

PSYCHOSYNTHESIS: A PSYCHOTHERAPY FOR THE WHOLE MAN

by Robert Gerard, PH.D., Los Angeles, California (1961)

FIRST SESSION

Introduction

I am faced with the problem that the psychoanalyst would be faced with if he were asked to tell us in one hour, or one hour and a half, about psychoanalysis; the subject is so vast that it is almost impossible to bring it into a very short discussion. My presentation, then, will be much more indicative, much more an introduction, than anything thorough. What I intend to do is to briefly tell you what Psychosynthesis means. We have to start with first things first, and very briefly enumerate some of the sages in this kind of therapy. And then, in order to really get down to something more concrete, I will take up one of the techniques of psychosynthesis. There are many such techniques, but I felt that by taking one which is not yet widely known in this country, it would be rather novel. What I intend to do in the second session is to give you an actual excerpt from a therapy case which illustrates some of the approaches that I will mention in this session and which is more specifically related to what might be called a "spiritual" experience during a therapy session.

PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

Now, first of all, what is meant by *Psychosynthesis*? The concept of psychosynthesis was introduced and steadily developed over more than forty years by Roberto Assagioli, M.D., an Italian psychiatrist who founded in 1926 the Istituto di Psicointesi in Rome. Dr. Assagioli combined in his psychotherapeutic practice the use of various techniques of psychotherapy, and experimented with and applied a series of techniques to further the process of psychosynthesis. I was attracted to his work because of the similarity of our approach to psychotherapy and made it a point to meet him personally during a trip to Europe in the summer of 1955. This was the beginning of our friendship and professional association. For instance, with the support of the Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, I spent the spring of 1959 in Florence to collaborate intensively with him on the theory and techniques of psychosynthesis.

You have heard, of course, a great deal about psychoanalysis, particularly the psychoanalysis of Freud and of his followers, the neo-Freudians, persons like Karen Homey and Erich Fromm, and also about the analytical psychology of the Swiss psychiatrist, C. G. Jung. This emphasis on analysis has been prevalent for quite a while in psychotherapy. *Analysis is a separation of the whole into component parts in order to be able to understand the nature, function and relationship of these parts.* But analysis is not enough in psychotherapy. We need to go beyond analysis, without discarding what is of value in analysis. We need to translate analytic understanding and insight into actual change in our feelings, our attitudes and behavior. In short, *the goal is not analysis; it is much more. It is synthesis, namely an integration, a wholeness, a unity, a harmonious use of all of our functions,* of all of our potentialities, of all of our drives. The word "synthesis" comes from the Greek word "syn", which means "together", and the Greek word "thesis", meaning "a placing". So, synthesis is a placing together, a putting together of parts so as to form an integrated whole.

As far as the psyche of a human being is concerned, then, *psychosynthesis refers to the integration and harmonious expression of the totality of our human nature*—physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. I put an emphasis on the "and", because it is this last aspect which has been to a great degree overlooked, or perhaps not emphasized sufficiently in some of the early attempts at psychoanalysis, although many of my psychoanalytic colleagues in more recent times are more and more concerned with values. Whether they are artistic, or esthetic, or ethical, or altruistic values, we might call these the "spiritual" aspect of our human nature. *So the goal is synthesis, a creative whole.*

Analysis may lead to this goal, but not necessarily. It is *one* way to the goal, *one* means, but we must always remember that it is not the goal itself, and therefore should not be confused with the goal. In order to reach the goal of synthesis, or wholeness, analysis may be used, but other methods may have more direct integrative effects. At this point, I do not want to give you the erroneous impression that I am anti-analytical. My plea is that one should make use of both analysis and synthesis if one is going to help another human being in his or her efforts to a richer and fuller life. Thus psychosynthesis is a method which is applicable, not only to individuals who suffer from neurotic difficulties and from various serious psychological problems, but it is also applicable to individuals who may be functioning fairly well, but who desire a greater degree of self-realization and fulfillment.

If integration is to take place, the various tendencies of human nature must be harmonized. How is this to be done? In other words, how do we actually become synthesized? I think that one of the first things we have to take into consideration is that you cannot be synthesized without having some kind of a center around which synthesis is to take place; otherwise "everything goes all over the place", and nothing is really integrated. So we may say that first, *synthesis should occur around a personal center*, the conscious ego, the "I", in what we may call a *personal psychosynthesis*, namely the synthesis of the personality—physical, emotional and mental. Eventually psychosynthesis may occur around a deeper center which, for lack of a better word, we may call a *spiritual center*, a *spiritual Self* with a capital "S", of which the little self of our everyday life is only a reflection in the field of consciousness. (The spiritual Self is related to Karen Homey's "real self," which she describes as "the central inner force" which is the deep source of psychological growth, the spring of constructive energies, and which she distinguishes from both the actual or empirical self and the idealized self (Karen Homey. *Neurosis and Human Growth: The Struggle Toward Self-Realization*. New York: Norton, 1950). It refers to the deepest nature, the inner core, the real Being of the person (see Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*. Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1962). The spiritual Self has been called the transpersonal Self (because the phenomenological experience of the Self encompasses both the personal and the collective, individuality and universality) and the transcendental Self use. of the Self transcends the limitations of ordinary ego self-consciousness). It is related to states of mystic selflessness as described by Fingazette in a psychoanalytic frame of reference (Herbert Fingazette. *The Self in Transformation*. New York: Basic Books, 1963). Regardless of the terms used, what needs to be further developed is a science of the Self, of its energies and manifestations, of how these energies can be contacted and released for creative living.) So the potential goal (which may not be achieved in many individuals but at least is a potential) is not only a personal psychosynthesis, which is an effective integration of a personality, but also a spiritual psychosynthesis; i.e., an integration of the personality with a spiritual center, of which the integrated personality then becomes an instrument of expression in this world.

To clarify, we integrate the personality around the personal ego, which, to a great extent, experiences a sense of separation from others, and then this integrated personality is to be synthesized around a much deeper center, which not only experiences a sense of self-identity, but also a sense of universality, of being in communion with other beings and with the universe at large. This is a very long and complex process, and in many ways it is up to the patient or individual to decide how far he really wants to go. Many people are satisfied with a half-way job, so to speak, and stop there and become very effective in their work and daily activities. Others feel some inner unrest which has been called a "divine discontent", in which case something more needs to be added in order to really satisfy the individual.

By spiritual I do not mean dogmatic religious ideas, for in many cases religious dogmas may stand in the way of a genuine spiritual experience. They may be, in short, in the nature of thought forms which limit us. On the other hand, a real spiritual experience can be translated in terms which are understood by all humanity and not by just one particular sect. By "spiritual" I do not mean "going to church." I mean anything which involves values higher than the average, including empathetic understanding, altruistic love, deep wisdom, creative

inspiration, an appreciation of beauty, a sense of responsibility, a feeling of wanting to contribute, as well as the so-called mystical experiences of universality, of oneness with the cosmos. (See for instance Richard M. Bucke, *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study as the Evolution of the Human Mind*. New York: Dutton, 1923. New Hyde Park, N. Y.: University Books, 1961 edition.) Spiritual experiences take many forms in different people, and very often you will find that an individual will lose his particular dogma, since it may be a way to clothe the experience, but is not the essence of the experience itself.

It is evident from the foregoing that the basic orientation of psychosynthesis includes a recognition on the part of the therapist that *the spiritual urges within an individual are as basic, as primary, as the sexual and aggressive drives*, which are so well studied in psychoanalysis. But it also indicates that these sexual and aggressive drives are not denied. This is the error of so many so-called spiritual persons, in that they cut themselves off from their physical-emotional nature and want to reach metaphysical heights without having their feet close to the ground. This is not psychosynthesis. To be "spiritual" in the sense of ordinary language when we talk about a person, saying he or she is "spiritual", is the antithesis of synthesis because it is cutting yourself off from being a human being in the flesh. It is one way of achieving a pseudo-nirvana, but it is not the way of psychosynthesis. Of course, it is much easier to be integrated on a purely materialistic basis or on a purely spiritual basis, than to integrate both within oneself. The latter is the aim of psychosynthesis.

