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# The Psychedelic Experience versus The Mystical Experience

This booklet is an important update to my article [A Critique of Stanislav Grof and Holotropic Breathwork](#). I'm writing it because of two things. The first, which is the primary reason, is because I repeatedly have been writing about spiritual crises, and has credited Stanislav Grof for having mapped spiritual crises. I have later realized that this mapping of spiritual crises actually ought to be credited his wife, the late Christina Grof.

The other reason is that we with [The Matrix Conspiracy](#) are witnessing a renaissance of the proposal of using psychedelics in connection with spiritual practice. In my article on Stanislav Grof I have already warned against this, and explained what is going wrong, and wherein the misunderstandings consist. In this booklet I will repeat this warning in a new way, namely by seeing the difference between genuine mystical experiences and psychedelic experiences in relation with the difference between the real Kundalini experiences of Christina Grof, and the LSD induced experiences of Stanislav Grof. I will furthermore see this in relation to the real Kundalini experiences of mystic Kate Thomas, as well as my own Kundalini experiences.

All this will finally be put into the context of the most famous account of the advocacy of the use of psychedelics in connection with spiritual practice, namely the book *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. It is a book about using psychedelic drugs that was coauthored by Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner and Richard Alpert (Ram Dass), all of whom had previously taken part in research investigating the therapeutic potential of psychedelic drugs such as LSD, psilocybin and mescaline in addition to the ability of these substances to sometimes induce religious and mystical states of consciousness. Started as early as 1962 as part of the [Zihuatanejo Project](#) in Zihuatanejo, Mexico, the book was finally published in August 1964.

The theses put forward in *The Psychedelic Experience* is just about the basic theses put forward in numerous New Age books today, which are dealing with psychedelics, shamanism, and Tibetan dream yoga. I will end the booklet with an investigation of the concept of plastic shamanism, and conclude with the claim that we with the

psychedelic renaissance are witnessing an exploitative form of colonialism and one step in the destruction of Indigenous cultures, and eventually all the original wisdom traditions.

The main thesis put forward by users of psychedelics in connection with spiritual practice is that we with psychedelics are able to skip all preliminary work with spiritual practice. Psychedelics are a fast track to enlightenment.

In connection with that I will rise two questions: 1) why is it that we never have heard of one single human being who has reached enlightenment through the use of drugs? 2) Why is that all wisdom traditions, which work with spiritual practices that lead to enlightenment, without exception warn against the use of drugs in combination with spiritual practice?

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## **1. The Stormy Search for the Self**

Before I begin, I will in a simplified way explain what the difference between a psychedelic experience and a genuine mystical experience is. The difference is as big as the difference between being drunk and sober. This is an explanation Krishnamurti often used when being asked this question. You don't drink in order to get sober. And when confronted with the usual *Don't Knock It Till You've Tried It* argument, he simply answered: do you need to be ill in order to know what it is to be healthy? Do you need to be drunk in order to know what it is to be sober? A person who never have touched alcohol, don't need to get drunk in order to know that he is sober.

These answers are of course not enough for people who already are hooked on using psychedelics in connection with spiritual practice. But if you shift the words "drunk" and "high" with the expression "ego-inflation," and the words "hangovers," "abstinence," etc., with the expression "The Dark Night of the Soul" you'll have an idea of what I in this booklet will try to explain.

I personally have had, and still have, experiences with the awakening of Kundalini, but my discovery of the concept of spiritual crises is due to the book *The Stormy Search for the Self: A Guide to Personal Growth through Transformational Crisis*, by Christina and Stanislov Grof.

At times, Christina suffered being in the shadow of her husband's immense intellect and prolific legacy, and so she has remained a bit of an unsung heroine. Stanislov Grof himself credited Christina with shining a spotlight on areas he would otherwise never have seen or considered, and for also being at the forefront of these areas and at the memorial service for Christina on October 14th 2014 at Spirit Rock, in Woodacre, California, Stanislov explained:

*Our cooperation was so close that it was not always easy to separate one person's contributions from the other's. Unfortunately, because we live in a patriarchal society, Christina often did not receive any credit for projects that she had created single-handedly—such as founding the Spiritual Emergency Network (SEN) or bridging the addictions field and transpersonal psychology—as well as those to which she made substantial contributions—such as Holotropic Breathwork, Esalen month-longs, and international transpersonal conferences. This was further complicated by the fact that, in later years, low energy due to her chronic autoimmune disease did not allow her full participation in many of the events.*

So, Stanislov is in no way trying to hide the importance of the work, and experiences, of his wife Christina. The fact is that the concept of spiritual crises never would have been discovered without Christina.

*The Stormy Search for the Self* begins with two prologues: *The Uninvited Guest: Christina's Story*, and *God in the Laboratory: Stanislov's Story*. In the following I will summarize these stories and comment with my own experiences with the Kundalini awakening. My claim is that I highly doubt that people who hasn't experienced a real Kundalini experience, and The Dark Night of the Soul aspect of it (not the ego-inflation aspect of it), will be able to see where Stanislov is going wrong. But I will seek to explain it in a way so that people can understand it. My focus will be based on what I see as the tragedy of Christina's story; a tragedy undoubtedly caused by Christina's uncritically accept of Stanislov's ideas and practices.

In Stanislov's story he says that his personal and professional history is somewhat unusual since it was his scientific research and everyday observations in clinical and laboratory work that undermined his initial atheistic worldview and attracted his attention to the spiritual domain. A close friend of Stan lent him Sigmund Freud's *Introductory Lectures to Psychoanalysis*. Although he was intellectually interested in

religion and Oriental philosophy, he was basically an atheist. So, before his LSD experiments, he was well read in religion and Oriental philosophy. That's an important thing to remember in the following.

It is also important to make aware Stan's interest in the mythologist Joseph Campbell's monomyth of *The Hero's Journey*. Campbell says that this monomyth is the common template of a broad category of tales that involve a hero who goes on an adventure, and in a decisive crisis wins a victory, and then comes home changed or transformed. Campbell's concept of monomyth (one myth) refers to the theory that sees all mythic narratives as variations of a single great story. The theory is based on the observation that a common pattern exists beneath the narrative elements of most great myths, regardless of their origin or time of creation. This mythological cycle of healing is a central part of Stan's psychotherapeutic model of healing. In other words: Stan reduced mythology to psychotherapy; a complete central problem which I will refer to in this booklet (read more about this in my article [The Hero's Journey](#)).

In Stan's continued story, and even more in Christina's story, you can easily see how it is reflected.

One day the department where Stan worked received a complimentary parcel from the Sandoz Pharmaceutical Laboratories in Basel, Switzerland. As he opened it, he noticed a mysterious conglomeration of three letters and two numbers: LSD-25. It was a sample of a new experimental substance with remarkable psychoactive properties, discovered in a strange case of serendipity by the leading chemist at Sandoz, Dr. Albert Hofmann. After some preliminary psychiatric work had been done in Switzerland, the company was making samples of this drug available to researchers all over the world, requesting feedback about its effects and potential. Among its possible uses were the exploration of the nature and causes of psychoses, particularly schizophrenia, and the training of psychiatrists and psychologists.

Stan was extremely excited about the opportunity for such unique training and, in 1956, became one of the early subjects. His first LSD session was an event that has in its consequences profoundly changed his professional and personal life. He experienced an extraordinary encounter and confrontation with his unconscious psyche, which instantly overshadowed his previous interest in Freudian psychoanalysis. This day marked the beginning of his radical departure from traditional thinking in psychiatry. He was treated, in his own words, to a fantastic display of colorful visions, some of them abstract and geometrical, others figurative and full of symbolic meaning. He also felt an amazing array of emotions with an intensity he did not know was possible. He could not believe how much he learned about his psyche in those few hours. He was hit by a radiance that seemed

comparable to the epicenter of an atomic explosion, or possibly to the light of supernatural brilliance that, Stan explains, according to Oriental scriptures appears to us at the moment of death.

Here we see Stan's misunderstanding of what he experiences. Notice his words "comparable" or "possible." What he experiences has nothing to do with what he compares it to. If it was a real mystical experience it would precisely be *real*. He is for example not dying for real. The mystical experience is not something "comparable" or "possible." What he experiences is *images* or *symbols* of these events. I will explain this in detail later, but just say that the difference is between *experience* alone, and *experience* followed by *realization*. He need to use the word *possible* because he is not realizing anything. He needs to *interpret* what he experiences. Note how the word *real* is contained in the word *realization*.

Stan's story continues: this thunderbolt catapulted him out of his body. He lost his awareness of the research assistant and the laboratory, then the psychiatric clinic, then Prague, and finally the planet. His consciousness expanded at an inconceivable speed and reached cosmic dimensions. As the young assistant gradually shifted the frequency of the strobe up and down the scale, he found himself in the middle of a cosmic drama of unimaginable proportions. He experienced the Big Bang, passed through black and white holes in the universe, identified with exploding supernovas, and witnessed many other strange phenomena that seemed to be pulsars, quasars, and other amazing cosmic events.

Once again Stan makes the comparison bias: he says that there was no doubt that the experience he was having was "very close to" those he knew from reading the great mystical scriptures of the world. What happened is that his mind was getting identified with the collective images of time. I will return to these images, but just say that these images exist outside your ordinary personal mind in the very movement of nature itself. It is a kind of abstract tensions of matter and energy. In other words: they are ontological facts. In that way I'm not claiming that the images just are some kind of projections of his mind, which he has supplied with his previous ideas about these images. But a great deal of it is. And that's where the danger comes in. People trained in Freudian psychology experience Freudian dreams. People trained in Jungian psychology experience Jungian dreams, and those trained in Grofian psychology experience Grofian dreams, or Grofian LSD trips. It's not real, it's not realization. It's distortions.

Even though Stan's mind was deeply effected by the drug, he claims he was able to see the irony and paradox of the situation. The Divine manifested itself and took him over in the modern laboratory in the middle of a serious scientific experiment

conducted in a Communist country with a substance produced in the test tube of twentieth-century chemist.

Did Stan *realize* anything? Well, he claims that he realized that, under the proper circumstances, psychedelic experiences – to a much greater degree than dreams, which play such a crucial role in psychoanalysis – are truly, in Freud’s words, a “royal road into the unconscious.” The powerful catalyst could help to heal the gap between the great explanatory power of psychoanalysis and its lack of efficacy as a therapeutic tool. He felt strongly that LSD-assisted analysis could deepen, intensify, and accelerate the therapeutic process and produce practical results matching the ingenuity of Freudian theoretical speculations.

Stan makes an important admission here: “The great explanatory power of psychoanalysis and its lack of efficacy as a therapeutic tool.” But he doesn’t seem to realize that perhaps the lack of efficacy is due to that the explanations are entirely the therapist’s own private idiosyncratic ideas (Freud, Jung, Grof), which he tries to put into a one-size-fits all explanation of everything. A distortion in other words. This is why Jeffrey Masson made the controversial claim that all therapy, *all* therapy, is corrupt. A claim I completely agree with. In his book [Against Therapy](#) Masson attacks the very foundations of modern psychotherapy from Freud to Jung, Fritz Perls to Carl Rogers. With passion and clarity, *Against Therapy* addresses the profession’s core weaknesses, contending that, since therapy’s aim is to change people, and this is achieved according to the therapist’s own notions and prejudices (subjectivism), the psychological process is necessarily corrupt, and can justify the use of, well, just about anything the therapist can come up with: even brainwashing, beating and torture. In a nutshell it is the same argumentation I myself put forward towards the Matrix Conspiracy’s two methods: psychotherapy and coaching. See my books [The Matrix Conspiracy 1-2](#). I have told about such horrifying kinds of psychotherapy in my articles [The Devastating New Age Turn in Psychotherapy](#), [The Vampirised Spirit of John Rosen](#), and [Spiritual Vampires](#).

Stan tells of later sessions, where he started to witness experiences that were “indistinguishable from those described in the ancient mystical traditions and spiritual philosophies of the East.” Some of them were powerful sequences of psychological death and rebirth; others involved feelings of oneness with humanity, nature, and the cosmos. Many clients also reported visions of deities and demons from different cultures and visits to various mythological realms. Among the most astonishing occurrences were dramatic and vivid sequences that were subjectively experienced as past-incarnation memories.

Notice how everything reported are *interpretations* of visions. Stan interprets the visions according to what he has read about this, and what he has thought about it. It's the same process as when interpreting dreams. It is experiences without realization. If there had been realization involved, there would be no need of interpretation. Realization happens instantly, it is not a process of interpretation where you mix the experienced with your own ideas. But I still don't try to insinuate that the visions in a LSD trip, or other psychedelic trips, only are projections from the mind. I do claim though, that a great deal of it is. I will return to the danger of this later.

Stan continues and tells that the process he was witnessing in others and experiencing himself also had a deep similarity with shamanic initiations, rites of passage of various cultures, and the ancient mysteries of death and rebirth. He rightly claims that Western scientists had ridiculed and rejected these sophisticated procedures, believing that they had successfully replaced them with rational and scientifically sound approaches. Stan's observations convinced him that such modern fields as psychoanalysis and behaviorism had only scratched the surface of the human psyche and could bear no comparison to the depth and scope of such ancient knowledge.

But then Stan begins to talk New Age language. He claims that another decade passed before it became obvious that traditional science was itself undergoing a conceptual revolution of unprecedented proportions. The radical changes that were introduced into the scientific worldview of Einstein's theories of relativity and quantum theory was followed by equally profound revisions occurring in many other disciplines. New connections were being established between transpersonal psychology and the emerging scientific worldview that has become known as the "new paradigm."

At present, Stan claims, "we are still lacking a satisfactory synthesis of these developments, which are replacing old ways of thinking about the world. However, the impressive mosaic of new observations and theories that are already available suggests that in the future the "old/new" discoveries in regard to consciousness and human psyche might become integral parts of a comprehensive scientific worldview."

Stan is here clearly demonstrating the most common New Age reductionism: philosophy, religion, and science has to be reduced to psychology. Why is it that new connections need to be established between precisely transpersonal psychology and the emerging scientific worldview, and why does precisely this constitute a "new paradigm?" Easily answered: because psychology is Stan's discipline. The same is seen in the attempt from New Age biologists to reduce everything to biology, because

biology is their discipline (on the use of paradigm shifts in New Age see the Matrix Dictionary entry [Bridge Between Science and Spirituality](#)).

It's true that Einstein's theories of relativity and quantum theory have established what Thomas Kuhn called a "paradigm shift" in science. But Kuhn didn't tell anything about that this is closely connected to transpersonal psychology. That's entirely Stan's idea, or rather: Stan has it from earlier ideas, for example Timothy Leary, whom we will return to. Furthermore: Stan makes the more ideological bias in discriminating between old thinking and new thinking (the discrimination which the thought police in George Orwell's 1984 also made). The new discoveries in physics hasn't made the classical physics invalid and outdated. It is still valid, but with a limited perspective. Scientists make use of classical physics every day in all kind of disciplines: astronomy, mathematics, and, when measuring quantum phenomena (see my articles [Quantum Mysticism and Its Web of Lies](#), and [Quantum Mechanics and The Philosophy of Niels Bohr](#)).

Stan ends his story with the true claim that spirituality is an important dimension of existence, and becoming aware of this fact is a desirable development in human life. For some, this process takes the form of unusual experiences that can at times be disturbing and dramatic; these are crises of transformation, as he calls them, for which Christina and him created the term *spiritual emergencies*. So, despite all the revelations he says LSD brought him, they obviously didn't tell him anything about spiritual crises. This is something he was made aware of due to Christina.

Although Stan was familiar with nonordinary states of consciousness from his own experiences and from his work with many others, participating in this process around the clock with a person who was emotionally so close to him revealed entirely new aspects and dimensions that remain hidden during work with nonordinary states of consciousness in a professional context. In retrospect, Stan claims, Christina values highly what she has been through, although on occasion she felt stretched to her utmost limits. Stan says that he can claim that for himself; this extremely difficult period was a time of invaluable learning that only real life can provide. Because what Christina experienced was something real, not something experienced in a LSD trip.

These are just about the only things Stan mentions about the dangers, or rather, he doesn't see them as dangers, he puts them into his own system. And here Christina's tragedy, as I call it, begins.

Stan namely claims that his beliefs just were further reinforced by this, and their observations of the effect of Holotropic Breathwork, a powerful method that Christina and him developed. This "simple approach" as he calls it – combining



accelerated breathing, music, and body work – can induce, in a safe and supportive framework, an entire spectrum of healing experiences comparable [sic] to those known from spontaneous transformative episodes; however, he admits, unlike the latter, these experiences remain limited to the periods of holotropic sessions. This indicates a radical difference. If you have an awakening of Kundalini for example, the Kundalini is awake, it doesn't "fall asleep" again. It isn't a psychedelic cyclic trip. It can increase and decrease in strength, some don't even notice it, though they certainly will experience nonordinary states of consciousness. But when awake it stays awake. It's an ontological, and eventually, a metaphysical reality.

It has to be mentioned though, that you can have pseudo-awakenings, for example when using drugs. That is: you can have a vision of the Kundalini awakening, feel it in the body, etc. But it is not a real awakening, and disappears again. The reason why you can feel it in the body is as mentioned, that images are composed by energy and matter.

Holotropic Breathwork (HB) is entirely developed in order to replace LSD, and create experiences similar to those in a LSD trip. Christina's participation in this, is due to her complete trust in Stan's ideas. Not anything in it healed her, on the contrary, it made her experiences worse. That's my point of view. Below I will explain how HB can claim someone is healed when this person actually not at all seem healed, or even are feeling worse.

There are especially two psychotherapeutic ideas included in Holotropic Breathwork: regression psychotherapy and cathartic psychotherapy.

