetic variation. Meditators sustain their meditation for the long-range purposes of uncovering truth, and of changing or clarifying deeper levels of consciousness. Perhaps the ideal is represented by Gautama Siddhartha's uninterrupted meditation under the Bo tree. Phenomenologists, on the other hand, wish to identify and analyze the subjective processes and the contents of meditation experiences; especially by performing the eidetic reduction, they run the risk of interrupting meditation in order to make their analysis methodologically complete.

*their
different
needs*

NOTES

¹Some authors who use the terms "phenomenology" or "phenomenological" refer to psychological theories of introspection developed by Wundt and Titchener, rather than to the branch of psychology that, in a stricter sense, has developed under the name "phenomenological psychology." This latter, more technical kind of phenomenology can be traced back to the philosophical phenomenology of Edmund Husserl. Giorgi (1983) and Ashworth (1976) distinguish phenomenological psychology in the stricter sense from other branches of psychology that are loosely referred to as phenomenology in the psychological literature.

²See, for example, the "Profiles of Meditation Experience Form (POME)" questionnaire, outlined in Malieszewski, Twemlow, Brown and Engler (1981); the "Profile of Trance, Imaging and Meditation Experience (TIME)" questionnaire mentioned in Forte, Brown and Dysart (1987-88); and the "Phenomenology of Consciousness Questionnaire (PCQ)" applied in Pekala and Levine (1982a), Pekala and Levine (1982b), and Pekala, Levine and Wegner (1985).

³Notable exceptions include R. Walsh's two descriptions of his own meditation experiences in Initial meditative experiences: Part I, *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 9, 92-151, 1977; Initial meditative experiences: Part II, *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 10, 1-28, 1978; S.J. Hendlin, (1979) Initial Zen intensive (*sesshin*): a subjective account, *Journal of Pastoral Counseling*, 14(2), 27-43. Other examples occur in the autobiographies or journals of yogis, e.g., Yogananda (1946).

"Summaries based upon Eastern texts include Mishra (1963), Goleman (1972), Golman (1976), Brown (1977), Brown (1986), Brown and Engler (1980), Epstein (1990). Although many Eastern texts discuss the kinds of subjective experiences occurring during meditation, as well as the progressive stages of meditation, most classical texts tend to be condensed synopses of many meditators' experiences, rather than extended phenomenological descriptions of each kind of experience. Western summaries of these texts do not themselves take a phenomenological approach, but take an approach comparable to an historian's approach; they recount and outline the categories of mental functions and stages of meditation, described in Eastern texts, as though these are reported facts about psychological processes. In other words, the psychologists summarizing these classical texts do not, as they write, attempt to replicate and describe the experiences referred to by Eastern texts.

⁵Examples of Western psychological studies that discuss or summarize experimental subjects' own descriptions of their experiences during meditation include Deikman (1963) and Suler (1990).

⁶Tart (1975), pp. 156-158; Shapiro (1982), p. 272; Shapiro (1984). Potential methodological difficulties of a more introspective or phenomenological approach to meditation are discussed in Maliszewski, Twemlow, Brown and Engler (1981); Shapiro (1983); Shapiro (1984).

⁷Sinari, R. (1965) The method of phenomenological reduction and yoga. *Philosophy East and West*, 15, 217-28; Puligandla, R., (1970) Phenomenological reduction and yogic meditation, *Philosophy East und West*, 20, 19-23.

⁸The classic and original formulations of the phenomenological method are by Edmund Husserl, especially his works, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, transi. W.R. Boyce Gibson, London: Collier Books, 1962; *Logical Investigations, Volumes 1 & 2*, transi. J.N. Findlay. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970; *Cartesian Meditations*, transi. Dorion Cairns, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970. For a general overview of the history of phenomenology, see Herbert Spiegelberg's *The Phenomenological Movement, Volumes I & 2*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971.

⁹ In philosophy, the Husserlian tradition of phenomenology is called "transcendental phenomenology."

¹⁰There are, of course, exceptions, e.g., Tart (1971); Walsh (1977 & 1978). Tart (1971) has recommended that meditators be trained in psychological research methods so that they may analyze their own meditation practice.

¹¹Husserl continually re-addresses these two techniques in his works in an attempt to formulate them more clearly. But for an initial account of the two techniques, one may consult his work *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, the eidetic reduction is described in chapters 2, 6, 7 and 10, and the phenomenological reduction in chapters 3-6.

¹²The phenomenological reduction is used to counteract the kind of automatization that Deikman (1966) describes; it is meant to suspend our habitual, virtually automatic ways of framing our experiences with categories, concepts, labels, etc.. The emphasis in the phenomenological reduction, however, is more narrowly focused on suspending our almost automatic presuppositions about the reality status of what is experienced (Husserl calls this "suspension of the natural attitude"); whereas Deikman's concept of de-automatization is broader in range, since it covers a shift away from all abstract categorization.

¹³In phenomenology, the phenomenon under study could be anything. For example, in a study of meditation, it could be the subjective processes occurring during meditation (e.g., thinking, feeling, sensing, remembering, phantasizing, etc.), or the objects concentrated on during meditation (e.g., mantras, candle flames, *mandalas*, inhalations/exhalations, etc.).

¹⁴For an easy-to-understand introduction to this method of imaginative variation, see Don Ihde, (1977) *Experimental Phenomenology*. NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

¹⁵Insofar as meditation can be practiced during any activity, the reverse situation could also occur: one could meditate while doing phenomenology.

¹⁶Husserl defines noetic and noematic analyses in *Ideas*, chapters 9-10.

¹⁷The descriptions themselves were written shortly after the two experiences; the first was written less than an hour after the meditation experience ended, and the second was written less than a week after the experience occurred. (The second could not be written earlier because the author was on retreat, under restrictions that forbade writing.) Both descriptions have been edited since they were initially written. Strictly speaking, the descriptions are of remembered meditation experi-

ences. The author is not yet at the point of being able to write phenomenological descriptions while still in meditation.

¹⁸The following description combines noetic and noematic analysis because the nature of the experience, at the time that it was happening, made it difficult to discriminate between the content of consciousness (noema) and subjective processes of consciousness (noesis).

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THE MULTISTATE PARADIGM AND THE SPIRITUAL PATH OF JOHN OF THE CROSS

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INTRODUCTION

Of all the varieties of Christianity, the Roman Catholic is one of the richest in its history of spiritual disciplines. The foundation of these spiritual disciplines is found in the deeply mystical writings of the Johannine and Pauline strata of the New Testament. The early introduction of Greek neo-Platonism into Christian theology provided a conceptual-linguistic framework for the development of these "schools" of mysticism during the first Christian millennium. After 1000 AD, there was another significant historical moment when an extrinsic conceptual-linguistic model enabled a deepening of the interior life for those within the tradition.

In the fourteenth century Thomas Aquinas revolutionized Catholic theology by presenting it in the conceptual and linguistic framework of a newly rediscovered Aristotelianism. Scholasticism, as his school was called, became the *lingua franca* of mystical theology until Vatican II in the early 1960s. As William Johnston aptly puts it:

Western mystical treatises from the fourteenth century used the language and framework of Aristotle and Thomas. Scholasticism was the language of the day. And spiritual writers until the Second Vatican Council spoke of *sense* and *spirit*, of the *three powers of the soul*, of the *memory*, the *understanding* and the *will*. They catalogued virtues and vices in the manner of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* or they spoke of the seven deadly sins and their contrary virtues. They talked about union with God in scholastic terms (Johnston, 1991, p. 3).

*a
deepening
of the
interior
life*

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Since the early sixties, much has changed. For American Catholics, Thomas Merton introduced Eastern mystical traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism. The Jesuits have also been significant in this regard. Jungian psychology, Myers-Briggs typology, the Enneagram, body-work, and most New Age movements are also prominent in workshops for the professed religious, and increasingly, lay Catholics. The Jesus Prayer, which has its home in the Eastern Christian hesychastic movement dating back to the Desert Fathers, and “centering prayer” which has its roots in the anonymous fourteenth-century English work, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, are also gaining popularity as spiritual practices. The result is a richness, but a richness for which scholasticism is no longer very helpful as a conceptual-linguistic framework.

