



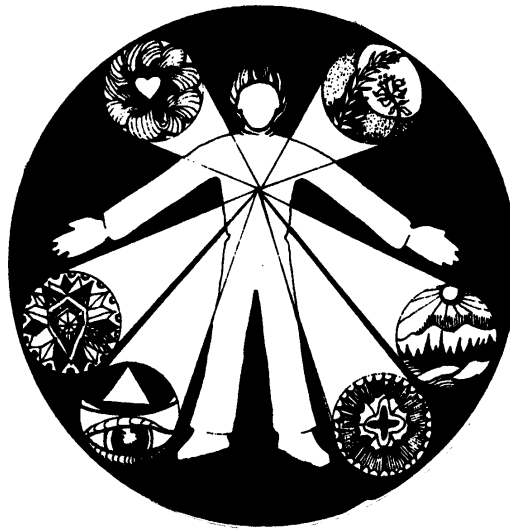
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IMAGE AND SYMBOL A PATH TO THE REALIZATION OF THE SELF

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Images and symbols are the language of the unconscious mind. When evoked and understood, they can provide us with the guidance to resolve issues from the past, help us discover and develop our talents and potentials and empower the present, and bring into consciousness inspiring visions with which to grow personally, professionally and spiritually throughout our life span. In this article, the dynamics of imagination are discussed in detail. Both ancient and modern methods for provoking and working with the symbolic process are discussed.

"Affectus, qui passio est, desinit esse passio simulatque eius claram et distinctam formamus ideam."
Emotion, which is suffering, ceases to be suffering as soon as we form a clear and precise picture of it. 'Ethics'. Spinoza

"Infected minds to their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets; more needs she the divine than the physician." 'Macbeth'.
Shakespeare

THE NEED FOR INNER WISDOM

We live in an outer directed culture, one which highly values intellect, analysis and reason and which places great emphasis on science, entertainment and extroversion. Because of this, it is only natural for us to seek logical solutions to our problems when trouble befalls us. Or to escape from and avoid our crises through drugs, high tech toys, travel, movies and television. Or to turn to others--therapists, ministers, family, friends, or the institutions to which we belong--to give us solutions to our difficulties and distress.

Unhappily, reason alone cannot help us deal with life in broad and inspiring ways. Neither science nor entertainment can help us address or resolve developmental issues. Neither the external systems to which we belong nor the people with whom we interact can fully understand the complex and unique realities that exist within us. These resources and strategies can, to some degree, lessen stress, provide comfort, and lend support. They are no substitute, however, for the hard work required to comprehensively confront our patterns of thinking and behaving and find answers to basic questions about the meaning and purpose of our lives. They cannot forever protect us from the risks we must take to develop our human resources and make critical decisions and are of little help when the time comes to take responsibility for the consequences of our actions in the world.

We do, however, need a source of guidance and inspiration if we are to wind our way successfully through the labyrinths, changes and developmental stages of life. So where *can* we turn for help? One of the greatest challenge in life is to discover, develop, learn to trust and utilize the deep springs of wisdom that flow *within* us. We must engage in the search for meaning, and seek answers to our fundamental questions, within the realms of our own unconscious mind (Miller, 1975, p. 123).

There are levels of awareness that can take us beyond the necessary but limited outlook of intellect and reason. There are alternate modes of perception and higher states of consciousness that can be accessed to connect us ever more deeply to ourselves and to life. Exploring and developing these possibilities can result in a deeper understanding of our experiences, the renewal of our sense of meaning, the development of our human resources, and move us beyond the narrow limits of strictly self-seeking and self-serving behavior (Progoff, 1963, p. xv).

The search for *inner* guidance and wisdom brings us into contact with processes that operate very differently from those of the rational mind. The shift of attention from external to internal reality puts us in touch with the unconscious mind, in general, and with the resource of imagination, in specific. As a species we have many languages with which to communicate with one another. The unconscious mind, however, communicates to us all in the same way, through images and symbols. We need to learn how to deal with this unusual language in order to access, explore, understand, and develop the deeper and higher aspects of our humanity (Fromm, 1951, 7-10).

The function of imagination usually operates unconsciously in the sense that we do not normally guide or direct its activity in a purposeful way. Most of us live strictly conscious lives and neither explore the vast dimensions of the unconscious mind nor develop its bountiful resources. And yet, just as we are fascinated by and drawn toward the unconscious, the

unconscious also wants to be known (Hull, 1972, p. 21). The unconscious mind has a life of its own which, when first encountered, can seem rather strange and obscure. Its communications are allusive, symbolic and indirect (Fromm, p. 29). Rather than stating its meanings to us in specific, logical terms, the unconscious mind portrays its messages to us in images and symbols which must be interpreted to be understood (Progoff, p 208).