Regression psychotherapies (e.g.: rebirthing, reparenting, past life regression, alien abduction, recovered memory therapy, satanic ritual abuse, etc.) are based on the notion that if you discover the cause of your troubles you will be cured (the unconscious material in HB, is, in its combination with Cathartic psychotherapies, more likely to be re-experienced than merely remembered). These theories are (like other New Age theories) partially attached to science, partially to spirituality (the therapists often call themselves spiritual counselors). In this confusion they are oblivious to the observer, and are lost in the observed. Therefore they are ignorant about the one who creates the causes. The causes become built into the psychotherapy itself, and are therefore ideological worldviews, or just pure prejudice. It is causes such as birth traumas, inadequate parents, sexual abuse, satanic rituals, cannibalistic orgies, past lives, alien abduction, possession by entities, etc. Take your pick. Often they use a one-size-fits-all explanation of every emotional disorder.

In the best Sophist way the therapists are planting such causes in their patients' minds. They give their patients books to read or videos to watch. They plant them during hypnosis, group sessions, etc., and then these planted causes are "recovered" or "re-experienced", and offered as validation of their therapeutic techniques and theories. Patient after patient is paraded forth by the therapists as evidence of their good work, yet none of the patients seem better for the therapy and many seem hopelessly ill. The reason is, that it is not that to feel better, which is the cure, but that to have "discovered" or "re-experienced" the cause. They are ignorant about thought distortions such as *Communal reinforcement*, *Confabulation*, and *Priming effect*.

Cathartic psychotherapies (e.g.: Experiential Psychotherapy, Primal Therapy, Gestalt therapy, Energy breathing, etc.) are based on the notion that if you express your feelings you will purge yourself of your troubles. We have probably all heard this because psychotherapy today have spread far out over its disciplinary limits, and have become a part of an ideology, that think it have to take care of, not just psychological problems, but also philosophical, political and religious problems. In schools and in workplaces we are for example forced to lay bare our feelings on the slightest occasion.

Psychotherapy is a branch of psychology, and therefore something scientific, which have to be empirical tested. The problem is that there is no proof for the notion that you will purge yourself for your troubles if you express your feelings. On the contrary. The notion seems disproved by experiments with children, which find that rather than subliminate aggression when encouraged to be aggressive, the children become more aggressive. As Stephen J. Castro says: "if you have ever experienced (and it is indeed a quite unforgettable experience) someone go berserk and beat a cushion in order to express "repressed" anger, edged on by a group of onlookers displaying the fervour of a mindless mob, then you tend to value rationality, and not gestalt." To Castro it was therefore heartening to read in the *Daily Mail* that there are more than 400 published studies that show quite clearly that when people are focused in this way they just become more angry – not better.

As shown in a documentary by Ofra Bikel "Divided Memories", the therapists featured in interviews, are completely oblivious to how they are demonstrating the monstrosity of their pseudoscientific and self-deceptive work. During the interviews they talk freely about how uninterested they are in the truth and how indifferent they are to the families they help destroy. They are uniform in their dismissal of critics as being in "denial." Patient after patient is paraded forth by the therapists as evidence of their good work, yet none of the patients seem better for the therapy and many seem hopelessly ill.

The documentary shows the subjectivism and relativism in the New Age environment.

Watch the documentary on the playlist of my [YouTube channel](#).

Subjective validation is active when people will validate a set of statements allegedly about themselves as highly accurate, even if these statements *not* are accurate. New Age psychotherapies are dependent of that subjective validation is active in the client, or else they won't work. It is also therefore it is necessary to eliminate critical thinking in the client. These therapies, and subjective validation, are two sides of the same coin.

In July 2011, Chantal Lavigne of Quebec died as a result of a personal development seminar. Some month later a coroner's report confirmed that Lavigne was accidentally "cooked to death" during a class called "Dying in Consciousness." Participants were wrapped in mud and plastic, covered with blankets, and left immobilized for about nine hours. Cardboard boxes were placed over their heads and they were encouraged to hyperventilate. Lavigne died of hyperthermia when her body was unable to dissipate heat properly.

The seminar was held at a spa called Ferme Reine de la Paix and organized by Gabriella "Seréna" Fréchette. In her work as a holistic healer, Fréchette channels "Melchizedek," a mysterious king and priest that appears in the book of Genesis. Lavigne had already completed 85 personal development seminars at the spa, for which she paid more than \$18,900.

This seminar may be related to the conscious dying movement, which explores ceremonies from world traditions such as Shamanism and Tibetan Buddhism that emphasize both preparing for death and gaining spiritual insight through near-death experiences. In audio recordings of the session, Fréchette allegedly states, "The time has come for this body of death that you believe is yours...Death is freedom...death is the truth." – in the end of this booklet I will investigate the mix of shamanism and Tibetan Buddhism, which is a central part of the psychedelic renaissance.

This is not the first time tragedy has resulted from holistic therapies that involve heat and confined spaces. In 2000, ten-year-old Candace Newmaker was accidentally smothered to death during "rebirthing therapy" that involved wrapping her in blankets and sitting on her to simulate the experience of birth. The therapists received prison sentences of 16 years.

In 2009, three people died in a poorly constructed homemade sweat lodge during a five-day “Spiritual warrior” retreat organized by James Arthur Ray, a self-help expert who appeared on Oprah and in the film *The Secret* (see my articles [James Arthur Ray and the sweat lodge tragedy](#), and [The New Thought Movement and the Law of Attraction](#), and The Matrix Dictionary entry on [Oprah Winfrey](#)). The dead were among 56 participants who paid nearly \$10,000 each to take part in the retreat. Participants were crammed into a four-foot tall sweat lodge, packed with superheated rocks, in a ceremony that was supposed to induce a “rebirthing” experience.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation consulted Dianne Casoni, a criminologist from the University of Montreal who studies “cultic groups” including self-help groups. Casoni expressed concern both about the influence holistic health providers gain over their clients and the lack of oversight over such seminars. Holistic healers have, in fact, been framed as sinister and manipulative charlatans at least since nineteenth century.

The problems of traditions such as New Thought, water cure, and mesmerism (see my article [Hypnosis, Hypnotherapy, and the Art of Self-deceit](#)) foreshadowed later concerns over cults. One blog has already labeled Fréchette, “a deranged New Ager.” A Quebecois commenter called her “un garou de seet” (a cult guru).

Shortly told: the problem with all of the above is the tendency, within New Age and the self-help industry, to reduce religion (the traditional spiritual traditions and their spiritual practices) to psychology and psychotherapy. With Christina and Stanislav Grof’s therapeutic technique “Holotropic Breathwork” they are combining Regression psychotherapies with Cathartic psychotherapies, and are calling this technique a spiritual practice with an ancient shamanistic lineage. Stan even claims that this technique is able to skip years of meditation within the traditional practices. The intention is to provoke paranormal phenomena of the same kind as those known from spiritual crises (the awakening of Kundalini, para-psychic opening, Hero’s journey, the shamanic crisis, channeling, close encounters with UFOs, memories from past lives, near-death experiences, possession states, peak experiences – I will explain these later).

The misunderstanding, and the following misleading of clients, happens because of the psychologizing of these phenomena. Stan wrongly thinks, that these experiences correspond with the theories within Regression psychotherapies and Cathartic psychotherapies, and that the goal is to re-experience or re-visit them; that is: you need to go through heavy ordeals of regressive and/or cathartic kind, and experience death and rebirth (especially known from the shamanic illness and the Hero’s journey) in order to experience healing and personal transformation.

So, we have now investigated the psychedelic experience in relation with Stanislav Grof's LSD experiences and Christina's twisted kundalini experiences. If we shall begin to explain the difference between the psychedelic experience and the mystical experience, we will begin with a mystic with a stabilised kundalini experience, and who interestingly enough precisely has had a relationship with the Holotropic Breathwork movement, and therefore can make a direct comparison.

In volume 3 of her autobiography, mystic Kate Thomas (1992) quotes extensively from correspondence relating to the controversy at the Findhorn Foundation, where Stan conducted his experiments at that time. In this, and subsequent writing (1998, 2000), she expresses the view that Holotropic Breathwork interferes with the process of spiritual evolution in ways that she claims facilitators are unqualified to recognize or deal with. Grof himself was for example able to boast that he could convert a Jewish rabbi into a Zen Buddhist using his LSD dosages; but in reality he had no concept of how Zen monks live and think, and himself was incapable of the traditional ideal.

Kate Thomas also has real experiences with Kundalini, and shares therefore precisely the same concerns as me. Of British nationality, Kate Thomas first became an affiliate (or associate member) of this organisation in 1989, moving from Cambridge to the village of Findhorn, where she became a resident until a subsequent move to the nearby town of Forres. She had been drawn by the repute of the Findhorn Foundation for "spiritual" process. The myths were quickly shattered. What she discovered was a hierarchy of alternative therapists and other presumed "spiritual experts" who would not tolerate any query or criticism of their decisions and policies.

The crunch came when she complained at the latitude extended to Stanislav Grof. This controversial celebrity of the Esalen Institute (California) gained influence at the Findhorn Foundation in 1989, a prominence which increased under the patronage of the Foundation Director Craig Gibsone, who soon made known his ambition to become a practitioner of Holotropic Breathwork, the trademark exercise in hyperventilation that was promoted by Grof Transpersonal Training Inc.

Gibsone achieved his desire, and the commercial therapy was conducted in "workshops" supplied by the Esalen model. A problem being that Kate Thomas and other observers found very distressing symptoms and after-effects accompanying this therapy in too many cases. Some after-effects were extreme, leaving the victims estranged from their daily routine, in states resembling shock and acute confusion. Yet Gibsone and other influential Foundation personnel dismissed this visible factor, applying very unconvincing interpretations. Grof was the immaculate therapist, and

represented income. All drawbacks were explained in terms of therapeutic and spiritualising effects of the wonder technique of hyperventilation (abnormally induced speed and depth of breathing).

[Read the whole of this story](#) on Kevin Shepherd's website (Kate Thomas's son). Also read his page [Neglected Papers Against Grof Therapy](#), where you can find two articles by Kate Thomas, which deal with Grof and the use of psychedelics seen in relation to her own genuine mystical experiences: *Transpersonal Experiences* (2003) and *Disbelieving "Sacred Medicine"* (2003). Here is a quote from *Transpersonal Experiences* (2003):

*[...] Stanislav Grof, is a prime mover in the introduction of Holotropic Breathwork and its extremely serious consequences into increasingly widening areas of therapeutic treatment, including transpersonal psychology, psychiatry, and the crises arising from so-called "spiritual emergencies." In his book Psychology of the Future: Lessons from Modern Consciousness Research (2000), Grof gives detailed information on his work over four decades, two of which were spent "conducting therapy with psychedelic substances" (p. lx). From the content one can only conclude that major lessons are yet to be confronted, for the confusion that existed between experiences supposedly of a spiritual nature and those that arise from other causes has still to be approached. The horrifying states described as Second Perinatal Matrix (BPMII and III) are nothing whatever to do with inner development, but rather do they indicate that the persons undergoing these terrifying experiences were in no sense ready to deal with the content of their psyches, or their reincarnational past (as Grof assumes), and should certainly not have been submitted to the type of sessions that evoked them.*

*Grof makes clear in Psychology of the Future that he is fully aware that LSD and breathwork sessions similarly activate the energy of Kundalini to disastrous effect, but has nevertheless no intention of advising discontinuance of these sessions which, without exception, provide a contrived induction into altered states that would not otherwise be experienced – a "forced entry," in actuality, into uncharted areas, with results that are unpredictable for the individual, and without any safeguards at all. Grof states: "The activated Kundalini, called shakti, rises through the nadis, channels or conduits in the subtle body. As it ascends, it clears old traumatic imprints and opens the centers of psychic energy, called chakras. This process, although highly valued and considered beneficial in the yogic tradition, is not without dangers and requires expert guidance by a guru whose Kundalini is fully awakened and stabilised" (p. 156).*

*But a "guru" whose Kundalini was "fully awakened and stabilised" would not countenance what Dr. Grof is doing. Grof is considered to be an advocate of the perennial philosophy, but his methodology surely demonstrates a pronounced perennial folly. Like his pupil, Christopher Bache, he is completely unable to control what he has initiated – nor has he any true comprehension of the states encountered (all of which he regards as investigative and experimental) despite his dealings, along with his wife Christina, with "spiritual emergencies." Possession by evil entities, trance, sexual deviance, alien abduction, witchcraft, sado-masochism, and unwholesome scatological interests (to name but a few of the abnormalities extensively covered in chapter three of *Psychology of the Future*) have no place in spiritual practice, and the lengthy sessions that engender these aberrant irregularities should be eschewed. What is happening here is that the psyche is being opened to a stratum of existence that it would not otherwise have contacted, and which is anything but benevolent. Could it be that the deviant "archetypes" experienced are not part of the individual's unconscious but rather a dangerous layer of existence best permanently avoided?*

*My primary concern in the foregoing is the damage done to the evolutionary (developmental) potential of literally thousands of trusting people, likewise to the physical health of far too many casualties in the form of serious after-effects following the use of certain techniques and practices and ranging from nervous breakdown to insanity. I am not using conjecture here; I have personally spoken with numerous damaged and disoriented individuals, a large number immediately following the Holotropic Breathwork sessions held at the Findhorn Foundation in Morayshire, Scotland in the early 1990s, some of which were initially presided over by Stanislav Grof himself. (These extreme hyperventilation sessions required the inclusion of buckets, bowls and plastic bags for the violent vomiting and loss of bladder and bowel control by the participants – and the screaming was such that the area surrounding the venue in which the sessions were held was placed out of bounds to community members and visitors alike.)*

Kate Thomas is a fascinating example of a human being who have had a stable spiritual development right to the very enlightenment itself, which means that she is true mystic. Enlightenment is what I primarily refer to as the *Awakened Wholeness*, or the *Wholeness of the Observer and the Observed*. The awakeness can happen in glimpses, and it can be a permanent condition. Mystics, such as Teresa of Ávila and Meister Eckhart, called the by glimpses condition *Illuminatio*, in which the soul and God in a single moment is one. That permanent to be one with God they called *Unio Mystica*. In Eastern Philosophy it is called Nirvana.

The usual development is that you start with glimpses which last from a fraction of a second, to minutes, hours, and several days. If you are not under qualified guidance of an enlightened master, the very short glimpses can still cause a distortion, for example a spiritual crisis such as ego-inflation or The Dark Night of the Soul. The longer glimpses will permanently change you, so that you can't fall back into illusion. Kate Thomas speaks of being in a glimpse which lasted fourteen days.

But anybody who have went through just some of the phases as hers can recognize that we here speak about a person who knows what she is talking about. Here is a quote from her article *Transpersonal Experiences*:

*[...] A serious enquirer and highly regarded professional fellow-member of the Scientific and Medical Network recently asked me if certain of the non-ordinary states of consciousness recorded in my autobiography, The Destiny Challenge (1992), are comparable to those described by Christopher Bache in his influential work Dark Night, Early Dawn: Steps to a Deep Ecology of Mind (2000). I must in all honesty state that they are not, despite certain marked similarities. Ignoring for the moment the actual nature of these experiences, Bache's experiential insights were self-sought and self-induced by a variety of means – primarily by the use of LSD therapy (as advocated by former clinical psychiatrist and current transpersonal theorist, Dr. Stanislav Grof) and by sessions of Holotropic Breathwork™ (a controversial "non-pharmacological" means of inducing altered states of consciousness – one that ironically causes biochemical changes in the brain – originated and currently commercially promoted by Dr. Grof).*

*These breathwork sessions each required a preliminary phase of two hours of rapid breathing (hyperventilation), and the resultant experiences, many of which were horrific to say the least, covered a further span of several hours in each instance, frequently leaving the experiencer in a condition of extreme exhaustion and shock. This same appalling syndrome applied also to Bache's earlier, psychedelic, sessions – intensity of suffering being the keynote. He observes that at one point he was obliged to interrupt his investigative endeavours for a very lengthy period (seven years, in fact) "because the extreme nature of the states I was entering became too stressful for my family to endure" (Dark Night, Early Dawn, note 10, p. 311).*

*As a result of this type of "research," Bache has recorded, in meticulous detail, his artificially-induced transpersonal perceptions of the meaningfulness of life as a whole; the structure of the personal self or ego; also the "species" ego which he presents as the collective ego of us all; the point and purpose of the Eastern concepts of karma and reincarnation; various "hell" states and their implications; the precognised imminent collapse of civilisation as we know it, and his observational*



*experience of the galactic universe, etc. All of these experiences appear to have arisen haphazardly and non-sequentially.*

*Conversely, my own transpersonal experiences were entirely spontaneous and unsought (a factor not so far noted as significant by researchers), commencing in early childhood, being at first of a psychic, and then a mystical or transcendental nature, and without any harmful residual effect upon body or mind. More importantly, these experiences were sequential, in that my conscious ability to comprehend the complexities of interior dimensions and developmental processes accelerated by degrees, preparing my system step-by-step to sustain yet higher intensifications of subtle energies prior to the major other-dimensional experience which climaxed all that went before. This occurred in 1977, when I was nearly forty-nine years old, and significantly altered my consciousness for a full fourteen days and nights. In the early stages of this experience I was acutely aware of the activation of hitherto dormant brain cells and of the stimulation of specific regions of the brain, thus facilitating retention of the intrinsic knowledge of a dimension other than the physical (see K. Thomas, *The Destiny Challenge: A Record of Spiritual Experience and Observation*, pp. 499–700). This profound, and frequently cosmical, experience included an overview of time – past, present, and future – which was clearly remembered and recorded immediately afterwards.*

Here is a quote from her article *Disbelieving "Sacred Medicine"* (2003) on her view of the use of psychedelics in relation to spiritual practice:

*I thank Professor Bache for his response to the concerns expressed in my article Transpersonal Experiences – a need for re-evaluation? (1) He evidently feels that there is no need for any re-evaluation whatsoever. Here I must beg to disagree. Professor Bache implies that I have but a naïve gut feeling in these matters, whereas he possesses the professionally reasoned approach conducive to accuracy. Professional judgements are not necessarily the most accurate ones in every instance. I take strong exception to Professor Bache's footnote of sources, which is very misleading. The insinuation that objectors to drug use are right back in the 1950s is a typical ploy of the psychedelic movement.*

*As a mere layperson (not a Professor of the History of Religions), I have attempted several years study of current brain research plus various spiritual traditions (including shamanism), and find that those studies confirm both the positive and negative aspects of the non-ordinary experiences referred to in my article. I therefore strongly question the (largely commercial) promotion of hyperventilation and the use of psychoactive substances as medically safe, and valid, methods to attain transpersonal experiences. (2)*

*To my mind the concepts of "sacred medicine" and the "shamanic tradition" used by Professor Bache to justify the use of LSD are not convincing. I realise that Mircea Eliade's proposal – that the shaman's use of psychoactive plants represents a "decadence in shamanic technique" (3) – is now anathema amongst some scholars, who are quick to point out that the use of psychoactive plants was widespread in antiquity. (4) However, widespread use does not negate the reality of an alternative existent tradition, one that did not resort to "sacred medicine" in order to induce transpersonal experiences. (5)*

*Nor were such experiences attained through the various "yogic" techniques of the so-called "sage tradition," these being but a development from earlier shamanic practices such as fasting, visualising, refraining from sexual activity, chanting, concentrating, sleep deprivation, postures, etc. Transpersonal experiences arose through a special form of transmission or irradiation (6) from teacher to pupil or community. It is this method that is referred to in my article, it is this method that forms the basis of my recorded mystical experiences, (7) and it is this method which demonstrates that such experiences arise from a qualitative, spiritual, dimension and can be naturally transmitted (that is, without the use of chemical intoxicants or shamanic or yogic practices), given the necessary requirements and circumstances.*

Grof's work, as is the case with all the new copycats, is permeated with the thought distortion called confirmation bias, which obviously is a slippery slope to pseudoscience. Confirmation bias refers to a type of *selective thinking* whereby one tends to notice and to look for what confirms one's beliefs, and to ignore, not look for, or undervalue the relevance of what contradicts one's beliefs. The complete ignorance of all the problems mentioned above shows how forceful confirmation bias work in this environment.