One alternative is the linguistic and conceptual framework of *multistate education*. A concise presentation of this model is found in Thomas B. Roberts’ “Multistate Education: Metacognitive Implications of the Mindbody Psychotechnologies,” (1989). Roberts argues that underlying the burgeoning contemporary Western interest in spiritual practices, self-help, holistic health, martial arts, stress-reduction, etc., is:

... the central assumption of a new (or renewed) approach to human nature; the human mind and body (considered as one) produces and uses a large number of psychophysiological states. This fact has profound metacognitive implication for the cognitive sciences and for éducation at all levels (Roberts, 1989, p. 84).

*the
multistate
paradigm*

Roberts calls this approach to human nature and education the *multistate paradigm*. He explains it in terms of three central concepts: mindbody states, mindbody psychotechnologies, and residency. As defined by the author, a *mindbody state* is:

... a system or pattern of overall psychological and physiological functioning at any one time.. .. From an information-processing perspective, mindbody states are high level executive systems which integrate and control lower level information processing systems (Roberts, 1989, p. 85).

Mindbody psychotechnologies are means .. of producing a mindbody state or states” (Roberts, 1989, p. 85). Examples given by the author are:

. . . contemporary approaches to meditation, biofeedback, psychoactive drugs, yoga, prayer and other spiritual disciplines, so called “martial” arts, hypnosis, dream-work, and others (Roberts, 1989, p. 85).

Residency refers to the following assumptions made for purposes of guiding theory and observation:

1. Human abilities and inabilities “reside” in mindbody states.
2. The strength of abilities, inabilities and disabilities differs from one mindbody state to another.
3. Analogs of abilities which reside in our usual, wakeful mindbody state may reside in other states (Roberts, 1989, p. 86).

To adopt the multistate paradigm as a framework for analyzing a spiritual tradition means viewing such a tradition as a psycho-technological system whose purpose is to produce specific mindbody states and their corresponding resident characteristics, usually in a specific sequence. The multistate paradigm thus offers a simple, objective perspective from which, for example, a general overview of the Roman Catholic spiritual tradition might be developed. One could then make connections among the various Catholic sub-traditions (e.g., the Ignatian, Carmelite, Benedictine, Franciscan, etc.), as well as with non-Catholic and non-Christian spiritual disciplines. What follows is a first tentative step in using this paradigm: an analysis of one discrete sub-tradition in Roman Catholic spirituality, from the standpoint of the multistate paradigm. The sub-tradition I have chosen is one that is generally considered significant, the path of spiritual development presented in the writings of the sixteenth-century Spanish Carmelite, John of the Cross. The standard critical English translation of John’s corpus, which I will use exclusively, is Kavanaugh (1991).

*an
analysis
of
one
discrete
sub-tradition*

CONCEPTUAL FIELD OF THE SPIRITUALITY OF JOHN OF THE CROSS

General Overview

In the works of John of the Cross, the ultimate spiritual goal is typically conceptualized as union with a personal God, wherein:

... both God and the soul become one in participant transformation, and the soul appears to be God more than a soul. Indeed, it is God by participation. Yet truly, its being (even though transformed) is naturally as distinct from God’s as it was before... (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 165).

The human experience most often chosen by Catholic mystics as a metaphor for spiritual development towards this union is that of intimate human relationship, especially that of romantic love. This is witnessed to by the fact that most of the corpus of John of the Cross is organized as commentaries on three poems which are literally romantic allegories. One caveat is necessary, however. Just as human romantic love can be so profound that words fail, John makes it clear that the deepest union with God is ultimately an

ineffable transcending of, .. even the loftiest object that can be known or experienced” (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 161).

Specific Assumptions

Theological As a Roman Catholic, John of the Cross assumes the existence of a personal God, the beginning and end of all things, who cannot be experienced empirically or comprehended conceptually. Further, as a Christian and in distinction to other theistic non-Christian world-views, he assumes God became incarnate most perfectly in Jesus of Nazareth, and that God is triune.

Anthropological For John of the Cross, steeped in the tradition of scholasticism, the human person is comprised of *body* and *soul*. The soul has two components, the *sensory* and *spiritual*. The sensory is understood by John to be the lower or inferior aspect. Its faculties are the exterior senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell, and the interior faculties of fantasy (receives, stores and presents sensory forms and images to the intellect) and imagination (creates material forms and images). Meditation (treated in the next section) is the work of the interior sensory faculties (Kavanaugh, 1991, pp. 185-86).

*two
realms
of
experience*

The spiritual component is understood by John to be the superior component of the soul. Its faculties are the intellect (which may receive knowledge actively through the sensory part of the soul, or passively through grace), the memory (which is the faculty for recalling and reliving the past), and the will (which is the faculty that chooses). It should be noted that when John refers to the sensory and spiritual parts of the soul, “He is talking about two realms of experience rather than two parts of the soul” (Cummins, 1991, p. 131).

As a Roman Catholic John also assumes humans are created and sustained by God. Without God, the individual would not exist or continue in being. Thus individual human existence, in and of itself, is seen as essentially contingent upon a relationship to God, technically referred to as *substantial* or *ontological* union with God. The ultimate goal of human development for Catholics is conceptualized as the full, conscious realization of this union of self with God, which is the result of human effort and divine action (what the tradition calls *grace*). It is also described as the movement from knowledge to experience to transformation.

Given this definition of *ontological union*, knowledge of self and knowledge of God are understood to be inextricably linked. For John, knowledge of self is coming to see oneself truly, without

rationalizations or masks. True self-knowledge is obscured, however, by *inordinate* attachment to all that is not God: sensory pleasure, people, institutions, emotions, concepts, memories, images, objects, experiences, etc., which fill the human intellect, will, and memory, disordering natural *appetites* (affective tendencies toward some object).

The root of inordinate attachment is human desire. True self-knowledge is thus a function of the progressive recognition and mortification of increasingly subtle levels of attachment, or in John's language, the *emptying* of the intellect, will, memory, and natural appetites. To the extent that one becomes *mortified*,¹ or *empty*, thus gaining true self-knowledge, to that extent one gains conscious experience of God and moves toward participant transformation.

According to John, one level of recognition and mortification, or emptying, is possible through human effort (*active purification*), and the other only through divine action (*passive purification*). He refers to each of these levels as a *night*, and says:

*active
and
passive
purification*

. . . people should insofar as possible strive to do their part in purifying and perfecting themselves and thereby merit God's divine cure. In this cure God will heal them of what through their own efforts they were unable to remedy. No matter how much individuals do through their own efforts, they cannot actively purify themselves enough to be disposed in the least degree for the divine union of the perfection of love. God must take over and purge them in that fire that is dark for them. . . (Kavanaugh, 1991, pp. 366-67).

According to John the initial level of mortification is active. The typical movement is from exterior (sense) to interior (spirit) and from active to passive. Thus in John's terminology purification moves from the *active night of the sense* to the *passive night of the sense* to the *active night of the spirit* to the *passive night of the spirit*.² In more contemporary terms this movement can be described as the growth from the *knowledge* of God and self, to the *experience* of God and self, to the *transformation* of self in God.

John terms the ultimate goal of spiritual development the *union of likeness* or *participant transformation* and describes it as being achieved when:

... the intellect of the soul is God's intellect; its will is God's will; its memory is the memory of God; and its delight is God's delight; and although the substance of the soul is not the substance of God, since it cannot undergo a substantial conversion into Him, it has become God through participation in God, being united to and absorbed in him . . . (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 671).

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT ACCORDING TO JOHN OF THE CROSS:
THE MULTISTATE PARADIGM APPLIED

The writings of John of the Cross are addressed to Roman Catholics who have consciously entered the path of spiritual development, people who would speak of themselves as “seeking God” or wanting to “grow closer to God,” and who desire clear instructions how to proceed. At this point in their interior life the spiritual path presented in the writings of John of the Cross is appropriate and effective.

In brief, this path of spiritual development has three levels: beginning, proficient, and perfect. They are also known as the purgative, illuminative, and unitive. I will adopt the former naming convention for my analysis.

Level I: Beginning (Purgative)

For John there are two stages to this level: *the active night of sense* and the *passive night of sense*. In the *active night*, progress is the result of the intellectual, affective, moral, and spiritual training involved in the practice of three closely-related psychotechnologies (henceforth PTs): active purification, discernment of spirits, and mental prayer (also referred to as meditation). It (progress) is understood to be, and experienced as, the result of human effort applied to these PTs, rather than divine action (the technical traditional term is *grace*). Thus at this stage, to use the language of the *multistate paradigm*, PTs catalyze mindbody states (henceforth MBSs) and their (MBSs') related *resident abilities* (henceforth RAs). With this in mind, description of Stage 1 of Level I will be organized as a sequential examination of the three PTs noted above, with attention to the related MBSs and RAs. At the subsequent stage of Level I (*passive night of sense*), PTs are better understood as developmentally helpful responses to spontaneous MBSs arising from beyond human control, and that section will be organized differently.

