4 / The Way of Surrender and Self-Expression

The way of Za-Zen may be regarded as the way of surrender of personal preferences: an emptying oneself of preconceptions (in the intellectual aspects), greed (in the emotional), and self-will, in order to discover that enlightenment bypasses or is not dependent on the satisfactions of those habits that we call our personality. As well as the movement of surrender or letting go *of* something, we can also see that there is place in meditation for an attitude of surrender to.

This might seem an attempt doomed to failure, if we consider that any surrender to our preferences is likely to leave us subject to those impulses in our personality that constitute the very prison or vicious circle that we want to transcend. If saying "No" to our little ego proves to be effective, could saying "Yes" to it be effective as well? In this, as in other things, paradoxes seem to be more compatible with empirical reality than with logical reasoning, and experience indicates that surrender to impulse may not be the blind alley that it seems to be.

An anecdote may be appropriate here to suggest how a respectful attitude toward the spontaneous urge of the moment may become a key to the meditation process. This is a story about

an ancient Hindu king who was very attached to his riches, and yet, having developed a feeling of the nothingness of hls vast wealth, was eager to meditate in order to apprehend the timeless reality. **A** yogi gave the king instructions:

> The king sat down to meditate in earnest, but whenever he tried to fix his mind upon the eternal, it went blank. Pretty soon, without his knowing it, his imagination began to hover around his beautiful bracelet, of which he was particularly fond. Before his admiring gaze, the real bracelet began to sparkle in all the colors of the rainbow. As soon as he found himself in that fantasy, he fought his way back to God. But the harder he tried to fix his mind upon God, the bigger was the disappointment he experienced. God invariably changed in his mind into the bracelet. With much humility, the king now went to the yogi for further instructions. The yogi knew how to turn the weakness itself into a source of strength. He said to the king, "Since your mind is so much attached to the bracelet, start right there. Meditate upon the bracelet. Contemplate its beauty and gorgeous colors. Then inquire into the source of that beauty and those colors. The bracelet is, in its objective essence, a configuration of energy vibrations. It is the perceptive mind which lends it its beauty and color. Therefore, try to understand the nature of the mind which created the world as you see it."[1]

The decision to meditate upon the bracelet, in this story, aligns with what we have called the way of descent, the contemplation of individual aspects of reality rather than of its unity—in symbol or direct experience. Although the king's greater attraction toward his precious object removes him from the One and draws him to one of the Hundred Thousand Things, is not each of these worldly objects also an echo of the One?

In contrast to the way of detachment, which would have us see the whole world as maya, we may instead develop an attitude of reverence toward all of existence, and trust in the

compass that life has placed in our hearts. If we thus follow our feelings, rather than constrain them, we are most likely to find that our preferences of today become obsolete in the face of tomorrow's; the music that we now enjoy, the books that nourish us, the women or men that we feel in resonance with, may become trite, exhausted of meaning, too obvious or shallow to our future perceptions, likings, and needs. Yet that shift of attitude, which would make our present feelings seem indiscriminate or lacking in orientation, would have taken place precisely through satiation, not through denial. Just as in life we grow by outgrowing, and we outgrow by living something out completely, our perceptions may be refined by giving in to our inner voices to the fullest degree.

Athough the attitudes called for by the concentrative and by the receptive ways appear as perfectly logical opposites, this need not be so in actual experience. It would be better to view them as divergent ways that converge upon the same goal. They may be experienced as divergent at the beginning of the journey but as aspects of the same attitude when the meditator is approaching higher states of consciousness. In these, empathy with an attractive object leads to a state of desirelessness—the very gratuitousness of beauty and detachment makes the world more alive and not dead. As Ch'an Master Hsu Yun has put it: "Oh, friends and disciples, if you do not attach yourselves to the Ten Thousand Things with your minds, you will find that the life-spark will emanate from *everything*."[2]

The borderline between the negative attitude of "just sitting" and that of surrendering to experience is a very delicate one indeed, and one that may be discerned most clearly in the case of visions, revelations, physical sensations that commonly take place in meditation. In the Japanese Zen tradition, these are all called makyo (meaning "diabolical phenomena"), and while not considered inherently bad, they are regarded as a potential obstacle to Za-Zen. According to the Za-Zen Yojinki, "The

disciple may develop the faculty of seeing through solid objects as though they were transparent, or he may experience his own body as a translucent substance. He may see Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Penetrating insights may suddenly come to him, or passages of sutras which were particularly difficult to understand may suddenly become luminously clear to him. Yet," the book goes on to say, "these abnormal visions and sensations are merely the symptoms of an impairment arising from a maladjustment of the mind with the breath."[3]

The indifference of Zen masters to these phenomena may be surprising to the disciple, and hard to understand for anyone not familiar with the Way of Emptiness. ***Makyo*** may be experienced as highly rewarding and desirable, and are valued in other religions. Yet this attitude of Zen .toward unusual contents of consciousness does not differ from its attitude with regard to contents of consciousness in general—the aim being awareness of awareness in itself: the direct grasping of mind by mind." This was made explicit by Yasutani Roshi, the Japanese Zen master who has lectured extensively in the United States. He has pointed out that makyo has a general as well as a specific sense:

> Broadly speaking, the entire life of the ordinary man is nothing but makyo. Even such Bodhisattvas as Monju and Kannon, highly developed though they are, still have about them traces of makyo; otherwise they would be supreme Buddhas, completely free of makyo. One who becomes attached to what he realizes through satori is also still lingering in the world of makyo. So, you see, there are makyo even after enlightenment. . . ."[4]

The attitude that is recommended in face of makyo is therefore no different from that which characterizes Zen in general: detached awareness. The issue deserves special mention only because the exceptional nature of the phenomena might seem to

* The word ***hsin,*** frequently translated as "mind," may be rendered also by "heart" or "consciousness."

call for an exception. For instance, cases are reported of persons who have written down things that turned out to be prophetically true, or who felt in communication with divine beings. The Zen view of these states, though, is that they constitute a mixture of reality and unreality, falling short of true enlightenment. They indicate progress in the practice of meditation, and yet they would not be part of a more concentrated state.