LSD or HB have obvious not revealed this simple trick of the mind to Stan, or his disciples, even though science is their excuse.

One of the main rules in science is the concept of falsifiability. Statements, hypotheses, or theories have falsifiability or refutability if there is the possibility of testing or observing it to showcase how false or how true it is. They are falsifiable if it is possible to conceive of an observation or an argument which could negate them and in the corollary, conceive of an observation or an argument which proves them. Thus, the term falsifiability is synonymous to testability.

The many dangers, and all the human wrecks left in the wake of HB, are completely ignored in Stan's work. If they are mentioned it is in a "positive" way, as "people deeply involved in a process of transformation."

Christina's story is heavily characterized by her husband's ideas and language. She begins with explaining how her own transformative journey is the primary reason for her intense interest and involvement in the area of spiritual emergency. For many years, she was immersed in a dramatic and challenging awakening that she felt had come uninvited into her existence; as this process continued, it changed her life and profoundly affected both Stan and her.

She tells that even though her journey was for many years turbulent and chaotic, she has moved through the overwhelmingly difficult stages to a clearer, more integrated way of existing than she has ever known. Once-jarring energies have become smooth and flowing, and the chaos of years past has been transformed into creativity. Numerous emotional issues that used to restrict her have been removed, and many of her former fears have been swept away. As a result of living through the challenges, she feels happier and more peaceful than ever.

This sounds like the above-mentioned patients who were brainwashed to repeat what the therapists have told them to say. Nothing whatever in Christina's story validates what she just has told. She repeats the healing cycle of Stan's therapeutic model – Campbell's monomyth of The Hero's Journey. And does it several times during her story. When one dramatic period is over she repeats the implanted idea of a cycle once more. But because the healing is a false promise a new cycle begins. Cristina's story documents how distorted it can become when you reduce religion, or mythology, to psychology and psychotherapy.

Christina also seems to be extremely affected by the therapeutic victimization culture, and just throw herself in the hands of any authority who supposedly can give her an explanation of her genuine experiences.

Her story is divided into June 1964, where she began practicing Hatha Yoga; September 28, 1968, where she had the first Kundalini awakening during birth; November 2, 1970, where she had an even more forceful experience when her daughter gave birth; July 1974 where she met a guru known as Swami Muktananda, "Baba." She tells that he was an acknowledged *Shaktipat* master – one who is able, through a look, a touch, or a word, to awaken spiritual impulses and energies in people, beginning a process of spiritual development. She says that the best way to describe her meeting with Muktananda was to say that it was like falling deeply in love or meeting a soul mate. Hereafter she describes how she received *shaktipat*,

entirely unexpectedly. The impact of that seemingly simple event blew the lid off the experiences, emotions, and energies she had been holding down since Sarah's birth. Suddenly she felt as though she had been plugged into a high-voltage socket as she started to shake uncontrollable. Her breathing fell into an automatic, rapid rhythm that seemed beyond her control, and a multitude of visions flooded her consciousness. She wept as she felt herself being born; she experienced death; she plunged into pain and ecstasy, strength and gentleness, love and fear; depth and heights. She was an experiential roller coaster, and she could no longer contain it. The genie was out of the bottle as she expresses it.

Remember what Kate Thomas said: "a 'guru' whose Kundalini was 'fully awakened and stabilised' would not countenance what Dr. Grof is doing." But that is precisely what Muktananda was doing. Today we live in a world where the number of false gurus is extremely high. In *The Matrix Dictionary* I have posted an entry called [Playing the Enlightenment Card](#) where I give some tools to discriminate between true and false gurus. One of the simple techniques is to study the guru critically and find eventually critical things. You don't have to do much google search in order to find the critical things about Mukatananda, which shows just about everything needed in order to characterize him as a sexual predator. You'll also find the usual "Crazy Wisdom bias" which the followers use in order to justify just about anything he did as examples of teachings. I have written about crazy wisdom in my entry [Why I Don't Teach Tibetan Dream Yoga](#).

In the end of the booklet you can find links which addresses problems with Muktananda.

In my own article [A Critique of The Indian Oneness Movement and Its Use of Western Success Coaching](#) I have written about the false use Shaktipat. In my article [Spiritual Vampires](#), and on the whole my book [Lucifer Morningstar – a Philosophical Love Story](#) – I have written about sexual and spiritual predators.

Notice how much Christina's descriptions are characterized by Stan's language. During the next few months, her whole life changed. Her neat, restricted worldview was shattered, and she began to discover new possibilities within herself as her meditation experiences continued. I won't go further into the long descriptions, just say that she now describes another cycle of healing; that is: *now* she is healed.

After her "healing" she begins to get anxiety attacks. She then meets Stan in the Summer 1975, and again she describes a healing cycle. In May 1976 she describes how she wakes up in total unreality, and is no longer able to hang on to her familiar daily reality. She gets release by Stan telling her that her whole situation is

completely normal in a process of transformation, and that she just needs to go through it. Again she desperately describes a cycle of healing. Hereafter the process gets worse and worse until she identified with an agonized crucified Christ as well as with his murderers. She died many deaths, sometimes feeling that they were her own, at other times becoming people throughout history who had died in war, persecution, or torture. She screamed with fear and pain, rolled on the floor in agony, and she tells that there was much, much more.

Fortunately, she says, she had Stan supporting her and reassuring that she was actually fortunate to have this happening to her so readily, and that she intuitively knew that he was right (how can he reassure something he haven't experienced?). Again she describes a healing cycle, without being healed in any way. She now begins to drink alcohol in order to calm the process, and she describes how this develops into alcoholism. And now she, with no surprise, gets involved with the victimization cult of anonymous alcoholics. Again a healing cycle is described. She ends her story with saying that the "transformative process" continues. That's just about her last words as well.

Nowhere in Christina's story you find any hint of critical thinking and healthy doubt: could it maybe be, that something is going wrong here? Could it be that my process has taken the wrong course due to wrong guidance?

My own story of spiritual crisis contains many of the elements of Christina's story, but my luck was that my spiritual practice began with Krishnamurti and his anti-authoritarian teaching of thinking for yourself; the key element in philosophy. I would say that I have went through two dramatic Kundalini cycles (which has nothing to do with Campbell's monomyth), before I succeeded in getting the energy stabilized.

My Kundalini awakening happened after five years of Hatha yoga practice beginning in London in 1985, where my only meditative exercise was the relaxation-meditation described in my first book *Meditation as an Art of Life* – a basic reader.

After the awakening I had some wonderful time with great experiences of bliss without realization. In a slow, ingeniously way, this developed into a period of ego-inflation, which to my luck was too short in order to create some kind of grouping around me. I have often told that ego-inflation is the most dangerous manifestation of a spiritual crisis, because you lose any kind of self-reflection. It actually doesn't matter what there might be happening of external things. Nothing will make you change your mind. Unless this balloon-like mind itself is getting punctured. To me this happened like some kind of nemesis. My ego-inflation changed into The Dark

Night of the Soul, which should last about ten years, heavily filled with anxiety attacks.

To my luck I was still able to avoid spiritual authorities, and I knew something was going wrong (if you today try to find out about the Kundalini phenomena you almost certainly will meet New Agers who will give the same advice as Stanislov Grof). But I was already familiar with the concept of Kundalini, and I began to read everything I could find about it. I stumbled upon a book by Karlfried Graf Durckheim called *Hara: The Vital Centre of Man*. I simply knew that the concept of Hara was the answer to my prayers.

I found other books on Hara, and how to practice it (in Zen and Taoism it is quite explicit described, but you can see it depicted in different kinds of spiritual art, for example the Buddha sculptures). The Kundalini was slowly turned around, so it streamed downwards instead of upwards. I realized that the most important for a beginner in a spiritual practice is the development of Hara, which is fundamental to all wisdom traditions and natural healing professions (you can find the hara-exercise described in my supporting exercises in my first book *Meditation as an Art of Life* – a basic reader).

The second dramatic cycle began due to my lack of realization work. It should be remembered that no one can go through a spiritual practice without realizing the shadow, the ego and the painbody, as well as karmic structures. And the Kundalini obviously created some unconscious tensions in me, not dramatically like Christina, but still in a degree that I slowly began to use alcohol to calm it down. My unconscious conflicts had three components:

- 1) The painbody and dark ancient powers (I will return to this, except just refer to my book *Lucifer Morningstar – a Philosophical Love Story*).
- 2) Problematic balance between sexual conflicts and spiritual urge (I have always been [asexual](#), a fact that have caused a lot of conflicts, before I accepted it, and gave up any possibility for a sexual relationship with someone. The latter was made easier by the opportunity to go totally into the spiritual practice).
- 3) Problematic balance (contradiction) between living a temporal life and a spiritual life. A lot of problems with expectations and lack of comprehension from family.

In my pop culture file [Ghost Rider](#) I go further into my own painbody seen in the light of popular culture. Here I tell about my awakening of Kundalini and the following alcohol abuse, which ended with a liver disease, hospitalization, a near-

death experience and the meeting with a Dream Master (a visit in a lucid dream). Hereafter I moved to Rold Forest in order to go totally into the spiritual practice. I now consider the process to be stable.

I can only attribute the solution to the two dramatic cycles to an intervention from the source, symbolized with the meeting with a Dream Master. Especially the solution to the ego-inflation and the alcohol abuse was something completely unsought and unintended. I guess that no one would want to end either in The Dark Night of the Soul, or with a liver disease. But still these events were necessary for my further spiritual development.

This thought is reinforced by the fact that I after the dramatic cycles is beginning to experience progressive karma (I will return to that). A strange aspect of my spiritual crisis is also that I all my life have experienced a mysterious connection with Karen Blixen, which is puzzling me more and more the more progressive karma I'm experiencing (see my article [The End of My Work](#)).

## **2. The Spiritual Practice**

The Good, the True and the Beautiful, is the Source, which rays in all religions, though often faint, through countless thought distortions. But through history there have always existed rare individuals, who experienced an inner transformation, and therewith realized that in themselves, which all religions aim towards. The various descriptions of this, basically same, indescribable ground-realization, could, in a spiritual practice, be:

- a) Oneness with the divine
- b) The ultimate fulfilment
- c) The essence of consciousness
- d) The naked consciousness
- e) The enlightened consciousness
- f) The Source of love

But in order to describe this non-conceptual truth in a more broad sense, they thereafter used their own religions as frame of reference.

Through some of these men and women there has in all great religions arisen a spiritual practice, which represented, not only a rediscovery, but in some cases an intensification of the light of an original teaching, universal and common to all mankind. Thus Gnosticism and Mysticism arised in the early and medieval Christianity, Sufism in Islam, Hasidism and Kabbalah in Judaism, Advaita Vedanta in Hinduism, Zen and Dzogchen in Buddhism. But even older are shamanism and paganism; religious practices which I under one call the old religion and the old art.

Unlike the established religions then the spiritual practice presupposes no religious doctrine, ideology, myth or conception, though religion and supporting exercises often are used as a frame of reference. The spiritual practice puts its emphasis on realization and inner transformation. And it is this, which constitute the philosophical element in the spiritual practice.

The spiritual practice contains three important concepts:

- 1) Critical thinking (spotting thought distortions, created by dualistic unbalance, both in yourself and in others - see my book [A Dictionary of Thought Distortions](#))
- 2) Investigating the shadow (ignorance, the unconscious, the painbody, the cause of suffering, your own dark side, the Ego - see my articles [The Emotional Painbody and Why Psychotherapy Can't Heal It](#), and [Suffering as an Entrance to the Source](#))
- 3) The spiritual practice (going beyond all ideas and images)

All three points are in psychedelic psychotherapy claimed to be unnecessary when using psychedelics combined with psychotherapy. This is the key statement of this movement. Psychedelics are a fast track to enlightenment. And this key element demonstrates the distortion.

To begin a spiritual practice is to begin a proces of awakening. In Zen it is for example said about the process of awakening: "In the beginning mountains are mountains, and woods are woods. Then mountains no longer are mountains and woods are no longer woods. Finally mountains are again mountains, woods are again woods."

This refers to the three forms of states the wholeness can be in: sleep, dream, awake. When the wholeness is sleeping, mountains are mountains and woods are woods. This is the reality of the ordinary consciousness (the Ego-consciousness). The ordinary consciousness can also sleep in three ways: 1) the dark sleep, which is the



Ego's deep nightly sleep; 2) the grey sleep, which is the Ego's nightly dreams and other dreams; 3) the light sleep, where the Ego is awake.

The three forms of states the wholeness can be in, can also be described as the personal time, the collective time and the universal time. Furthermore it can be described as the personal history, the collective history and the universal history. Time and history constitute the structure under your thinking.

This structure is also called the astral plane, or the astral world. It is a plane of existence postulated both by classical (particular neo-Platonic), medieval, oriental and esoteric philosophies and mystery religions. It is the world of the planetary spheres, crossed by the soul in its astral body, either through the dream state, or on the way to being born and after death, and generally said to be populated by angels, demons, spirits or other immaterial beings.

The astral plane is connected with the so-called Akashic records. The Akashic records are a compendium of mystical knowledge encoded in a non-physical plane of existence: the astral plane. These records are described as containing all knowledge of human experience and the history of the cosmos. They are holding a record of all events, actions, thoughts and feelings that have ever occurred or will ever occur.

The Akasha is an "astral light" containing occult records, which spiritual beings can perceive by their "astral senses" and "astral bodies". Clairvoyance, spiritual insight, prophecy and many other metaphysical and religious notions are made possible by tapping into the Akashic records. They are metaphorically described as a library. They can be accessed through astral projection, meditation, near-death experience, lucid dreaming, or other means.

The Akashic records are the wholeness, and as mentioned: the wholeness can be in three states of spiritual awakening - sleep, dream, awake – which again can be described as the personal, collective and universal time (or history).

The collective time is a very dangerous intermediate area, if you not are very trained in realization and compassion. The collective time is the area where different kinds of paranormal (philosophical/religious) phenomena are beginning to occur in your daily life. It is especially the lack of understanding this area, that is due to my critique of the many incompetent spiritual teachers you see today in the New Age movement (see my articles [Six Common Traits of New Age that Distort Spirituality](#), and [The Matrix Conspiracy](#)). If you don't understand what to do, when these phenomena arise, it can end in a spiritual crisis.

It is precisely this area which practitioners of psychedelics are rumbling around in. But whatever kind of psychedelic experience you might have, then you, spiritual seen, not necessarily are sufficiently awake on these areas, and therefore competent enough to guide other people spiritual.

I have in my book *A Portrait of a Lifeartist* set up six steps, or phases in the proces of awakening, which are recurring in all the various wisdom traditions. These steps indicate a common core, which in remarkable equal form occurs in all the directions. That is: some existential conditions, and some, common to all mankind, growing conditions, and growth levels, in the spiritual practician's voyage of discovery into himself, and thereby into life itself. The steps are:

- 1) The separation of the observer and the observed
- 2) Religion and supporting exercises
- 3) Passive listening presence (wordless prayer)
- 4) Discrimination
- 5) Creative emptiness
- 6) The wholeness of the observer and the observed

A central aspect of spiritual practice is to give up control and let the self-regulating system of karmic structures work by itself. It should be clear that when using psychedelics you do the exact opposite: you are interfering in it, trying to control it. That was precisely Kate Thomas's warning.

Central is the discrimination between subject and object, dream and reality - and what is lie or illusion, and reality. All original wisdom traditions have knowledge about this. The Dominican mystics call this step *discriminatio*, the ability to discriminate between how the energy is used temporal or religious. And despite that magical thinking actually can create something magical, then in true spirituality it is still something temporal, or relatively (black magic/occultism), which will create negative karma if practiced. The Orientals call it *viveka*, discrimination, the ability to use your will on that part of the energy, you can steer yourself, and steer it towards exercises, prayer, mantras, meditation, instead of towards career, worldliness, self-unfolding, as for example the New Thought movement wrongly preaches. Discrimination is a central aspect of letting the self-regulating system of karmic structures work by itself.