*the
result
of
human
effort*

Stage 1: Active Night of Sense

PTs As noted above, the three Level I Stage 1 PTs are active purification, discernment of spirits, and mental prayer.

Active Purification For John of the Cross, *active purification* is the heart of this initial stage of Level I. The object of purification is any inordinate, voluntary, habitual desire (appetite) of the sensory part of human nature. This purification involves the, “privation and purgation of all sensible appetites for the external things of the

world, the delights of the flesh, and the gratifications of the will” (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 119).

It is John’s view that:

People, indeed, are ignorant who think it is possible to reach this high state of union with God without first emptying their appetite of all the natural . . . things that can be a hindrance to them.... For there is an extreme distance between such appetites and that . . . state, which is nothing less than transformation in God (Kavanaugh, 1991, p.127).

He is careful to point out, however, that it is not the things of this world that occupy the soul or cause it harm, for they do not enter it. It is the *desire* for them that is the problem. Progress occurs when, “... sensible objects begin to fade from sight” (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 156). The specific method (PT) he proposes has three components: the imitation of Christ, renunciation of sensory satisfaction, and mortification of the natural passions of joy, hope, fear and sorrow.

*the
method
has
three
components*

By the “imitation of Christ” John means developing the habitual desire to conform one’s life to that of Jesus of Nazareth, which requires education sufficient to know how to, “. . . behave in all events as He would” (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 148).

According to John, “renunciation of sensory satisfaction” means foregoing any sensory pleasure that is not purely for the honor and glory of God. If a sensory experience, which does not bring one closer to God, is unavoidable,

... it will be sufficient to have no desire for it. By this method you should endeavor ... to leave the senses as though in darkness, mortified, and empty of pleasure. With such vigilance you will gain a great deal in a short time (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 149).

Concerning the method of “mortifying the natural passions” we have one of John’s most quoted passages:

Endeavor to be inclined always: not to the easiest, but to the most difficult; not to the most delightful, but to the harshest; not to the most gratifying, but to the less pleasant; not to what means rest for you, but to hard work; not to the consoling, but to the unconsoling; not to the most, but to the least; not to the highest and most precious, but to the lowest and most despised; not to wanting something, but to wanting nothing; do not go about looking for the best of temporal things, but the worst, and desire to enter for Christ into complete nudity, emptiness, and poverty in everything in the world. You should embrace these practices earnestly and try to overcome the repugnance of your will toward them. If you sincerely put them into practice with order and discretion, you will discover in them great delight and consolation (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 149).

Application of the three components of this PT (*active purification*) is difficult for those beginning the path of conscious spiritual development because it calls for the renunciation of attachments. Struggling with these attachments brings one to the MBS of the recognition of one's "spirits," the characteristic moods, feelings, thoughts, desires and tendencies which inhabit one's consciousness. This recognition is the basis for a second PT, usually termed *discernment of spirits* in the tradition of Catholic spirituality.

*fruits
of the
spirit,
works
of the
flesh*

Discernment of Spirits Once a person has gained some ability to recognize his or her own "spirits" as a result of active purification, he or she can learn to consciously discriminate between those "spirits" which lead to good, and those which lead to evil. This discrimination is termed *discernment of spirits*, and the standard or norm by which "good spirits" are separated from "evil spirits" is found in a classic New Testament passage (Galatians 5:16-25) wherein the "good spirits" are those identified as "fruits of the spirit," and the evil are those designated as the "works of the flesh":

My point is that you should live in accord with the spirit and you will not yield to the cravings of the flesh. The flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; the two are directly opposed. This is why you do not do what your will intends. It is obvious what proceeds from the flesh (works of the flesh): every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse, impurity, immorality, unrestrained lust, debauchery, idolatry, sorcery, magic, hostility, hatred, strife, discord, contention, quarrels, jealousy, envy, anger, rage, selfish ambition, disputes or outbreaks of selfishness, dissension, drunkenness, carousing, revelries, orgies and the like. I warn you, as I have warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. In contrast, the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, generosity, faith, gentleness, humility, courtesy, considerateness, self-control, and chastity. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the spirit, let us follow the spirit's lead.

Practicing *discernment of spirits* means spending time learning one's "spirits," sifting the good from the evil, and attempting to follow the former and renounce the latter. It is thus ultimately a form of *active purification*. It leads to greater sensitivity to self and to God, which begins to extend beyond the actual period of discernment. It also leads to an increase in positive MBSs referred to above as the "fruit of the spirit" and a decrease in negative MBSs referred to as "the works of the flesh." The actual RA is the ever-growing ability to recognize and discern one's "spirits," at increasingly subtle levels.

Mental Prayer (Meditation) The final PT at this stage is *mental prayer* (meditation), understood as the application of reason or imagination to biblical texts for the purpose of deepening one's

knowledge of God or Christ. It is necessary to note, however, that the ultimate purpose of mental prayer is not the acquisition of knowledge. Rather it is the ignition of desire for the experience of God, or what John calls the “love of God.” Developing this “love of God” is necessary because:

... the sensory appetites are moved and attracted toward sensory objects with such cravings that if the spiritual part of the soul is not fired with other, more urgent longings for spiritual things, the soul will be able neither to overcome the yoke of nature nor enter the night of sense; nor will it have the courage to live in the darkness of all things by denying its appetites for them (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 152).

Thus, although the overt activity of mental prayer is cognitive, the deeper purpose is the gradual re-orientation of desire from “sensory objects” to “spiritual things.” Ultimately this leads to MBSs of *consolation* (pleasant affective MBSs such as feelings of deep peace, joy, etc.) and *light* (spontaneous cognitive insights wherein one moves from conceptual to real knowledge of a topic).

RAs There are two RAs that result from the discipline of mental prayer. One is the ability to consciously withdraw from the ordinary waking state and its distractions to an interior MBS of attentive receptivity, a RA that I will designate *concentration*. The second is *discernment of spirits*, described in the preceding section.

Typical Level I Stage 1 Developmental Progression A typical progression in Level I Stage I can be described in terms of a sequence of MBSs: boredom, then pleasant states consistent with the development of concentration and active purification. Any pain encountered is the pain of actively saying no to inordinate appetites, or yes to development of positive virtues. Mental prayer tends to become easy and joyous, one to two years after beginning. This MBS may last for several years, often in conjunction with feelings of growth and holiness. Imperfections (including the “spirits” which are their roots) identified through discernment and mortified through active purification, may seem to disappear. The mind and heart are both engaged, with lights and consolations occurring during mental prayer. It is a “honeymoon” period, which continues, with changes in quality, to the extent that Level I PTs are practiced consistently and in consultation with a spiritual director.

*boredom,
then
pleasant
states*

Transition to Level I Stage 2 At Level 1 Stage 1, PTs lead to particular MBSs. What the tradition calls *grace* is not involved. Level I Stage 1 spiritual development is an active process analogous to getting into shape, losing weight, or getting an academic degree. This changes, however, gradually or suddenly. A person moves to a new MBS progression, described below. In the words of John:

. . . the practice of beginners (Level I Stage 1) is to meditate and make acts of discursive reflection with the imagination. A person in this state should be given matter for meditation and discursive reflection, and he should by himself make interior acts and profit in spiritual things from the delight and satisfaction of the senses. For by being fed with the relish of spiritual things, the appetite is torn away from sensual things and weakened in regard to things of the world. But when the appetite has been fed somewhat, and has become in a certain fashion accustomed to spiritual things, and has acquired some fortitude and constancy, God begins to wean the soul. . . (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 685).

progress
that
seems
exactly
the
opposite

This “weaning” is initially very painful, and is the beginning of the second stage of Level 1, which John calls the *passive night of sense*. When the painful “weaning,” which John calls “darkness” or “dryness,” becomes more or less constant, and is accompanied by the “three signs” (described below), the individual is regarded as having entered the second stage of Level I. The key to growth in this latter stage of Level 1 is the belief (later realized experientially) that what is going on is in fact progress, although it seems exactly the opposite.