> Just as dreams do not appear to a person in deep sleep but only when he is half-asleep and half-awake, so makyo do not come to those in deep concentration or samadhi. Never be tempted into thinking that these phenomena are real or that the visions themselves have any meaning. To see a beautiful vision of a Bodhisattva does not mean that you are any nearer becoming one yourself, any more than a dream of being a millionaire means that you are any richer when you awake. Hence there is no reason to feel elated about such makyo. And similarly, whatever horrible monsters may appear to you, there is no cause whatever for alarm. Above all, do not allow yourself to be enticed by visions of the Buddha or of gods blessing you or communicating a divine message, or by makyo involving prophecies which turn out to be true. This is to squander your energies in the foolish pursuit of superstition.[5]

These very phenomena against which Zen warns its followers as deceptive surrogates of enlightenment are the substance of the trance states cultivated by the alternative approach to meditation. The domain of surrender or letting go is typically that of visionary experience, automatic movements, the release of dormant physical energies, inspired utterance, automatic writing, spirit possession.

Yet if we consider these superficially contrasting attitudes closely enough, we may see where they meet. On one hand, the way of detachment, in its ripeness, cannot help being permissive; a suppressive effort would entail attachment to a preference or perception and would fall short of non-action. (It is no coincidence that makyo appear in Za-Zen. This is because this system cultivates a state of undistracted receptivity, and though the

meditator is warned not to become attached to his visions, he is not told to suppress them but to persist in the stance of both not doing and allowing, which characterizes Shikan-taza.) On the other hand, a complete surrender cannot fail to involve detachment, for a greedy interest in the attainment of certain mental states would cease to be surrender altogether. We might say that there is a condition of openness to experience, expressed by both detachment and surrender.

In the actual experience of meditation, though, this meeting point of detachment and surrender may take a long time to attain. And so we see, in its less perfected stages, a sharp contrast between a dry asceticism of the mind* and a tumultuous Dionysian spirit; between the serene spirit of the monk and the seeming madness of the prophet; between the pursuit of emptiness and the phenomena of possession by gods or cosmic forces.

Possession by gods, spirits, or energies is, indeed, the most characteristic experience in the domain of spirituality that we are discussing at this point, just as an equanimity transcending all feeling and thought is most characteristic of the Apollonian way (see Figure 1, p. 16). Possession also differs from the absorptive way of meditation insofar as in possession there is no union of subject and objectt (which the word samadhi reflects—sum, meaning "together" or "with" in Sanskrit), but a state in which the subject entirely disappears and becomes a mere channel. As in the case of the individual in absorption he may say, "I am God," but it is not he but the entity speaking through him that says "I." Also, in spite of the abysmal difference between a possession state and the ordinary state of hypnotic trance, it seems legitimate to inquire as to whether both depend on a similar propensity within the person to be in a dissociated state-i.e., a state in which the habitual role, style, and center of consciousness are relinquished, and a different personality role, style, and state of consciousness

• As in countless instances among the Fathers of the Desert in Christianity and in the history of Hinayana Buddhism.
† See quotations **pp. *28-29*** and **pp. 30-31.**

are adopted, frequently without knowledge or memory of this having happened.

When contrasting the orgiastic-prophetic dimension of the revelatory state with the dimension of detachment and equanimity that we discussed before, we may say that the main difference between them is the importance ascribed to content. Everything the Zen monk would consider makyo—imagery, feelings, voices, etc.-here is likely to become the very goal of the meditation. The inner vision, idea, or inspired utterance of the shaman, sybil, or prophet, is frequently regarded not as a by-product of an individual quest but as a self-sufficient end of one's function in the community: a channel for revelation.

From this angle we may also contrast the revelatory and concentrative ways of meditation. While both forms are content-centered, they differ (especially in the degraded forms of each) in the relative accent placed on the social or individual role (product versus person, message versus state), and, more radically, in the contrast between the structural content of the former and the unstructured, inwardly determined content of the latter. While a Christian may attempt 'to apply the idea of death and resurrection to his own life and inwardly enact an "imitation of Christ," the Dionysian Bacchae would abandon themselves unconditionally to the workings of their deeper nature, there to find, without seeking it, the eternal rhythm of death and resurrection.

Perhaps the best illustration for much of what I have been saying is to be found in shamanism, which, as a whole, embodies the orgiastic-revelatory aspect of experience as much as Buddhism embodies the dimension of emptiness. Not only is shamanism in general a mysticism of possession, but the shaman's trance is usually content-oriented. A shaman* that may properly be called

*** The shaman performs the roles of priest, medicine-man, prophet, artist, and is not to be confused with the formal priest or medicine-man who exists in some cultures in addition to the shaman. What distinguishes the shaman is his ability to "transport himself to other worlds", *i.e.*, to experience altered states of consciousness.**

so is not a seeker of enlightenment or an individual who indulges in altered states of consciousness as part of a discipline for personal development. He is one who has attained communication with the supernatural (a spirit world, in most shamanistic conceptions) and may act as a mediator between spirits or gods and man, making the desires of each known to the other. In this, he may be called a primitive prophet. Apparently his ecstasy is not for himself but for others: his patients, his disciples, or the community at large. Yet we must not forget that in his becoming a mouthpiece of the gods he fulfills ***his*** calling—and some reports indicate that a shaman that has no occasion to shamanize tends to become ill.

In no instance better than in that of shamanism can we discern the archetypal—inwardly prompted—nature of the symbols that later religions have crystallized into standard forms.

Ideas such as the journey to the underworld, ascent to heaven, death and resurrection, are not mere ***ideas*** in shamanism but actual experiences that are renewed generation after generation. In countries as far apart as Australia, South America, and the Arctic Circle, these are echoed with the same freshness of spirit. Constancies such as these are generally interpreted as an indication of a shamanistic "tradition," spread by migrations. But do we not overstate, perhaps, the necessity of tradition in our experiential ignorance of the archetypal domain? It is quite possible that the essence of the tradition may lie in a tradition of no-tradition: the fostering of an openness (which perhaps is more easy in preindustrial cultures than in ours) whereby the individual can discover in himself all that his ancestors did not enforce upon his world view. Consider, for instance, the following account of his initiatory experience by a Siberian shaman who, far from seeking it, plunged into it with no apparent expectations:

> **A. A.** Popov gives the following account concerning a shaman of the Avam Samoved. Sick with smallpox, the future shaman remained unconscious for three days and so nearly dead that on the

third day he was almost buried. His initiation took place during the time. He remembered having been carried into the middle of a sea. There he heard his Sickness (that is, smallpox) speak, saying to him: "From the Lords of the Water you will receive the gift of shamanizing. Your name as a shaman will be Huottarie (Diver)." Then the Sickness troubled the water of the sea. The candidate came out and climbed a mountain. There he met a naked woman and began to suckle at her breast. The woman, who was probably the Lady of the Water, said to him: "You are my child; that is why I let you suckle at my breast. You will meet many hardships and be greatly wearied." The husband of the Lady of the Water, the Lord of the Underworld, then gave him two guides, an ermine and a mouse, to lead him to the underworld. When they came to a high place, the guides showed him seven tents with torn roofs. He entered the first and there found the inhabitants of the underworld and the men of the Great Sickness (syphilis). These men tore out his heart and threw it into a pot. In other tents he met the Lord of Madness and the Lords of all the nervous disorders, as well as the evil shamans. Thus he learned the various diseases that torment mankind.