When I say that the spiritual drive is basic, I mean that it is not essentially derived from sexual and aggressive drives by processes of reaction-formation, projection, and sublimation, which are the explanations given in the orthodox psychoanalytic literature. It is true that in many cases spiritual strivings are derived from other drives; for example, some individuals may project the image of a God, because of their own immature need for dependency on a strong father image. There is this remnant in many of us, I am sure, but there is also something else. There is a spiritual urge which is not derived from infantilism, from dependency, from reaction formation to aggression; which is not derived from the sexual drive; but which is a drive *in itself*, just as much as the sexual and aggressive drives. As individuals develop in adolescence and express more of the sexual drive, in the same way, generally later in life, the person starts to express some of his spiritual drives. Viewed in this light, *neurosis can occur just as much from the repression of spiritual urges as from the more widely recognized repression of sexual and aggressive drives*. I think this is a very important distinction between orthodox psychoanalysis and the viewpoint of psychosynthesis. It does not mean that a psychosynthetically-oriented therapist will not recognize all the aspects which have been so well studied by Freud and his followers, and make use of all the techniques that they have developed, but there is the need to recognize further aspects in human nature and include the spiritual aspects; to recognize the need for integration of these spiritual aspects with the rest of human nature, and to make use of further techniques which may not be analytical but which are very specifically suited to the purpose of synthesis.

There is another implication in this orientation, which is that if you recognize the existence of a spiritual Self with a capital "S", then you also recognize as a therapist that there is within your patient (within all of us, for that matter) an inner source of love, of intelligence, of wisdom, of creativity, of inner direction and purpose. Thus, with this orientation, *the job of the therapist is to help the individual become aware of and utilize these higher energies for the work of the reconstruction of the personality*.

One of the basic assumptions of this approach is that this inner spiritual center, if contacted without undue personality distortions, is a wiser source of guidance and direction for the patient's life than the conscious mind of the therapist. This recognition of the patient's inner wisdom will give the therapist a well-needed sense of proportion and of humility. I think it can help a great deal if the therapist has a conviction, drawn from direct experience, that regardless of how wretched, confused or sick the individual may appear on the surface, there is this inner center of psychological health, of wisdom and purpose, which is there to be evoked, provided the blocks to its conscious realization can be removed.

You may say that this is all well and good, but how can one do this? *How can personal and spiritual psychosynthesis be achieved?* I cannot possibly give you the complete answer in these two sessions. It is impossible in the time available, and I think even if I had more time I could not give you the complete answer because I do not have the complete answer; nor can I give you a panacea. All I can do is to describe first the general process of psychosynthesis and then select one technique which, among others, may help toward the goal of psychosynthesis.

Assagioli, in his article *Dynamic Psychology and Psychosynthesis* distinguishes between various stages in the process of psychosynthesis. I will briefly summarize these stages but it is well to remember that they may to some extent overlap. (For a more complete description of this process, see R. Assagioli, *Dynamic Psychology and Psychosynthesis* (1959) and *Self-Realization and Psychological Disturbances* (1961), published by the Psychosynthesis Research Foundation.)

The first stage involves a thorough knowledge of one's personality. This is the analytic stage where you can use free association, projective techniques and all the techniques of modern-day psychotherapy.

A second stage is focused on the control of the various elements of the personality. This is based on a fundamental psychological principle, which may be formulated as follows: *We are dominated by everything with which our self becomes identified. We can dominate and control everything from which we dis-identify ourselves.* The question becomes then to what extent can we identify ourselves with the true Self and dis-identify ourselves from the non-self. For example, every time we identify ourselves with a sickness, a thought of fear, or failure, every time we admit "I am discouraged", or "I am irritated", we become more and more dominated by irritation, depression or anger. We have put our chains on ourselves. Now, if we say, "a wave of discouragement is trying to submerge me", or "an impulse of anger is attempting to overpower me", the situation is quite different, because on the one side you have the discouragement or the anger, and, on the other side you have the self. So, we identify ourselves with the self. Now, that does not mean the Pollyanna attitude of denial and repression which says, "Oh! I'm not angry; I am a very kind man", gritting one's teeth at the same time! I do not advocate the Pollyanna attitude that everything is fine in the best of worlds, like *Candide* in Voltaire's novel. *One must have the courage to face one's shadow* (if one wants to use the Jungian term) or one's Id (if one wants to use the Freudian term), and meet it head-on, becoming aware of it and of the psychodynamics and motivations connected with it. *But that does not mean that we say we are it.* This is not the whole of us; this is only part of us. So the basic *exercise of dis-identification from the non-self and identification with the Self* is most important for psychosynthesis. First, to become aware that I have a body, but I am not my body, because after all, within a few days all the cells of my body will no longer be the same, and yet I experience a sense of continuity. At times I am tired, and at other times I am full of energy. Because there is so much change, how can my identity reside in that? I have a body; I use it just as I use a car, but I am the driver, I am not my car. That does not mean I do not enjoy the car; that, for example, I do not enjoy sex; but I realize that the whole of me is not that kind of enjoyment. It is just one aspect of life.

The same thing can be said of my emotions. Sometimes I feel depressed, sometimes I feel elated, sometimes I feel irritated, sometimes I feel very loving. The moods change; now where in that is my identity? These are all passing moods that I feel, but I am not my feelings. Nevertheless, they are extremely useful and helpful in my contact with other people. I do not withdraw from other people. I need emotions to sense by other than intellectual ways how another individual reacts, and also to express love and affection. But I am not my emotions.

And I can go one step further and think of all the ways that my thoughts, my intellect, my ideas have changed and evolved over a period of years; that I have sometimes changed my point of view. How can my identity reside in that? I think, but I am not my thoughts. I have an intellect; it is a tool, but I do not raise it (as some

intellectuals do) to the status of a God to which I pay homage. It is just a tool; it is an intellect; it is a way of resolving questions and thinking. But I am not my intellect. Then who am I? *I am a Self. I am a point of pure self-awareness.* One of the easiest ways to help a person realize this is to ask him to concentrate on anything, as for instance closing his eyes and visualizing a white dot at the center of the outline of a white circle. Very quickly sensations and feelings will impinge, and all kinds of extraneous thoughts will intrude. You begin to have the experience that there is, on the one hand, this self who has willed to visualize a dot and a circle; and on the other hand, all these extraneous sensations, feelings and thoughts. You become aware of how little in control you are, and of how much difference there is between the self and the stream of your consciousness which includes sensations from the body, feelings from your emotional nature and thoughts from your mental nature. And, finally, there is the further experience when you become aware that this conscious self is not your ultimate reality and identity. Because, after all the conscious self disappears during the night, and yet the next morning you wake up and you are back again. It disappears during anesthesia or in states of very deep hypnosis, and yet it reappears. So maybe it is just a reflection in a field of consciousness of some center which is much deeper and which we may call a Self with a capital "S".

So the next realization, the next stage, is the realization of one's true Self—the discovery of this unifying center. For this, ideal models may be helpful, models on which we might pattern ourselves. But inner models, the inner sense of awareness and of selfhood is another way. I cannot go too much into the details in this session. I want simply to give you a broad outline, and then I will present to you one particular technique.

The next step is the psychosynthesis itself, the formation or reconstruction of a personality around this center that you have helped the patient to realize. It consists of many intermediary stages involving, for example, the utilization of available energies, the transformation and sublimation of sexual and aggressive drives, the coordination and subordination of various psychological functions and *the development of functions which are undeveloped.* Considering the four functions of sensation, feeling, thinking and intuition, there is in general an imbalance. Some people approach life mainly on the sensory level; other people approach it on the feeling or emotional level; for others everything has to be thought out, intellectualized; they cannot feel, they have to think how they feel. In these individuals, psychosynthesis would involve the development of the *feeling* function since it is undeveloped.

This gives me the idea that now might be the time to give you an overview of one technique of psychosynthesis which is related to the development and control of imagination.

SYMBOLIC VISUALIZATION: A TECHNIQUE OF PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

In this technique, imagination is used not for the idle daydreaming we engage in once in a while, nor for artistic creation, which may be worthwhile in its own right, but for the specific purpose of psychological growth and integration. I want to show you how this technique can help not only in the development of the function of imagination, but also in the psychosynthesis of the individual as a whole.

In many of us, imagination is either undeveloped or uncontrolled. If it is undeveloped, the person when asked to visualize often cannot see anything, for everything has to be intellectualized and cannot be experienced directly in the world of images. If imagination is uncontrolled, it may run rampant, cause a great deal of trouble, produce wild fancies, idle daydreaming, all the way to psychotic autistic fantasies. So the purpose becomes to develop imagination, but in a way which will be creative, constructive, for the growth and development of the whole personality. Visualization, the pictorial aspect of imagination, is closely related to the language of the unconscious, which essentially is a pictorial language, as you well know from your own dreams. When we dream, our unconscious speaks to us in images. By reversing the process, either by presenting images to the unconscious or by changing the images springing from the unconscious, it is possible to speak to the unconscious in its own language of images and therefore to affect unconscious processes and hence eventually

influence our outer behavior. Since many of these images are symbolic of feelings, attitudes or conflicts, I call this process "*Symbolic Visualization*".