Stage 2: Passive Night of Sense

As noted above, Level I Stage 1 experience is ultimately pleasant emotionally (*consolations*) and stimulated or inspired cognitively (*lights*). The tradition speaks of it as “God carrying the soul.” The danger is that one can easily assume that the good that he or she experiences comes from himself or herself (inflation), or one can become attached to the positive MBSs that characterize this period (spiritual lust and greed). So, again in the language of the tradition, God “puts the soul down,” or “weans it.” The images are parental, that of putting a child down to learn to walk on its own, or denying it the breast so that it might learn to consume more solid food. Ultimately, it is the experience of self apart from God. The typical way this is actually experienced subjectively is as the loss of satisfaction in all those worldly things that once gave one pleasure. John speaks of it as the “tearing of the first (temporal) veil.”⁴

At this stage, presentation of the MBSs will precede that of the PTs because the MBSs are experienced as happening to the individual rather than as the result of the application of PTs. The PTs are recommended responses to the spontaneous MBSs, responses which facilitate continued progress.

MBSs John puts it dearly. After individuals have become adept at discernment, active purification, and mental prayer, and

... are going about their spiritual exercises with delight and satisfaction, when in their opinion the sun of divine favor is shining most

brightly on them, (it is at this time) that God darkens all this light and closes the door and the spring of the sweet spiritual water they were tasting as often and as long as they desired. . . (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 376).

The bottom falls out. Lights and consolations disappear. One may feel abandoned by God, or that one's recent interior experience has simply been a religious "phase." There may be the experience of personal nothingness and sinfulness. Mental prayer becomes difficult to impossible, and the natural tendency is aversion to this painful "darkness" and "dryness" and a desire to return to the "honeymoon" state.

PTs The darkness or dryness of the second stage intensifies until the individual either abandons the path, or consciously chooses to regard or accept the pain of dryness as the pain of healing, purification, and transformation. If the latter takes place, this conscious choice is the first PT, and as suggested earlier for this stage, is a response to a particular MBS ("darkness" or "dryness"). John encourages this choice. His position is that the pain of this stage, the passive purification or night, is actually the pain of imperfections being "burned up" by the "fire" of God's grace, by the actual experience of God. When the imperfections are totally consumed, the pain will end. John calls the adoption of this attitude, and fidelity to it, the "prayer of dryness or darkness." From his perspective the darkness is really light and is actually the beginning of *contemplation*, which is "nothing else than a secret and peaceful and loving inflow of God, which, if not hampered, fires the soul in the spirit of love" (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 382).

*the
prayer
of dryness
or
darkness*

The experience (MBS) of this "inflow" of God typically begins as an initial, subjectively painful experience of "dryness" or "darkness" together with what John calls a "habitual care and solicitude for God accompanied by grief or fear about not serving Him" (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 383). This aridity has the effect of purging the inordinate sensory appetites. The result is the growing ability to discern a more subtle interior experience that has been masked by the grosser sensory desires. John names this experience the "fire of love" or "inflow of God" or most simply, "contemplation." Although this "fire of love" (contemplation, the experience of God, inflow of God) is not commonly felt as a positive MBS at the outset, a person will begin to feel a certain longing for God. Gradually the individual becomes aware of being attracted by God's love and enkindled in it, without knowing how or where this attraction and love originates. And,

At times this flame and enkindling increases to such an extent that the soul desires God with urgent longings of love,. . . and, with no knowledge of its destination, sees itself annihilated in all heavenly and

earthly things in which it formerly found satisfaction; and it only sees that it is enamored, but knows not how (Kavanaugh, 1991, p.383).

development
of
attentive
equanimity

During the latter portion of this stage, a wide variety of MBSs, as described below in the context of Level II PTs, begin to occur as attention is withdrawn from the sensory realm of experience and turned toward the spiritual realm of experience. Their occurrence marks the end of the *passive night of sense* (Level I, Stage 2), and the beginning of the *active night of spirit* (Level II, Stage 1). This is a point where discernment is critical and John is very helpful. After pointing out that mental prayer has built a set of images, concepts, etc., in the individual's intellect, John says that there comes a time when they all have to be abandoned and the intellect emptied, if development is to proceed. This point is recognized by the conjunction of three "signs": there is no delight in creatures, the memory is centered on God, and mental prayer becomes impossible (Kavanaugh, 1991, pp. 189-90,377-80,685). When this is the case, "The advice proper for these individuals is that they must learn to abide in interior quietude with a loving attentiveness to God and pay no heed to the imagination and its work" (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 188). John thus counsels development of attentive equanimity, or loving attentiveness, to the experience of sensory darkness or dryness. This is the most important PT for progress at Level I Stage 2.

RAs If one maintains fidelity to the recommended PT, the following "benefits and blessings" are typical conséquences: self-knowledge and the concomitant knowledge (experience) of God; cleanness and purity of soul; purification of spiritual pride; love of neighbor; cessation of judgment of others; openness to being taught and directed by others; purification of spiritual avarice, lust, gluttony, anger, envy, and sloth; acquisition of the "fruit of the spirit," as well as theological, cardinal and moral virtues; .. the habitual remembrance of God, accompanied by a fear and dread of turning back on the spiritual road;" and frequent, unexpected lights and consolations which are imperceptible to external senses (Kavanaugh, 1991, pp. 384-92).

According to John, if the individual is destined to go further in spiritual development, this passive night of sense is lengthy and filled with trials and temptations. John takes particular note of three "spirits" which afflict those destined to go further: the spirit of fornication,⁵ the spirit of blasphemy,⁶ and the *spiritus vertiginis*? The ultimate purpose of such trials is to prepare the individual for the next level of interior growth, because successfully meeting them develops attentive equanimity, calms the four passions (joy, sorrow, hope, and fear) and the sensory appetites, and harmonizes the interior senses through cessation of discursive activity.

Level II: The Proficient Level (Illuminative)

Towards the end of the *passive night of sense*, a variety of MBSs begin to occur. When these begin to characterize a person's interior experience, the second major level of spiritual development can be said to have begun. This is the level of proficiency, or what the tradition calls the *illuminative* stage.

For John this level, like the first, comprises first an active, then passive purification. Here, however, the purification is of attachment to interior, "spiritual" possessions, rather than to the exterior, material possessions of Level I. Further, his presentation is organized based on his view of the spirit as comprised of three faculties: intellect, memory, and will. Thus the initial active stage of mortification is designated generally as the *active night of spirit*, but actually presented more specifically as the *active night of intellect*, *active night of memory*, and *active night of will*. The subsequent passive stage is termed the *passive night of spirit*, but is presented without further specification. These stages will be analyzed in order.

Stage 1: Active night of spirit (intellect, memory, will)

The general goal of this initial stage of Level II is the active attempt to divest (empty, mortify) the spirit of "all its imperfections and appetites for spiritual possessions" (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 154). For John this active mortification of spirit is necessary because:

*the
active
attempt
to
divest*

No creature, none of its actions and abilities, can reach or express God's nature. Consequently a soul must strip itself of everything pertaining to creatures (active night of sense) and of its actions and abilities (of its understanding, taste, and feeling) so that when everything unlike and unconformed to God is cast out, it may receive the likeness of God, since nothing contrary to the will of God will be left in it. Thus it will be transformed in God (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 163).

John also clearly indicates that this purgation of spirit cannot ultimately be accomplished by human will, pointing ahead to the passive night of spirit.

General Stage 1 PT

The general PT for this stage is consistent with its general goal. In John's words:

Passing beyond all that is naturally and spiritually intelligible or comprehensible, souls ought to desire with all their might to attain

what in this life could never be known or enter the human heart. And parting company with all they can or do taste and feel, temporally and spiritually, they must ardently long to acquire what surpasses all taste and feeling. To be empty and free for the achievement of this, they should by no means seize upon what they receive spiritually or sensitively . . . but consider it of little importance. ... In this way . . . souls swiftly approach union... (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 161).

John's rationale for this PT is based on his knowledge that the individual typically experiences a wealth of unusual MBSs at this stage, the visions, prophecies, locutions, etc., catalogued below. It is also his experience that:

This is the stage in which the devil induces many into believing vain visions and false prophecies. He strives to make them presume that God and the saints speak with them, and frequently they believe their phantasy. It is here that the devil customarily fills them with presumption and pride. Drawn by vanity and arrogance they . . . lose holy fear⁸ which is the key to and guardian of all the virtues. Illusions and deceptions so multiply in some, and they become so inveterate in them that it is very doubtful whether they will return to the pure road of virtue and authentic spirituality (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 397).