Therefore, images and symbols can either illuminate or confuse us. When misunderstood or taken literally, they can misguide and misdirect us. But when we learn how to understand and decode them, images and symbols can help us understand our lives in many special ways (Assagioli, 1963, p. 8).

HANDLING HEAVY TRAFFIC

For instance, I sit at my desk with a tremendous amount of work to do, with deadlines to meet and obligations to fulfill, but in an unproductive mode, staring at the wall. I need, somehow, to focus my mind, discover what is blocking my productivity, and get on with my work. In a state like this, I call upon the imagination to help me figure out what is going on.

How do I consciously access and use imagination? One way is to close my eyes, take a few deep breaths, relax, and allow a symbol for my internal reality come into my mind's eye or field of awareness. Up comes an image, a mental picture, of me standing in the middle of a noisy, busy intersection directing heavy traffic. A restless, tethered eagle sits on my shoulder, looking off toward the distant snow-capped mountains.

A complex image such as this does not tell me directly what is going on, but rather portrays its meaning, a meaning that must be discovered and interpreted to be understood. Taken literally, the imagery is confusing. I'm not in heavy traffic, I'm in my office. What does the tethered eagle mean? The Blue Ridge Mountains are a hundred miles from Richmond!

Reflecting on the various components of the image, I begin to realize that each element does carry a specific meaning. My mind is struggling to direct the traffic, to confront and complete the projects on my desk. My body, the eagle, needs to exercise. My emotions, the restless quality of the bird, are stressed out and need some quiet solitude. And my spirit needs to soar, needs contact with the inspiration of nature--all at the same time. No wonder my productivity has fallen off and I feel immobilized! My unconscious mind has helped me perceive my inner reality through a single powerfully descriptive image.

When we relax, let go of our controlling, rational minds, and tune into our inner depths, in imagery we can see reflections of the many potent dynamics that operate within us. Our instincts, urges, drives, desires, and emotions need to be expressed and yet they are often in conflict with one another (Assagioli, 1974, p. 60). If we do not know how to understand the imagery through which these dynamic forces are portrayed, we can be frightened, bewildered or overwhelmed by the symbolic process. Then, as we begin to use it to understand, take responsibility for, and improve the condition in which we find ourselves, further confusion can result (Laszio, 1958, p. 310).

We resist looking into or acknowledging the contents of the unconscious mind for several reasons. We don't know how. We don't believe it matters. We don't want to admit we *have* any inner conflict or turmoil. We couldn't deal with traumatic experiences when they happened in the first place, we're afraid to be retraumatized if we remember them, so we repress and/or deny the fact that they occurred at all. In order to be well adjusted in our society--externally oriented, facts and information driven, consumed by our roles and our diversions--we ignore much of who we are and what exists within us because it seems so dangerous. The result is that we reject much of the depth of our human nature. But it is clear that much is sacrificed by our ignorance, timidity, laziness or denial for these depths are also the source of our joy, love, pleasure, creativity and self-esteem. By protecting ourselves from the hell

within, we also cut ourselves off from the heaven within (Maslow, 1968, p 142).

Unfortunately, we have been conditioned to distrust the imagination. How many times have we heard something like, 'Oh, it's all in your imagination?', as if this resource were distracting or irrelevant. We have been taught to consider imagination as a process that can actually inhibit or get in the way of rational, successful living (Young, 1983, p. 57). And it's true, imagination *can* run away with us and lead us astray. Instead of doing the work on my desk, I might be staring at the wall thinking about an old girlfriend, brooding about the pile of work I have to do, imagining a variety of disastrous consequences that will result if I do not get it done. When left to operate in an undisciplined way, the imagination can leave us scattered, distracted, preoccupied, anxious or shut down.

Just as we need mirrors with which to see our own faces, so too, we need reflections of the invisible, powerful dynamics which operate within us in order to see them clearly and act upon them responsibly. Imagination is the function that handles this traffic. The imagination is one of the most important functions of the psyche, for it is through the imagination that we can become conscious of what is going on inside us and then take charge of our energies in efficient and effective ways.

EXPANDED AWARENESS

When we turn our attention to the symbolic dimension, we move from a linear way of thinking to an expanded state of awareness. The imagination is synthetic in the sense that it can perceive and portray many levels of reality at the same time--body, feelings, mind and spirit (Assagioli, 1965, p. 143). The imagination can also take into account and portray both conscious and unconscious energies simultaneously (the projects I must get off my desk--conscious; my need for relaxation and renewal--unconscious). Imagery can help us disidentify and take a

critically important step back from our roles, responsibilities problems and conflicts so that we can view them broadly and then direct the expression of our energies in appropriate and productive ways to address and/or resolve them.