Symbolic visualization is both a psycho-diagnostic and a psycho-therapeutic method. It is one of the fundamental methods of psychosynthesis. For example, a patient may be asked to close his eyes and imagine a *closed rosebud opening up and growing into a full-grown rose*, very gradually, as nature grows. By the way, when I say "patient", I do not mean only a patient, because many individuals come to me for self-actualization, for Self-realization through therapy and not essentially because they feel they are neurotic; so when I say patient I really mean person. In some patients the bud becomes immediately a full rose; diagnostically it may mean that this is an individual who may have a goal fairly clearly in his mind but will not go through the trouble, sweat and pain of taking intermediate steps. Then the therapy consists of asking him to imagine the growth of the rose in a gradual way, as in nature. Other diagnostic implications are endless. I will give you a couple of examples. A patient with repressed hostility visualized at first a rose with sharp jagged petals. With another patient, very withdrawn and isolated, the rose failed to open; it remained closed tight as a bud. These clues to personality dynamics may be used for interpretation and insight, as one does in psychoanalysis, but it is also possible to work directly with the image and to have the patient repeat the procedure until he is able to produce a beautiful rose and to realize that the whole process is a significant symbol of his inner growth and development. The efficacy of this symbolic visualization depends on the person's growing ability to introject the rose, to have a sense of the living symbol, so that the symbol works creatively in the person and sets in motion his own constructive and creative forces.

The techniques of symbolic visualization fall on a continuum from controlled visualization of specific symbols to free spontaneous visualization of an unstructured type, such as reverie.

A. Controlled Symbolic Visualization.

In controlled symbolic visualization, although some of the details may be spontaneous, the basic pictorial content is specified in advance. A preparatory state consists of sitting in a comfortable chair, closing the eyes and achieving as relaxed a state as possible. The sitting position, in contrast to the use of the couch, facilitates ego control over imaginative processes. Attention is withdrawn as much as possible from bodily processes and extraneous thoughts and focused upon the specified symbol or symbolic scene which is being created in the "mind's eye".

There are two basic types of controlled symbolic visualizations: (1) the controlled visualization of dynamic symbols and (2) the controlled visualization of symbolic scenes.

I. Controlled Visualization Of Dynamic Symbols.

For that, in turn two approaches may be used.

a. *In the first case, the self attempts to maintain the image in a pre-determined form.* This experience generally brings to the patient a dramatic realization of his ineffective control. Unwanted thoughts and feelings intrude to disturb his concentration. The image itself tends to change or fade. He has to recreate it again and again. This experience helps the patient to distinguish between the self or "I" that wills to concentrate on a certain image, and the changing contents of consciousness. For maximal effectiveness, a few minutes daily over a period of several months may be devoted to this type of visualization. Gradually, with repeated practice, the person finds that his ability to visualize improves and that he can maintain a steady image for longer periods of time. Thus, he acquires control over imaginative processes and his sense of self-identity as a directing agent of his inner and outer life becomes strengthened.

The very selection of the image to be visualized may bring about further changes, since it is chosen for its dynamic therapeutic value. Particularly useful in this respect are the following:

(1) *Symbols of synthesis*, of integration and balance around an inner core, such as a sunflower. Jung has attested to the transforming power of these symbols. From a study of mandala symbolism, I came to the conclusion that the integrative value of these symbols resides essentially in the basic geometric forms imbedded in the image. Instead of waiting for their spontaneous emergence, it is possible to visualize these basic integrative symbols; for example, visualizing the outline of a white circle with a white dot at the center, following this with an equal-armed white cross or mathematical plus sign, and ending the visualization by portraying the outline of a white equilateral triangle pointing upward, spending approximately four to five minutes on the visualization of each symbol in that order. Experience has shown that it is important to recreate the image again and again as it fades out and to continue the practice daily for nine months to a year in order to insure cumulative and lasting results.

(2) *Symbols of harmonious human relations*, such as two hands clasping each other.

(3) *Symbols of masculinity* (a sword for instance) *and of femininity* (a receptacle, such as a cup or vase). If the visualized sword is covered with rust or broken (which, by the way, occurred in a homosexual patient), the patient is asked to remove the rust or repair it in imagination until he creates a fine blade of shining steel. Psychotherapists will see the sexual symbolism there very easily. But it is more than that. It concerns his entire masculinity and not just his sexual potency. It represents his role as a masculine male in life; he sees the degree to which he can assert himself when he is in a position to rightfully do so. As to the feminine symbol, the cup or vase, it was visualized for instance by a woman patient as black inside and filled with mud. I asked her to remove the mud, paint the vase gold inside, and fill it with fresh water. The work of restoration, such as flowers springing up from the mud, often occurs spontaneously without the intervention of the therapist.

(4) *Symbols of affective states* (by "affective", I mean the emotional, feeling aspect of one's human nature). In this connection subjective color visualization may prove effective to bring about desired affective states. For example, in psychophysiological studies that I conducted at the Veterans' Administration Hospital in Los Angeles, blue was found to have tranquilizing effects which were particularly marked in subjects with more than average anxiety. These effects even changed brain waves on the electro-encephalograph (EEG) machine which I used, and there were corresponding changes in blood pressure, respiration rate, palm conductance (GSR), and other autonomic nervous system functions. The patient may be asked to visualize himself at the center of a globe of light filled with a given color, or to imagine a scene or object with a particular color, such as a blue mountain lake; or a geometrical form filled with color, such as a blue circle or yellow diamond.

b. *In the second approach to controlled visualization of dynamic symbols, the self attempts to change the image in a previously predetermined direction.* This permits the utilization of *living symbols*. Among these are symbols of transformation (e.g., the transformation of a worm to a chrysalis to a butterfly) and *symbols of growth* such as the rose that I have already mentioned, or a seed growing into the full strength and maturity of a tree (such as an oak, or pine tree) able to withstand the onslaught of the elements. I had a very interesting experience with a patient who was asked to visualize a seed during a therapy session for the first time. (I usually like to have the patient try it first in my presence and then try it on his own later on.) The tree started to grow and wanted to grow so fast that the trunk was not strong enough to support the branches. It never became a tree.

Instead it became a vine which stayed close to the ground, like a clinging vine, which represented vividly the way the patient depended on others. To have him start allowing for a natural growth was part of the process of therapy with this individual.

2. Controlled Visualization Of Symbolic Scenes.

In the second basic type of controlled visualization, namely controlled visualization of symbolic scenes, the dynamics of movement are applied, not only to a single symbol such as a growing tree, but to an imagined sequence of events. *Symbolic scenes may be suggested by the patient's own productions.* For instance, in a daydream a sexually inadequate male patient encounters difficulties when he attempts to play ping-pong with a girl. He is asked to visualize the scene repeatedly, gradually improving his game and reducing his anxiety. By symbolically playing pingpong with a girl some of the anxieties connected to heterosexual relationships may be resolved.

Symbolic scenes may be suggested by the therapist, depending upon the needs of the patient. These scenes include the following:

(1) *Symbolic visualizations of desired personality characteristics,* such as undoing a tangled knot with patience, awakening from slumber to clear perception, taming and training a wild horse. In this connection a wild horse may represent the personality as a whole; specifically, it may represent the aggressive drives which have to be tamed, trained (but not held back) so that they can be released and expressed in a constructive manner.

(2) *Symbolic representations of the process of reconstruction of the personality.* For instance, building a home or temple to replace a dilapidated house; or restoring a neglected garden, picturing its growth in beauty, day after day for a few minutes, until it really becomes a thing of beauty.

(3) *Symbolic sequences portraying the discovery and identification with a unifying center around which personality conflicts can be resolved.* For example, reaching the safety of a lighthouse on a rock after a dangerous swim in the churning waters of the ocean, climbing to the top of the lighthouse, and looking at the ocean from this central position with the awareness that this sequence may represent the ability to stand firm in the midst of emotional turmoil, and to survey one's conflicts with the attitude of the observer identified with the self, the "I", the center of one's consciousness. Seen in this context, the lighthouse is more than the symbol of a male sexual organ; it becomes a symbol of the self.

(4) *Symbolic representations of inter-individual psychosynthesis,* namely, the psychosynthesis of the couple, of the group, of humanity—such as walking together as a couple or as a group on the same path, helping each other to surmount obstacles on the way.