Still preceded by his guides, the candidate then came to the Land of the Shamanesses, who strengthened his throat and his voice. He was then carried to the shores of the Nine Seas. In the middle of one of them was an island, and in the middle of the island a young birch tree rose to the sky. It was the Tree of the Lord of the Earth. Beside it grew nine herbs, the ancestors of all the plants on earth. The tree was surrounded by seas, and in each of these swam a species of bird with its young. There were several kinds of ducks, a swan, and a sparrow-hawk. The candidate visited all these seas; some of them were salt, others so hot he could not go near the shore. After visiting the seas, the candidate raised his head and, in the top of the tree, saw men of various nations: Tavgi Samoyed, Russians, Dolgan, Yakut, and Tungus. He heard voices: "It has been decided that you shall have a drum (that is, the body of a drum) from the branches of this tree." He began to fly with the birds of the seas. As he left the shore, the Lord of the Tree called to him: "My branch has just fallen; take it and

make a drum of it that will serve you all your life." The branch had three forks, and the Lord of the Tree bade him make three drums from it, to be kept by three women, each drum being for a special ceremony—the first for shamanizing woman in child-birth, the second for curing the sick, the third for finding men lost in the snow.

The Lord of the Tree also gave branches to all the men who were in the top of the tree. But, appearing from the tree up to the chest in human form, he added: "One branch only I give not to the shamans, for I keep it for the rest of mankind. They can make dwellings from it and so use it for their needs. I am the Tree that gives life to all men." Clasping the branch, the candidate was ready to resume his flight when again he heard a human voice, this time revealing to him the medicinal virtues of the seven plants and giving him certain instructions concerning the art of shamanizing. But, the voice added, he must marry three women (which, in fact, he later did by marrying three orphan girls whom he had cured of smallpox).

And after that he came to an endless sea and there he found trees and seven stones. The stones spoke to him one after the other. The first had teeth like bears' teeth and a basket-shaped cavity, and it revealed to him that it was the earth's holding stone; it pressed on the fields with its weight, so that they should not be carried away by the wind. The second served to melt iron. He remained with these stones for seven days and so learned how they could be of use to men.

Then his two guides, the ermine and the mouse, led him to a high, rounded mountain. He saw an opening before him and entered a bright cave, covered with mirrors, in the middle of which there was something like a fire. He saw two women, naked but covered with hair, like reindeer. Then he saw that there was no fire burning but that the light came from above, through an opening. One of the women told him that she was pregnant and would give birth to two reindeer; one would be the sacrificial animal of the Dolgan and Evenki, the other that of the Tavgi. She also gave him a hair, which was to be useful to him when he shamanized for reindeer. The other woman also gave birth to

two reindeer, symbols of the animals that would aid man in all his works and also supply his food. The cave had two openings, toward the north and toward the south; through each of them the young women sent a reindeer to serve the forest people (Dolgan and Evenki). The second woman, too, gave him a hair. When he shamanizes, he mentally turns toward the cave.

Then the candidate came to a desert and saw a distant mountain. After three days' travel he reached it, entered an opening, and came upon a naked man working a bellows. On the fire was a cauldron "as big as half the earth." The naked man saw him and caught him with a huge pair of tongs. The novice had time to think, "I am dead!" The man cut off his head, chopped his body into bits, and put everything in the cauldron. There he boiled his body for three years. There were also three anvils, and the naked man forged the candidate's head .on the third, which was the one on which the best shamans were forged. Then he threw the head into one of three pots that stood there, the one in which the water was the coldest. He now revealed to the candidate that, when he was called to cure someone, if the water in the ritual pot was very hot, it would be useless to shamanize, for the man was already lost; if the water was warm, he was sick but would recover; cold water denoted a healthy man.

The blacksmith then fished the candidate's bones out of a river, in which they were floating, put them together, and covered them with flesh again. He counted them and told him that he had three too many; he was therefore to procure three shaman's costumes. He forged his head and taught him how to read the letters that are inside it. He changed his eyes; and that is why, when he shamanizes, he does not see with his bodily eyes but with these mystical eyes. He pierced his ears, making him able to understand the language of plants. Then the candidate found himself on the summit of a mountain, and finally he woke in the yurt, among the family. Now he can sing and shamanize indefinitely, without ever growing tired?

The resemblance between shamanistic experience and the mystic experiences encountered in the "higher religions" goes beyond

mere content, striking as this aspect may be (cf., death-resurrection theme in Osiris, Attis, Adonis, in the Tibetan Tchod ritual, and the journeys to the other world of Aeneas, Enoch, Mohammed, St. Paul, and others). Also, the psychological character of the shamanistic experience is fairly constant and is the prototype of that which we recognize in prophets and other inspired men of more recent cultures. The aspect of the shamanistic experience is one that the individual expresses either as a separation of the soul from the body (so that it may visit other places and levels of existence), or as a penetration of his soul-free body by other spirits (animal, demonic, or angelic); possibly, by both at the same time. The Greeks gave names to these two concepts: the flight from the body they called ἔκστασις (ecstasy), and the penetration by the spirits, ἔνθεος (enthusiasm—literally, "in God," or "God within"). The quality that inspires such interpretations seems to link together experiences that are remote in time, place, or cultural setting. The resemblances may be even more apparent from the frequent physical or visible concomitants of this type of experience: the seer's frenzy, his seeming madness taking the form of agitation, his convulsive movements, glossalalia,* lack of regard for his social image or physical safety, followed by a period of calm and, later, of forgetfulness for the whole event. Compare, for instance, the following descriptions:

> Even as she spoke, neither her features nor her complexion remained the same, nor was her hair confined within her braid; her bosom heaved, and her wild heart was stolen with frenzy; her stature was longer to the sight, her voice no longer human: so soon she was inspired by the breath of the god as it came ever nearer . . . at length no longer submitting herself to Phoebus, the prophetess rages furiously in her cavern, if so be, she may succeed in flinging off the mighty god from her bosom. All the more he plies her frenzied mouth, subduing her wild heart and fashions her to his will by constraint.—Aeneid, Book vi.