In spiritual practice you begin to activate the higher functions of the mind. In order to discover and break the identification with the *samsarical* producer of the mind, the subject must discover the hidden source in the awareness or in the innermost of consciousness. It happens by neutralizing the Ego's, or the thinking's, functions. This happens through meditation.

The Ego's functions constitute what you could call the ordinary consciousness. You can talk about four such, lower, functions of the ordinary mind:

1. Evaluation (accept/denial, yes/no)
2. Focus
3. Activity
4. Language (words, images)

The source of awareness, the naked consciousness, is hidden because it has melted together with these four functions. They have become a kind of veils, or layers. It is like a closed Lotus seed.

Meditation is in all simplicity about separating and dismantling the consciousness' automatical identification with these functions. Then you can talk about four higher functions of the consciousness, which are becoming activated through meditation:

1. Neutral observation
2. Passive listening presence (or wordless prayer) (defocus) (silence)
3. Non-activity (non-action)
4. Non-language (wordless)

The whole process is like a Lotus opening itself. This is shown in numerous spiritual art works of the East.

The process allows the self-regulating system of karmic structures to work by itself. You have to have patience. Even for people with a regular and well-ordered practice (2-3 hours every day) there can pass weeks, months or years between the divine reflections into the processes of the karmic structures. However if practice is appropriate, the spiritual consciousness will with time automatically penetrate the unconscious vegetative forms of consciousness, and open it's Lotus seed.

Any form of psychedelics will prevent this. This is due to that psychedelics directs your mind into the content of consciousness, and the many forms of experiences this

allows. This will interfere in the self-regulating system of karmic structures, stop the self-regulating process, and create new compensatory karma.

Contrary to that the spiritual practice directs your mind towards the form of consciousness, which is where realization is made possible.

The Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna said, that the Now's lawfulness around the function of a universal negationpower, is due to, that energy works as streams and dividings within a superior wholeness. And because the wholeness is a reality, each part will always fit into a correspondent part. This means, that each part only can be understood in relation to its negation; that is: what the part *not* is. Firstly this implies, that each part comes to appear as part of a polarization-pair, or a pair of opposites – like in the teaching of Yin and Yang. Secondly it implies, that each part only can be understood in relation to *everything* else; that is: in relation to the wholeness.

So the more you, through the Ego's evaluations, isolate these parts from each other, the more the abandoned parts will work stronger and stronger on their polar partners. Therefore these polar partners in their extremes will finally switch over in the opposite extreme. Another aspect of this lawfulness, or another way to describe this lawfulness is: energy returns to its starting point. This is also called compensatory karma, and the lawfulness works as wave movements and pendulum movements.

Herewith we can talk about the laws of the wholeness. These are known in all wisdom traditions: Tao, Dharma, Destiny, Karma, Hybris-nemesis, Original sin, Logos, the Will of God, and so on. They say as follows: *energy returns to it's starting point*. You may therefore say, that energy moves as a wheel. Thus it is these laws, which control all the different life-cycles.

The energy-laws can therefore be described in many ways, according to the viewpoint you are using. You can say, that they in particular contains four universal sub-laws:

- 1) The first sub-law says: energy works as wave-movements. A build-up in a wavecrest will always be followed by a trough of the waves.
- 2) The second sub-law says: energy works as pendulum-movements. A build-up in an extreme will always be followed by a swing over in the opposite extreme.
- 3) The third sub-law says: when energy is build up in a situation, this energy will work as a challenge, that causes reactions.

4) The fourth sub-law says: energy works as circulation-movements. A build-up of energy works as a pulse which moves outwards, circulates, for thereafter to return to its starting point.

This is the laws that for example explain the function of dreams. The Ego-weakening, and the dreams' connection with the body, causes that the energy-laws of the wholeness work much better in the dream state. In other words: dreams balance the energetical swings of the thoughts. And dreams seek to finish unfinished situations.

If you follow your dreams you will see, that wherever and whenever the Ego's awake life - on the background of evaluations using opposites - has slipped out in one extreme, then the dream-process seeks to balance this imbalance by insisting on the opposite extreme. If you awake were too gentle, the dreams depict the more stubborn and unfriendly sides in your personality. If you were too negative, the dreams seek to bring the positive aspect into light. And each and every time the Ego in the awake life reacts on the challenges of the various situations, by using the past, an unfinished situation is left behind. The dreams seek to finish this as good as possible. As you know you are cursed to re-live the same dreaming themes again and again – until you begin to examine yourself, and change and restructure your thought-patterns, so that you can let go of the situations.

So, firstly the dreams have a developmental function through their symbol-function. This is connected with progressive karma – I will return to this, just refer to my articles [What is Dream Yoga?](#), [What are Chakras?](#), and [Paranormal Phenomena Seen in Relation with Mystical Experiences](#). Secondly the dreams function with reference to bodily and energetical balancing and regulation of the swings of the thoughts (compensatory karma). This, the self-regulating system of the dream-process, is a Sisyphean task though, as long as you in the awake life don't help.

In fact, the work you have to do is extremely simple: you just have to let it all work by itself by letting it go in neutral observation. Especially Zen Buddhism is build up around this surprisingly simple fact. The problem is that we don't allow it to be simple. This is due to impatience. The simple fact takes time, like a flower or a tree to grow. We don't want to dedicate it that much time. We seek simple solutions, but we don't want to spend the time it takes. Our thought system is in that way incredible complex and paradoxical. Therefore it requires qualified guidance. But qualified guidance has in itself developed into something filled with dangers and pitfalls. A simple solution to the time problem is namely the use of psychedelics.

Spiritual practice is therefore also about being aware of your thoughts throughout the awake life. Once your thoughts spread themselves too far out in an extreme (for

example exaggerated perfectionistic) the energy-system will compensate by seeking to bring itself back to the balance of the middle. The system does this by seeking over towards the opposite extreme (for example an exaggerated feeling of fiasco). That is: through a contra-balancing, a compensation. Here we speak from the second energy-law, that energy works as pendulum-movements. The more energy, which is invested in the one extreme of a pair of opposites, the larger the swing in the opposite direction will be.

What apply for the individual, also apply for the collective and for nature. You can therefore also observe this energy-law in groups, societies, world-images, yes, in all Mankind, and in the Universe. You can observe it in everything, which is movement and not unmoved being.

For example: right now Mankind is in an ego-extreme. This is reflected in numerous fields. Too much energy is invested in armament. Too many atomic weapons. Too much pollution. Too much unequal distribution of the treasures of the Earth. Too much unequal distribution of the food and fruits of the Earth. And first of all: too many people are too focused in their ego; they accumulate energy to their ego, to themselves; or to the family ego; or to the national ego.

This is the energy in one extremity. With necessity the energy will swing over in the opposite extreme. And this will not happen in a quiet way, when you consider the enormous moment, that is in the actual extreme, and it will happen quite simple: through pollution of the environment, through illness (aids, cancer and other), through crises, warfare, terror, through inner mass-psychotic collapses, and through natural disasters.

However, spiritual practice is to be aware, when your thoughts move too far out. In the situation you can therefore try to remember the opposite extreme and seek to bring it in. This makes the situation much truer.

The awareness itself is in the Now, in the oneness of the opposites, and therefore in the fulcrum, which is the unmoved being in the centre of the circular movement of time; also when something else fluctuates and dances between the swings of the extremes. Therefore the training of the awareness in itself will gradually prevent, that there is given impulse to the swings. It's the Golden Mean, which Aristotle and Buddha talked about, and which Lao Tse describes in his book Tao Te King.

The Golden Mean can generally be formulated as the art of balancing between the extremes *too much and too little*. To strike the Golden Mean is an art of life, and to strike this path is a necessary suggestion for, why you exist.

Now, since everything only work correlative, then Nagarjuna claimed, that we actually can't say anything about the wholeness, only about the parts. Therefore he called the wholeness the Emptiness (*'sûnyatâ*) – a teaching, which had one quite determinate purpose: the neutralization of all the dogmas, theories and viewpoints, which ignorance has created.

This leads to the thought about that human beings have two aspects: an energy aspect and a consciousness aspect. Seen from the energy aspect lawfulness rules: your body is subject to the physical laws of nature, your psychic system is subject to the lawfulness of the energy fields and of the energy transformations. The energy aspect is the area of compensatory karma; it is the area of experiences, the area of the personal and collective images of time, which work in sequences in past and future, and therefore in absence of awareness, or absence of consciousness. And that also means that it in itself is without realization.

Seen from the consciousness aspect, then a human being seems to be akin to the wholeness, to be transcendent in relation to these lawfulnesses. The consciousness is the area of progressive karma, spiritual development; it is the area of realization, the area of the universal images of time, which work in synchronism with the Now. The Now seems to be a quality of awareness, and therefore also of consciousness and wholeness. Realization has to do with the three states the wholeness can be in: sleep, dream, awake. So it is only here you can talk about the spiritual insights of the great mystics. It is only here you can talk about genuine mystical experiences; that is: experiences, which are followed by realization.

The use of psychedelics, or Holotropic Breathwork, is reducing everything to the energy aspect. As with a lot of other New Age directions they seem ignorant about the consciousness aspect, or the aspect of universal images, though talking a great deal about consciousness. And it is only the consciousness aspect, which can come to insight about karmic structures.

When you reduce everything to the energy aspect, there can't happen any realization. Whatever you do within this area - therapy, exercises, use of drugs, stimulation of brain cells, Holotropic Breathwork, etc., etc, - then it only will result in experiences without realization. It will also result in absence of awareness, because the consciousness will be distracted by the personal and collective images of time, which work in sequences in past and future, and in fragmentation. You are lost in the content of consciousness, and the more theories you are developing about this content, the more you're getting identified with it.

In a spiritual practice it is the form of the consciousness it is about (realization), not its content (experiences).

On the plane of the universal images, and therefore on the Now's plane, the central is the form of the consciousness - the actual consciousness and its clarity and openness. Not the content of the consciousness. In spiritual practice the spiritual, and spiritual active, is the consciousness' course towards its source (the Now, the Wholeness). What the consciousness and the mind and the senses are filled by, is of less crucial importance.

So the Ego's partial consciousness is part of a greater wholeness, which is the Now, life itself. And life itself is the life in the Now, where you are present and active using the pure awareness, the innermost in you, and using the heartfulness, which is the whole of yourself; what we could call your spiritual essence, because the life-fulfilment, which life itself contains is so absolute, so complete, that there herein is something eternal and endless.

The concept of karma has therefore primarily to do with the development process of your spiritual essence - and only secondary and indirectly with the Ego's process; that is: with your personal time and life-situation. Admittedly it is the Ego's actions out on the scene, which leaves karmic tracks. Karma is the subconscious consequences of the Ego's actions. Each time the Ego acts - and thereby changes the balance in the wholeness - then the structures and power lines in your spiritual essence changes, in the subconscious.

When your spiritual essence is sleeping, karma is automatically. The Ego's pendulum swings in one life out in an extreme. Hereby gathers in the wholeness, in your spiritual essence, momentum to, that the pendulum in a future life will swing out in the opposite compensatory extreme. This is the automatic compensatory karma. In one life ascetic, in the next libertine, then inhibited and expelled, thereupon sybarite etc. with no end, because the Ego has freedom continual to give new momentum and new course - within the karmic possible; that is to say: heredity and environment - to the Ego's pendulum. This happens also in a psychedelic trip, and considered how much such a trip can influence you, it also leaves considerable new karmic tracks. And due to the lack of spiritual training, you have no idea of what kind of karma it will leave behind.

However when the Ego decides to use its free energy, its existential option to begin to awake through a spiritual practice, then the karma structures changes. Then you begin to use and work with your spiritual dimension. This dimension is not subject to the karmic structure, it *is* it, or it is over it. The wholeness is over, is transcendent, in



relation to the laws and mechanisms, which regulate the infrastructures of the wholeness. The wholeness is not subject to the laws and energy transformations, which rule between the constitutive parts of the wholeness.

When your spiritual essence awakes from sleep to dream, when the Ego-consciousness begins to bloom, to open itself, you discover the karmic lawfulnesses and can therefore relate to them. When your consciousness in extended state begins to sense the karmic structures, which after all not only rule between the many lives of your spiritual essence, but all the same are known psychological mirrored from the Ego's dreams and the Ego's life - then you can change attitude.

Instead of swinging with the laws you can choose to observe. Instead of identifying yourself with impulses and incentives, emotions and thought tendencies, you can separate yourself, become a witness, become alert. And hereby you can break the karmic automatism.

I will repeat: Human beings have two aspects: an energy aspect and a consciousness aspect. Seen from the energy aspect lawfulness rules: your body is subject to the physical laws of nature, your psychic system is subject to the lawfulness of the energy fields and of the energy transformations. Seen from the consciousness aspect, then a human being seems to be akin to the wholeness, to be transcendent in relation to these lawfulnesses.

Human beings are in that way, seen from the point of view of the ordinary ego-consciousness, inserted in two dimensions:

- 1) a continuum, which streams are subject to laws.
- 2) a discontinuum, for which laws not seem to be effective when you leap into it (a leap would be the same as an intervention from the discontinuum (the wholeness, the divine source; that is: completely beyond your control; completely beyond any laws. The consciousness doesn't evolve towards something. It awakes by being awakened).

The wholeness, your spiritual essence, is normally the discontinuous aspect; normally, because this is of course seen from the point of view of the ego-continuum. Seen from the point of view of your spiritual essence, then the ego-continuum, with its sleep and awake, life and death, is the discontinuous aspect, and the spiritual essence the eternal, immortal continuous aspect. But the parts, the Ego and its evaluations, is normally the continuous aspect.

When your spiritual essence begins to dream and the continuum of the Ego-consciousness breaks and expands in a discontinuum (into the superior continuum of the wholeness – or your spiritual essence), then the cosmic structure-pattern changes. Instead of mere compensatory karma, a progressive karma will now be effective. That, which you through existential achievement have reached of spiritual contact in one life, will form a progressive karma.

The process of your spiritual essence, your process of awakening, will leave progressive karma along through the various incarnations. What you spiritual have reached to realize in one life, will in the spiritual essence be left there in the next life as a dreaming track or a songline.

If your spiritual essence is sleeping, the spiritual energy is quiet. Without traceable activity. A human being can live a whole life, yes, life after life, in absolute sleep.

However, if you existentially begin to seek, to seek the spiritual, the divine, to seek love, if you choose to use your energy and your life in that way, then the spiritual energy will begin to vibrate, to become active. Only the images, which have achieved to imprint themselves in the spiritual energy, will be transferred as progressive karma. Your spiritual essence will remember its dreams from life to life (we are talking about the dreams of the wholeness, not personal nightly dreams). And your spiritual essence will remember and accumulate the glimpses of being awake, it might have experienced. These, the dreams and awake moments of your spiritual essence (the wholeness), are the progressive karma.

This is what is meant with, that people are born with different levels of spiritual development.

Concerning the progressive karma it applies, that each new life, in a quintessence, repeats the crucial stations on the development path of the spiritual essence (this is where I see my mysterious connection with Karen Blixen, something I haven't realized though – it is only speculation by now). The place, where you can find your own progressive karma, if such is available, is therefore in the life, you have lived, in the history of your present life. It is lying as an invisible script underneath the history of your actual life. It is the dreaming tracks and songlines in the artwork of your life.

In the inexplicable events in your life, in the rows of moments of spiritual longing, in the fateful incidents and actions - in them are contained the progressive karma. In your spiritual history there is a map. This map shows the dreaming tracks and the songlines in your spiritual work of art. This map is a universal image.

There is no doubt about, that Karen Blixen, though not fully conscious, had a sense of this map. All her stories are about destiny seen in this way; they are about people who either live in accordance with this map, or in discordance with it. This map, this universal image was, what she referred to as the "ancient," the "original," and which she always was seeking as authenticity, autonomy, possibility, freedom and adventure.

A universal image is of a holographic nature, therefore it contains all other images, personal, collective and universal, and therefore it would also contain the dreaming tracks and songlines in the artwork of my life. It is the universal history of the astral plane; the Akashic records, or the wholeness, which is awake (read my article [The Philosophy of Karen Blixen](#) and my book [Lucifer Morningstar – a Philosophical Love Story](#)).

You can live a whole life with this key lying in your own actual, spiritual biography. It requires work to find it. If you through development, through training, expand your consciousness to the spiritual dimension, then this invisible script will be made visible, the dreaming tracks and the songlines in the progressive karma will be found.

Alaya-vijnana is a term used within Yogacara Buddhism to indicate the store-house consciousness, or the great vision, which consists of universal images. As mentioned: it is also called the Akashic Records. These universal images are a kind of energetical mandala-structures or yantra-fields. They have a linguistic nature, but it is of a visionary kind. They are composite by sound and color, symbol and structure. You could also say, that they are what the philosophers call unmoved matter, a worldaspect of sound-colours and symbol-structures, an ocean of vibrant, soundfilled energy-fields, which shimmer in symbols and colours. Altogether filled with information about life. Together the great vision, an information-ocean of holographic nature.

It has therefore nothing whatever to do with Grof's version of Jung's theory about the collective unconscious. It doesn't belong to the energy aspect of Man (the parts), but to the consciousness aspect of Man (the wholeness). Or rather: it is a border phenomenon between the two aspects.