B. Spontaneous Symbolic Visualization.

The predetermined course of image development in controlled symbolic visualization may be altered by the irruption of spontaneous symbolic contents. This tendency for spontaneous images to arise is encouraged in the techniques of spontaneous symbolic visualization, no attempt being made to predetermine the form or sequence of symbolic representations, although a starting image may be given to induce the process. The spontaneity of symbolic formation is facilitated by relaxation on the couch. In the previous technique, the self or ego was visualizing a predetermined visualization. In the present technique we want to be more receptive to these unexpected images, and let them come through in a more spontaneous manner; so the use of the couch is advisable, although the reclining position is not essential. Here I want to give a *very important word of warning.*

Whereas controlled symbolic visualization (which I have talked about so far) may be performed by an individual on his own, *spontaneous visualization is best done in the presence of a trained psychotherapist*. By that I mean a professional psychotherapist who has been trained specifically in this technique; who has gone through it himself, and who knows what it involves; for instance, who will not be lost if suddenly a patient is about to be devoured by a dragon. I would not advise any one of us here to do spontaneous symbolic visualizations. If you do it, you do so at your own risk.

One of the most unstructured among the techniques of spontaneous symbolic visualizations is the "active imagination" technique of C. C. Jung, in which, for instance, the patient is asked to continue an interrupted dream or imagine a dialogue with the figures of the dream. In Germany, Hanscarl Leuner from the University of Tübingen has developed the "initiated symbol projection" technique, which he uses for psychodiagnostic purposes, and more recently for therapeutic purposes. He uses a systematic series of about twenty symbolic situations which he proposes to the patient; for instance, waiting for a figure to emerge from a cave. In one of my women patients the figure which emerged was a lion. In order to further her psychosynthesis, I asked her to make friends with this dangerous animal. She became frightened and thought she would be devoured by the lion. However, in a previous session she had a spiritual experience during which she had visualized herself completely surrounded with white light, and I asked her to recall this experience which previously had been associated with integrated feelings of power and love. When she did, the lion, although very ferocious, no longer wanted to eat her. I asked her to climb over the lion and to mount the lion, thus symbolically representing her integration with her "animal" nature. This procedure was especially essential with this woman, who was very spiritually inclined but needed further integration with her physical and emotional nature. At first it was the lion who directed her to his lair, where she met the lioness and their cubs. Using the "guided daydream" ("Rêve Eveillé") technique of Desoille, I proposed that she climb a mountain with the lion. Symbolically this induced a sublimation of the animal drives represented by the lion, and by this process these drives could be controlled more easily. Indeed, when she reached the top of the mountain, she found that she could direct the lion, so that when she went down into the valley she and the lion were like a rider on his horse. Very shortly following this symbolization the patient (who had not been able to write for the last two years), began to experience an upsurge of creativity and resumed her writing career.

Desoille's technique of the "guided daydream" makes a remarkable use of downward movement to contact threatening symbolic representations of internal and inter-personal conflicts and of upward movement for resolution of conflicts, sublimation and humanization. More recently, Desoille has structured his therapy into a preliminary series of symbolic themes, including climbing a mountain, descending into the depths of the ocean, meeting a witch in a cave (the witch often representing the mother, wife or sister), or meeting a sorcerer (who may represent the father, husband or therapist).

What distinguishes these techniques from usual daydreams where anxiety situations are often avoided and goals reached without effort, is the encouragement to take an active stand toward the threatening image. The therapeutic process may be explained in learning theory terms as the substitution of healthy response tendencies for previously neurotic responses of fear and avoidance. For example, if an octopus is met in the depths of the sea, the patient is encouraged to capture it in spite of intense anxiety and bring it to the surface, to the light of day where it sometimes may transform itself into the face of the mother or father. Thus the patient may discover that his mother has been smothering him, or over-protecting him, thus preventing him from developing his own self-identity; or that he was afraid of his father, if the father comes up as the image. Then, in his visualization, the patient climbs a mountain with his mother or father. He may discover certain values in the other person through this process of sublimation of his "lower" drives and actualization of his "higher" tendencies, and become aware of certain qualities in these people that he was not fully aware of before. He may even begin to experience feelings of understanding and love which he did not feel before. So really it is a method of psychosynthesis "parexcellence". You travel into the depths of the ocean, into the interior of the earth; and you

reach all the way up to the top of a mountain and higher in the sky, into the universal cosmos—thus symbolically you link spirit and matter within yourself and integrate your spiritual aspirations with your physical nature.

In the second session I will continue to talk on spontaneous visualization, and then I will go into an actual example of a therapy session.

* * * *

SECOND SESSION

As you remember, in the first session I talked first about the basic idea of psychosynthesis, the goal, the overview of the process, then I talked about *one of the techniques of psychosynthesis*, namely, *symbolic visualization*. I want to remind you that this is only one technique; I do not want to give you the impression that psychosynthesis is just *this*. For instance, psychosynthesis includes techniques of acceptance, concentration, creative expression, humor, intuition, meditation, objective observation, deep relaxation, transmutation and sublimation, synthesis of the opposites, and development of the will, to mention only a few.

However, for the purpose of focus it is important to deal with specifics. Therefore, instead of being purely general and theoretical, I selected a technique which I helped to develop, so I could talk from direct experience. I felt that this would be of value to you, since symbolic visualization is an approach which so far is not well known in psychotherapy.

In the first session I spent most of the time on symbolic visualization by taking up the first kind of symbolic visualization, which is the controlled type where the patient or subject has determined in advance what he is going to visualize, and what the outcome of it might be, like visualizing the bud of a rose growing into a full grown rose.

I then started to talk about spontaneous symbolic visualization, in which there is much greater freedom, which is generally done on the couch, where the individual in a state of close to reverie starts to allow certain contents from his unconscious to come up spontaneously, and I mentioned two individuals who were particularly connected with this approach: (a) A Frenchman, Robert Desoille; his major book in French is called *Le Reve Eveillé en Psychothérapie* (The Guided Daydream in Psychotherapy), published by the *Presses Universitaires de France* (French Universities Press) in Paris in 1945. His most recent book is entitled *Théorie et Pratique du Rêve Eveillé Dirigé*, published in 1961 by Editions du Mont-Blanc, Geneva, Switzerland. (b) A German psychiatrist, Hanscarl Leuner; unfortunately most of his articles are only available in German. (A paper in English, *Initiated Symbol Projection* by William Swartley—based on unpublished manuscripts by Hanscarl Leuner—is available from the Psychosynthesis Research Foundation.) This I think explains why there has been as yet very little known in this country about these important advances in psychotherapy. (Since this lecture was given, J. H. van den Berg's article, *An Existential Explanation of the Guided Daydream in Psychotherapy*, was published in Vol. II, Number 1, Winter 1962, of the *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry*, pp. 5-35.)

I want to point out that the techniques of Desoille and Leuner comprise only one section of the overall techniques of symbolic visualization. These are techniques of spontaneous symbolic visualization, but even within the realm of spontaneous symbolic visualization there are possibilities of using additional techniques that I would like to present to you.

For instance, the techniques of Desoille, Jung, Leuner and others, in which the individual interacts with the imagined material, can be extended to include *symbolic identification* with every element in the fantasy. The patient is asked to imagine that he is the person, animal, plant, object, or natural setting (river, sea, mountain,

etc.) he has encountered in his fantasy, and to experience and spontaneously enact the scene from that point of view. This technique is useful for reintegrating projected material, for working through anxiety-arousing images, for improving interpersonal relationships, and in general, for gaining insight into the meaning of the symbolic representations.

Furthermore, besides the guided daydream technique in which visualization constitutes the major avenue of approach to therapy, it is possible to make occasional use of spontaneous symbolic visualization to represent and eventually affect a variety of psychological states:

1. Symbolic Visualization of Somatic States.

This technique is particularly helpful for the symbolic understanding and resolution of psychosomatic tensions. For example, a borderline schizophrenic college girl reports a tension in the shoulders during the course of a therapy session which was essentially a dialogue between her and me—she was sitting in the armchair in front of me. The usual psychoanalytic technique might be to say, "Well, what does this bring to your mind?", thus continuing our verbal dialogue. It is possible, however, to use symbolic visualization, namely to ask her to close her eyes and report associated images instead of just associated words or memories. She sees herself dangling from a tree, strung up on a hanger, with the horizontal wire of the hanger across her shoulders, without feelings, a "thing" instead of a person. This, by the way, is the kind of imagery produced by withdrawn individuals who have lost the feeling of selfhood, or self-identity, and who experience instead a feeling of depersonalization. I ask her to imagine that she is getting herself off the hanger, but she experiences great difficulty. She is finally able to get herself on the ground. When she reaches the ground she sees a boy who interested her, but whom she had kept at a distance. She wishes to hug him. When encouraged to do so in imagination, she notes that she is breathing more easily, that she feels more alive, and that her shoulder tension has disappeared. This is a spontaneous visualization, because when I asked this individual to close her eyes, neither she nor I knew what image would come. The image was not predetermined; it appeared as a spontaneous representation of her psychosomatic tension.