* From the Greek, "speaking in tongues."

> [When David fled to Samuel for protection] Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. [Saul sent messengers three times,] then went he also to Ramah . . . and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah. And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night.
>
> —I Samuel 19

> And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing, mighty wind, and it filled all the houses where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. . . . And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.
>
> —Acts of the Apostles 2

In spite of the constancy of the characteristic of the possession trance, however, it seems necessary to draw a distinction between states of greater or lesser quality, in terms of the level of experience to which they relate, or the excellence of their content. This distinction is acknowledged in all cultures and attributed to the nature of the entities by whom the individual is possessed. Islamic thought, for instance, draws a distinction between inspiration by jinn or by angels, and Mahomet himself is said to have distrusted his own states at the beginning, regarding them as the workings of jinn rather than divine revelation. Even among jinn, distinctions in quality are drawn. Whereas some are regarded as the inspirers of poets or of soothsayers (*'arraf,* who sometimes gives his oracles in verse), others inspire the less pro-

found utterances of the diviner ***(kahin,*** who will give inspiration on practical issues such as the finding of lost objects).*

Though frequently the individual will maintain connections with a specific entity (jinni, spirit helper, "familiar spirit," etc., according to the tradition), or with entities at a given level of mystical realization, there are exceptions in the instances of shamans who declare themselves to be in contact with ***many*** spirit helpers and who will attend to matters as different in scope as divination related to hunting and the leading of the souls of the dead. Even in the case of such a High Prophet as Elisha, we find an instance in which he was asked for an oracle on where to find a water supply:

> . . . And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him.
>
> And he said, Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches.
>
> For thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.
>
> —II Kings 3

Not only can we discern differences in "level" among instances of revelation, ranging from the stage clairvoyant to the prophet, but differences in quality at a given level—stylistic differences that might be likened to the different colors of the spectrum.

Plutarch draws this distinction for us when he classifies inspiration or "enthusiasm" into the diviner, prompted by Apollo; the Bacchic frenzy, prompted by Dionysus, Cybele, and Pan; the warlike frenzy of Ares; the poet's frenzy, inspired by the Muses; and the most fiery of all, the frenzy of love.[7]

* To the more orthodox Muslims, only the Prophet is regarded as divinely possessed—his words being inspired by the Archangel Gabriel. In this we see the tendency of all orthodoxies to substitute the realization of the individual for that of the savior, rather than seeing their highest exemplar as the embodiment of a universal ideal and possibility. Thus, other instances of God-incarnation in the Moslem world (like the Sufi Hallaj) were considered heretical.

Today we may want to call the Greek gods "archetypes," regarding them, as Jung puts it, as "organs of the psyche"[8] comparable to those in our body. Notwithstanding this shift in point of view (which turns the gods from personalities to forces within us), Plutarch's classification holds for what we know of possession in all cultures, regardless of the names or interpretations given to these states.

One last important distinction is that drawn by many cultures with regard to the good or the evil nature of possessing entities.

At least in the Judeo-Christian and Moslem worlds, the tendency to interpret all possession as caused by devils or the Devil seems to have run parallel to the establishment of a formalized orthodoxy. Whereas jinn appear to have been regarded as amoral in early times, they later came to be seen more and more as shaitans (satans), and while there is no record of possession by demons in early Jewish history, that is the only type of possession reported by the authors of the Gospels.

We may assume that both the positive regard for possession and the frequency of the phenomenon increased again in the Christian world as a consequence of the experience of the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. From the writings of St. Paul we may infer that the effects of the Holy Spirit were well known during his time. (Consider, for instance, the admonition in the Epistle to the Ephesians: "Be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit.") Ecstatic prophecy, nevertheless, was viewed with suspicion by the early Church, and when it was revived by Montanus in the second century, he and his followers were exterminated as heretics. The sayings of Montanus ring of the prophetic spirit of all times and places:

Man is like a lyre, and I [the Holy Spirit] play him like a plectrum. Man sleeps; I [the Holy Spirit] am awake.

The attitudes and interpretations the Church adopted with regard to the revival of possession in medieval witchcraft are too

well known to call for more than a brief mention. Only with the Reformation did this phenomenon find a modest place in Christianity: in the early meetings of the Quakers in seventeenth-century England and, in present practice, as the religious core of minor sects such as the Pentecostals.

This historical digression is most relevant to the question of technique in the path of surrender for, if the "devil" is the misinterpretation of the "god" (because of our rigid assumptions and imperfect surrender), doesn't this make possession by the devil the unavoidable first step for one who shares this bias? In other words, in surrendering to his own nature, the individual may at first experience the emergence of unconscious intrusions of "devilish" nature, and only later come to "shake hands" with what, after all, was nothing other than his own energies, his constructive potential.

I am not thinking specifically of "devil-worship," though some historical forms of it may be related to this process, but of a more general principle: the conversion of "negative" into "positive" forces, or the recognition of a constructive power in what at first seems destructive. A typical instance of this is to be found in the shamanistic approach to helping spirits, which are often perceived at first as threatening, but which must be "tamed" in the overcoming of the shaman's nervous crisis.

Among the Angmagssalik Eskimos, what often takes the form of a shaman's spontaneous crisis is probably no different in nature (though perhaps in degree) from the crisis that the shaman is able to bring about in his function as a healer. Just as he has been able to come to terms with seemingly destructive forces (by giving in or riding with them), he is able to guide others on a similar journey. This entails a redirecting of the drives that are manifested in the form of mental or psychosomatic disease, and is essentially a process of giving such drives a channel of ***expression:*** dancing, imagery, drawing, dramatization, the emotionally expressive medium of gibberish (glossalalia). In being expressed, the

"spirit" will have fulfilled its calling: once accepted, it will not need anymore to knock at the door of the individual's consciousness in the form of an ailment.