Imagery can also integrate diverse energies in a way the rational mind cannot do. Where once we were viewing elements within us as separate and discreet, and in opposition to one another, now we can see how they fit together in complimentary ways. With such insight we can take into account all the dynamic forces within us and act to meet our needs in a wholistic way (finish the work, *then* go for a hike in the mountains!). The imagination offers us a way to gather, store and integrate information, then transform and use our energies in the best ways possible (Assagioli, 1965, p. 178).

The unconscious mind is not bound by the limitations of reason or logic, time or space, as is



the normal conscious mind.

In dreams, fantasy, meditation, in hypnotic, drug and other unusual states of awareness, we can be actor and observer simultaneously.

We can replay interactions from the past to learn what really was going on then. We can rehearse to successful outcomes roles we must play. We can see ourselves successfully using abilities we wish we had and are only beginning to develop.

There are no limits to the possible experiences we can have in imagery. As we begin to master this function in an increasingly conscious way we begin to realize that everyday life can be much richer than we had previously experienced. Imagination gives us a broader perspective on life and with this expanded

awareness we can begin to approach our lives with deeper understanding, greater enthusiasm, and a growing creativity.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF IMAGERY

Dynamics within the unconscious can be known through imagery that may be visual or verbal, auditory, rhythmic or kinesthetic, olfactory, intuitive, or generalized in its feeling tone (Progoff, p. 91). Let's consider some examples of these different kinds of imagery.

- Visual imagery: remembering a wonderful walk on the beach, a favorite mountain meadow, or capturing a mental picture for what is going on inside as described above.
- Verbal imagery: remembering a specific conversation I had with someone or hearing the echo in my head of the voice of a loved one not present.
- Auditory imagery: hearing sounds of nature like the wind blowing, the ocean surf, a dog barking in the distance or the tune of a song which coincidentally relates to current activities.
- Rhythmic or kinesthetic imagery: feeling vivid body sensations which have taken place in the past (flashbacks) or new sensations never felt before; expanding or shrinking body sense; the impulse to gesture or express myself in some spontaneous way.
- Olfactory imagery: remembering the fragrance of a certain perfume and having it trigger the memory of a favorite meal, a girlfriend from the past, a foreign country once visited.
- Intuitive imagery: the sudden awareness that I must use my overhead transparencies in the seminar I am about to conduct if I truly want to inspire the group.
- Imagery that is generalized in its feeling tone: remembering the feeling of success I once had, letting that feeling enter me

now and help motivate me to prepare for an upcoming important event so that I may do my best.

It is necessary to develop the imagination in order to increase our repertoire of knowing skills, to control and direct our energies, to expand our understanding of and capacity to participate in the world around us. For these reasons the imagination is one of the functions which has to be controlled when excessive or dispersed; to be trained when weak; and to be used well because of its great power (Assagioli, 1965, p. 144).

PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF IMAGERY

Though we rarely appreciate the fact, imagination affects us physically. When we remember or ruminate about a situation that was difficult for us--conflict with a loved one, trouble at work, experiences of abuse, an accident--our bodies become tense, our muscles constrict, our breathing changes and we are much less responsive to the world around us. When we imagine or remember a time of peace or harmony, however--a warm encounter with a friend, a professional success, a vacation in the mountains--our bodies respond in an appropriate manner. Images, symbols and mental pictures tend to create the physical conditions and events that parallel them (Assagioli, 1974, p. 51).

Our thoughts and images heavily impact our bodies and greatly affect their state of wellness or disease. We must realize how important are our unconscious mental processes, identify and understand the negative images that preoccupy us, and develop the capacity to change and/or transform them. Then, when we are tense or nervous, we can find ways to work with these negative energies and return to a state of openness and response-ability. The growing medical field of psychoneuroimmunology is studying this powerful mind/body interaction in a search for ways to help us heal and be more healthy physically (Justice, 1987).

The use of imagery can also bring humor into our lives. The unconscious is entirely unpredictable or, as the alchemists use to say, mercurial. We take ourselves far too seriously in life. Often the best remedy for a self-absorbed ego is to ask our unconscious what is going on. Images and symbols often speak to us in direct and unexpected ways. What is going on for me right now? Humorously, I see myself blowing delicate multi-colored conceptual bubbles your way, hoping they survive the long and perilous journey from my mind onto this paper, and from this paper into your understanding and heart!