2. Symbolic Visualization of Emotional States.

It is possible to represent prevailing affective states and motivational dynamics pictorially. For example, an anxious male patient is asked to contact his anxiety ("close your eyes, describe how you feel, and tell me if there is any image that comes to you"). He pictures a soft lump of dough, unbaked bread, and thus realizes that his anxiety is related to feelings of inner weakness. Now, this is using the symbolic representation in a psychoanalytical sense, to understand the source of the anxiety. But, I went further. I asked him to imagine that this dough is put into an oven and baked into bread; this represents the growth process all the way to a finished product. The outside crust is formed and the inside is digestible. The person becomes more than a lump; he has attained (symbolically) a level of self-identity. This is a psychosynthetic approach, because you are doing the therapy without words, by using non-verbal material. I consider that too much psychotherapy is done on a purely verbal level. A patient comes and tells you all the horrible things that have happened to him for years and what he thinks about, and you often get nowhere. Sometimes you do, but I feel we have to use non-verbal as well as verbal approaches. Symbolic Visualization is one additional non-verbal approach which can be used.

There are several techniques which facilitate the visualization of emotional states:

a. The Technique Of The Door.

The patient is asked to imagine a door in a high wall or in a house, and on that door to visualize a word which the therapist may suggest, or a word the patient may himself suggest, such as "anxiety", "depression", "love", "hate", "hope", etc. Then the patient is asked to open the door and to report what he meets on the other side. From then on the process is a spontaneous symbolic visualization. For this, one can use the guided daydream technique of Desoille, and foster the sublimation and resolution of conflicts by asking the patient to go up; or, if

the patient produces Pollyanna images, if for example to the word "hate" he opens the door and finds a beautiful garden with nothing but doves making love, and there is no such thing as hate in his world, then I ask the patient to go down because he needs to go *down* and encounter the dark side of life that he has repressed.

b. The Technique Op The Heart

The patient is asked to visualize a huge valentine bigger than himself, perhaps eight to ten feet high, and to enter it through a door. Let me give you an example. A married woman with ulcers and breathing difficulties, frustrated by her husband and angry because of his failure to express any warm feelings toward her, is contemplating divorce. She sees a wooden heart (you already see the symbol of her affectional deprivation) which leads to a wasteland of snow and ice close to the North Pole. Now, if I were just psychoanalytically inclined I would stop there and ask for associations. I have a symbolic representation of the wasteland in which she finds herself, of the iciness of her emotional climate at home; the wooden heart may represent her own heart that no longer can love, or the heart of the husband who does not love her. However,

instead of making any interpretations right away, I asked her, "Is there any living thing or person around this wasteland?", which I admit is a suggestion, but I think it is a therapeutic suggestion. I still leave it open; I do not know what kind of life is going to appear. She meets a man bundled up in a heavy overcoat that conceals his face. One can see here the difficulty in interpersonal relationships between herself and the man. One does not know yet who the other person represents, but he is a male. I suggest that they dig into the ice to discover what is underneath. That is another suggestion, but again I think it is a therapeutic suggestion. They have no tools, so they dig with their hands. Their hands bleed and they go through terrible anguish. Finally they hit the ground and then she gasps. She is amazed to find fresh, green grass. This is a symbolic representation, I think, of the potentiality for life or growth in the future; something alive underneath all this ice—maybe there is something that could be developed between her and her husband. I assumed that it probably represented the husband but I still said nothing, since she did not mention that it was her husband. The ice recedes, and she finds herself in a meadow. The reason the ice recedes is because warm sunshine melts the snow. She notices that the man's face is that of her husband. I did not tell her that I thought the man was her husband; this came from her. But despite the warm sunshine, he cannot take off his overcoat; he is still all muffled up. This is a symbolic visual representation of a man who cannot express warm feelings. The sunshine is warm, and yet he is all bundled up. This is what she is angry about. And she starts to say, "Come on, take it off, take it off", but he won't. This is more or less the situation in her home. Now comes another therapeutic suggestion: "Suppose you help him take his overcoat off". She does; he responds to her gesture and embraces her. They decide to build a home on this spot and start a new life together. It is interesting to note that at the following session she reported experiencing warm feelings towards her husband for the first time in years and the husband responds in kind. Eventually, after more psychotherapy, her ulcer improves and her breathing difficulty subsides.

3. Symbolic Visualizations Derived from Projective Techniques.

The patient is asked to interact in fantasy with the figures portrayed in the Draw-a-Person test, and to enter the scenes pictured in his projective drawings. Significant Rorschach responses as well as characters from the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) and the Make-a-Picture-Story test (MAPS) can be confronted and played in imagination.

4. Symbolic Visualizations Derived from Dreams and Daydreams.

The patient interacts with and confronts the symbols, characters, and situations previously encountered in his dreams and daydreams. The above mentioned *symbolic identification technique* is particularly helpful to understand and assimilate dream contents. For example, an emotionally constricted woman was asked to identify with the flowing stream of her dream, and experienced a release which helped her establish more spontaneous feeling relationships with others.

5. Symbolic Visualizations of Thought Contents.

The patient is asked to associate a perceptual picture with certain thoughts, ideas and concepts. Metaphorical language lends itself particularly well to this substitution of verbal by non-verbal material.

The technique of the *reflected self-image* is particularly useful to elicit the self-concept. The patient is asked to go into a room and look into a mirror, or to go into a garden and look at his reflection in a pool of water. Often the reflected image is different from the real person. It may be the idealized self of what he would like to become, and from it one can see whether the level of aspiration is under or over what could possibly be achieved by the person; or it can be the rejected self, what C. C. Jung has called the "shadow". I remember, for example, a woman patient who had no awareness of her masculine aggressive tendencies and experienced intense anxiety when she saw her reflected image—almost like Oscar Wilde's picture of Dorian Grey. The image in the mirror first had her features, then she saw the features change into the face of a mean man. In this way she experienced with terrific impact what were some of her inner tendencies which she had repressed. These needed to come out and be resolved in the process of psychotherapy. This was quite a psychological shock to her at the time, and that is why I feel a trained therapist should be present with such an approach.

Even *abstract ideas*—now we come closer to the *spiritual aspect*—such as justice, goodwill, altruism, may be represented in visual symbols or scenes, in which the subject is asked to express the corresponding values; to act *as if* he had those values, to act *as if* he were altruistic.

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

There is a big trend in psychology today toward existentialism; in many respects this is a valuable trend, but it has limitations and I want to point them out here. Many existentialists have emphasized the experience of loneliness and isolation, of identity ultimately apart from other beings. This experience is one of the major symptoms of modern life, and is quite prevalent. It is, therefore, understandable that the existentialists pay such attention to this human experience. The experience of isolation, of separate identity is related to the experience of the personal self. It may occur when the personal self is dis-identified from others, dis-identified from the contents of consciousness—such as sensations, feelings, and thoughts—but has not yet achieved a direct contact with the spiritual Self (the "higher" Self or "deeper" Self, whatever analogy one may want to use).

Most existentialists do not discriminate between the personal self which is isolated, and the spiritual Self which is not. This distinction is a fundamental one in psychosynthesis. The experience of the personal self is that of separate identity. The experience of the spiritual Self combines a keen sense of identity (of individuality, of being one's self, of discovering one's true self), and the sense of universality, of oneness, of unity with the cosmos. What would seem in logic to be a contradiction is instead a most wonderful living experience—individuality and universality, being oneself fully and yet being identified with the fullness of life, being at one with the universe. I would call that kind of experience a spiritual experience. The existential experience of solitude is a negation of the spiritual Self. However, this experience of loneliness and isolation has its values. For instance, pioneers in any field, individuals with new ideas which may not fit the accepted orthodox pattern of their times, may sooner or later have to pass through this experience. But psychosynthesis, unlike existentialism, affirms that this experience of isolation is not man's essential nature. Man's essential nature is an integral part of the universe.

The awareness of the spiritual Self, the true essence of man's Being, may be achieved through the use of certain methods of psychosynthesis. I do not think that it would be particularly fruitful at this stage to theorize about the spiritual Self. Some of my colleagues have asked me, "Can you define the spiritual Self?" One answer is that the *Self is an experience*. We can formulate the experience more or less into a concept, but it is primarily an experience. Life itself is an experience, so, in my opinion, we should not start with a conception of the Self with

a capital S, or with dogmas (including scientific or religious dogmas), but we should start with techniques for experiencing the Self, for having a spiritual experience.