If we consider this situation in which religion, medicine, and art meet, we might well say that only in allowing himself to be *possessed* ***by*** *the spirit* (in dance, song, etc.) can the person *express himself,* and, consequently, create and become cured. Only in being taken over by a genie, can he become a genius.*

A particularly interesting instance of the transmutation of disease into constructive expression is afforded by the Zar cult of Iran, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Arabia, observable to this day. This is a form of healing practice in which the patient (afflicted by what we would regard as emotional or psychosomatic disturbances) is *regarded as possessed* from the outset, and in his being persuaded that in this possession lies the root of his sickness, he is also prompted to open up to the expression of the possessing entity. In the Zar healing ceremony the patient falls into a trance during which the intruding spirit in him can speak and make its demands clear. If satisfied, it agrees to leave the patient in peace.

The interpretation of disease as possession is far from being a rarity. Not only is it a common belief in the Middle East of today, but it was prevalent in Egvptian and Babylonian antiquity. We may regard the process that takes place in the Zar cult (or similar practices) as one of *surrogate* expression: under the special circumstances of the ceremony and, particularly, under the pretext of an alien spirit in his body, the patient may express *himself,* say what *he* wants, satisfy his postponed needs. But does not the *idea* of possession amount here to a powerful therapeutic technique, without which the cathartic process would have needed perhaps years on the psychoanalytic couch?

'The word "genius," which we now use to denote a certain type of excellence, derives from the notion of a possessing genie or jinn. To "have" genius once meant to have a helping spirit, a daimon.

The same interpretation is reported in other cultures (Greenland, Australia) as one of being swallowed by a monster and emerging out of it as a new man (cf. Jonah), or being taken to the underworld, torn apart and put together again, killed and resurrected:

> The first thing the disciple has to do is to go to a certain lonely spot, an abyss or a cave, and there, having taken a small stone, rub it on the top of a large one, the way of the sun. When they have done this for three days on end, they say, a spirit comes out from the rock. It turns its face toward the rising sun and asks what the disciple will. The disciple then dies in the most horrible torments, partly from fear, partly from overstrain; but he comes to life again, later in the day.[9]

There are special instances of the use of such personification in contemporary psychotherapy—notably Gestalt therapy and psychodrama—and in these we can see a type of psychological healing not different in essence from that of the shamanistic conversion of an "enemy" into a "helper." By confronting and even taking sides with the hitherto avoided aspects of his personality, the patient learns that these may be expressed in ways not detrimental to his life but, on the contrary, enriching. When this becomes possible, the devious mechanism at the root of his symptoms is no longer necessary.

The sudden flooding of the mind by unconscious (or, better, ego-alien) contents, which is characteristic of the kinds of spiritual practice under discussion, is not only most dramatic but also entails real dangers. The relationship between possession accompanied by visionary phenomena and psychosis can be seen at all levels. Not only do the prophet and the "God-intoxicated" frequently act like madmen, but a specific pathology seems to derive from the failure of the individual to deal with the avalanche of energies awakened by a practice of this type. Moreover, we may be justified in considering many cases of schizophrenia as

an outcome of the spontaneous plunging of an immature person into the realm of that kind of experience, which, when properly assimilated, distinguishes the genius from the average man.

The shamanistic process, the cults of Egyptian and Greek Mysteries, the Sufi science of opening the lataif, the practice indirectly alluded to by Western and Taoistic texts on alchemy, all appear to deal with the domain of experience that has the potential of bringing the individual into harmonious contact with his unsuspected dormant powers or, alternately, of turning him into a puppet of forces that he cannot control. One of the reasons for the esoteric nature of many of the techniques employed in these various traditions lies in the dangers of misuse that are inherent in them. A dervish tale illustrates this point. It tells—such is the version of it in the Arabian Nights—of a fisherman who brought up a bottle from the ocean in his net. When he opened it a jinn came out and threatened to destroy him, but he managed to trick the jinn back into the bottle and throw it into the ocean. . . .

> Many years passed, until one day another fisherman, grandson of the first, cast his net in the same place, and brought up the self-same bottle.
>
> He placed the bottle upon the sand and was about to open it when a thought struck him. It was the piece of advice which had been passed down to him by his father, from his father.
>
> It was: "Man can use only what he has learned to use."
>
> And so it was that when the jinn, aroused from his slumbers by the movement of his metal prison, called through the brass: "Son of Adam, whoever you may be, open the stopper of this bottle and release me: for I am the Chief of the Jinns, who know the secrets of miraculous happenings," the young fisherman, remembering his ancestral adage; placed the bottle carefully in a cave and scaled the heights of a near-by cliff, seeking the cell of a wise man who lived there.
>
> He told the story to the wise man, who said: "Your adage is perfectly true: and you have to do this thing yourself, though you must know how to do it."

"But what do I have to do?" asked the youth.

"There is something, surely, that you feel you want to do?" said the other.

"What I want to do is to release the jinn, so that he can give me miraculous knowledge: or perhaps mountains of gold, and seas made from emeralds, and all the other things which jinns can bestow."

"It has not, of course, occurred to you," said the sage, "that the jinn might not give you these things when released; or that he may give them to you and then take them away because you have no means to guard them; quite apart from what might befall you if and when you did have such things, since 'Man can use only what he has learned to use.' "

"Then what should I do?"

"Seek from the jinn a sample of what he can offer. Seek a means of safeguarding that sample and testing it. Seek knowledge, not possessions, for possessions without knowledge are useless, and that is the cause of all our distractions."

Now, because he was alert and reflective, the young man worked out his plan on the way back to the cave where he had left the jinn.

He tapped on the bottle, and the jinn's voice answered, tinny through the metal, but still terrible: "In the name of Solomon the Mighty, upon whom be peace, release me, son of Adam!"

"I don't believe that you are who you say and that you have the powers which you claim," answered the youth.

"Don't believe me! Do you not know that I am incapable of telling a lie?" the jinn roared back.

"No, I do not," said the fisherman.

"Then how can I convince you?"

"By giving me a demonstration. Can you exercise any powers through the wall of the bottle?"

"Yes," admitted the jinn, "but I cannot release myself through these powers."

"Very well, then: give me the ability to know the truth of the problem which is on my mind."

Instantly, as the jinn exercised his strange craft, the fisherman

became aware of the source of the adage handed down by his grandfather. He saw, too, the whole scene of the release of the jinn from the bottle; and he also saw how he could convey to others how to gain such capacities from the jinn. But he also realized that there was no more that he could do. And so the fisherman picked up the bottle and, like his grandfather, cast it into the ocean.

And he spent the rest of his life not as a fisherman but as a man who tried to explain to others the perils of "Man trying to use what he has not learned to use."