SYMBOLIC INTERPRETATION

When we get an image or symbol, however, it is important to ask the question, from where in consciousness does it come? Does it come from the lower unconscious, the repository of our fears, repressed energies, unexpressed emotions, needs and inner conflicts (Assagioli, 1965, p.17)? If so, then the imagery will reflect these qualities of energy--monsters, demons, battles, explosions, predation and the like. Or does the image come from the higher unconscious, the source, in consciousness, of altruistic love, intuition, inspiration and authentic spiritual potentials? If so, then the imagery will reflect these qualities--a flower opening, a rising eagle, circles joined together, a rainbow, a man joined with the energies of nature.

The problem of symbolic interpretation is important because symbols can also carry different meanings at different levels of reality without their coming into conflict or being mutually exclusive (Assagioli, 1963, p. 13). From the lower unconscious, I fear my conceptual bubbles will seem frivolous or foolish to you; that you will find these ideas strange, ungrounded or unclear; that, because you may not understand or work directly with the imagination, you will dismiss this article as irrelevant. But from the higher unconscious, I know these thoughts and insights are important and significant. They are the result of much research, study, personal and

clinical experience. They are delicate gifts which can fascinate, inform, inspire, and perhaps encourage you to pay more attention to the wonderful resource of imagination.

The generation of images and symbols doesn't relieve us from the difficult responsibility of making rational and informed choices about how and where to direct our energies. They don't *'tell us what to do'* in any literal or direct sense. But they do portray reality to us in a variety of ways and give us the opportunity to struggle with the question of the meaning of things. It is up to us to choose how we will deal with the information and use it in ways that further our personal, professional and spiritual growth and development.

How we interpret, understand and work with imagery can greatly effect our motivation, energy, self-esteem, and ability to persist in what we are doing and help us develop deeper levels of creativity, insight, wisdom and inner guidance. Images and symbols may initially be unclear and seem as inscrutable as a foreign language we do not speak. But they can connect us to our inner world and help us interact more meaningfully with the world at large. In that respect, with us they echo the prayer of the writers of the Upanishads: TAMASC MA JYOTIR GAMAYA – "Let me pass from the darkness to the light" (Brodrick, 1970, p. xi).

WHOLENESS

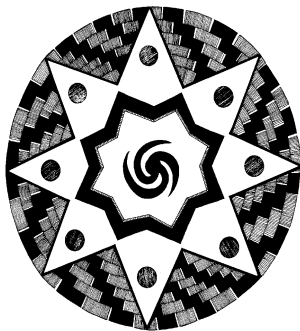
Religious and mystical traditions throughout time have said that some kind of divine intelligence or One Mind underlies the created universe. Buddhism, for instance, tells us that nature is one complete tapestry and that we must discover and participate in its essential wholeness. Modern physics tells us there are no discreet particles or parts, but that everything that IS is intimately bound together in a web of interconnections or network of relations. Whether we move outward toward the stars or inward toward self-knowledge, the message is the same:

the whole determines the functioning of the parts (Capra, 1975).

If so, then this must be true about us as well. If nature is intrinsically harmonious and whole, then we must be, too, since we are each a unique expression of the natural law (Arguelles, 1972, p. 53). Working with the symbolic process can help us understand, align and cooperate with the self-balancing wisdom of life. The intrinsic ability of the universe to heal and reconnect its individual parts into a fundamental wholeness is both seen and made available to us through the symbolic process (Progoff, p. xiii). The challenge, then, is to cooperate with this impulse and develop within ourselves a well functioning team composed of all our energies and resources. To do this, we must discover or create a center within us, a hub through which all our energies can interconnect and which can coordinate and direct this team effectively (Girard, 1964, p. 3).

SELF-REALIZATION

It is clear that there are levels of consciousness outside the direct control of the "I", and deeper than the personality. As we begin to tune into our depths, as the "I" peers into the mysterious inner world, all kinds of new phenomena are experienced and become known to us through imagery of one sort or another. But from where do images and symbols come? What part of us generates these phenomena?



The honest and easy answer is, "Who knows?!" No one can really say for sure. But at least two more serious responses can be made to the question. The first involves neurophysiology and studies of how the brain operates. Research suggests that imagery is an activity of the right hemisphere of the brain (Brown, 1989, p. 49).

The second is more philosophical or psychological. When the unconscious is seen to be a meaningful part of us, and as we begin to explore and utilize its resources, our center of gravity begins to shift. We cease to operate exclusively from intellect or reason alone. Energies and awareness begin to flow from a hypothetical point *between* the conscious and the unconscious mind, from a center which might be called the Self (Jung, 1958, p. 340).