It seems that many churches do not spend much time on the *techniques* which would evoke spiritual awareness. Perhaps it is not too much to hope that as a result of the growing relationship between psychotherapists and clergymen of all faiths, such techniques will in the future form an integral part of the ministry of the church. Some ministers I know are investigating and practicing various techniques of meditation, and I believe that many of the techniques of psychosynthesis could also be of help in the church, particularly in pastoral counseling. Neither the clergyman with members of his church, nor the therapist with his patients, can force a spiritual experience, but they can help to evoke it. Certain techniques can be used which may bring about genuine spiritual experiences, and this is what I want to talk about briefly in the remainder of this session.

SYMBOLIC VISUALIZATION FOR SPIRITUAL PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

Inasmuch as symbols can express not only infantile and primitive wishes, but also unrealized potentialities for growth, symbolic visualization may serve to evoke inner wisdom and inspiration as well as ethical, humanitarian and altruistic values, which I include under the generic term "spiritual experiences" and "spiritual values". Techniques particularly suited for this purpose include the following:

1. The Guided Daydream Technique.

The previously mentioned "Réve Eveillé" technique of Desoille for ascending to the heights or going into the depths of one's inner world is essentially a technique of symbolic ascent and symbolic descent.

2. The Techniques of Light.

Light is a very profound symbol—a symbol of enlightenment, of wisdom; the light of the intellect, and so on. One can use symbols of the Self in terms of light, such as a point of light, or a sphere of fire— (fire is also a symbol of purification). Try in imagination to enter a flaming sphere. The patient will say, "But my body is going to be destroyed". And I may say, "Well, let's see what will happen". The patient may experience that his body is destroyed yet he himself is not destroyed; he becomes aware that the Self is not the body. A shining diamond, a radiating sun, or star have been used as symbols of the Self. In imagination, the patient approaches and eventually penetrates into the lighted area. For instance, he may identify himself and merge with a clear pure light of great intensity on the summit of a mountain peak or pyramid. The light is used to generate a process of gradual contact and identification with an inner light of understanding and insight.

3. The Technique of Inner Dialogue.

In the previous technique, the patient visualized an impersonal symbol of the spiritual Self, such as a radiating sun or shining diamond. In this technique he visualizes a personification of the spiritual Self: for example, a wise old man. If the person is inclined toward Christianity, he can visualize the inner Christ. If he is a Buddhist, he visualizes the Buddha in meditation. He is actually visualizing the same process in my opinion. I do not mean to say that the Buddha is the same person as the Christ. I mean that the symbol may serve to represent the same inner reality, namely the individual's spiritual Self. He can visualize this personified symbol of the Self and engage in a dialogue. For instance, he can ask for the wise man's guidance; he can be in a receptive mood and await an answer which may come immediately or during the next attempt; or at an unexpected moment, as when shaving. The techniques of light and inner dialogue help the patient to develop a philosophy of life suited to his existential situation and to find purpose, direction and meaning to his life. Thus they may provide an approach toward logotherapy. (Frankl, V. E. *Logos and Existence in Psychotherapy. Amer. J. Psychother.* 1953, 7, 8-15. *On Logotherapy and Existential Analysis. Amer. J. Psychoanal.* 1958, 18, 28-37.) (Viktor Frankl) which is concerned with the search for the meaning of human existence.

SYMBOLIC VISUALIZATION AND SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES—A CASE STUDY

I feel that one of the best ways to illustrate how spiritual experiences may be induced by means of symbolic visualization is to give an actual example from one therapy session. The patient I have selected has given me the authorization to publish the material contained in the session, provided I do not disclose his identity. The session is particularly interesting for this reason: many metaphysically inclined individuals believe that it is only possible to have spiritual experiences by going up; this is a person who had a spiritual experience by going down. In many of my patients (and in many individuals, whether they are patients or not), the spiritual experience takes the form of contacting some kind of light. When the symbolic visualization technique of ascent or descent is used, a different kind of light is contacted on the way down than on the way up. In general, the light experienced on the way down gives the impression of a very basic, undifferentiated, pure energy of the universe, neither good nor evil, which can be used in either way. The light contacted on the way up generally impresses the subject as being essentially spiritual (not that the other is not "spiritual"): a constructive energy often associated with feelings of altruistic love, understanding and wisdom. In some cases, the individual contacts a light on the way down, then one on the way up, and is eventually able to fuse the two in one synthesis of both lights, representing the integration of his material and spiritual nature in one harmonic whole, as an integral part of the universe, which is what eventually needs to be experienced.

The therapy session I will present to you is also interesting because the patient, to my knowledge, had not read books on color symbology. His experience during the session sprang from an inner contact with the depths of the psyche. He was in his late forties, an engineer by profession. In his first session, he presented several symptoms which are typical of many individuals in modern times. He suffered from feelings of isolation, yet often felt that he would rather be left alone, for he was uncomfortable in the presence of people. He found it difficult to express his feelings and to make friends. He bemoaned his inability to communicate with others and complained that he was not enjoying life; he experienced a lack of energy and had no enthusiasm for anything.

I generally do not attempt symbolic visualizations right away. This patient, for instance, was not asked to visualize on the couch until the 13th session, when I suggested a theme, namely to imagine that he was in a meadow, then to climb a mountain. He was able to reach the top of the mountain, but only after experiencing many obstacles and finally crawling on his hands and knees. This symbolic achievement gave him a feeling of confidence.

The second symbolic visualization, which I will now present to you, occurred during the 16th session, which was recorded on tape. I will have to omit some details from this session in order to shorten the presentation. I will make occasional interpretive comments from the point of view of psychosynthesis, for instance with reference to the patient's contact with symbolic representations of the spiritual Self. The experience of this patient could be formulated and labeled in different terms, and interpreted in different frames of reference, such as the psychoanalytical, existential or interpersonal. In my opinion, however, it is the patient's experience and not whatever interpretation we may attempt to make of it, which constitutes the essence of the therapeutic process during this session. It is in the nature of a "peak experience," as described by Maslow (Abraham H. Maslow. *Lessons from the Peak-Experiences. Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, Volume 2, No. 1, Spring 1962, pp. 9-18.), and is akin to some experiences under the influence of psychedelic drugs such as LSD-25, but significantly is the result of a natural psychological process which does not require the ingestion of any pharmacological substance.

After asking the patient to lie down on the couch, to put eyeshades on, to relax as much as possible, and to breathe naturally, without making any conscious willful effort to control his breathing, the following exchange took place:

T. Therapist: I'd like you to imagine that you are lying down on the beach on top of a blanket, and describe to me what you experience.

P. Patient: Nice warm sunshine...the sand conforms to the contour of my body...

T. In your imagination, sit up and describe the beach to me.

P. A sandy strip of beach... there is the sound of surf... I like to be along the ocean and be alone...almost a companionship. I feel with the ocean. I have a lot of times gotten up in the morning at times when the beach would be deserted. But this is different in the heat of the day and the warm sun; other people come to the beach and they also like to get the sun. There are men and women and a lot of children...there are young people, younger high school age and college age; quite a romantic spot where the young people come to the beach.

T. Are you a good swimmer?

P. Yes, I swim a great deal. I swim a lot.

T. Suppose you swim in the ocean, and swim out as far as you can.

P. ...As I get on farther out, there is nothing to gauge my distance...I am very much alone...

T. Are you pretty far out?

P. Yes, it seems pretty far out, as far as it might be safe to swim out alone.

T. Now what I would like you to do is to dive deep into the ocean and go down deeper and deeper and deeper. If you are concerned about not being able to breathe, you might imagine that you have an Aqualung.

P. ... One would have to work hard to swim down, work against the buoyancy, but with an Aqualung...I would have goggles so that I could see without the discomfort of the salt water; and I see clearly, it's a bright day.

T. Now assume this is a very deep part of the ocean, and go deeper and deeper, down and down.

P. I am going down through layers of kelp and seaweed; and it's dark now, quite dark...it's much colder.

T. Imagine you have a light on your forehead, so it is possible for you to light your surroundings, and keep going down.

P. I get a feeling that I am in something different from clear water, for now there is a layer of muck, ooze, slime...

T. How do you feel?

P. There is a certain fear, but I still want to go on. There are creatures...like fish and snakes...formless creatures ... they are all around.

T. Can you describe these snakes?

P. They're...formless...they have a surface of snakelike thing. They have the tendrils of an octopus...I go right through them. They don't have a real body to them...they are a part of this ooze.