*the
three
components
of spirit*

John does not present this stage, however, in a general way. His analysis treats the active night of spirit by breaking it down into the three components of spirit noted above: intellect, memory and will. I will follow his method of organization.

Stage 1a: Active Night of Intellect

For John the intellect is a cognitive faculty receiving knowledge in concepts and ideas naturally by means of bodily senses or through reflection, or supernaturally by means transcending natural ability and capacity. Supernaturally received knowledge is either *corporal* or *spiritual*. Corporal knowledge of supernatural origin has two media: the exterior bodily senses and the interior bodily senses, including all the imagination can apprehend, form or fashion. Spiritual knowledge of supernatural origin takes two forms. It may be distinct and particular knowledge which comprise four kinds of distinct apprehensions communicated to the spirit without the means of bodily senses: visions, revelations, locutions, and spiritual feelings. Or it may be vague, dark, and general knowledge, i.e., contemplation. I consider each type of knowledge a specific MBS, and will examine each in John's order.

Intellectual knowledge originating naturally

John says mortification (PT) of this type of knowledge involves desiring the “knowledge of nothing” by traveling “a way in which you know not.” More specifically,

... a person must be careful not to lean upon imaginative visions, forms, figures, or particular ideas, since they cannot serve as a proportionate and proximate means to union with God; they would be a hindrance instead. As a result a person should renounce them and endeavor to avoid them (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 202).

The benefits (RAs) of this PT are spiritual freedom, clarity and simplicity.

Intellectual knowledge originating supernaturally

1. Through exterior bodily senses

Such knowledge through the sense of sight would include visions of images and persons from the other life: saints, good and bad angels, unusual lights and splendors. Supernatural knowledge mediated through the sense of hearing John calls “extraordinary words,” which sometimes originates from envisioned persons, and at other times without seeing the speaker. Through smell, the experience is that of the sweetest fragrances without knowledge of the source, and through taste, exquisite savors. Supernatural knowledge through touch is experienced as moments of extreme delight, at times so intense that all the bones and marrow rejoice, flourish, and bathe in it (termed spiritual unction).

The PT for all such MBSs is to voluntarily dismiss them completely and renounce the desire even to determine whether they are of divine or diabolical origin (Kavanaugh, 1991, pp. 179-84).

*to
voluntarily
dismiss
them*

The RAs are the same as for naturally occurring knowledge (i.e., spiritual freedom, clarity, simplicity), but more subtle.

2. Through interior bodily senses

For John, imagination and phantasy comprise the interior corporal sense and are treated together. The types of knowledge here (MBS) are the same as in (1), but are more subtle and effective. The PT is also the same: to desire neither to accept or keep them. John’s rationale is instructive:

I consider the desire for knowledge of things through supernatural means far worse than a desire for spiritual gratifications in the sensitive part of the soul. I fail to see how a person who tries to get knowledge in this supernatural way—as well as the one who commands this or gives consent—can help but sin, at least venially, no matter how excellent his motives or advanced in perfection he may be. There is no necessity for any of this kind of knowledge, since a person can get sufficient guidance from natural reason, and the law and doctrine of the Gospel. There is no difficulty or necessity unsolvable or irremediable by these means, which are very pleasing to God and profitable to souls. We should make such use of reason and the law of the Gospel that, even though—whether we desire it or not—some supernatural truths are told to us, we accept only what is in harmony with reason and the Gospel (Kavanaugh, 1991, pp. 224-25).

The RAs are also identical to those of (1), but of a higher order.

3. Purely spiritual

*visions,
revelations,
locutions,
and
spiritual
feelings*

This is knowledge not communicated to intellect through exterior or interior senses, and comprises visions, revelations, locutions, and spiritual feelings. Each will be treated in turn.

Spiritual visions: John distinguishes two types of visions: those of corporal substances and those of incorporeal. Corporal visions are “seeing all heavenly and earthly objects that are absent,” i.e., clairvoyance. They are often accompanied by MBSs of quietude, illumination, gladness, delight, purity, love, humility and an elevation and inclination toward God. The recommended PT is to dismiss them. Incorporeal visions are of angels and souls, and, according to John, if viewed the result is physical death, with rare exceptions (Kavanaugh, 1991, pp. 240-44).

Revelations: A revelation is a

. . . disclosure of some hidden truth, or manifestation of some secret or mystery, as when God imparts understanding of some truth to the intellect, or discloses to the soul something that he did, is doing, or is thinking of doing (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 244.)

There are two types of revelation: the disclosure of naked truths to the intellect (intellectual notions or concepts) and the manifestation of secrets. Knowledge of naked truths has either the Creator or creature as its object. If the object is the Creator, the revelation is ineffable, pure contemplation. There is no PT since it is pure gift. If the object is creatures, the RAs are called prophecy and discernment of spirits (of other people).

The second type of knowledge in this category is *secrets*, i.e., hidden mysteries concerning God Himself or God in His works. According to John:

The pure, cautious, simple, and humble soul should resist and reject revelations and other visions with as much effort and care as it would extremely dangerous temptations, for in order to reach the union of love there is need not to desire them but to reject them (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 254).

Thus the recommended PT for these, and revelations, is always to renounce seeking or attachment to such knowledge, because the devil can imitate them. One should seek God through *unknowing*.⁹

Supernatural locutions : There are three types : successive, formal, and substantial. Successive locutions are words and reasonings the spirit usually forms and deduces while recollected (the MBS termed “lights”). These can become a serious obstacle to union. Formal locutions are certain distinct and formal words that the spirit receives, whether or not recollected, not from itself, but from another party. The PT for both successive and formal locutions is to reject them, not doing what they say or paying attention to them.

Substantial locutions are the same as formal locutions, with the addition that they are immediately efficacious, producing in the soul what they signify. According to John, “the soul has nothing to do, desire, refrain from desiring, reject or fear...” concerning them, and regards them as a great aid to union with God (Kavanaugh, 1991, pp. 263-64).

Spiritual feelings: These are exceptionally sublime feelings which John does not specify. The PT is the same as for the other three types of knowledge in this category: not to seek them.

*not
to
seek
them*

General PT for intellectual knowledge originating supernaturally

According to John:

In these apprehensions coming from above (imaginative or any other kind—it matters not if they be visions, locutions, spiritual feelings, or revelations), individuals should only advert to the love of God that is interiorly caused. They should pay no attention to the letter and rind (what is signified, represented, or made known). Thus they should pay heed not to the feelings of delight or sweetness, not to the images, but to the feelings of love that are caused (Kavanaugh, 1991, pp. 287-88).

General RA (benefit) for fidelity' to PT of renunciation of supernatural knowledge

If persons

. . . remain both faithful and retiring in the midst of these favors, the Lord will not cease raising them by degrees until they reach divine union and transformation. Our Lord proves and elevates the soul by

first bestowing graces that are exterior, lowly, and proportioned to the small capacity of sense. If the person reacts well by taking these first morsels with moderation for strength and nourishment, God will bestow a more abundant and higher quality of food (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 183).

Stage Ib: Active Night of Memory

There are three categories of objects of the memory: natural, imaginative, and spiritual. Corresponding to these objects are three types of knowledge (MBS) of the memory: natural, imaginative, and spiritual. They will be examined in order.

MBSs and Concomitant PTs and RAs

Natural and imaginative apprehensions

*knowledge
of
the
memory*

This is knowledge derived from the five bodily senses, “and everything like this sensory knowledge that the memory can evoke and fashion” (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 268). The PT advocated by John is straightforward:

Do not store objects of hearing, sight, smell, taste, or touch in the memory, but leave them immediately and forget them, and endeavor, if necessary, to be as successful in forgetting them as others are in remembering them. This should be practiced in such a way that no form or figure of any of these objects remains in the memory, as though one were not in the world at all. The memory, as though it were nonexistent, should be left free and disencumbered and unattached to any earthly or heavenly consideration. It should be freely left in oblivion, as though it were a hindrance, since everything natural is an obstacle rather than a help to anyone who would desire to use it in the supernatural (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 272).

There are a number of characteristic MBSs associated with progress at this level. One is a sudden jolt in the brain so sensible that the whole head swoons and that consciousness and sensibility are lost. Another is significant periods of time passing without awareness or knowledge of what has happened. There may also be deficiencies in exterior behavior and customs (Kavanaugh, 1991, pp. 269-70).