The unmoved mover, "that which moves without being moved" is a concept advanced by Aristotle as a primary cause or "mover" of all the motion in the universe. As is implicit in the name, the "unmoved mover" moves other things, but is not itself moved by any prior action. In Book 12 of his Metaphysics, Aristotle describes the unmoved mover as being perfectly beautiful, indivisible, and contemplating only the perfect contemplation: itself contemplating. He equates this concept also with the active intellect [the connection with the consciousness aspect]. This Aristotelian

concept had its roots in cosmological speculations of the earliest Greek Pre-Socratic philosophers and became highly influential and widely drawn upon in medieval philosophy and theology. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, elaborated on the unmoved mover in the *Quinque viae*.

Aristotle argues "that there must be an immortal, unchanging being, ultimately responsible for all wholeness and orderliness in the sensible world". It doesn't end in an endless regress questioning (what is the cause of the unmoved mover?, etc.) since it is linked to the wholeness, which can't be put in opposition to anything (it is indivisible), and therefore can't be described.

It is therefore not a collective psychological phenomenon constructed by humans, but a metaphysical and ontological reality that isn't human made. It is the thoughts of God. It is here the wrong turn is happening in the reductionism of transpersonal psychology, and in the whole of New Age's psychologism. Religion is reduced to psychology. God is reduced to a center within the human psyche. Images are confused with reality, the map is confused with the landscape, the subject is confused with the object. The result is subjective idealism. Subjective idealism, or empirical idealism, is the monistic metaphysical doctrine that only minds and mental contents exist. It entails and is generally identified or associated with immaterialism, the doctrine that material things do not exist. Subjective idealism rejects dualism, neutral monism, and materialism; indeed, it is the contrary of eliminative materialism, the doctrine that only material things, and no mental things, exist.

Subjective idealism leads to solipsism, a complete absurd doctrine. Solipsism is the philosophical idea that only one's own mind is sure to exist. As an epistemological position, solipsism holds that knowledge of anything outside one's own mind is unsure; the external world and other minds cannot be known and might not exist outside the mind. As a metaphysical position, solipsism goes further to the conclusion that the world and other minds do not exist (about the absurdity of this doctrine see the Matrix Dictionary entries [A Course in Miracles](#) and [Jorge Luis Borges](#)).

In contrast, the unmoved mover, or the great vision, is complete objectivity, a complete negation in relation to, not only humans, but to the created world as such. I have several places spoken about the negation power as the power of creation, for example in my article [The Hero's Journey](#).

We have historical records about this vision. For example: within Tibetan Buddhism there exists a peculiar doctrine about the so-called Tertöns (tib. Gter-bston - the unearthers of the hidden books), people who are born with a special karmic

connection to a long ago deceased master, and who, because of the connection to this master's oneness-consciousness with the universal vision, now can collect treasures of information in from the vision, or the universal images, which after all work in synchronism with the Now, and which therefore lie in the wholeness, in the continuum of eternity. The master was hiding and storing holy "texts" various places in the universal images with that purpose, that a future "Tertön" would be able to find this knowledge again, decipher and publish it.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead (Bardo Thödol) is in that way one of the Tibetan texts, which is considered for having been hidden in the universal vision by the founder of Tibetan Buddhism, Padma Sambhava, and which was found again by a Tertön with the name Rigzin Karma Ling-pa. Padma Sambhava is considered for having hidden many holy texts, whereafter he gave some of his disciples the yoga ability to become reincarnated in the right time - which were determinated astrologically - for here to find the scriptures again.

After an estimated judgment, the spiritual texts, which already have been taken out by Tertöns in the run of the centuries, would form a cyclopedia on around sixtyfive volumes with average around four hundred pages in each volume.

I can see no reason to deny the doctrine of the Tertöns. You can't just deny people's experiences (followed by realization) written down through centuries. This would in itself be unscientific, irrational, and besides, deeply arrogant. It is important though, to remember the philosophical aspects of the spiritual journey; that is: the use of rationality and critical thinking, which actually also is a central part of the training of the Tibetan monks. The problem with the alternative environment within the New Age movement, is namely that because the above mentioned, normal inaccessible, areas, in principle lie outside the area of the Ego-consciousness, yes, then they are open for all sorts of fantasies.

Within the New Age movement there are countless people today, who work egoistic with karmic experiences – that is to say: they earn money as clairvoyants, regression therapists etc. Some of them live on pure make believe, others are direct frauds, but some of them have actually the ability to see into the collective time and its images, and tell about a past and a future which lies outside the area of the personality. But usually they have no philosophical training, no realization training and ethical practice. Therefore they basically do not know what they are doing. They are lost in the area of time where mountains no longer are mountains, and woods no longer are woods. There is in this area of the collective time and its images, with all its experts and clients, the possibility for a lot of waffle, a lot of imprecisely guesses and imagination, fiction and speculation.

There are therefore some philosophical principles you ought to hold on to, on the whole of this enormous, and growing market. The so-called compensatory karma will by these experts and clients normal be misunderstood and abused as a kind of legitimation of, that we are as we are or do, as we do. He or she becomes obliged to do this or that, in order to equalize old karma. It is for example a central idea in Holotropic Breathwork, that in order to access transpersonal states of consciousness a person must necessarily first regress to the perinatal state to resolve the trauma of (and/or around) birth. Other New Age psychotherapies have similar ideas, that makes it necessary to use precisely *their* methods in order to access transpersonal states of consciousness, against a high fee of course.

This is spiritual seen nonsense. Usually the whole thing is about escaping from reality or excuses. It all origin from the collective time, which work in sequences in past and future, and in fragmentation, and therefore, in deeper sense, not karmic and not in the least spiritual.

If a human being in genuine sense experiences (that is: realizes) compensatory karma, then this will *precisely* cause a separation, a break in relation to the automatic identification with tendencies and circumstances. A human being, who actual realizes his karmic conditions, will *precisely*, by force of realization, break the automatic process. And therefore *precisely* break out of, for example a spiritual crisis, instead of “having to revisit it.”

A very dangerous tendency in HB, and in cathartic psychotherapies as such, is the thought about that it is necessary to revisit/re-experience suffering, so that they become ignorant about danger signals. This is also a part of their suppression of critique. But it is very important to understand the *meaning* of suffering, though. I have investigated this in my article [Suffering as an Entrance to the Source](#).

When you are in an intense spiritual practice, then you, admittedly, in a short time have to run through a lot of dark existential stuff, which are the cause of suffering. Spiritual practice is a process of awakening. And when you wake up to greater presence and intensity of life, you also wake up to your own, and others’ (other people, society, nature), realized or unrealized, suffering. That is the process of realization and compassion. But there is a crucial difference between experiencing suffering without realization, and experiencing it with realization. In the realization you discover the cause of suffering, you discover the nature of suffering, and therewith you will of course break with this cause. And this break is also one and the same as an intervention from the Source.

When I had my first experiences with Kundalini, I was very influenced by the many New Age books that talked about the “necessary” in combining spiritual practice with psychotherapy – whereby philosophy is ignored. In the first part of the process I experienced all the kinds of rising processes, that are described in connection with awakening of Kundalini. But there was no realization in them, they were just colourful experiences of powerful energies, which made me somehow ego-inflated. Several times I for example experienced how the Kundalini power was rising out of my crown chakra, spreading in fountains of light, but I was not becoming enlightened, I actually had no clue about what happened.

These colourful experiences continued and grew in intensity. Then suddenly they changed into something demonical. I experienced the dark night of the soul, heavy anxiety, nightmares, demons and devils attacking me. And the psychotherapists I talked with (who didn't had any experiences of this themselves) gladly told me to continue the process, because it was “necessary” to go through it (precisely as Stanislav Grof, and other transpersonal psychotherapists, *wrongly* are instructing people in). In order to make the stress milder, I went into periods with alcohol abuse.

But to my luck I was not dependent of any people or cults. My common sense told me, that this simply couldn't be right. Then I began to study the original wisdom traditions. And then I found all the explanations and warnings. I also found the focus on philosophy, the important use of critical thinking and rationality. I was simply breaking out of the process. Though the Kundalini still was active in me, it was now rather functioning as a kind of energetical teacher (and still does). It showed me whenever my thoughts slipped out in extremes, activating my painbody, and it showed me this quite brutally through heavy tensions and pains. As soon as I again was breaking out of the process, and returned to meditation and neutral observation, the tensions and pains disappeared.

This also tells something about, that if you have come this far in a spiritual practice, there is no way back – you need to continue the spiritual practice – you can't stop it, or break out of it, without ending in deep suffering. The Tibetan Dzogchen-practice starts for example with that the teacher gives you a glimpse of enlightenment, whereafter the whole spiritual practice begins. In this way Dzogchen, contrary to other spiritual traditions, somehow begins with the goal. The following spiritual practice is then about that you start the hard work of finding the enlightenment again. There is no way back, after the glimpse, you need to continue the spiritual practice, or else you are lost. Therefore it is not all people, that are ready for Dzogchen. But the teachers would know this. They are themselves in a state of enlightenment.

Kevin Shepherd, whom we mentioned in the start of this booklet, argues that the spiritual practices which Holotropic Breathwork claims as inspiration can only be correctly understood in the context of their original cultures. In particular, he questions the motives and wisdom of facilitators providing Holotropic Breathwork in a commercial context. This is a claim I completely agree with. This is also why the book *The Psychedelic Experience*, which claims to be a manual to a psychedelic trip based on The Tibetan Book of the Dead, is a complete distortion. I will return to this book.

As mentioned: Kate Thomas quotes extensively from correspondence relating to the controversy at the Findhorn Foundation. In this, and subsequent writing, she expresses the view that Holotropic Breathwork interferes with the process of spiritual evolution in ways that she claims facilitators are unqualified to recognize or deal with. Grof himself was for example able to boast that he could convert a Jewish rabbi into a Zen Buddhist using his LSD dosages; but in reality he had no concept of how Zen monks live and think, and himself was incapable of the traditional ideal.

After my own experiences with Kundalini, I have often been talking about the incompetence of New Age teachers. Traditional a spiritual teacher must be a person, who is one with what he teaches; that is: he must have experienced, and *realized*, what he teaches. I don't say that a spiritual teacher need to be an enlightened master; I just say that a spiritual teacher only should teach in what he or she has realized themselves. This requirement is removed in New Age. Here everyone can take a homemade weekend-education as spiritual teacher, shaman, clairvoyant, etc. They behave and talk like enlightened masters.

Another aspect of this incompetence is the unqualified talk about science, which these people often are promoting. They can be directly breathtaking in their combination of self-confidence and absurdity, where they with no hesitation are bullying highly qualified experts if they are critical, no matter whether they are scientists or mystics. Remember how Kate Thomas was bullied out despite her obvious high spiritual development. Ego-inflation must, because of the magical thinking New Age is promoting, be seen as a collective spiritual crisis within the environment.

Kevin Sheperd and Kate Thomas have caught something important. Grof has admittedly an idea about that there in a human being exists some kind of resistance, an invincible inertia that reacts and protests against entering into transpersonal states of consciousness. But from here everything goes in the wrong direction.



Let me explain. I often advice my guests in my philosophical counseling sessions, and in my philosophical cafés, to find a religion that suits them; a religion that can work as a frame of reference in their spiritual practice; a religion, that has a spiritual tradition for different kinds of supporting exercises, as for example meditation and prayer. When spirituality namely requires a non-evaluating, defocused, open, surrendered consciousness, then there is an instinctive survival-preparedness in us, that reacts and protests. Man has survived on willfullness and a consciousness-structure, which mental and psychic sign is ego-centredness: the work of the inner calculator. The bigger ego, the bigger survival chance.

Seen from a spiritual perspective, this instinctive survival strategy (the ego) appears as a resistance, and invincible inertia. The traditional wisdom traditions (religions) have some very precise concepts about this. In the West it is called original sin. In the East it is called negative karma.

If a human being for real should have hopes for re-encoding this instinct-anchored (animal-like) behaviour-pattern, then this demands a radical reorganization of the mind and the thoughts. The consciousness has to train the use of its higher functions (neutral observation, passive listening presence, wordless prayer, defocus, non-activity, non-language) by de-teaching the, for the Ego, necessary, and by the evolution, approved functions (evaluation, accept/denial, yes/no, focus, activity, language, words/images). And this is not practical possible without a long-term pedagogy, which uses religion and supporting exercises (note that de-teaching the lower functions of the ego doesn't imply ego-loss. The difference is that the ego opens like a Lotus flower).

In order to convert or purify the evolutionary inertia, religion and supporting exercises are used. You can't, by psychotherapeutic strategies or psychedelics, free the consciousness for its attachment to this inertia. You can therefore not dissolve or dilute or convert the original sin through psychotherapy and psychedelics.

The reason is, that it is only the intervention of the Source (God, Christ, the enlightened consciousness) that basically can help Man with a transcendence of the negative karma of the original sin. But in order to, that a human being should be able to receive this help from the Source (gift of grace), then this requires an eminently precise and profound preparation. And as part of this preparation religion and supporting exercises serve. This is the spiritual practice, and it is completely removed in Holotropic Breathwork, which claims that it isn't necessary. Holotropic Breathwork, or the use of psychedelics, is a fast track to enlightenment. You never hear about any intervention from the divine, or mind independent karmic structures: original sin, negative and progressive karma. If it does mention such an intervention,

it talks about it as an intervention from the collective unconscious. Jung's talk about synchronicity is for example spoken of as something originating in the collective unconsciousness. Pure reductionism. What they in fact are craving, are to get high, like an alcoholic craving to get drunk, and to have a spiritual justification for this.

The crucial difference between psychotherapy/psychedelics and religion and supporting exercises is namely, as already explained, that psychotherapy/psychedelics is turning the awareness towards the content (experiences) of consciousness, while religion and supporting exercises are turning the awareness towards the essence, or the form of consciousness (realization).

It is therefore important that you, in your fascination of the contents of consciousness, and the possibilities that lies in the astral plane's collective history, don't begin to use drugs or one-sided developmental techniques, which promise you great experiences concerning so-called "transpersonal" states of consciousness. One of the reasons why the true spiritual traditions lead people around the collective time, or shorten the passage through it, is because that discarnate entities from these areas are using people or cults (collective energy processes in mass phenomena: religious, spiritual, psychotherapeutic, political, sports or other type) as psychic channels, working interdimensionally to create all sorts of "experiences" in people, experiences that seems dazzling and/or extraordinary – but with the purpose of using their energy as food. That is: a kind of vampires, or even worse.

We have heard Kate Thomas mention this danger.

The spiritual process is a slow and organic growth-process that requires your own realization-work through religion and its continual supporting exercises. When the source eventually intervenes, then the religion and supporting exercises fall away. They are only a frame of reference. You can't receive realization from any outer source, whether it is through organizations, faith, dogmas, priests, rituals, drugs, therapy, theories of dream interpretation, philosophical knowledge or psychological methods. You must remember that all such systems are build on the thought-constructions of man, and they will make you into a slave if you are identified with them. Only your own realizationwork can, step by step, year after year, clean the consciousness, increase the energy level in the consciousness, and gradually expand it out into the fascinating areas of life. And the intervention from the source is one with this expansion.

You have to have patience. Even for people with a regular and well-ordered practice (2-3 hours every day) there can pass weeks, months or years between the spiritual reflections into your life. You can concretely say, that a person, who really wants to

experience an existential transformation process, shall reckon in, during a number of years to practise supporting exercises about 2 hours a day. However if practice is appropriate, the spiritual consciousness will with time automatically penetrate your life.

Another philosophical principle is to examine, whether the karmic talk and experiences of the “experts” and clients remove their energy-investments in the actual reality. If focus is displaced backwards, then the collective time has taken over and spiritual seen there therefore happens an escape. Such an escape is seen both in Freud, Rank, Grof, Janov, rebirthing, regression. None of these people and theories can therefore be said to work spiritual. And if they use the karma idea in that way, it is no longer a spiritual help, it is a collective displacement of the focus backwards in time and therewith out of reality and into the unreality of the collective time.

And this area is inexhaustible. Regardless whether you make use of psychotherapy, Holotropic Breathwork, clairvoyance, healing, body therapy, regression, dream-interpretation, chakras, psychedelics, then there will always be more. You can continue and continue, you almost become dependent of it like drugs or sex, because the actual magnet, which attract the whole of this area with its energy – the Ego - has not been realized. The Ego will with its evaluations create new problems, new content, new longings, new dreams - which again is in need of therapy, consultation etc., indefinitely. The spiritual development stops, it leaves the rails and ends up blind.

The genuine karmic structures do not lie in the collective time, but in the universal time, which work in synchronism with the Now. If the karma idea is used spiritual seen correctly, then the focus, instead of being projected out in something afar (past lives, a guru, birth, the future), will be present in something very near, namely only in the most intensive experiences of this actual life, and after that: in this actual Now with its possibility of realizing your innermost.

So the universal images lie as a kind of dreaming tracks and songlines in your actual life here and now. Only here and now they can be discovered. They can manifest themselves in symbols, which contain informations about the development process of your spiritual essence. Informations from the universal images are, contrary to informations from the collective images, not contradiction-filled and split, but healing and synthesizing. They are the map, which shows the path from the Ego to your spiritual essence. When they have been discovered, the Ego knows the way to the pure awareness and love of its spiritual essence – the home of the spiritual essence (about symbols, see my article [Paranormal Phenomena Seen in Connection with Mystical Experiences](#)).

Only Man himself can find the progressive karma. The consciousness has the key in its life. Only awareness can find the progressive karma, and awareness must of course be your own awareness, and therefore your own presence in the Now. It helps nothing, what people through Holotropic Breathwork or psychedelics may be able to experience in the collective time, or fantasize about karmic experiences. Many of these experiences (for example about past lives) – and which have a certain reality for the client – are collective fantasies.

Collective fantasies have two aspects. The one aspect of the fantasies is a kind of archetypical, mythologically symbolizings of more personally, unclarified matter. The second aspect of the fantasies is relatively valid information about incidents, for example in other centuries. The misleading happens because the two aspects are blended together. We have talked about the important aspect of discrimination in spiritual practice, and the process of separating and dismantling the consciousness' automatic identification with its lower functions (evaluation, focus, activity, language). It is in no way possible that a person whose mind haven't been through this process would be able to navigate in this collective stuff. A navigation is only possible if you don't evaluate the stuff, don't focus or react on it, and don't interpret it in words and images – which means that you completely understand the nature of this stuff.