T. Go still deeper.

P. It could be almost like a mass of living things, but they are almost without physical form...They have the beginning of a shape but the shape is plastic; it can be changed, and it does almost change with the movement of the water... (Note: I think this may represent his own yet unfinished state, and also the movement of the water may be his environment. His form can be changed by the environment, he is plastic; he does not yet fully feel his identity within himself. He is malleable, he is weak, he is soft, etc. I don't know, but this is a possible interpretation. I do not interpret at this state; I may interpret later.)

P. I have a feeling...they are animals of some kind...the beginning of something that has to go up. Maybe it's a protoplasm in development...like an egg...There is a potential of life and there is the beginning of life and growth, but it's not formed yet. It's only the promise of the potential of life and there is the beginning of life and growth, but it's not formed yet. It's only the promise of the potential of something that is to be. It must move upwards. It must develop more to become resolved into a creature...it is the beginning of life, before life has really become resolved to the point of calling it a creature. It is precreation. Very strange, very strange.

T. Keep going down.

P. ...I can't make sense of the formless mass. I want to do something to learn more about it.

T. We may come back to it; at the present time keep going deeper.

P. ...Seems like the further I go the less form, the less resemblance to anything physical. I get this feeling of just unidentifiable mass that's almost jellylike in consistency...I can move into it...It's a nourishing thing. (Note: A Freudian psychoanalytical interpretation may link this with the experience of the womb.) It is the food on which these creatures must draw. It is the source of their life...It is the thing from which material is made ... It is the source and beginning of life.

T. Keep going deeper into this source. (Note: Since the patient mentioned the word "source", I picked this up.)

P. (pause) It's a light coming almost like a dome.

T. Let's approach this light.

P. It seems like there is a dome with light coming through. This mass from which light comes, it's being created inside this vaulted area, and I can see that it's being rather like it's pumped out, or forced out through openings.

T. Let's go inside.

P. I can work my way in through the opening (very long pause). Looks like there are people. (Note: Since P. breathes very heavily I know he is experiencing something.) They are just a radiant kind of a floating shadow being...they move around freely; it seems they leave a misty trail as they move. It is almost like a spider spinning a web, and the web is a trail of misty-like substance. They move back and forth and weave this...work it into the material that is being forced out of the openings. It has no more than the consistency of smoke...There is nothing to it until it begins to combine and it's a weaving process that takes a number of them moving back and forth, and the combination of their trails that forms into this material...each of them has a

different color, it's almost a light; they are fluorescent, they are luminescent. They seem to have a kind of radiance.

T. How many of these beings are there?

P. Many, many...a very large area that I can see. Now that I am inside it seems tremendously large. I feel like I am almost able to float about. I don't need any support....I can see so much more now...The light that I saw at first is coming from these colored trails of luminescence...mist coming from these figures. The figures are small.

T. How small?

P. O, they are no bigger than my hand, in the form of men...Yes, like little men and women...I can't determine too much about them...they are busily weaving in their patterns.

T. Let these luminescent trails impregnate you. In other words, let them come to you and touch you.

P. Yes, I find I can move right into their trails as they are moving by. They have no substance to them; it's like a mist...They smell good! And I get a distinct feeling of a warm glow. There is exhilaration about it. My feet were cold, but now I feel warm and a tingle It is a great feeling, wonderful!...a great sensation of elation. I want to move around and try some of the other colors. (He is breathing very deeply)...I can get different aromas with the different colors.

T. Do you feel a different way for a different color?

P. Yes...this one is blue.

T. How does that feel?

P. It makes me want to breathe it in and get more (deep breath). It goes to my head. This one I feel is stimulating my brain, and...thought processes. I think it would be a great stimulus to the thinking function (puts his hand on his chest)...I get a tingling sensation around my mouth and my throat as though it were affecting my vocal chords and my speaking...I know it is affecting my vocal chords and my breathing. I feel like I'm trying to take it in (deep breath)...and make it a part of me.

T. Let's try another color.

P. I see a green trail here, that I can get into (deep breathing). It has an aroma of growing things. This has growth potential. It is a source material for promoting vegetation...that feeds man and gives him strength. It has the beginnings of nourishment, of this vegetable growth that can take power from the earth and the sun and give him strength. It has elements of growing material. (Note: In my opinion, the patient was getting in touch with certain basic energies. Incidentally, if we could translate many religious ideas in terms of energy it would be quite interesting.) Yes, yes, it has wonderful power, but it is not a direct source for man. It must gather power from the sun and from the earth materials to convert it for man's use, and...it has to have other energies added to it. But I like it; it shows me this also is a part of life's process it makes one think of all the elements that must contribute to make life whole. It has tremendous energy and...life potential for all growing things. There is great potential there that has never been realized, never been tapped. It's many things of beauty; flowers and all the infinite variety of color that can grow from this and the taste can come from it...and food and the aromas for the senses...Unimaginable source of life in this.

T. Identify yourself with this source of life in the same way that you identified yourself with the blue source of intellectual creativity.

P. Yes, I feel that this is the nourishing material, the thing the body feeds upon to grow; and this radiance is the thing that is converted through physical activity into strength that one needs (breathes very heavily). It is the growth material, the growing, expanding potential that enables one and is...the relationship that man has with his surrounding growth in nature. Man is really alive and able to maintain life by his use of this strength-giving, energy-giving force. It is the thing that is here for the maintenance of life and for growth in all areas...It is a very vital thing (deep breath).

T. (*Note:* I felt that by that time the patient had sufficiently absorbed this experience; after all, we have only a certain amount of time in a given session.) Let's try another color, another luminescent trail.

P. There is a red trail, a vivid red. When I get into the midst of it I find this is warmth and heat and radiation!! It is the thing from which fire is formed, and it is an energy. It has dangerous qualities; (deep breathing) it is consuming, but it is also life-giving. We can't live without it, but we cannot live without controlling it. (*Note:* This may represent the energy of will and power, of life itself, an energy which can be used destructively or constructively.)

T. How do you feel? What kind of sensations does it make you have?

P. There is a warmth and a feeling that this I must know, I must learn, I must get (deep breathing). I must understand it to use it. (*Note:* Remember that this man is a somewhat passive, at times withdrawn individual who as yet cannot assert himself). But I must not let it consume me (said with great feeling). It almost stifles my breath if I breathe too deeply...I must stay aware and keep in touch with the other trails. I wouldn't want this one to swallow me up. It has tremendous power; (deep breath)...it can suffocate as much as bum. I feel its warmth and I want to hold it, and have it around me, but I must not let it blind me or sweep me from the other trails and colors...I can use the warmth and the radiation as great potential. There is much in this that I must know more about, but it can be dangerous...I feel that I must move along to a place where this trail is close to the other trails. I need the blue for intelligence, to let me keep my wits about me. Let's not the red consume the green; it can blend with it. They all blend, but I can't let one become too great at the sacrifice of others. I want to know more about each, but I must stay in touch with them all. (*Note:* this is a symbolic realization of the need for psychosynthesis. In symbolic language, the patient is saying, "I must synthesize all the forces within me.") I see a yellow trail that blends with the red (deep breath). I see the yellow light! (deep breath)...It is yellow and white; that is the radiance. It is almost the light source in itself, and this is its light. With it I can see the others. I think the others must fluoresce from this. This is the source; this is the light, and because of it the others give off their reflecting light, their fluorescence. This is yellow-white incandescence. Oh! (almost a moan) I am afraid!

T. (*Note:* This awe before a contact with a symbolic representation of the spiritual Self occurs frequently). What are you afraid of?

P. This one is the (deep breathing), this one has all (very deep and fast breathing; gives a couple of cries), I am afraid if I find the source from which this is emanating, my spirit...my life will be consumed, it will be taken back. It's the thing that is life!

T. You can experience it and keep your identity. You can know that you are part of that light, and yet are a being in your own right.

P. (breathing heavily) This is the source of the spiritual things (deep sigh).

T. You can be a light within a greater light.

P. Yes, I must (patient wrings his hands and touches his throat). I have the feeling...as though my soul or spiritual element or whatever it is, that is neither intelligence nor physical body nor physical strength, nor warmth; it is being taken in, could be or become one with this elemental light, this source of all brilliance. I had the urge toward a strong identity with it, but I feel that I must keep my own identity. I must not become numb and dissolve...into this...

T. Can you approach that light?

P. Hm. Hm.

T. Approach closer and closer to that source of light.

P. Yes, Yes!

T. And become one with it, (pause) and know that you have that light within you also.

P. I can feel it, it's in me! But I think now I can keep it from leaving me, and it must be with me. This is the whole! this is the life, that one element of existence through all life; the thing that does live and carry from one existence to another. This is the spark, the life element that...goes on and...grows and changes and combines with other things...This is the spiritual source.