Supernatural imaginative apprehensions

These are the images, forms, figures, ideas impressed in the memory as the result of the occurrence of supernaturally originated visions, locutions, revelations, and feelings (sentiments). One should not seek to preserve or remember these, based on the principle that:

The more importance given to any clear and distinct apprehension, natural or supernatural, the less capacity and preparedness the soul has for entering the abyss of faith, where all else is absorbed. As we pointed out, none of the supernatural forms and ideas that can be received by the memory is God, and the soul must empty itself of all that is not God in order to go to God. Consequently the memory must likewise dismiss all these forms and ideas in order to reach union with God. ... In the measure that the memory becomes dispossessed of things, in that measure it will have hope, and the more hope it has the greater will be its union with God; for in relation to God, the more a soul hopes, the more it attains. And it hopes more when, precisely, it is more dispossessed of things; when it has reached perfect dispossession, it will remain with perfect possession of God in divine union. But there are many who do not want to go without the sweetness and delight of this knowledge in the memory, and therefore they do not reach supreme possession and complete sweetness (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 279).

Spiritual knowledge

As treated above (cf. Revelations, p. 70), there are two types—of creatures and of the Creator. The former may be remembered if it produces good effects. The latter may always be remembered.

General PT for the active night of memory.

According to John;

As often as distinct ideas, forms, and images occur to individuals, they should immediately, without resting in them, turn to God with loving affection, in emptiness of everything rememberable. They should not think or look on these things for longer than is sufficient for the understanding and fulfillment of their obligations, if these refer to this. And then they should consider these ideas without becoming attached or seeking gratification in them, lest the effects of them be left in the soul. Thus people are not required to stop recalling and thinking about what they must do and know, for, if they are not attached to the possession of these thoughts, they will not be harmed. (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 290).

*consider
these
ideas
without
becoming
attached*

General RA for active night of memory

Significant progress in active mortification of the memory results in a RA wherein the memory moves from its natural operation to a point for a person where

... God's Spirit makes them know what must be known and ignore what must be ignored, remember what ought to be remembered—with or without forms—and forget what ought to be forgotten, and makes them love what they ought to love, and keeps them from loving what is not in God. Accordingly, all the first movements of these faculties are

divine. Since these souls are practiced in not knowing or understanding anything with the faculties, they generally attain ... to the knowledge of everything (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 271).

There is also deep spiritual repose and quietude.

Stage 1c: Active Night of the Will:

PT: For John the will is the faculty which rules the intellect, memory, passions, and appetites. Active purification of the will means consciously directing intellect, memory, passions, and appetites toward God and away from all that is not God. It is the living out of Deuteronomy 5:6 ("Love God with all one's heart, soul, and strength"). For John this scriptural text, "... contains all that spiritual persons must do and all that I must teach them here if they are to reach God by union of the will through charity" (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 292).

*not
a
complete
description*

John does not give a complete description of the active night of the will. He indicates that he will treat the four passions (joy, hope, sorrow, and fear), but in fact only gives a partial analysis of joy. The goal of active purification of the will is clear, however.

... the person rejoices only in what is purely for God's honor and glory, hopes for nothing else, feels sorrow only about matters pertaining to this, and fears only God. The more people rejoice over something outside God, the less intense will be their joy in God; and the more their hope goes out toward something else, the less there is for God; and so on with the others (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 292).

The means (PT) to this goal is clearly described by John:

At the first movement of joy (or hope, sorrow or fear—the passions) towards things, the spiritual person ought to curb it, remembering the principle we are here following: There is nothing worthy of a person's joy (or hope, sorrow or fear) save the service of God and procurement of his honor and glory in all things. One should seek this alone in the use of things, turning away from vanity and concern for one's own delight and consolation (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 303).

Thus according to John, active mortification of the will means doing what one does, .. out of love for God alone, without any other motive..." (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 317). And the value of such service

... is not based upon . . . quantity and quality (of what is done) so much as upon the love of God practiced (in what is done)... and ... consequently ... the service (is) of greater excellence in the measure both that the love of God by which they (acts which are done) are

performed is more pure and entire and that self-interest diminishes with respect to pleasure, comfort, praise, and earthly or heavenly joy (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 318).

MBSs and RAs Because only *joy* was analyzed by John and even that analysis ended abruptly, there is inadequate information on these for the active night of the will.

Stage 2: Passive Night of the Spirit

The individual typically remains in the active stage of proficiency (active night of the spirit) for a significant period of time. John says:

In this ... state, as one liberated from a cramped prison cell, the soul goes about the things of God with much more freedom and satisfaction of spirit and with more abundant interior delight than it did before the passive night of sense. ... The soul readily finds ... a very serene, loving contemplation and spiritual delight. Nonetheless, since the purgation of the soul is not complete, certain needs, aridities, darknesses, and conflicts are felt. These are sometimes far more intense than those of the past and are like omens or messengers of the coming passive night of the spirit (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 395).

It is important to note that from John's standpoint, all imperfections, sensory and spiritual, are rooted in the spirit. Complete purgation is thereby accomplished by total purgation of the spirit, which can only happen through divine activity. This is the second, terribly painful stage of the second level, in which:

*all
imperfections
are
rooted
in the
spirit*

God divests the faculties, affections, and senses, both spiritual and sensory, interior and exterior. He leaves the intellect in darkness, the will in aridity, the memory in emptiness, and the affections in supreme affliction, bitterness and anguish, by depriving the soul of the feeling and satisfaction it previously obtained from spiritual blessings (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 399).

MBSs At this stage there is a deep sense of personal unworthiness, impurity, and sinfulness. The soul sees its true condition, really sees the imperfections. As John says, the inflow of God into the soul

... stirs up all the foul and vicious humors of which the soul was never before aware; never did it realize there was so much evil in itself, since these humors were so deeply rooted. And now that they may be expelled and annihilated, they are brought to light and seen clearly through the *illumination* of this dark night of divine contemplation. Although the soul is no worse than before, either in itself or in its relationship with God, it feels clearly that it is so bad as to be not only

unworthy that God see it but deserving of his abhorrence. In fact, it feels that God now does abhor it (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 417).

PTs All one can do during this period is .. suffer this purgation patiently. God it is who is working now in the soul, and for this reason the soul can do nothing” (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 410). John says that a person in this situation should regard it, “...as a grace, since God is freeing you from yourself and taking from you your own activity,” taking the person to a place they could never have reached on their own (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 432). So at this point:

People, then, should live with great patience and constancy in all the tribulations and trials God places on them, whether they be exterior or interior, spiritual or bodily, great or small, and they should accept them all as from God’s hand as a good remedy and not flee from them, for they bring health (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 669).

*to
receive
permanent
divine
union*

RAs Residency at the conclusion of this stage is freedom from all attachments other than God, and the concomitant ability to receive permanent divine union.

Transition to Level III John says that for this purgation (passive night of spirit) to be effective it must last for a number of years. There will be, however, intervals when the “inflow of God” or “dark contemplation” switches from a purgative mode to an illuminative one, “... a sign of the health the purgation is producing within it and a foretaste of the abundance for which it hopes” (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 408). The individual begins to experience what John calls an, “... impassioned and intense love ... [a] spiritual inflaming...” of the will (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 419). Initially the intellect is not involved, but gradually begins to participate in this initial direct experience of God. When the will is involved, it is called “wounding,” and when the intellect participates, John’s term is “divine touch.”

Periods of illumination (wounding and divine touching) are initially infrequent, and the individual subjectively experiences a time of great “ups and downs.” When illumination predominates, one has entered the first stage of the final level.

Level III: Perfect (Unitive)

The general goal of this level is to be transformed in God. It has two stages, termed *spiritual betrothal or espousal* and *spiritual marriage*.

Stage 1 : Spiritual Betrothal/Espousal

MBSs According to John, at this stage

... God communicates to the soul great things about himself, beautifies her with grandeur and majesty, adorns her with gifts and virtues, and clothes her with the knowledge and honor of God.. .. The soul sees and tastes abundance and inestimable riches in this divine union. She finds all the rest and recreation she desires, and understands secrets and strange knowledge of God.. .. She experiences in God an awesome power and strength which sweeps away every other power and strength. She tastes there a splendid spiritual sweetness and gratification, discovers true quiet and divine light, and tastes sublimely the wisdom of God reflected in the harmony of his creatures and works. She has the feeling of being filled with blessings and of being empty of evils and far removed from them. And above all she understands and enjoys inestimable refreshment of love which confirms her in love (Kavanaugh, 1991, pp. 525-26).