But, since few people ever came across jinns in bottles, and there was no wise man to prompt them in any case, the successors of the fisherman garbled what they called his "teachings," and mimed his descriptions. In due course they became a religion, with brazen bottles from which they sometimes drank housed in costly and well-adorned temples. And, because they respected the behaviour of this fisherman, they strove to emulate his actions and his deportment in every way.

The bottle, now many centuries later, remains the holy symbol and mystery for these people. They try to love each other only because they love this fisherman; and in the place where he settled and built a humble shack they deck themselves with finery and move in elaborate rituals.

Unknown to them, the disciples of the wise man still live; the descendants of the fisherman are unknown. The brass bottle lies at the bottom of the sea with the jinn slumbering within.[10]

The danger of psychosis that besets the legendary sorcerer's apprentice is today a matter of great interest, because we are beginning to see that not only is psychosis the outcome of a failure of the ego (to deal with the unconscious) but also a state of potentialities greater than those of the normal states. Julian Silverman has remarked on how a shaman undergoes, as part of his initiation process, something that we would diagnose as a psychotic state.[11] He is not hospitalized for it and "treated," but, quite to the contrary, his state is respected and allowed to follow

its natural course. The consequent question is then: are not some of the syndromes that we treat as schizophrenic, tumultuous, and even cataclysmic, stages of development that we are, for lack of trust, interrupting instead of allowing them to take a positive course?

A new approach to psychosis, now gaining adherents, is more respectful than the traditional, and we may therefore hope that definitive answers to the question are not too far away.* At any rate, from the facts known to us now, it may be said that practices in surrender of control (such as mediumship) ***may*** lead to psychotic states and that temporary states akin to psychosis are part of the inner journey of ***some*** shamans, mystics, and artists.

Aside from the esoteric character of some practices, there are a number of factors that make it difficult to write on techniques pertaining to the revelatory dimension of meditation. One such factor relates to the nature of the defining attitude. Because of its openness to the promptings from one's deeper nature, and its attunement to one's inner voices, the way may be expected to be a highly ***individual*** one. Indeed, if we seek analogies for the shamanistic way in the modern world, the closest might be found in the life of some artists, whose endeavor has been to follow their "calling" or vocation. Their attunement to themselves (or, if we prefer, to what wanted expression through them) cannot in general be divorced from their process of expression, so that their art is at the same time a result and a discipline. When the Greeks spoke of the poet as one possessed by the Muses, they were not merely indulging in a metaphor. For many, the visionary or clairaudient experience was as true as that which Socrates reported in speaking of his daimon, and this has continued to be true among a number of artists in our own tradition.

Dante writes: "I am one who when Love inspires me, takes

*** An international conference on the value of psychotic experiences was held at Esalen Institute in 1968, and a forthcoming book edited by J. Silverman will present a summary of the more important contributions.**

note; and I go on setting it forth after the fashion which Love dictates within me." In Whitman we read:

> Oh, I am sure they come from Thee, the urge, the order, the unconquerable will, the potent, felt, interior command, stronger than words. A message from the heavens, whispering to me ever in my sleep.

They are both speaking of the true experience of ***inspiration,*** which most people today have come to regard as little more than a figure of speech. Such experiences do not differ in essence from that which Alfred de Musset describes in the following terms: "**. . .** it is not work. It is merely listening. It is as if some unknown person were speaking in your ear."

Another factor that makes description of techniques of meditation difficult is that the effectivness of any technique seems to depend on an extra-technical factor of "personal contagion."

The infectious nature of possession by devils throughout history is well established, and it is impressive to read documents such as those of the epidemic of Loudun, showing how even apparently sane priests sent to perform exorcisms became affected by the prevalent **state.**[12]

What is true with regard to unwanted devil possession is apparently as true with regard to states that are welcomed and cultivated. Among many peoples, trance is a collective phenomenon in which the state of the more experienced is believed to facilitate that of the novices. The Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert, for instance, understand the possessing entity not as a spirit but as an energy* (also called a "medicine") originally given to man by God and now maintained by direct ***transmission*** from man to man. According to Dr. R. Lee, who has studied the trance dances, the practicing curers spend much of their time implanting "medicine" into the bodies of their **trainees.**[13]

*Interestingly, not unlike the Taoist elizir or the Power of Kundalini Yoga, this is a "medicine" that lies in the pit of the stomach and, when heated up, rises in the form of vapors through the spinal column.

That the direct transmission of a spiritual energy, or the possibility for a divinely inspired individual to bring another into contact with his seemingly supernatural source of inspiration, is well recognized in the different mystical traditions can be seen in stereotyped expressions that have lost their original significance, such as the notion of "blessing," or the Christian formula of insufflation during baptism, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit." In other instances, however, it is a matter of a non-verbal process by which a spiritual master may actually initiate a disciple to a new domain of experience. The following passage of the Sufi Master Ibn' Arabi — known as a "disciple of Khidr"-tells of his own initiation to the state of communion with the cosmic entity that the Sufis equate with the Holy Spirit, with the Angel Gabriel, and with the historical Elijah:

> This consociation with Khidr was experienced by one of our ***shaikhs,*** the ***shaikh*** 'Ali ibn 'Abdillah ibn Jami, who was one of the disciples of 'Ali al-Mutawakkil and of Abu Abdillah Qadib Alban. He lived in a garden he owned in the outskirts of Mosul. There Khidr had invested him with the mantle in the presence of Qadib Alban. And it was in that very spot, in the garden where Khidr had invested him with it that the ***shaikh*** invested me with it in turn, observing the same ceremonial as Khidr himself had observed in conferring the investiture upon him. I had already received this investiture, but more indirectly, at the hands of my friend Taqiuddin ibn Abdirrahman, who himself had received it at the hands of Sadruddin, ***shaikh*** of ***shaikhs*** in Egypt, whose grandfather had received it from Khidr. It was then that I began to speak of the investiture with the mantle and to confer it upon cerain persons, because I discovered how much importance Khidr attached to this rite. Previously I had not spoken of the mantle which is now well known. This mantle is for us indeed a symbol of confraternity, a sign that we share in the same spiritual culture, in the practice of the same ***ethos.*** It has become customary among the masters of mysticism that when they discern some deficiency in one of their disciples, the ***shaikh*** identifies himself mentally with the state of perfection he wishes to communicate. When he has effected this

identification, he takes off the mantle he is wearing at the moment of achieving this spiritual state, and puts it on the disciple whose spiritual state he wishes to make perfect. In this way the *shaikh* communicates to the disciple the spiritual state he has produced in himself, and the same perfection is achieved in the disciple's state. Such is the rite of investiture, well known among us; it was communicated to us by the most experienced, among our *shaikhs*.[14]