The client in a psychedelic or Holotropic Breathwork session can for example remember, that he has lived in a past incarnation (often very romantic, for example as a pharaoh), and he can even travel to the places, where he had been incarnated and find things which "proves" his assertion. There has been made many examinations of things of that kind. But regardless how fascinating it is, then it proves nothing about past lives. And therefore it is deceptive and dangerous to occupy oneself with. As mentioned: there is for example the danger of discarnate entities using you as a channel.

Nobody and nothing can tell you about your karmic structures. All people or techniques - clairvoyants, regression therapists, shamans, HB facilitators, psychedelics etc. etc. - who are claiming they can help you in a karmic way, are cognitional and ethical delusional and deceptive.

Only your own realization opens. If you think that you, through Holotropic Breathwork or psychedelics, are able to experience your karmic course, it would not help you. On the contrary it would harm. Only your own inner realization can open the spiritual dimension. Karma in other ways is nonsense. And by the way, that's the same with all spiritual.

In all briefness you can say, that genuine spiritual practice tries to guide people, who wish to learn, to avoid the states, which have to do with the collective time, or at least, to shorten the passage through these areas. And if you are lost in them, to lead you back on the right track.

### 3. Spiritual Crises

Christina and Stanislav Grof have without doubt made a pioneering work mapping different types of spiritual crises, which I below, on the background of my own experiences, present in a slightly reworded version:

1. *The awakening of Kundalini*. Described as a snake-like energy, which in spiralform moves itself from the foot of the spiral column up in the head, while it opens a line of psychological centers, called chakras (see my articles [The Awakening of Kundalini](#), and [What are Chakras?](#)). The phenomenon is especially known in connection with the Indian Tantrism.

2. *Para-psychic opening*. Visual, auditory or emotive knowledge about a past and a future, which lies outside your own personality. Is especially known in connection with different types of clairvoyance. Also known in connection with astral travel or astral projection (out-of-body experiences).

3. *Spiritual crises as a Hero's journey*. The experience of yourself as a hero who travels through a mythological and fantastic empire, filled with good and evil forces, as well as a fount of other sharply marked opposites. The crisis takes you farther and farther back into the past – through your own history and the history of humanity, all the way to the creation of the world and the original ideal state of paradise. In this process, you seem to strive for perfection, are trying to correct things that went wrong in the past. It often culminates in the meeting with death and the following rebirth. Such death-rebirth themes are known from ancient schools of mystery, as well as in the transition rites of scriptless peoples' religions (related to my article [The Hero's Journey](#)).

3. *The Shamanic Crisis*. At the beginning of his career the shaman often goes through heavy ordeals, the so-called initiation crisis. The initiation often includes a journey to the underworld, where the shaman aspirant goes through terrible ordeals with diverse demons and other mythological creatures. As in the hero's journey the initiation often culminates in the experience of death, dismemberment and extinction. Typical the extinction then is followed by resurrection, rebirth and ascension into heavenly regions.

4. *Channeling*. The ability to make contact with divine creatures and levels of consciousness, which is thought to possess informations of spiritual value for people, and through the body mediate communication from these levels.
5. *Close Encounters with UFOs*. Experiences of unusual light phenomena, communication with aliens, or experiences of being abducted by aliens, or of traveling with them to other worlds (see my pop culture file on [The X-Files](#)).
6. *Breakthrough of Memories from Past Lives*. Sequences of experiences, which take place in other historical periods and/or other countries/planets – or in connection with karmic experiences.
7. *Near-death Experiences*. Experiences, which are connected with death or the death process. This can be experiences of anxiety or existential guilt, but also experiences of a peaceful, harmonic condition after death. It has also to do with the experiences of having been close to death in one way or another.
8. *Possession States*. An experience of, that your mind and body (it can also be things or places) have become invaded and are controlled by a being, or an alien energy, which can be of divine or, most known, demonic kind. Often with inexplicable bodily manifestations.
9. *Oneness-consciousness/Cosmic Consciousness*. Experiences of oneness between inner and outer, strong positive feelings, transcendence of time and space, feeling of holiness and paradoxical nature. It sounds like a genuine mystical experience, but it is not. It is rather a so-called peak experience: the experiences of that your normal everyday ego somehow has been changed. If the ego haven't gone through the above-mentioned spiritual training, there is a danger of getting inflated – (about the problem of peak experiences read my articles [The Ego-inflation in the New Age and Self-help Environment](#) and A [Critique of the Indian Oneness Movement and its use of Western Success Coaching](#)).
10. *Alcohol and Drug Abuse*. The strong longing after alcohol or drugs corresponds on a low level to our own being's spiritual longing after wholeness: the unification with God. The important role of the Ego-death under the above-mentioned types of spiritual crises is a direct parallel to the abuser's experience of "hitting the buttom." Can for example be seen reflected in the "Beat Generation", and the works of the Beat writers. Another aspect of alcohol and drug abuse as spiritual crisis, is that alcohol, and some kind of drugs, can relieve the intense stress from other kind of spiritual crises. We have already talked about this. In connection with psychedelics

there of course is the danger of getting addicted to it, but this is not the primary critique in this booklet (in the end of the booklet I will link to some articles about that). The primary focus has been on whether psychedelics can help you in a spiritual practice, or even replace it.

In this booklet I have been focusing on The Awakening of Kundalini since this is where I've had, and still have, my experiences. So, I will speak a bit more about Kundalini.

The rise of "Kundalini Energy" is as ancient as history itself. It is also called "The Serpentine Fire" as it makes its way up the spinal canal (also called the sushumna) in an alternating spiral that would resemble a pair of intertwining snakes if it were seen clearly for any length of time.

My Kundalini awakening happened in a dream. I was standing in a row of sinners on the top of a mountain. Scary demons were forcing the sinners to jump out from the mountain, down into the flames of Hell. Normally, when you have a falling dream you wake up. I didn't wake up, and continued down into the flames and hit the ground among hills of broken bones. When I sat up I felt like I was sitting on a jet motor, or rather, on a Harley engine, because of the spasms of the energetical flames that streamed up through my body, with that characteristic *thug, thug, thug* - a hypnotic rhythm that must resonate with some fundamental frequency in the human brain. And out of my mouth came a Tiger's roar in the form of a very deep om, or auuuuummm.

The dream was lucid, and the experience didn't disappear when I woke up. The energy/fire was, and still is, continually floating through my body.

Ageless symbols of healing speak louder about Kundalini than any description I could give. We see the rise of the Kundalini portrayed very aptly in the design of the Staff of Hermes, also known as the Caduceus. The modern medical profession has adopted this symbol as their standard---two snakes intertwined around a pole that is lifted high for all to see.

In Biblical Literature, we see reference to a staff that was utilized by the Hebrew Prophet, Moses, and the healing power it was purported to have. Around the pole was wrapped a serpent and it was held high above the people. Whoever looked upon that staff with faith could be healed of any affliction.

Later, in the gospels, Jesus said of Himself: "As Moses lifted up the staff in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up...." In this, Jesus was apparently

making some incredible claims. First, he was equating himself with the serpentine power on the pole. By all appearances, he was saying that the intertwining of that vital life force was, in fact, the very essence of who he was. Millions of people, those currently incarnate and also those who have transitioned in death, could testify of the healing power of that image of Jesus on the cross.

The reconnections now come to us and offer the viewpoint that the intertwining power of that Kundalini rise is, in fact, the very essence of who we all are. It is a dance of energy that involves both the active and passive elements within the physical universe. As we become balanced, within our physical body, the whole essence of our person (and our perceptual universe) begins to change. We somehow get "turned on," (as some might have thought: it's very sexual) and nothing is ever the same again.

But the experience is seldom as positive as that. Numerous accounts describe the experience of Kundalini awakening. When awakened, Kundalini is said to rise up from the muladhara chakra through the central nadi (called sushumna) inside or alongside the spine and reaching the top of the head. The progress of Kundalini through the different chakras leads to different levels of awakening and mystical experience, until Kundalini finally reaches the top of the head, Sahasrara or crown chakra, producing an extremely profound transformation of consciousness.

Energy is said to accumulate in the muladhara and the yogi seeks to send it up to the brain, transforming it into 'Ojas', the highest form of energy (again: see my article [What are Chakras?](#)). As mentioned: you can have a "pseudo-experience" of this rising; that is: you can have precisely the sensation of energy moving as described, without anything happening at all. The description of a true Kundalini rising refers to some very subtle, even abstract, realization-levels. It has nothing to do with a physical movement of energy in certain body-spots.

Physical effects are believed to be a sign of Kundalini awakening by some, but described as unwanted side effects pointing to a problem rather than progress by others. This is due to that the energy necessarily floats into the painbody.

Feelings are the body's reaction on the mind (the thoughts). Feelings arise where the mind and the body meet. They are reflections of the mind *in* the body. Feelings can also be a reflection of a whole thought-pattern. A thought-pattern can create an enlarged and energy-charged reflection of itself in the form of a feeling. This means, that the whole of the thought's past also can create a reflection of itself in the body. And if this past is filled with pain, then it can show itself as a negative energy-field in the body. Eckhart Tolle calls this the emotional painbody. It contains all the pain you



have accumulated in the past. It is the sum of the negative feelings which you have "saved together" through life and which you carry. And it can nearly be seen as an invisible, independent creature. Therefore it could be called an Alter ego. And therefore we also could, as H.C. Andersen does in his fairy tale, call it [the Shadow](#). In this fairy tale the narrator's shadow precisely develops into a shadowy, independent creature (not really a fairy tale, more a horror tale, like many of Andersen's other "fairy tales").

The painbody is the inner demon, or the devil in the heart. Some pain-bodies are relatively harmless, some are anxiety-filled, depressive or angry, others are directly malicious and demonical. They can be passive or active. Some are passive 90% of the time, others are active 100% of the time.

The painbody is, through the inner evaluating ego, which the painbody is constructed around, connected with the more dangerous depths of the astral plane's collective history, which also are a kind of dark, ancient inertia, which opposes any change of the ego. The energies found here are unfathomable, and when you direct them into your painbody, as it must happen with an awakening of Kundalini, you are really facing problems. That is what is happening in a spiritual crisis. It's clear that a pain/sorrow can be so powerful that the painbody directly gets a mythological character.

Instead you should, as we have described, dismantle and separate your mind's identification with it; that is: you should relate completely neutral in relation to your painbody, and through critical thinking seek to change the inappropriate basic assumptions, which are the thoughtpattern behind the painbody. That is how philosophy and true spirituality works (the inappropriate basic assumptions are based on thought-distortions – see my book [A Dictionary of Thought Distortions](#)).

That is also the reason why you, through therapy, can't heal Man from the ground. In order to heal Man from the ground you need to go into a spiritual practice. It is only within the religions and their spiritual traditions they have knowledge and names for the more dark sides of the astral plane's collective history. The West has very precisely called this factor the original sin. The East has called it negative karma. The concepts indicate, that the inertia projects beyond the personal history (growing up conditions, traumatic bindings, painful experiences etc.) and far down into the collective inherit-backgrounds of history (genes, environment, society-ideals, the archetypes and the primordial images of the dreams, fantasies, fairy-tales, myths, and finally: instincts inherited from the animals). It is a factor, which lies in the evolution itself, in the genes, in the collective subconscious, in the collective history.

Such important factors as original sin and negative karma are completely ignored in Holotropic Breathwork and psychedelic psychotherapy. Or rather, they are not explained in their original context, but reduced to psychology, so that when speaking about them, they are referred to as traumas, etc. This is a fatal mistake.

Spiritual crises are not due to mental disease, but are manifestations of time and its more collective images; that is: the collective history of the astral plane. These manifestations are often accompanied by some deep and powerful energies (or forms of energy), which penetrate the whole of your being. And this can, in the meeting with the painbody (the thought's negative energyfield in the body), be heavy filled with suffering. In the psychiatric system such crises are therefore often misdiagnosed as mental disease, due to a lack of knowledge about, or rejection of such forms of energy. This makes the crisis even worse.

Experiences of the above-mentioned phenomena are not a reliable criterion for, that you are in a crisis, though. You can experience them without being in a crisis (though you still can be a victim of thought distortions). When it is a matter of a crisis, the phenomena should be followed by some typical symptoms.

The following are either common signs of an awakened Kundalini or symptoms of a problem (the meeting with the painbody) associated with an awakening Kundalini (commonly referred to as Kundalini syndrome):

1. Involuntary jerks, tremors, shaking, itching, tingling, and crawling sensations, especially in the arms and legs.
2. Energy rushes or feelings of electricity circulating the body.
3. Intense heat (sweating) or cold, especially as energy is experienced passing through the chakras.
4. Spontaneous pranayama, asanas, mudras and bandhas.
5. Visions or sounds at times associated with a particular chakra.
6. Diminished or conversely extreme sexual desire sometimes leading to a state of constant or whole-body orgasm.
7. Emotional upheavals or surfacing of unwanted and repressed feelings or thoughts with certain repressed emotions becoming dominant in the conscious mind for short or long periods of time.

8. Headache, migraine, or pressure inside the skull.
9. Increased blood pressure and irregular heartbeat.
10. Emotional numbness.
11. Antisocial tendencies.
12. Mood swings with periods of depression or mania.
13. Pains in different areas of the body, especially back and neck (since such pains have become a widespread form of cultural suffering, you should be careful believing that back pains are due to Kundalini – this is of course also the case with the other mentioned symptoms).
14. Sensitivity to light, sound, and touch.
15. Trance-like and altered states of consciousness.
16. Disrupted sleep pattern (periods of insomnia or oversleeping).
17. Loss of appetite or overeating.
18. Bliss, feelings of infinite love and universal connectivity, transcendent awareness.

In my article [The Devastating New Age Turn Within Psychotherapy](#) I describe some physiological persuasion techniques used by psychotherapy cults. It is techniques producing predictable physiological responses; that is: physiological methods of producing various mental and physical feelings taught to members as group activities. Members' responses to these activities are reinterpreted in desirable ways by group leaders or trainers, so as to convince both neophytes and devotees that the processes are good for them. The process of positive reinterpretation, sometimes called proof through reframing, is a persuasion technique commonly used by cults. One of the physiological persuasion techniques is called Relaxation-Induced Anxiety, and refers to the use of one-sided meditation-techniques. In the article I give a few examples of symptoms which illustrate former cult members' range of impairments after having done such one-sided meditation-techniques, some of which remain after many years out of the cultic group. The symptoms seem to be symptoms of spiritual crises, though the persons described don't mention this.

The presence of the above-mentioned symptoms is however still not a reliable criterion for, that it is a matter of a spiritual crisis. The criterion is also, among other things, that the physical symptoms can't be explained through medical science, as well as that you, in psychological sense, are able to discriminate between your own inner experiences and the outer surroundings.

The crucial criterion is however, that the experiences are accompanied by one, or more, of the following existential conditions: unreality, division, stagnation, anxiety or meaninglessness.

This means, that your consciousness and personality, when it is a matter of a spiritual crisis, has slipped fundamentally out of balance, but in most cases not so much that you can be diagnosed as having a mental disease.

Spiritual crises often appear as unintended consequences of yoga, one-sided meditation-techniques, bodyoriented- and experiential psychotherapy, healing, energy transmission (for example Deeksha/Shaktipat - about the false, or demonical, use of Deeksha, see my articles [A Critique of the Indian Oneness Movement and Its Use of Western Success Coaching](#) and [The Philosophy of Karen Blixen](#)), different types of rituals. The problem is - besides using one-sided techniques - that many experiential psychotherapists, meditation teachers, or other spiritual teachers, are completely ignorant about the nature of spiritual crises. There are far too many people today, who teach spiritual techniques without having the necessary experience and philosophical knowledge.

A special problem is in this connection, that many meditation teachers are psychologists or psychotherapists, who, with the best intentions, want to use meditation as a therapy based on a scientific approach; that is: without religious/spiritual/philosophical undertones. In other words, they cut the philosophical aspects of meditation off, and that's of course a problem, because meditation traditionally is meant to open up into the dimensions of the human mind, which actually are of a philosophical nature.

Among other factors of release can be mentioned: births, unhappy love, celibacy, deep sorrow, high fever *and* intake of drugs. But a spiritual crisis can also come suddenly without traceable cause. You can suddenly be thrown out in such a crisis.

The wisdom traditions have always claimed, that the above-mentioned phenomena come from the collective imageworld of the astral plane, which consists of highly abstract form-formations of energy. This imageworld has had many names: it is Plato's world of forms, the Bardoworlds of the Books of the Dead, the Anabasis of

the mystery cults, the image galleries of the Alchemists, the collective subconscious, the dreamtime of the aboriginals etc. etc.

This imageworld has a relative validity, because it is lying outside the area of the personality, and seems to have a paranormal, or supernatural, character. The deceitful (relative) about it is, that it works in sequences in past and future, and in fragmentation. If you therefore identify yourself with it (the above-mentioned phenomena), then you relate absolute to the relative, and remove your consciousness from the Now, which is the actual reality and being. The Now is left empty and meaningless, the absolute has vanished. Furthermore you become a helpless victim of the swings of the energy-laws, and then you have the spiritual crisis.

A spiritual crisis can be expressed in two ways: 1): as suffering, often called The Dark Night of the Soul, or 2) as Ego-inflation (inflammatio).

1) If the borders to the collective time is broken down or being exceeded out of hand, for example through psychedelics or through one-sided development techniques, or in shock, the consciousness and the personality will slide crucial out of balance and therefore it will suffer. The Ego will sideways with its personal identity and life-situation, suddenly experience break in of tremendous astral energies, clairvoyant abilities, visions of mythological beings, good and evil forces, various demons and angels, death and themes of rebirth, unusual light phenomena, messages from supernatural beings, memories from past lives. These experiences will, because that the Ego's nature has not been realized, be characterized by unreality and division, anxiety of going mad and anxiety of death, or the experience of a total meaningless and dark extinct world.