What separates this stage from the final *spiritual marriage* are continued disturbances from the senses, the devil, feelings of being imprisoned in the body, the up and down of divine presence and absence, raptures, ecstasies, dislocation of bones, levitation, etc., and a final purgation wherein all the natural faculties and appetites are brought under the control of the purified will and intellect (Kavanaugh, 1991, pp. 537, 546-47, 551-59). When these disturbances cease, through divine action, the soul is empty enough to receive the full experience of God, i.e., *spiritual marriage*.

*the
soul
is
empty
enough
to
receive*

PTs The individual, seeing his or her virtues in all their beauty and perfection, offers them to God in the spirit of love. One prays for freedom from any activity in sense or spirit, that there no longer be any spiritual dryness or affective absences of God, and that God “breathes through the soul.”

RAs The primary RA is the ability to understand and experience God to a degree that approximates the “blessed in Heaven.” John characterizes this as a knowledge, .. so lucid and lofty that one comes to know clearly that God cannot be completely understood or experienced” (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 502). The soul possesses, .. an abyss of the knowledge of God” (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 535).

Stage 2: Spiritual Marriage

Most concisely, spiritual marriage is the ultimate goal of spiritual development according to John of the Cross. It is qualitatively superior to spiritual espousal in that:

... it is a total transformation in the Beloved in which each surrenders the entire possession of self to the other with a certain consummation of the union of love. The soul thereby becomes divine, God through participation, insofar as is possible in this life (Kavanaugh, 1991, pp. 560-61).

MBs For those attaining this most exalted state:

... the intellect of this soul is God's intellect; its will is God's will; its memory is the memory of God; and its delight is God's delight; and although the substance of the soul is not the substance of God, since it cannot undergo a substantial conversion into Him, it has become God through participation in God, being united to and absorbed in him . . . (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 671).

PTs At this stage there is no PT, for according to John, it is God

... alone who works in her (the soul), without any means. This is a characteristic of the union of the soul with God in spiritual marriage: God works in and communicates himself through himself alone, without the intermediary of angels or natural ability, for the exterior and interior senses, and all creatures, and even the very soul do very little toward the reception of the remarkable supernatural favors which God grants in this state. These favors do not fall within the province of the soul's natural ability, or work or diligence, but God alone grants them to her. Since the soul has left all and passed beyond all means, ascending above them all to God, it is fitting that God himself be the guide and means of reaching himself (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 609).

*the
culmination
of
spiritual
development*

RAs At this level the individual receives the ability or gift of seeing, .. what God is in Himself and what He is in His creatures in only one view.... What a person knows and experiences of God in this awakening is entirely beyond words" (Kavanaugh, 1991, pp. 710-11). According to John this is the culmination of spiritual development this side of physical death.

It is important to note John's final perspective on this interior journey, with particular emphasis on the place of what this paper has termed PTs and MBs, or what might be alternatively called human effort and altered states. In John's words:

I should like to persuade spiritual persons that the road leading to God does not entail a multiplicity of considerations, methods, manners, and experiences—though in their own way these may be a requirement for beginners—but demands only the one thing necessary: true self-denial, exterior and interior, through surrender of self both to suffering for Christ and to annihilation in all things. In the exercise of this self-denial everything else, and even more, is discovered and accomplished. If one fails in this exercise, the root and sum total of all the virtues, the other methods would amount to no more than going about in circles without any progress, even if they result in considerations

and communications as lofty as those of the angels. A person makes progress only through the imitation of Christ.... Accordingly, I should not consider any spirituality worthwhile that would walk in sweetness and ease and run from the imitation of Christ (Kavanaugh, 1991, pp. 171-72).

For John, there is, ultimately, no PT other than the self-emptying exemplified for him by Christ, which includes the annihilation of desire for even the most sublime MBSs. In this he shows his kinship with the masters, sages and saints of other spiritual traditions, both Christian and non-Christian.

CONCLUSION

It has been my purpose to present one of the most significant sub-traditions of Roman Catholic spirituality from the standpoint of the multistate paradigm. In subsequent research I will seek to broaden my analysis to include other traditions of spiritual development, both Christian and non-Christian, and then use the results to evaluate various models of human spiritual growth. It is my hope that the simple conceptual framework and terminology of the multistate paradigm will facilitate this project, as well as conversation with those similarly engaged.

*the
evaluation
of
various
models*

NOTES

¹ As defined in Kavanaugh's critical edition, mortification is "A radical attitude, a putting to death of all inordinate attitudes within oneself (and all actions deriving from them). One cannot find God without mortifying evil within oneself; this gets to the root of the practice of all virtues. This death is embraced out of love for Jesus Christ and patterned after his death" (p. 772). In this paper, the terms *purification*, *emptying*, and *mortification* are essentially synonymous.

² It should be noted, however, that the active and passive, "... are not perfectly successive; rather, they are parallel and simultaneous. It is the predominance of one over the other that permits the establishing of a certain relative succession, which of course means that in the final stage of purification the divine (passive) is clearly prevalent" (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 355). As Thomas Cummins puts it: "... we have an active work to do at the level of sense and at the level of spirit. God also does his part at both these levels, his work running concurrently with ours. Thus we speak of an active and passive night of sense, and of an active and passive night of spirit. The word 'passive' in these cases does not mean we lack a vital role, but that God is the principal agent and we respond as receivers" (1991, p. 31).

³ Unless otherwise noted, the New American Bible (NAB) translation is used for all biblical texts.

⁴ "We can say there are three veils that constitute a hindrance to this union with God and must be torn if the union is to be effected and possessed perfectly by the soul; that is: the temporal veil, comprising all creatures; the natural, embodying the purely natural inclinations and operations; and the sensitive, which consists only of the union of the soul with the body.... The first two veils must necessarily be torn in order to obtain this union with God in which all the things of the world are

renounced, all the natural appetites and affections mortified, and the natural operations of the soul divinized" (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 653).

⁵ "... given to some to buffet their senses with strong and abominable temptations, and afflict their spirit with foul thoughts and very vivid images, which sometimes is a pain worse than death for them" (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 393).

⁶ ... it commingles intolerable blasphemies with all one's thoughts and ideas. Sometimes these blasphemies are so strongly suggested to the imagination that soul is almost made to pronounce them, which is a grave torment to it" (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 393).

⁷ "This spirit so darkens the senses that such souls are filled with a thousand scruples and perplexities, so intricate that such persons can never be content with anything, nor can their judgment receive the support of any counsel or idea" (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 393).

⁸ "Holy fear" is described by John as the motivation to do something by the desire to please God rather than oneself, with an attendant lack of presumption and self-satisfaction (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 391).

⁹ This is a coming to know, . . . without the sound of words, and without the help of any bodily or spiritual faculty, in silence and quietude, in darkness to all sensory and natural things" (Kavanaugh, 1991, p. 626).

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Shah, Idries. *The commanding self*. London: Octagon Press, 1994.
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BOOK
REVIEWS

*Arthur J.
Deikman*

Idries Shah is well known for his many collections of Sufi teaching stories and didactic texts, published for the general public, for would-be Sufis and others on the spiritual path. Unlike many authors of spiritual books that convey a warm, cozy feeling, or at least describe the attractive new states of consciousness that the aspirant can expect to achieve, Shah's approach has always been more astringent. True to form, *The Commanding Self* does not comfort the reader or evoke "spiritual" feelings. Meditation is not prescribed and the word "love" does not appear in any of its 332 pages. Instead, Shah seizes the reader, shakes vigorously and yells, "Wake up!"

The title of the book refers to the self of "primitive emotionality interacting with irrelevant associations." The first step in spiritual development is to keep this acquisitive, defensive self from dominating a person's thinking and behavior, especially in the spiritual arena. The Commanding Self has its place and function, but not there. To bring the Commanding Self under control it is necessary to become aware of its operations *in oneself*. Enhancing that awareness is a major function of the teaching stories collected in Shah's previous books. This book serves a similar function but makes use of questions put to Shah over the years, and his answers to them. In those answers he addresses the false assumptions involved in many of the questions. The reader is never addressed directly and so can take in Shah's comments without an immediate defensive reaction.