T. Can you penetrate into that light, closer to the inner center of that light?

P. (after a long pause) Yes! this light is coming from the very center of...the interweaving and the spinning of the other lights. This one is the radiant center (deep breath). This is very strange! I can see it in the center, but it is not a little center; it is a center that is; no, I can't describe this one. This is a radiance that comes from a source that is the center and the final infinite. The little dot that marks the center and grows smaller and brighter into an infinitesimal dot that is so small, yet it is so big, that it is everything!...That infinitely tiny source is infinitely big! It is an all *encompassing*, infinitesimally small dot!! I can't describe it! In this tiny dot everything is combined. That is the all! That's it; that's it!

T. (*Note: The experience of symbolic contact with the spiritual Self is often accompanied by this resolution and synthesis of the poles of opposites. According to Maslow (Abraham H. Maslow. Notes on Being—psychology. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. Volume 2, No. 2, Fall 1962, pp. 47.71) this "dichotomy-transcendence" is one of the characteristics of Being-cognition, i.e., the cognition of the world as perceived in peak experiences). Everything is one?*

P. Everything is combined, the source and the beginning of everything. Everything that will ever develop is there; but it is in the form of a potential, just like the great tree is in potential in the tiny seed...so this infinitely small tiny speck is traced back to the origin of all things. It is the thing that shapes all growth and shapes all development. It is in the germ, the sperm from which I grew, which was carried in my father from his mother and father, and came to him through them and through their parents. And that infinitely tiny source is all contained here in this infinitely tiny small spot that I can see. I am in a very, very tiny spot, very infinitely small spot within that infinitely small spot. . . I am a spot of light within that spot of light...The direction and program for all of life is coming from this little spot! I can see that it's all contained there, but it is like looking through this spot into all of creation, because all of it is here! It is infinite! The infinitely large is all combined as an infinitesimally small!

T. Now, identifying yourself with this spot, visualize all these trails of various colors radiating from you and through you and blending. (*Note:* This intervention is for the purpose of furthering integration and synthesis).

P. That's it! They all come to me through everything about me that I touch, that I see, feel, and that I don't feel and that I'm not aware of. They are coming from the air I breathe, from the food I eat, from the warmth and the light. It comes from the sun; and this brightest of all, the spiritual trail, it's here; it's always here!

T. It is that which blends all the others together. (*Note:* The spiritual Self is the synthesizer).

P. Yes! Yes! That's it! They are all blended in me and through me to make an integrated being, and I still have the bright source, it is the combining element; it is the force that somehow is directing and setting the pattern... It is combined and associated with everything I come into contact with...All creatures have this same radiance. It's a beam that comes as a beam of radiance; and always is there and always will be there...Other bodies, other creatures come along to replace forms that change their form, but the spiritual light continues on; it is the continuing thing that carries through all of life. (*Note:* An experienced contact with this inner light enables the individual to sense the light in others and to realize their ultimate unity as expressions of the same life force. Although this is perceived more intensively at the moment of the peak-experience, it may be carried over as a greater ability to relate to others authentically from the core of one's Being to the core of their Being, realizing that they 'are part of the same common ground of existence. Not only improved human relationships, but also a constructive philosophy of life may be elaborated on the basis of such experiences.)

T. Now, from this center, with this realization, you can direct your life, knowing that you are a part of the universe.

P. Yeah; Yeah! I feel that I must be aware of it and keep in touch. I must know more. I must find out more about it, let it direct. I must learn...to let it do what has to be done...I am...an organism to do the will and to work out the pattern of life that is coming through this source...I must be in touch so that my functions, my thinking, my physical movements and my voice carry out the intent for the program towards greater and greater growth. This brilliance, this light, this source...it's moving to a fulfillment, and then I am a part of the plan to move toward that fulfillment. (*Note:* The patient seems to contact here the idea of Self-realization and actualization within the framework of an overall psycho-spiritual evolution.)

T. Now, remembering that a part of the source is within you always, the center of your inner being, go upwards toward the surface of the ocean and observe the transformations in the rays and creatures that you see around you as you move upward.

P. Hm, Hm. Yeah, it is very different now as I come out. Now...there is no darkness, there is no oppressive feeling of fear, and lack of direction, and wonderment of what it is. I feel that I come out. I stand on the top of the dome. Now I am in my element. This is not an ocean floor, this is not the bottom of the sea, unless I'm indeed a creature transformed to match this element...I am now...one of the elements! I feel that all around me is now friendly atmosphere. It's light, and there is warmth, and I feel buoyed up! This is not like an air-breathing creature on the bottom of the ocean...I feel that very exhilarating feeling. I feel that the elements are all my natural element now...this ooze of the ocean. If this is ooze from the ocean floor, it's natural for me...I have a feeling this is fresh wonderful air! Maybe I am transformed into a creature that adapts to the elements. It would be possible, sure anything is possible... I feel wonderfully exhilarated in moving in an element of warmth...This is right! The things are as they should be, and I go upward with buoyancy. I am rising, rising, but the light is going with me. I have a feeling of going through what I have gone through before, but as a different creature (*Note* the power of transformation of this kind of experience). I *am* a part of this element in which I'm moving.

T. Keep going up toward the surface...

P. I have a sense of being adapted to the element that I am in...the feeling of rising, going up, up, up, it's just the same as flying or being lifted on air. But now I know that I'm coming to the surface of the ocean...Now I am on the water, but I am not swimming now, I walk! I can, the water is my element. I seem to have full control. I am in the sunlight, in the air. I am walking on the water, as though anything is possible because everything is in tune, it's an all rightness! Everything fits together in the pattern as it should be. There is no division between the elements...the air is good, the water is good, the earth is good, the sun is good. All things are combined in me to support and give life and warmth and strength! Hm! (takes a deep breath).

T. Now go to the beach.

P. Hm, Hm. (after a pause.) Yes, I go right upon the beach, walk right back to where I was (pause; deep breath).

T. Stand on the beach and look at the beach and tell me what you see and feel.

P. It looks like it did before, but with a new feeling! Somehow I just like to wiggle my toes in the sand and feel the sand because it feels good. It is there to give my body support, and the sun is warm and strength-giving, and the air is good. I breathe in the air and the surf is still moving, almost as though it were alive. Now it has a rhythm, like a breathing action of its own;...the mm is alive; and the sand and the hills that I can see beyond are all part of the life-giving forces. (*Note:* The patient feels integrated with the physical side of life also, as a result of this experience, he is no longer cutting himself off from sensory relationship. He is experiencing oneness with the universe without loss of identity. The experience of a synthesis of body and spirit, of physical matter and spiritual essence, together with the creative resolution of the apparent conflict between a heightened sense of individual identity and a feeling of universality extending beyond the personal egocentric self, is characteristic of a genuine contact with the spiritual Self, which brings about a vivid realization of one's ultimate identity with the whole of life.) There are people around; children are still playing in the sand, and I enjoy watching them. They are almost like my sons and daughters; they are part of me. I have a different feeling towards them. They are not somebody else's children; they are my children, and there are the young people on the beach. They are all my children and my brothers and sisters, and they are my parents. They are an extension of me almost! They are almost as though they are other parts of me, because we are all part of that one great source, the pattern of all life! Hmm! I can look at them with a different feeling of understanding

T. Take a couple of deep breaths, then stretch your mm and legs; (pause) feel the weight of your body on the couch; and now you can take the shade off (pause). When you feel ready, you can get up.

P. (rising) It was quite a trip!

T. We can talk about it next time. I think it might be valuable if you would write as much of it as you can remember, not just...what you said, but also some of these inner experiences...which you may not have had a chance to describe in detail; and also what all this might mean for you, as a human being, as a person in your own right.

P. Yeah! There's a lot to it! (*Note:* An active participation on the part of the patient to apprehend the inner meaning of his experience, as well as a shared exploration with the therapist to derive insights in a subsequent session, are helpful for the interpretation and assimilation of the experience and facilitate the working through of its potentialities in the life of the patient. Thus the process of psychotherapy is carried forward by successive, sometimes overlapping cycles of analysis and synthesis.)

T. O.K. (therapist stops the tape recorder)

P. (*Note:* The following remarks made by the patient as he was leaving the room were recorded in the therapist's notebook immediately following the patient's departure.) The reality of the thing! Almost like a dreaming experience, except I could move around in it; I had a sense of myself. At the beginning I had a feeling of annoyance toward the people on the beach. They were noisy, an intrusion. But I had a different feeling when I came back. (*Note:* Another characteristic of genuine contact with the spiritual Self, the inner core, the real Being of the person, is the transforming power of such experience, its effectiveness residing in the externalization-on the plane of daily life activities-of a felt inner experience of integral relatedness to others, of oneness with the whole family of man.)