Throughout time people have had the intuition of the existence of such an inner center. The ancient Greeks called it the inner daimon. In ancient Egypt it was called the Ba-soul. The Romans thought of it as the "genius" in everyone. Native people refer to it as the spirit which dwells in plants and animals (Jung, 1972, p. 161). In our own spiritual traditions we speak about our guardian angel, about the soul, about the muse of creativity, and yet have no clear description of or idea about what these concepts really mean.

Many people have experienced this inner genius in a direct way, however. James (1902), Underhill (1911), Bucke (1923), and Ouspensky (1934) have documented stories about people who have had contact with this Self. In general, it is a mystical experience, characterized by a feeling of freedom, expansion, and profound connection with others and with nature. It seems to bring with it a feeling of being both individual and universal at the same time.

Perhaps the conscious mind is but a facet or reflection of a much larger and more comprehensive Self. Maybe the personality is like the point man or research assistant in the world at large, in the field of matter, time and space, commissioned to meet the needs, develop and manifest the energies of this Self in the best and most efficient ways. If this is so, then this might explain what images and symbols, dreams, visions, and all the fascinating and infinite variety of experiences are all about that open to the traveler into altered states of consciousness: communications between the 'I' and the 'Self'.

One thing seems clear: creativity is the result of taking the inner journey, linking this I/Self together, and is the very source of art, science, literature and religion (Fischer, 1972).

Images and symbols are the language through which the Self communicates and attempts to guide and direct our lives. When we repress or deny energies that need to be experienced or expressed, when we fail to actualize the talents and potentials that are our biological, psychological and spiritual heritage, this core part of us steps in to steer us straight. The symbolic process can be understood to help us develop, maintain and return to a natural and organic way of life which the Chinese call the Tao (Arguelles, p. 53).

PERSONAL AND SPIRITUAL PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

As we learn how to work with the symbolic process, balance between the mask (persona) and the Self becomes possible. Assagioli calls this personal psychosynthesis (Assagioli, 1965, p. 55). It requires courage, strength, perseverance, and discipline to arrive at personal psychosynthesis. Rather than to deny, repress, or strictly control them, the "I" must learn to coordinate, integrate, and utilize unconscious energies through the guidance and direction of the Self. As we achieve this, our personal lives increasingly reflect this internal harmony. Then we can begin to discover, develop and actualize the higher aspects, energies, and potentials of consciousness and move toward what Assagioli calls spiritual psychosynthesis.

Spiritual psychosynthesis is also a compelling process. We begin to care more about, and invest more in the exploration and development of, spiritual values and higher states of consciousness. Where once we primarily labored to understand, explore, and fulfill, for instance, our sexual, emotional or physical needs, now we begin to focus on the development of the more subtle or spiritual

capacities within us, faculties such as intuition, inspiration, revelation, illumination.

There seems to be an evolutionary or naturally unfolding process to all of this. We first confront the world driven by deficiency motivations and basic needs and act to meet them responsibly. As we mature, we become less desperate for or attached to the glammers of the world--the acquisition of money, power, status, fame, etc. Then we begin to respond to motivations toward growth, by the desire to develop and share the deeper facets of our humanity (Maslow, p. 21-27). Gradually we become more aware of the internal realities of other people, the points of union which connect us, and the world at large. As our consciousness expands, we perceive and participate in ever larger spheres of reality: intrapsychic, interpersonal, organizational, societal, national, international, planetary, cosmic.

The image of a giant redwood tree comes to mind to portray this process. By cooperating with the elemental, evolutionary principle of growth within us, we gradually learn to face and cope with life's challenges and crises, strong and firmly rooted in our humanness. We gradually let go of the lower limbs, childhood patterns and infantile needs, that no longer nourish our development. We unfold our potential, actualize our talents and abilities, and approach the realization of the Self.

SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES

There are a few principles to review and remember before we prepare to explore the realms of the human unconscious. For instance,

- The ego, or personality, is not the only domain of consciousness available to us.
- The unconscious mind is vast and multi-dimensional.

- Unconscious urges, drives, desires, and emotions tend, demand, and need to be expressed.
- Imagery is the language of the unconscious mind.
- Imagery and the symbolic process expand our awareness to see, understand, and actualize the conscious and unconscious dimensions and resources of the psyche.
- Imagery is symbolic, does not state its meaning directly, and must be interpreted.
- There are many kinds of imagery: visual, verbal, auditory, rhythmic, olfactory, intuitive, and generalized in feeling tone.
- Imagery affects the physical body.
- there seems to be a center within us, a Self, which can direct the evolutionary process of personal and spiritual unfoldment.

METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

How *do* we explore the unconscious mind in a practical way? What methods or techniques are available to help us gain access to, and develop rapport with, this hidden dimensions of the psyche? Throughout time, powerful procedures have been used to provoke experiences of depth in individuals and groups. They usually took place in sacred contexts, during special occasions such as rites of passage, initiation rituals, and religious ceremonies. Three important steps were understood to be necessary to ensure that such journeys had a positive, growthful and lasting effect: preparation, exploration, and integration (Brown, p. 48). Techniques included the use of psychedelic substances of plant and animal origin, trance dancing, drumming, chanting, fasting, sleep deprivation, solitude and quests in nature, self-mutilation, among others (Grof, 1976, p. 99).

Native and indigenous people have always believed that spirits and invisible forces exist that can be called upon to act as allies, emissaries or

guides in the challenges and struggles of living. These techniques were, and are today, used to make them visible and accessible, to embody their qualities and force. In fact, it was thought that without a vision a person had no special power, wisdom or protection and was like one in a desert without water, unable to find peace or rest (Mails, 1972).

Although most of these methods seem to us either strange or dangerous, or both, there *is* a tremendous interest in and exploration of altered states of consciousness in our culture today. Where, in the past, a disciple might sit for years at the feet of a Guru searching for enlightenment, in technological society we now use subliminal tapes, stroboscopic lights, biofeedback and virtual reality machines. Where in the past a monk might take up residence in a darkened cave or go to a mountain top to clarify the waters of his soul, we now have sensory isolation and float tanks. While native people in Southwestern United States and Mexico eat Peyote or San Paedro cactus; in Western Africa an alkaloid called Ibogaine; in Brazil, Ayahuasca; or in Northern California, 'magic mushrooms' to ride organic compounds into visionary states of consciousness, (Lyttle, 1994) there is widespread use of LSD among youth today.

PSYCHEDELICS

One of the most radical developments in the field of counseling and psychotherapy has been the study of psychedelic substances. Between 1946 and 1974, more than 90 psychiatric institutes in North America alone conducted research on the pharmacology of psychedelics and the nature of the psychedelic experience. LSD, MDA, DPT, ketomine hydrochloride, mescaline, and psilocybin have been the subjects of extensive research and are but a few of the more than 100 identified organic or synthetic substances that have been found to be powerful tools for catapulting people into the imageic and symbolic dimensions of the psyche and for unlocking the secrets of the unconscious mind.

Stanislav Grof, Psychiatrist and prolific author, is one of the principal researchers of LSD. After conducting over twenty-five hundred LSD sessions and analyzing over thirty-eight hundred records, Grof considers LSD to be one of the most powerful catalysts there is for exploring consciousness and for facilitating the emergence into awareness of material from the unconscious mind. The capacity of psychedelic drugs to make unconscious problems, dynamics and issues the subject of study and investigation make these substances of potentially tremendous value as research tools for healing the human psyche. Grof compares their potential significance for psychiatry and psychology to that of the microscope for medicine or the telescope for astronomy (Grof, 1976, p. 32). Beautifully abstract and aesthetic experiences, the reliving and resolution of childhood trauma, emotional release, and experiences of a transpersonal or spiritual nature are but a few of the documented positive effects that can result from the wise and careful (clinical) use of psychedelic agents (Grof, pp. 34-214).

There is, however, tremendous controversy concerning the use of drugs of any kind to facilitate the exploration of consciousness. Objections include: a lack of adequately trained therapists and guides to facilitate the process; concern about potential genetic damage; fear of the irrational behavior drugs can provoke; the belief that the use of one drug leads to another and potentially/eventually to problems with addiction; the conviction that natural means--yoga, meditation, fasting, solitude, spiritual practice, etc.--are the only valid paths to self-discovery.

Neither science nor the culture has resolved these questions and, as a result, along with reasonable concerns, fear, prejudice, ignorance and a negative press dominate public opinion. The research into psychedelic psychotherapy and its value in treating heroin addicts, alcoholics, dying cancer patients, people with severe character disorders, and other client populations has been neglected and largely

ignored in North America for more than 25 years (Abramson, 1967).

Despite the heated controversy, and although legitimate psychiatric research has been stalled for a generation, there continues to be much unwise, unguided, and illicit use of psychedelics in our culture. With effects as powerful as those reported in the research, on the street, and in the literature about their ritual use in native cultures (Masters and Houston, 1966; Harner, 1973; Halifax, 1982), is it any wonder people continue to disregard the dangers and seek out such adventures? At the same time, more and more people are seeking paths to self-exploration that are stimulating and exciting, that are easier and less risky than 12-18 hour drug sessions. There is a growing, if not explosive, interest in the use of mental imagery.