2) The personality can receive informations through the break in of astral and collective energies, images and symbols: information about, what approaches human beings from outside (from other people, from chance, destiny, life etc.). However, informations through collective images are contradictional and split. Many have therefore been seduced by these colourful experiences and have remained there, with the ability to see the aura, with the ability to create images, to create in reality. When the collective time is used spiritual in genuine sense, then the Ego, in its egoistic isolating and self-affirmative function, steps aside. However, the same forces can be used for other intensions. It can be creative, Ego affirmative, political, demonical and so on. The forces which in spirituality are given to others' disposal in healing, energy transmission and spiritual information exchange, the same forces can themselves be turned in through the Ego-structures and open creative channels, create super Egos, create political leaders and popular seducers. The problem, or the danger, does not consist in using creativity or auric abilities. It is actually a good idea to formulate the

experiences creatively; the danger is, whether the Ego grows and becomes swollen on the world's positive responses. And if the Ego gains strength, takes the honour, or blows itself up, the transformation-process of consciousness stops, the growth forward towards the goal: illumination and later enlightenment.

Spiritual crises are my explanation of paranormal phenomena; they are the dark inter-dimensional gates between parallel worlds. That there is a current collective spiritual crisis in progress, can be seen in the many film and series that focuses on this.

I will repeat: the painbody is - through the inner evaluating ego, which the painbody is constructed around - connected with the more dangerous depths of the astral plane's collective history, which also are a kind of dark, ancient inertia which opposes any change of the ego. The energies found here are unfathomable, and when you direct them into your painbody, you are really facing problems. That is what is happening in a spiritual crisis.

The ego-religion and the ego-exercises are the ego's incessant confirmation or denial of the ego: "it is no use with me!"; or: "Wonderful me!". Both, either the denial or the confirmation of the ego, maintain the ego-process, the ego-identity, and the ego-centralization. The ego's religion and exercises are the ego's needs and longings and will: I want to, I think, I believe, I feel, I wish, I hope, I think, I believe, I feel, I wish, or, in its most common core: I, I, I...Me, Me, Me... Therefore a spiritual crisis can both be "negative" and "positive" – the Dark night of the soul, or ego-inflation.

Your ego, and your painbody, is in other words the inter-dimensional gate where collective energies, and astral beings, can enter into your world (note that I also think that both things and places can have a painbody). When you in a selfish way use the powers from the collective history of the astral plane, and which demonical astral beings will help you with (because the ego phenomenon is their magnet of attraction), you can create personal power and material glory. That is the essence of Black Magic. The ego is a demonical structure, and it attracts demonical powers and energies, which also have been created by the ego phenomenon.

#### **4. The Psychedelic Renaissance**

If we begin with the start: *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead* is both a historical document and an anthropological curiosity. Written by a trio of renegade Harvard psychologists in 1962, *The Psychedelic Experience* was the first attempt to offer a written guide through the startling disjunctions, visionary vistas, disorienting droops into egolessness, and surges of ego inflation reliably induced by the ingestion of a sizable dose of

hallucinogen. The collaborators have attained legendary status in the intervening decades. Timothy Leary, charismatic ringmaster of the Harvard group, was soon to become the pied piper of the acid generation – using the mass media as a pulpit to proclaim his dicey message of “turn on, turn in, drop out” – before he fell into disgrace and disrepute. Richard Metzner went on to have a long career as a scholarly and meticulous advocate for the visionary experience, writing books such as *Ayahuasca: Human Consciousness and the Spirits of Nature* and *The Unfolding Self: Varieties of Transformative Experience*. Richard Alpert made the archetypal journey to India, where he found his guru, forsook LSD for yoga, and successfully rebranded himself. As Ram Dass, he has guided and inspired several generations of Western seekers.

By the time of the writing of *The Psychedelic Experience*, Leary, Metzner, and Alpert had abandoned the traditional methodologies of the social sciences for the intensive pursuit of mystical revelation and personal liberation. This change in focus happened in an extraordinarily compressed period of time. Leary’s first psychedelic trip, on psilocybin, occurred in Mexico in 1960, as he approached his fortieth birthday. Returning to Harvard, he changed the subject of his research from impersonal communication and what he termed “existential transactions” to an exploration of the possible uses of psychedelics for transforming personality and behavior. He launched a project in which prisoners were guided through psilocybin sessions to see if this would affect their rate of recidivism. At the same time, he gathered a circle of graduate students and like-minded professors around him in Cambridge, where they explored mushrooms and LSD together on a regular basis. The cultlike euphoria created by this investigation began to alienate the Harvard establishment. Ignoring the novelist Aldous Huxley’s prudent warnings that “the only attitude for a researcher in this ticklish field is that of an anthropologist living in the midst of a tribe of potentially dangerous savages,” Leary seemed to revel in defying convention and attracting attention to his antics. His increasingly erratic behavior led to reprimands and eventual dismissal. The Harvard coterie relocated to the Milbrook mansion in upstate New York, continuing their intellectual inquiry into the liberational potential of psychedelics – the scene was dubbed the “crypt trip” by Ken Kesey, who drove his magic bus of Merry Pranksters from the West Coast to Millbrook for a brief and famously uncomfortable summit (see my pop culture file [Ghost Rider](#)).

The rediscovery of psychedelics in the late twentieth century caused shockwaves because the modern psyche had been cut off from the direct access to revelation formerly possessed by the shaman and seer. Before the explosion of interest in the subject during the 1960s, direct visionary gnosis and shamanic techniques of ecstasy had been exiled and suppressed in the West for many hundreds of years. The witch hunts that took place during the Middle Ages launched a devastating assault on the

last vestiges of indigenous shamanism and the orally transmitted knowledge and use of vision-inducing plants throughout Europe. During the era of Colonialism, Europeans sought to annihilate the traditional wisdom of those they conquered. Possessed by the hierarchical framework and transcendent ideology of Christianity, the Europeans crusaded against any and all representatives of the archaic worldview that knew second sight, visions, and prophecy to be crucial aspects of reality. With the rise of the modern scientific method, the only form of awareness that was seen as valid was empirical, rational, and materialist. Anything else was grist for romantic poetry or faint fever dreams.

As Harvard psychologists, Leary and his cohorts had high status and a role in maintaining the smooth functioning of the American machine. In the 1950s Cold War era, American psychology was biased toward naïve behaviorism, prioritizing the objective and observable over the subjective and psychic. It is not surprising that the psychedelic trip, revealing multitudinous levels of awareness and secret domains of psychic activity, would have detonated within this mind-set with such tremendous, implosive force. “We’re all schizophrenics now and we’re in our own institution,” Leary proclaimed in the wake of his first mushroom trip.

It is easy to see that it might have been prudent for Leary and his coterie to wait a number of years before proclaiming the psychedelic experience, in itself, as fast track to “enlightenment,” whatever that is, when Leary is talking about it. They might have restrained themselves, observing the longer-term effects of psychedelic use on themselves, their work, and their relationships. They might have seen the strategic value in maintaining their Ivy League connection and pedigree, even if it meant radically slowing down their experiments. Unfortunately, the psychologists had no background to prepare them for their sudden shift into “expanded awareness” – previously, their access to altered states had been through alcoholic inebriation, and the binge drinking endemic to 1950s professional life was as contractive as psychedelics were expansive. Their worldviews radically wrenched by a massive ingression of previously unknown psychic intensities, the Harvard psychologists grasped these chemical catalysts as the Answer, rather than approaching them, with skepticism and proper caution, as tools that, potentially containing hidden dangers, required scrupulous care.

*The Psychedelic Experience* is a cultural artifact of this early and pivotal time in the modern West. In their efforts to find a spiritual context for entheogenic exploration, the Harvard trio gravitated to the sacred culture of Tibetan Buddhism, interpreted in the groundbreaking works of W.Y. Evans-Wentz and Lama Govinda. In retrospect, this choice is interesting, on several levels. Although Leary had taken mushrooms for the first time in Mexico – he reported feeling that he understood the Mayan



civilization for the first time during his trip – they did not create a manual based on indigenous practices or draw any connection to tribal shamanism in North or South America. Instead, they chose to contextualize the hallucinogenic journey in relation to the wisdom tradition of Tibet, which must have seemed far more distant in 1962 than it does today, when many Tibetan lamas have migrated to the United States, the Dalai Lama is a household name, and thousands pursue Tibetan Buddhist practices. Once again, a more cautious attitude might have mitigated the dangers of superficially appropriating the highly developed spiritual philosophy of a remote civilization. This quick grafting of entheogenic exploration onto Tibetan Buddhism could be seen as reflecting the absorptive ethos and narcissistic emphasis of the American mind-set, which tends to see all other cultures and resources as fodder to feed its experience, material desires, and knowledge base. Today this is a complete open goal of New Age, which demands that Eastern philosophy, and various forms of shamanism (and just about all other wisdom traditions as well), needs to be integrated with Western psychology and psychotherapy. Later I will explain this as a new kind of fatal colonialism.

*The Psychedelic Experience* may have helped to create a long-running rift in the spiritual culture of the modern-day West between followers of Buddhism and Yoga on one side and advocates of shamanic experimentation on the other. Although many Western Buddhists discovered the validity of expanded states of awareness through early psychedelic journeys, entheogenic use is frowned upon in traditional Buddhism and in modern adaptations of Eastern disciplines. I have already drawn a distinction between the experience of compensatory karma and the realization of progressive karma; between the cyclic temporary experience of psychedelics, and the development of permanent dreaming tracks and songlines in the spiritual essence (the wholeness). While psychedelics can allow us access to the collective images of time, their use does not compel a transformation that would turn the developmental possibilities glimpsed in those states – such as greater levels of compassion and realization – into positive character traits. Ego-inflation and distorted judgment can be the result. We have investigated it: psychedelic psychotherapy doesn't work with de-identification; that is: with dismantling and separating the consciousness from its content. On the contrary: it turns the consciousness towards its content instead of turning it towards its form.

Throughout *The Psychedelic Experience* we find an emphasis, entirely lacking in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, on “the selfish, game-involved nature of man,” “selfish game desire,” “the return to game reality,” “the ego-game,” and so on. In short: a reduction to Western psychology and psychotherapy. While Buddhism recognizes the “basic goodness” of our essential human nature, obscured by karma, the writers of the manual seem mired in a Puritanical and sin-stained conception of the individual.

Apparently, the tripper's nefarious ambitions to succeed in the game-worlds of modern life needed to be purged in the hallucinatory fire of the entheogenic encounter. In this respect and many others, *The Psychedelic Experience* overlays a simplistic and moralizing psychological perspective on the subtler and more profound exegesis of an ancient spiritual philosophy found in the original text. One has to remember the obvious fact that the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is a manual in what happens during the actual physical death process, and is meant to be read aloud to a person who is dying, not to a person in a psychedelic trip.

As for the value of *The Psychedelic Experience* as a tripper's manual, it was certainly used for that purpose by thousands of people during the 1960s, and may have provided a helpful reference point for some who would otherwise have plunged into their first journey with no context at all. In retrospect, however, the conjunction of bardo state experiences and psychedelic plateau seems more than a bit forced, and the insistence on the desirability of losing the ego also seems naïve. "Ego-freedom" might be a more appropriate goal than "ego loss": the ego is our particular lens for perceiving reality, connected to both the physical body, the painbody, and the astral body. Therefore loss of it would be disastrous. However, if we could attain freedom from the ego, we could act out of a holistic awareness of our particular perspective in relation to larger social and evolutionary processes. John Lennon, who borrowed a few lines from the manual for a song ("Turn off your mind, relax, and float down stream..."), later told an interviewer, "I got a message on acid that you could destroy your ego, and I did, you know. I was reading that stupid book of Leary's and all that shit. We were going through a whole game that everyone went through, and I destroyed myself...I destroyed my ego and I didn't believe I could do anything." I have explained that the mystical experience doesn't eliminate the ego, it opens it like a Lotus flower. The concept of ego-loss is completely misunderstood.

It has been over fifty years since the heyday of the 1960s and the brief flowering of the psychedelic era that ended abruptly when Woodstock gave way to Altamont, the achievements of SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) were obscured by the terrorist acts of the [Weathermen](#), and sensitive Beatles lyrics inspired the homicidal rages of Charles Manson's Family. Nobody can say for certain to what extent psychedelic use led to the radical inquiry and eventual degeneration of the 1960s spirit – it was certainly one element in a much larger story. In the wake of the '60s, many commentators from across the political spectrum found it convenient to blame psychedelics for some of the period's destructive excesses. Suppressed, interdicted, and generally reviled, mind-altering substances such as LSD, mescaline, mushrooms, and ayahuasca have not received a serious reconsideration since that time. Today, it is hard for us to imagine that long-ago moment when Ivy League professors, established intellectuals, film stars, famous people, and millionaires sincerely believed that the

exploration of non-ordinary states of consciousness through chemical means could induce a radical transformation of the individual and the society.

The psychedelic era of the 1960s could be seen as an attempted mass-cultural voyage of “shamanic initiation.” Because our culture lacks the proper frame of reference and background, as well as elders and wisdom-keepers who could guide the process, the effort reached a certain point and then short-circuited. Cultural figures like Leary and Lennon were thrust into the role of psychopomps, although they had not undergone the types of rigorous training demanded of shamanic candidates in traditional cultures. By the end of the 1960s, mechanisms of social repression – such as the Nixon-instituted “War on Drugs,” which continues today, incarcerating millions of nonviolent users of interdicted substances – had kicked into gear. The movements of personal liberation made permanent changes in Western culture, but the initiatory process remained incomplete. Today, over fifty years after the “Summer of Love,” it is possible that our culture, with works like Stanislov Grof’s (and *The Matrix Conspiracy* as such), is on the cusp of undergoing a second, much deeper phase of this “initiatory” crusade.

The term neocolonialism has been used to refer to a variety of contexts since decolonization that took place after World War II. Generally it does not refer to a type of direct colonization, rather, colonialism by other means. Specifically, neocolonialism refers to the theory that former or existing economic relationships, such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the Central American Free Trade Agreement, created by former colonial powers were or are used to maintain control of their former colonies and dependencies after the colonial independence movements of the post–World War II period.

The term could in my view also be used on the systematic New Age distortion of the original wisdom traditions, with the openly demand, that these traditions have to be integrated with (= reduced to) Western psychology and psychotherapy, or that they best can be understood in the light of Western psychology. The fatal mistake is the destruction of philosophy.

The psychedelic renaissance is especially seen in combination with Neoshamanism, and the so-called Ayahuasca Journey phenomenon.

The anthropologist Alice Kehoe criticizes the term “shaman” in her book *Shamans and Religion: An Anthropological Exploration in Critical Thinking*. Part of this criticism involves the notion of cultural appropriation. This includes criticism of New Age and modern Western forms of shamanism, which, according to Kehoe,

misrepresent or dilute indigenous practices. Alice Kehoe also believes that the term reinforces racist ideas such as the Noble Savage.

Kehoe is highly critical of Mircea Eliade's work on shamanism as an invention synthesized from various sources unsupported by more direct research. To Kehoe, citing that ritualistic practices (most notably drumming, trance, chanting, entheogens and hallucinogens, spirit communication and healing) as being definitive of shamanism is poor practice. Such citations ignore the fact that those practices exist outside of what is defined as shamanism and play similar roles even in non-shamanic cultures (such as the role of chanting in Judeo-Christian and Islamic rituals) and that in their expression are unique to each culture that uses them. Such practices cannot be generalized easily, accurately, or usefully into a global religion of shamanism. Because of this, Kehoe is also highly critical of the hypothesis that shamanism is an ancient, unchanged, and surviving religion from the Paleolithic period.

Anthropologist Mihály Hoppál also discusses whether the term "shamanism" is appropriate. He notes that for many readers, "-ism" implies a particular dogma, like Buddhism or Judaism. He recommends using the term "shamanhood" or "shamanship" (a term used in old Russian and German ethnographic reports at the beginning of the 20th century) for stressing the diversity and the specific features of the discussed cultures. He believes that this places more stress on the local variations and emphasizes that shamanism is not a religion of sacred dogmas, but linked to the everyday life in a practical way. Following similar thoughts, he also conjectures a contemporary paradigm shift.

Piers Vitebsky also mentions that, despite really astonishing similarities, there is no unity in shamanism. The various, fragmented shamanistic practices and beliefs coexist with other beliefs everywhere. There is no record of pure shamanistic societies (although, as for the past, their existence is not impossible).

Norwegian social anthropologist Hakan Rydving has likewise argued for the abandonment of the terms "shaman" and "shamanism" as "scientific illusions."

Dulam Bumochir has affirmed the above critiques of "shamanism" as a Western construct created for comparative purposes and, in an extensive article, has documented the role of Mongols themselves, particularly "the partnership of scholars and shamans in the reconstruction of shamanism" in post-1990/post-communist Mongolia. This process has also been documented by Swiss anthropologist Judith Hangartner in her landmark study of Darhad shamans in Mongolia.

Historian Karen Kroll Polenz argues that the social construction and reification of shamanism as a religious "other" actually began with the 18th century writings of Tibetan Buddhist monks in Mongolia and later "probably influenced the formation of European discourse on Shamanism".

What we see is an endeavor in some contemporary occult and esoteric circles to reinvent shamanism in a modern form, often drawing from core shamanism—a set of beliefs and practices synthesized by [Michael Harner](#)—centered on the use of ritual drumming and dance, and Harner's interpretations of various indigenous religions. Harner has faced criticism for taking pieces of diverse religions out of their cultural contexts and synthesising a set of universal shamanic techniques.