For each type of concentrative meditation, one is likely to find a corresponding type of expressive meditation. Meditation on externally given visual images has its correspondence, among the expressive techniques, in the contemplation of spontaneously arising imagery; meditation on a verbal formula crystallizing a definite state of mind (such as the koan) has in it the formulation of the hitherto unformulated state of the meditator. To traditionally stereotyped dance forms will correspond a form of dancing in which the individual aims at becoming transparent to the music and letting the dance, so to speak, do itself.*

Even in the domain of breathing we can contrast the two approaches. On the one hand, we find formalized exercises like pranayama,† which involve control of the breath and the surrender of spontaneous preference in favor of a pre-established rhythm; on the other hand, we have a practice that involves the relinquishing of control and a surrender of preference in favor of a spontaneity in the breathing process that originates in a level deeper than that of conscious choice. Even in this simple psychophysiological sphere we thus find a correspondence between the two approaches, a confluence that religions have described as the doing of God's will: the way of the Law, given from without, and that of Revelation, from within; the unfolding of the Divine seed planted in man's innermost nature.

***There are, however, exceptions: some trance dances (like the Balinese) are stereotyped. In the highly structured movenients of Tai Chi Chuan, on the other hand, the aim is spontaneity and the flow of *chi* is an energy conceived in terms similar to those reported by the Bushmen.**
†The fourth limb of Astanga Yoga or Raja Yoga.

The breathing exercise may seem, from such a written description, easy to carry out and perhaps trivial. We may tend to believe that "breathing naturally" is the most simple thing to do and that we are already doing it. In fact we ***are,*** but ***only when we are not aware*** of breathing. While we go about our ordinary activities, our breathing center—the animal within us—directs our respiratory movements with great wisdom according to the needs of our organism. As soon as "we" notice our breathing, however, "we" cannot hold back from interfering. Our conscious ego is a great manipulator that only through special training can learn to be ***merely*** aware. The exercise in spontaneous conscious breathing, therefore, is that of becoming a permissive observer, a non-intruding witness of nature—and in that, it is a practice in surrender and in action-in-inaction. This exercise, which is of great importance in the Buddhistic tradition, may be regarded as the simplest conceivable practice in naturalness and the first step toward disciplines in naturalness of movement (such as Zen archery or painting) and in mind-at-large.[15]

The attitude we have described above, which can be characterized as one of letting a process happen and "being breathed by one's breath," becomes, in the domain of visual representation, one of letting imagery unfold without conscious interference. Just as in the case of breathing, we would be wrong in assuming that this is something that we already do in our ordinary daydreaming. Only in ***unconscious*** daydreaming or in nocturnal dreaming—when "we" are not present—do we let go of control in our imaginary activity, and even then to a moderate degree.

True freedom of the mind is an attitude that many poets and painters have intentionally cultivated. It has led them to feel that their work was creating itself through them. In the domain of pure imagery, however, the situation is simplified by the absence of any technical issue such as that implied by the holding of pencil and brush.

The practice of unstructured contemplation of imagery is so widespread that it encompasses such different examples as the

"hunting for visions" of American Indians and the astral scrying of magicians. Under the name of "active imagination," it holds a prominent place in Jungian psychology,[16] and under that of "guided daydream," it is a different version of the practice recently discovered independently by Desoille.[17] Various psychotherapeutic schools today (such as Gestalt therapy and psychosynthesis) make use of the inner-directed display of visual fantasy as occasion suggests and in the context of their characteristic styles. Without forgetting that progress in the ability to let go of voluntary manipulation—in fantasy as well as in breathing—is more a matter of practice and self-observation than of sophisticated techniques, it is useful to keep in mind certain conditions, such as the necessity of sustained, concentrated attention to the unfolding of imagery. Muscular relaxation may also facilitate the practice, and, as with any form of training extending over time, regularity is important to success. With persistent practice, even persons who are not good visualizers are likely to notice a gradual shift in the quality of their imagination. While not unlike habitual daydreams at first, their productions will tend to resemble more and more those of the natural dream in their spontaneity and apparently irrational quality. Finally, as this level is also left behind, fantasies of a mythical quality, reflecting the archetypal level of the mind, become more prominent.

Techniques of letting go of control in the domain of fantasy are by no means the only ones that have found their way into psychotherapy. Indeed, most of psychotherapy today consists of variations upon the underlying motif of liberation of man's organismic tendencies from the prison of his conditioning.

The basic technique of psychoanalysis—"free association"—is the perfect reflection, at the conceptual level, of the practice of non-interfering observation that we encountered in the breathing exercise described earlier. The specific contribution of psychoanalysis to the attainment of this freedom is in the participation of the second person who witnesses the process: the activity known as "analysis of resistances." For, just as it may take de-

voted attention to discover that our "natural" breathing is not natural and our "spontaneous" fantasies are controlled, it may be necessary for us to develop a deeper insight in order to understand that our "free association" is unfree. According to Sandor Ferenczi, who may be called one of the fathers of the psychoanalytic technique, when a person attains the ability to free-associate, his analysis may be deemed completed. From this point of view, the technique of psychoanalysis is, like techniques of meditation in general, both a path and a goal.

A similar strategy of de-structuring individual behavior in order to facilitate the emergence of inner structure or style represents the foundation of several schools of group psychotherapy, from group psychoanalysis to encounter. The basic rule in all of these is self-expression, and the goal that of letting self-identity emerge from the superimposed socially patterned behavior that we have come to regard as "self."

One more instance of the way of expression and liberation in the province of psychotherapy is to be found in certain ways of employing psychoactive drugs. As with other techniques, the use of drugs to induce trance states appears to be of great antiquity and is generally found in association with shamanistic practice. The association of Dionysian rites with wine is well known, and it appears from various descriptions that the trance of the sybil at the Delphic Oracle was aided by her inhalation of the vapors of the chasm and of the fumes of laurel. There are indications, too, that some drug was employed at the Mysteries of Eleusis. "I have tasted, I have drunk the cyceon," says an oft-quoted statement by the Mystai (initiates).