Guided imagery and music

In the late '60's and early '70's, at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center on the grounds of Spring Grove State Hospital outside Baltimore, Maryland, a number of research programs were going on involving the use of psychedelic substances in both low and high doses, administered to a wide variety of client groups. Psychedelic sessions were attended by a therapist, a nurse, and a research assistant who provided an ongoing music background during each trip. The research assistant was Helen Bonny.

Bonny was a Registered Music Therapist who possessed a deep and thorough knowledge of music from around the world. Her job was to provide musical support for whatever was emerging in the psychedelic session--an attempt to resonate with and thus amplify the emotional and psychedelic experience with music. A very sophisticated and powerful use of music was developed.

In her research on how music facilitated the psychedelic experience, Bonny discovered that certain selections of music put together in a

specific way could guide a person through powerful experiences all by itself, irrespective of the use of chemical stimulants. She called her work Guided Imagery and Music (GIM), founded the Institute for Consciousness and Music, and began training practitioners (Bonny, 1973). Some titles of the many music programs Bonny developed, certified GIM guides employ, and clients experience include Beginning Imagery, Positive Affect, Comforting Anaclitic, Serenity, Peak Experience, Death/Rebirth, Cosmic/Astral (Bruscia, 1990).

As a result of the continuing cross-pollination between Eastern and Western cultures, many other visualization techniques have emerged to access, develop, and make the imagination of practical relevance to our modern culture and in everyday life. While it is not possible to trace the history of the development of techniques of mental imagery here, it has been done elsewhere (Samuels and Samuels, 1975). A few other examples of specific techniques can, however, serve to provide a useful introduction to this field.

THE DIRECTED DAYDREAM

At the turn of the century, Robert Desoille, a French engineer, became interested in mental imagery after having contact with an occultist named Eugene Caslant. Through exposure to methodologies employed by Caslant, Desoille developed a technique called The Directed Daydream (Crampton, 1976). The directed daydream is a state which explores the boundaries between wakefulness and sleep. It is a method for exploring, understanding, and even transforming, through imagery, the inexhaustible reservoir of anxieties, fears, desires, and hopes which one accumulates during the course of life. These factors maintain their determining influence over behavior whenever one is coping with the external world (Haronian, 1966, p. 13).

In this method, a person stretches out on a couch and becomes comfortably relaxed. Then, with the help of a guide or therapist, he or she is

encouraged to ascend or descend in imagery and report the images or visions that are encountered. It is thought that through the method of ascension, a person comes into contact with his or her higher potentialities and spiritual tendencies, while descent brings him or her contact with his instincts and primitive drives. There are countless guided imagery scripts and trips available today for accessing, exploring, enjoying, and learning from the symbolic process in similar ways (Masters and Houston, 1972; Lusk, 1992, 1993).

SYMBOLIC IDENTIFICATION

Another approach to mental imagery is a technique called Symbolic Identification. In this technique, a person identifies with an image or symbol and enacts it physically, emotionally, verbally etc. Symbolic identification makes it possible to access knowledge, information and wisdom that would otherwise be inaccessible to the conscious mind by moving a person from his own limited egoic point of view to the perspective of the symbolic character (Crampton, 1975, p. 144).

Symbolic identification can also be used to clarify interpersonal issues. The technique of role playing is similar to this. If we really want to know what someone else thinks or feels about a particular issue--someone whom we know, have had dealings with in the past, or need to deal more effectively with in the future--we can identify with them, stand as they stand, move as they move, speak some of their well known idiosyncratic phrases to merge with and become them--in imagination. In these ways, we can know reality from their perspective and can more deeply understand and account for their point of view.

SYMBOLIC DRAWING AND MANDALA ARTWORK

Another important tool for Self-discovery is symbolic art, where we draw, paint or sketch the imagery that comes to mind. As we sit in front of canvas or paper and visually express our

images in art, we can arrive at very accurate representations of the dynamics and patterns that operate in us at any given moment. Mandala artwork is one of the most powerful tools for capturing pictures of the inner world.

The Sanskrit word mandala simply means "circle". In religious practice and in psychotherapy it refers to circular images which are drawn, painted, modeled or danced (Hull, p. 3). In the strict use of the mandala, as done in Tibetan Buddhism and by Pueblo and Navajo Indians, there is a center focus point from which radiates a symmetrical pattern. Their basic design supports the concept that there is a central point within the psyche to which everything is related, by which everything is arranged, and which is itself a source of energy. Mandalas are as powerful to create as they are to view. While drawing them, we connect to a process which encourages us to express ourselves with honesty and candor. Every organism is driven to assume the form that is characteristic of its nature, no matter what the circumstance (Hull, p. 73). We experience this and see it reflected in Mandalas.