Some neoshamans focus on the ritual use of entheogens, and also embrace the philosophies of [chaos magic](#), while others (such as [Jan Fries](#)) have created their own forms of shamanism.

European-based neoshamanic traditions are focused upon the researched or imagined traditions of ancient Europe, where many mystical practices and belief systems were suppressed by the Christian church. Some of these practitioners express a desire to practice a system that is based upon their own ancestral traditions. Some anthropologists and practitioners have discussed the impact of such neoshamanism as "giving extra pay" (Harvey, 1997 and elsewhere) to indigenous American traditions, particularly as many pagan or heathen shamanic practitioners do not call themselves shamans, but instead use specific names derived from the European traditions—they work within such as *völva* or *seidkona* (seid-woman) of the sagas (see Blain 2002, Wallis 2003).

As mentioned: Today many spiritual seekers travel to Peru to work with *Ayahuasceros*, shamans who engage in the ritual use of ayahuasca, a psychedelic tea which has been documented to cure everything from depression to addiction. When taking ayahuasca, participants frequently report meeting spirits, and receiving divine revelations.

Shamanistic techniques have also been used in New Age therapies which use enactment and association with other realities as an intervention.

A new trend in using [abusing] Tibetan Buddhism in connection with Neoshamanism is in connection with Tibetan Dream Yoga, which is about practicing meditation in states of dreams, sleep and death. An example of this is the book *Dreaming Wide Awake: Lucid Dreaming, Shamanic Healing, and Psychedelics* by [David Jay Brown](#), a psychobiologist. The description of the book says:

*A detailed guide to mastering lucid dreaming for physical and emotional healing, enhanced creativity, and spiritual awakening*

- *Offers methods to improve lucid dreaming abilities and techniques for developing superpowers in the dream realm*
- *Explains how to enhance dreaming with supplements, herbs, and psychedelics*
- *Explores the ability of lucid dreamers to communicate with the waking realm and the potential for shared lucid dreaming and access to our unconscious minds*

*In a lucid dream, you “awaken” within your dream and realize you are dreaming. With this extraordinary sense of awakening comes a clear perception of the continuity of self between waking and sleeping and the ability to significantly influence what happens within the dream, giving you the opportunity to genuinely experience anything without physical or social consequences. In this way, lucid dreaming offers therapeutic opportunities for fantasy fulfillment, fear confrontation, and releasing the trauma of past experiences. With development and practice, lucid dreaming can provide a powerful path to greater awareness, heightened creativity, spiritual awakening, and communication with the vast interconnected web of cosmic consciousness.*

*In this detailed guide to mastering the practice of lucid dreaming, David Jay Brown draws from his more than 20 years’ experience using these techniques and his interactions with dozens of experts on consciousness, physics, dreaming, and entheogens, such as Stanley Krippner, Rupert Sheldrake, Stephen LaBerge, Robert Waggoner, Dean Radin, Terence McKenna, and many others. He explores the intimate relationship between lucid dreaming, shamanic journeying, visionary plants, and psychedelic drugs and how they are used for healing and spiritual development. Offering methods for improving both lucid dreaming and shamanic journeying abilities, he explains how to enhance dreaming with oneirogens, supplements, herbs, and psychedelics and offers techniques for developing superpowers in the dream realm.*

*Summarizing the scientific research on lucid dreaming, Brown explores the ability of lucid dreamers to communicate with people in the waking realm and the potential for dream telepathy, shared lucid dreaming, and access to the vast unconscious regions of our minds, opening up a path that takes us beyond dreaming and waking to dreaming wide awake.*

The book could be seen as a direct follow-up to *The Psychedelic Experience*. And the problems are precisely the same as we already have seen in connection with Stanislov Grof: the book is permeated with confirmation bias and selective thinking. There is no mention of dangers whatsoever, though such are so thoroughly documented that it could be a study in itself. It contains a lot of information, but with its pseudoscientific seduction it is deeply distorting.

As I have mentioned several times in connection with lucid dreaming and astral states of consciousness: if you remain in, or explore the astral worlds of the collective time, which lucid dreams and astral state gives access to, then you in other words distract your awareness in past or future. This can cost awakesness and life-energy, if you aren't under guidance of an enlightened master. In addition it can cause Ego-inflation and other spiritual crises.

It is in other words very important that you do not move accent from awake day to dreams and sleep, do not use drugs or one-sided development techniques, which promise you great experiences concerning either lucidity or astrality.

In the Matrix Dictionary entry [Why I Don't Teach Tibetan Dream Yoga](#), you can read more about New Age and Dream Yoga.

So, the psychedelic renaissance is taking place in the neoshamanistic environment. Neoshamanism refers to "new" forms of shamanism, or methods of seeking visions or healing. Neoshamanism comprises an eclectic range of beliefs and practices that involve attempts to attain altered states and communicate with a spirit world. Neoshamanic systems may not resemble traditional forms of shamanism. Some have been invented by individual practitioners, though many borrow or gain inspiration from a variety of different Indigenous cultures. In particular, indigenous cultures of the Americas have been influential.

Neoshamanism is not a single, cohesive belief system, but a collective term for many philosophies and activities. However, certain generalities may be drawn between adherents. Most believe in spirits and pursue contact with the "spirit-world" in altered states of consciousness which they achieve through drumming, dance, or the use of entheogens. Most systems might be described as existing somewhere on the animism/pantheism spectrum. Some neoshamans were not trained by any traditional shaman or member of any American indigenous culture, but rather learn independently from books and experimentation. Many attend New Age workshops and retreats, where they study a wide variety of ideas and techniques, both new and old.

Some members of traditional, indigenous cultures and religions are critical of neoshamanism, asserting that it represents an illegitimate form of cultural appropriation [colonialism], or that it is nothing more than a ruse by fraudulent spiritual leaders to disguise or lend legitimacy fabricated, ignorant and/or unsafe elements in their ceremonies. According to York (2001) one difference between neoshamanism and traditional shamanism is the role of fear. Neoshamanism and its New Age relations tend to dismiss the existence of evil, fear, and failure (see my article [The New Thought Movement and the Law of Attraction](#)). "In traditional shamanism, the shaman's initiation is an ordeal involving pain, hardship and terror. New Age, by contrast is a religious perspective that denies the ultimately reality of the negative, and this would devalue the role of fear as well."

Shamans and experienced users of ayahuasca advise against consuming ayahuasca when not in the presence of one or several well-trained shamans.

In some areas, there are purported brujos (Spanish for 'Sorcerers') who masquerade as real shamans and who entice tourists to drink ayahuasca in their presence. Shamans believe one of the purposes for this is to steal one's energy and/or power, of which they believe every person has a limited stockpile.

The word "shaman" originates from the Evenki word "šamán". The term came into usage among Europeans via Russians interacting with the Indigenous peoples in Siberia. From there, "shamanism" was picked up by anthropologists to describe any cultural practice that involves vision-seeking and communication with the spirits, no matter how diverse the cultures included in this generalisation. Native American and First Nations spiritual people use terms in their own languages to describe their traditions; their spiritual teachers, leaders or elders are not called "shamans".

However, with Michael Harner's invention and promotion of "core shamanism" in the 1980s, the term "shaman" began to be misapplied to Native American ways by cultural outsiders; this is due to Harner's unfounded claim that the ways of several North American tribes share core elements with those of the Siberian Shamans. This misappellation led to many non-Natives assuming Harner's inventions were traditional Indigenous ceremonies.

Critics Daniel C. Noel and Robert J. Wallis see Harner's teachings as based on cultural appropriation and a misrepresentation of the various cultures by which he claims to have been inspired. Geary Hobson sees the New Age use of the term "shamanism" as a cultural appropriation of Native American culture by white people who have distanced themselves from their own history.



Critics such as Noel and Wallis believe Harner's work, in particular, laid the foundations for massive exploitation of indigenous cultures by "plastic shamans" and other cultural appropriators. Note, however, that Noel does believe in "authentic Western shamanism" as an alternative to neoshamanism.

In Nepal, the term Chicken Shaman is used.

The term "plastic shaman" originated among Native American and First Nations activists and is most often applied to people fraudulently posing as Native American traditional healers. People who have been referred to as "plastic shamans" include those believed to be fraudulent, self-proclaimed spiritual advisors, seers, psychics, self-identified New Age shamans, or other practitioners of non-traditional modalities of spirituality and healing who are operating on a fraudulent basis. "Plastic shaman" has also been used to refer to non-Natives who pose as Native American authors, especially if the writer is misrepresenting Indigenous spiritual ways (such as in the case of Ku Klux Klan member [Asa Earl Carter](#) and the scandal around his book [The Education of Little Tree](#)).

It is a very alarming trend. So alarming that it came to the attention of an international and intertribal group of medicine people and spiritual leaders called the Circle of Elders. They were highly concerned with these activities and during one of their gatherings addressed the issue by publishing a list of Plastic Shamans in *Akwesasne Notes*, along with a plea for them to stop their exploitative activities.

One of the best known Plastic Shamans, Lynn Andrews, has been picketed by the Native communities in New York, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Seattle and other cities.

Critics of plastic shamans believe there is legitimate danger to seekers who place their trust in such individuals. Those who participate in ceremonies led by the untrained may be exposing themselves to various psychological, spiritual and even physical risks. The methods used by a fraudulent teacher may have been invented outright or recklessly adapted from a variety of other cultures and taught without reference to a real tradition. In almost all "plastic shaman" cases a fraud is employing these partial or fraudulent "healing" or "spiritual" methods without a traditional community of legitimate elders to provide checks and balances on their behaviour. In the absence of the precautions such traditional communities normally have in place in regard to sacred ceremonies, and without traditional guidelines for ethical behavior, abuse can flourish.

As we have seen, people have been injured, and some have died, in fraudulent sweat lodge ceremonies performed by non-Natives.

Among critics, this misappropriation and misrepresentation of Indigenous intellectual property is seen as an exploitative form of colonialism and one step in the destruction of Indigenous cultures. The para-esoteric Indianess of Plastic Shamanism creates a neocolonial miniature with multilayered implications. First and foremost, it is suggested that the passé Injun elder is incapable of forwarding their knowledge to the rest of the white world. Their former white trainee, once thoroughly briefed in Indian spirituality, represents the truly erudite expert to pass on wisdom. This rationale, once again, reinforces nature-culture dualisms. The Indian stays the doomed barbaric pet, the Indianized is the eloquent and sophisticated medium to the outer, white world. Silenced and visually annihilated like that, the Indian retreats to prehistory, while the Plastic Shaman can monopolize their culture.

Defenders of the integrity of indigenous religion use the term "plastic shaman" to criticize those they believe are potentially dangerous and who may harm the reputations of the cultures and communities they claim to represent. There is evidence that, in the most extreme cases, fraudulent and sometimes criminal acts have been committed by a number of these imposters. It is also claimed by traditional peoples that in some cases these plastic shamans may be using corrupt, negative and sometimes harmful aspects of authentic practices. In many cases this has led to the actual traditional spiritual elders declaring the plastic shaman and their work to be "dark" or "evil" from the perspective of traditional standards of acceptable conduct.

Plastic shamans are also believed to be dangerous because they give people false ideas about traditional spirituality and ceremonies. In some cases, the plastic shamans will require that the ceremonies are performed in the nude, and that men and women participate in the ceremony together, although such practices are an innovation and were not traditionally followed.

Another innovation may include the introduction of sex magic or "tantric" elements, which may be a legitimate form of spirituality in its own right (when used in its original cultural context), but in this context it is an importation from a different tradition and is not part of authentic Native practices.

The results of this appropriation of Indigenous knowledge have led some tribes, intertribal councils, and the [United Nations General Assembly](#) to issue several declarations on the subject:

4. We especially urge all our Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota people to take action to prevent our own people from contributing to and enabling the abuse of our sacred ceremonies and spiritual practices by outsiders; for, as we all know, there are certain ones among our own people who are prostituting our spiritual ways for their own selfish gain, with no regard for the spiritual well-being of the people as a whole. 5. We assert a posture of zero-tolerance for any "white man's shaman" who rises from within our own communities to "authorize" the expropriation of our ceremonial ways by non-Indians; all such "plastic medicine men" are enemies of the Lakota, Dakota and Nakota people. - *Declaration of War Against Exploiters of Lakota Spirituality*.

Article 11: "Indigenous peoples have the right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature. ... States shall provide redress through effective mechanisms, which may include restitution, developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples, with respect to their cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free, prior and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs. - [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

Article 31 1. "Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions." - *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

Therefore, be warned that these individuals are moving about playing upon the spiritual needs and ignorance of our non-Indian brothers and sisters. The value of these instructions and ceremonies are questionable, maybe meaningless, and hurtful to the individual carrying false messages. - *Resolution of the 5th Annual Meeting of the Traditional Elders Circle*.

Many of those who work to expose plastic shamans believe that the abuses perpetuated by spiritual frauds can only exist when there is ignorance about the cultures a fraudulent practitioner claims to represent. Activists working to uphold the rights of traditional cultures work not only to expose the fraudulent distortion and exploitation of Indigenous traditions and Indigenous communities, but also to educate

seekers about the differences between traditional cultures and the often-distorted modern approaches to spirituality.

One indicator of a plastic shaman might be someone who discusses "Native American spirituality" but does not mention any specific Native American tribe.

The "[New Age Frauds and Plastic Shamans](#)" website discusses potentially plastic shamans. Here are two quotes:

*Native people DO NOT believe it is ethical to charge money for any ceremony or teaching. Any who charge you even a penny are NOT authentic.*

[...]

*There is also the matter of telling people they can be shamans and charging them for it. If you were interested in Judaism, would you pay money to someone who said he could make you a rabbi in just one weekend seminar? If someone did this and then claimed Jewish objections were foolish, we would recognize he was anti-Semitic. Think about the lack of respect these operators show to native people and beliefs, and to their own followers, by defrauding people.*

So, the concept of The Matrix Conspiracy colonialism and crusade is especially clearly seen in relation with shamanism. But as explained in this booklet: New Age is also in progress with a systematic colonialization of Tibetan Buddhism. And the same is seen in relation with all other wisdom traditions. The demand is the same to all of them: these traditional practices has to be integrated with (=reduced to) Western psychology and psychotherapy, blended with a mix of pseudoscience, theosophy and New Thought.

Watch a video called *White Shamans & Plastic Medicine Men*:

<https://youtu.be/19JAMhAzXms>

*Related articles:*

[The Awakening of Kundalini](#)

[Paranormal Phenomena Seen in Relation with Spiritual Practice](#)

[Paranormal Phenomena Seen in Relation with Mystical Experiences](#)

[Spiritual Crises as the Cause of Paranormal Phenomena](#)

[Paranormal Phenomena Seen in Relation with Clairvoyance](#)

[Paranormal Phenomena Seen in Relation with Channeling](#)

[A Critique of The Indian Oneness Movement and Its Use of Western Success Coaching](#)

[What is Dream Yoga?](#)

[What are Chakras?](#)

*Related in the Matrix Dictionary:*

[Playing the Enlightenment Card](#)

[Why I Don't Teach Tibetan Dream Yoga](#)

[Plastic Shamanism](#)

*Articles related to the problems of Muktananda:*

<https://www.elephantjournal.com/2014/09/swami-muktananda-and-stroke-the-untold-medical-story-of-a-brilliant-gurus-tarnished-legacy/>

[http://www.leavingsiddhayoga.net/abhayananda\\_st.htm](http://www.leavingsiddhayoga.net/abhayananda_st.htm)

<http://www.ex-cult.org/Groups/SYDA-Yoga/leave.txt>

<http://www.leavingsiddhayoga.net/caldwell.sarah.pdf>

[https://www.salon.com/2010/08/14/eat\\_pray\\_love\\_guru\\_sex\\_scandals/](https://www.salon.com/2010/08/14/eat_pray_love_guru_sex_scandals/)

*Articles on the dangers of psychedelics (In the booklet I have only dealt with the spiritual dangers):*

*LSD:*

[WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF LSD?](#)

[LSD Dangers](#)

[The Effects of Acid](#)

[Long-term Effects of LSD](#)

*Ayahuasca:*

[Ayahuasca: The Dark Side and Dangers](#)

[Is Ayahuasca Dangerous?](#)

[Ayahuasca: Understand the Dangers & Possible Side Effects](#)

[The Dangerous Side of Ayahuasca](#)

[AYAHUASCA: A TRIP INTO HELL](#)

[THE DANGERS OF AYAHUASCA, MAPACHO & SHAMANISM](#)

*Articles on Selling Native Spirituality:*

[Nuage Tricksters](#)

[Dead Indians: Too Heavy to Lift](#)

[Exposing The Fake Medicine Men and Women](#)

[Native Religions and "Plastic Medicine Men"](#)

[Ownership of Indigenous Cultures](#)

[Plastic Shamans and Astroturf Sun Dances: New Age Commercialization of Native American Spirituality](#)

[Selling Native Spirituality](#)

[The Selling of Indian Culture](#)

[Spiritual Hucksterism: The Rise of the Plastic Medicine Men](#)

*List of notorious plastic shamans:*

[Carlos Castaneda](#). Carlos Castaneda was a best-selling author of a number of books centering on a Mexican Yaqui brujo (witch, sorcerer, or [shaman](#)) and his pharmacologically induced visions. He called the brujo Don Juan Matus. Castaneda claimed he was doing anthropology, that his books were not fiction. He was granted a Ph.D. by the UCLA Anthropology Department in 1973 for his third book, Journey to Ixtlan. Critics say the work is not ethnographically accurate and is a work of fiction.

[Lynn Andrews](#). Lynn Andrews has been instrumental in propagating the non-existent Sisterhood of the Shields. She has been shown to peddle fantasy, and heads the list of fake medicine people.

*James Arthur Ray*. Read my article [James Arthur Ray and The Sweat Lodge Tragedy](#)

*Stanislav Grof*. Read my article [A Critique of Stanislav Grof and Holotropic Breathwork](#)

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