In Shah's earlier work he stressed that modern Western people need their own spiritual path. In *The Commanding Self* the message is stated even more plainly. Shah writes, "Procedures designed for Eastern people are likely to have negative effects if adopted by Westerners." He regards most of the teachers and spiritual groups operating today as "fossilizations ... the antithesis of a spiritual school." He is no gentler with Sufi Orders: "Of all the major 'Paths' among the supposed Sufi of today, not a single one is traceable in its foundation to the man who is named as its founder." As in his previous writings, Shah insists that spiritual practices and study must be specifically designed for a particular time and culture. The implications are clear: adopting robes, mandalas, whirling, koans and Sanskrit is inappropriate for modern Western students. That calls into question many of the spiritual groups operating today.

At this point, readers are likely to ask their own question of Shah, "What should we do if we wish to advance spiritually and almost all of today's spiritual organizations are out-of-date? Are you the only genuine teacher?" Shah's answer would seem to be that the ques-

tions reflect unexamined assumptions about the aspirants' qualifications and the nature of the spiritual path. He might suggest that they read the books he has written to bring those assumptions into awareness and to throw light on the covert activities of the Commanding Self that otherwise corrupt and negate any progress. Until that is done, the student's inwardness will remain primitive no matter how devout in appearance he or she may be, no matter how faithfully "spiritual" exercises are performed. When the Commanding Self has been made a servant, rather than master, the student's perception and motivation will be better attuned for recognizing a qualified spiritual teacher and engaging in useful effort. As long as the Commanding Self rules, the student will seek and find teachers and systems that gratify the emotionality, vanity, and greed of which he or she is unaware.

There is a sense of urgency throughout this book. Shah regards the problem of false assumptions linked to emotionality as a very serious one, not only for the spiritual seeker but for the world at large. The book ends with the story of a demon who is able to destroy a couple and then devastate the entire village because they do not question the assumptions that underlie the demon's malicious suggestions.

The Commanding Self is challenging and disconcerting in its message that most spiritual seekers, the reader not excepted, are engaged in inappropriate activity, trying to run before they can walk. As extreme as Shah's message may seem to some, there is a reality in what he points out that compels one's attention and perhaps—even from the most skeptical—a grudging assent.

Duke, Steven B. & Gross, Al C. *America's longest war: Rethinking our tragic crusade against drugs*. New York: J.P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1993. \$26.95, 348 pp.

James Fadiman

Recently, a national radio program asked a major drug researcher to comment on several "facts" about marijuana-induced health problems cited by a high official in the Federal government. His reply—that he couldn't quite believe that the official was either so ignorant or so stupid—cut to the core of the current dilemma. It is becoming harder and harder to believe that the people in charge of American drug policy are as ill-informed, misguided, or as dull-witted as their statements and programs suggest.

We have in place an outrageously costly system, with zero (or even negative) effectiveness which keeps millions of citizens potential felons, tosses thousands into jail monthly, and does almost nothing to reduce the real and tragic effects of those drugs which maim and kill individuals. The system itself has the characteristics of an

addict: some awareness of one's difficulties, but an inability to admit failure.

This book, an accurate, detailed examination of the history of America's confused and faulty policy, describes how the United States government, our educational and legal system, and the media, have systematically painted us into a bleaker and bleaker corner.

It is a story with few villains, but any number of fools. Unfortunately, the fools have often been those persons who implemented and expanded policies that fly in the face of common sense, available information and, of course, human nature.

The book traces the history of the curtailment of civil liberties, the quirks of history, the foibles of laws passed for one reason but used for others, the monomania of some federal officials, and other satires (I meant to write "stories" but my spell-checker suggested the stronger word).

The authors, a Yale Law professor and an attorney, present a cost/benefit analysis on the effects of various drugs on health and personal freedom, coupled with an unsettling review of the total cost of unsuccessfully preventing (or encouraging) their use. They stress that it is never too late to turn around a set of policies that benefit no one and continue to extract a terrible cost on every citizen—economic, social, medical, and political. Beginning to balance the drug war's erosion of the Bill of Rights are the statements of an increasingly long list of courageous public officials who are willing to admit that, not only does the king have no clothes, but he has been naked for years.

One of the book's conclusions is that "the costs [of the drug war] are not remotely justified; that much of the drug-war artillery is worthless, and in many cases counterproductive. The casualty rate among those who have nothing to do with illegal drugs is unacceptable."

A review of alcohol prohibition—a model of the failure of repression—serves as a backdrop to describe the parallels in the repression of marijuana, psychedelics, cocaine, heroin, etc. More than simple failure, Prohibition led to the use of harder (stronger) drink, a guaranteed income base for a prospering criminal class, and a hypocritical stance, i.e., banning in public what was indulged in private.

The authors do not underplay illegal drugs' actual harm to users but, weighed against the costs of the present conflicted ways of

attempting to curb use—laws against certain drugs, subsidies for others—the “current-laws-prevent-harm” argument may be right-worded yet is wrong-headed and ineffective.

If we are going to stop shooting ourselves in the foot (and sending ourselves to prison for so doing), then we will need to use the data, the clarity, and even the sanity in this book. It is a dispassionate reminder of what we have done, and how we might begin to turn it around. Currently our leaders still lack the political will to admit that more of what doesn’t work won’t work any better. This book and a number of other forces, however, foster a realistic consideration of new policies that would tend not to legalize but to decriminalize.

The authors’ own suggestion is “harm minimization,” a policy which works in other countries. “The primary goal of our national drug policy should be to reduce and control the use of all the recreational, mood-altering drugs in order to provide for their safe, pleasurable use, consistent with centuries-old human experience, while minimizing their harmful effects on individuals, in the family and society as a whole” (p. 279).

The book will give you all the information you need to fully understand the extent of the terrible drain of the mind, soul, and cash drawer of America during seventy-five years of morally muddled legislation and misinformation, and what you need to understand to begin to end it.

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DUBIN WILLIAM. The use of meditative techniques for teaching dynamic psychology.—Experiential teaching of psychodynamics emerges from an exploration and analysis of the struggles students have in attaining and maintaining quiet focused attention under a variety of conditions. Over the course of an academic year the following sequence of meditative exercises is given: contemplation of a beach stone, a centering exercise on breathing, contemplation of other members of the group, and an exploration of the question, “What am I?” The teaching involves shifting back and forth between the map of psychodynamic theory and the territory of direct, immediate experience of the meditations. Discussion of what happened during the meditations is used to illustrate psychodynamic concepts. As the meditations evolve, students become aware of non-ordinary states of consciousness. Awareness of these states helps put dynamic psychology into the broader context of transpersonal psychology.

METZNER, RALPH. Addiction and transcendence as altered states of consciousness.—Proposes the description of addictions as contracted states of consciousness, and contrasts them with transcendence which involves the expansion of consciousness. Compares both states of consciousness in terms of mood, sensation, attention, range of awareness, time and space, and alterations such as “channel-switching.” Concludes that everyone has addictive potential and tendencies to compulsions, but that through conscious focusing of attention and expansion of awareness when indicated, the ancient virtue of moderation can be practiced.

PATRIK, LINDA E. Phenomenological method and meditation.—Most research on meditation focuses on objectively measurable effects of meditation rather than on experimental subjects’ own awareness of their meditation experiences. The phenomenological method can be used to describe meditation experiences in a way that is introspective, systematic and experimental. One basic step of the phenomenological method, the phenomenological reduction, is itself similar to mindfulness meditation, because it is a deliberate technique for increasing awareness of whatever one is conscious of, while one is conscious of it. A second basic step, the eidetic reduction, is used to identify the essential features of experiences; it differs, however, from most meditation techniques because it experiments upon one’s experiences with an intervention called “imaginative variation,” instead of sustaining simple observation of one’s experiences. Two meditation experiences, a “quiet focus” experience and a “heightened awareness” experience, are described phenomenologically.

STEELE, SPRINGS. The multistate paradigm and the spiritual path of John of the Cross.—A contemporary linguistic and conceptual framework for multistate education provides a useful structure for the analysis and comparative description of various psychospiritual paths. Based on a multistate paradigm, the framework has three central elements: mindbody state, mindbody psychotechnologies, and resident abilities. This structure offers a simple, objective perspective for an analysis in detail, of a Roman Catholic sub-tradition, the historically significant spiritual path and writings of the sixteenth-century Spanish Carmelite, John of the Cross.

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