Mandala art is a healing, integrating and transforming tool for many reasons. The creation of these designs involves all parts of us. Our body is involved in the mechanical act of drawing. We experience our own nervous system in a new way, in the fine movements required by the act of visual expression. Our mental patterns are reflected in the specific forms and structures that emerge. Our feelings are reflected in the colors we use. When the Mandala is complete, we have an interesting, often beautiful wholistic snapshot of our present reality. We can then look upon the symbol with curiosity and wonder, decode its meaning, and have a larger understanding of how our life is working. Having created more than 3000 Mandala drawings, used it as a principle tool in counseling, and conducted Mandala training programs throughout the United States and Canada for 21 years' time, I have found there

are at least six significant values to Mandala artwork.

First of all, Mandala art helps us shift our attention from our ordinary activities and concerns and focus it inwardly on the symbolic process. This shift is relaxing, refreshing, and energizing. Second, this is a private process of self-expression not dependent on a guide or therapist or outside consultant. In the search for the meaning of our experiences in life, we can sit down anytime we want to, draw a Mandala, and capture a reflection of what is going on in our lives at that time.

Third, through it we can discover where our energies are blocked, where our resistances lie, what are the thoughts, behaviors or roles in which we are stuck. Or, in compelling and graphic ways, we can celebrate our successes and create pictures of the inspiration and wisdom that touches us in life. Fourth, Mandalas help us learn to communicate with, accept, love, and work with the inner Self which struggles to live ever more freely and creatively in the world.

Fifth, Mandalas can help us see the larger cycles that operate in our life as we sit to make them regularly, then review a series of drawings that have emerged over time. Last, Mandalas are quite profound to share with others. Through them we can reveal our inner realities to our family and friends, in honest and open ways, whenever we choose, and by this encourage others to share their depths with us as well.

Whether mandalas are ritually drawn, adhering to strict and formal design requirements; are representations of images, symbols or mental pictures generated through specific methods and techniques; or are spontaneous expressions--elegant doodles--captured within the confines of a circle, the results are always illuminating.

THE WORKBOOK OR JOURNAL

The conscious mind has an uncanny ability to repress, forget or deny inner experiences it does not understand such as dreams, images, symbols

and the like. A journal or workbook, therefore, is an essential tool if we are to create meaningful maps of our inner space. Patterns and cycles of energy flow can only be perceived over time, and the regular recording of inner experience makes this perception possible. The workbook is the hinge of the process because in it we record and can re-experience that which moves around inside us. As we involve ourselves in the journaling process, we feel the presence of the principles of growth, development, and transformation taking root and working within (Progoff, p. 206).

CONCLUSION

These are but a few of the countless methods and techniques now available for working with imagination and the symbolic process on a path toward the realization of the Self. Just as there are an infinite number of ways to use electricity, so, too, there are an infinite number of ways of tapping into, and making use of the diverse energies, abilities, and potentials of the unconscious mind.

Personal growth is a slow and difficult process. If we want to fully develop our human resources and take advantage of our inward journeys, we must approach this work with discipline and attention. Like divers after sunken treasure, we must bring our images and symbols up into the light of consciousness. We must take the time to muse and wonder, digest and integrate, let our rational minds play upon the discoveries we make. We must carefully go over them to appreciate them and learn what they have to teach us. We need to organize, itemize and make an inventory of the images and symbols that we find so our basic patterns can be recognized, accepted, and gradually transformed. And we need to store them someplace safe, in easy reach, so we can refer back to the wisdom they provide whenever we like.

Through this process we create a new way of living, a manner and quality of being that touches everything we do. We learn to integrate

and balance the forces that dwell within us. We learn to be sensitive to all levels of reality--within ourselves, in others, and in the world of nature--participating ever more thoroughly in the cycles and rhythms of existence. Ultimately, we cannot fully understand reality. We will never be able to adequately define or describe it. But, through adventures in consciousness, tapping and employing the symbolic process, we can participate ever more fully in the mystery of living and continue to find ever deeper and richer levels of meaning and significance throughout our life span (Progoff, p. 216)

No individual, institution, philosophy, or system can take into account or completely appreciate the complexity that each of us is in our entirety. Everything we have ever been or ever hope to be is intimately bound together in the wholeness that the concept of the Self represents. It is to this inner Self that we must turn when we are lost, distracted, confused or troubled. We must learn to communicate with the Self by exploring the unconscious mind, through the use of images and symbols, and with the use of those methods and techniques to which we are drawn. In this way, we can find the guidance and wisdom necessary to play our parts successfully in life, and give into the world the best we have to offer, one unfolding petal at a time.

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