Just as drugs have been traditionally employed as catalysts to achieve self-expressive and prophetic attitudes, so their most promising place in contemporary psychotherapy seems to be in connection with the techniques aiming at unfolding suppressed spontaneity. For instance:

1. The use of intravenous amphetamines or MDA in order to elicit recall of repressed traumatic memories and feelings.

2. The use of harmaline or ibogaine as facilitators of the guided fantasy or similar practices and, in general, as bridges to the archetypal domain.[18]

3. The use of LSD and related drugs to induce a state of temporary unlearning of perceptual or social stereotypes, in which the individual may become receptive to his unconditioned or true needs and reactions.[19]

It is no wonder that several forms of practice in letting go to our deeper propensities are now to be found in the field of psychotherapy, for psychotherapy as a whole (as most frequently conceived today) aims at liberating the individual from what hinders from within his expression or realization.[20]

As to the relationship between art and therapy as ways of expression and liberation, it may be said that art centers in the issue of expression, and therapy in that of removing the blocks to expression, but any sharp boundary between the two processes can only be artificial. The shaman was at the same time an artist and a healer, and today we seem to be entering a stage of decompartmentalization of disciplines through which we can understand their original unity. More specifically, art-education disciplines are becoming therapies, and therapy is seen as both an art (rather than a medical technique independent of the inner states of the "patient") and a means of liberating the artist in the patient.

Another technique that deserves special attention is the one that has attracted many adherents all over the Western world today as a consequence of the influence of the Indonesian Bapak Subuh. The main practice carried out in different branches of Subud is called *latihan* and consists, precisely, in a surrender of control. The words that are generally used at the beginning of a session define the practice as a specific form of isvara-pranidhana*: "Let us surrender to the will of God." The specificity of the context lies in the fact that it is carried out in groups of either men or

* See p. 63.

women, and that a restriction is placed on the possible impulse to touch or address other persons in the group.

The phenomena typical of the latihan are mostly those already described: ecstatic experiences, visionary experiences in the form of hallucinations or eidetic imagery, possession or manifestations related to possession, such as automatic movements, glossolalia, inspired singing, spontaneously unfolding rituals. Otherwise the latihan may take the form of a serene receptive state akin to that in Za-Zen, or a tranquil attunement to what the individual perceives as God's will. Alternatively, it may be an experience of purification through the awareness of lack of attunement, either in that very moment or, more generally, in the individual's ordinary life.

According to Idries Shah, the latihan is a Sufi exercise not to be recommended as a single practice divorced from its original context or expert supervision.[21] Perhaps this is a statement valid for all the exercises mentioned, because they can represent a way both out of or into mental disease. They are ways of liberation through chaos, ways to consciousness via the unconscious, and, as Jung has pointed out about deep psychotherapy, there is the danger of remaining paralyzed in the depths and not returning.

The latihan is no exception to the expressive way in general, in that it may be an avenue to psychotic experience. Even psychoanalysis can be such an avenue, and it is not uncommon for psychotic experiences, elicited by the analytic process, to be the prelude to the definitive cure. However, the latihan (like the ingestion of drugs) may not only be a particularly ample gateway to the other side of the mind, but call for the complement of highly skilled guidance.

What I am saying of techniques of surrendering control in general is particularly true, I believe, of a technique that has received little attention in professional circles but whose potential danger might well be turned into usefulness. This is automatic writing.

Automatic writing is a phenomenon not known to most persons, and yet it is susceptible of being experienced by many (and perhaps most). It is done by holding a pencil over a sheet of paper without attempting to write, but only waiting for an involuntary movement to develop. If the experiment is engaged in with some persistence, it is very likely that the subject will find that his hand moves by itself, "as if guided by an invisible power." This may lead, at first, to illegible scribbling, but in the course of time it will take the shape of writing that can be understood. The experience is most likely to be successful when a question is posed by the subject, either aloud or mentally, and when this question is one whose answer deeply concerns him. Then the writing will have relevance to the question, and it is likely to impress the subject as an answer not formulated by himself. Moreover, as in the phenomenon of possession or in some deliberately induced hypnotic states, the person who writes sometimes does not know the content of his writing at all until a statement is completed.*

After persistent practice in automatic writing, however, texts dealing with personal matters often tend to be replaced by more impersonal or transpersonal ones, generally associated with the emergence of definite answering personalities (regardless of whether these are interpreted or not as "spirits" by the subject). When this occurs, it can be said that automatic writing has led to a more complete expression of the possession syndrome, with the dangers or the blessings, whichever may be the case.

I want to describe in some detail two instances of an inner saga triggered by automatic writing. Both cases are what may be called ***monumenta psychologica*** and show the organic interrelationships among a number of features of the expressive way and its states.

*** The interested reader may find useful technical information on the procedure in a book by Dr. A. Mühl,[22] who employed it in a psychotherapeutic context. As Dr. William Alanson White puts it in his introduction to the work, she had employed automatic writing "for discovering what was going on in the mind of her patients which was inaccessible to ordinary questioning!"**

The first case is that of Ludwig Staudenmeier, a professor of experimental chemistry, who in 1910 published a long essay entitled "Die Magie als experimentelle Naturwissenschaft" (Magic as an Experimental Science).[23] He was a methodical person with a critical mind, who started experimenting with automatic writing out of scientific curiosity. Once that Pandora box of his mind was opened, his life became a struggle to master the forces he had unleashed in his own psyche.

Staudenmeier was persuaded by a friend to try automatic writing. After several failures, his friend encouraged him to go on, until finally his pencil described "the strangest loops and curlicues." Later, and in spite of his skepticism, letters began to form and answers to the questions he was formulating. Though different spirits claimed to be involved in the writing, Staudenmeier doubted this, for he realized that his own thoughts were involved in the answers. "Nevertheless," he wrote, "I absolutely had the impression of having to do with a being utterly alien to me. At first I could tell in advance what was going to be written, and from this there developed in time an anticipated 'inner' hearing of the message; . . . as the spiritualists say, I had become an 'auditory medium.' "[24]

Some of the voices that Staudenmeier described are similar to those reported by most mediums as well as schizophrenics with auditory delusions:

> If the end the inner voice . . . made itself heard too often and without sufficient reason, and also against my will; a number of times it was bad, subtly mocking, vexatious, and irritable. For whole days at a time this insufferable struggle continued entirely against my will.
>
> Often the statements of these so-called beings proved to be fabrications. Opposite the house where I live a strange tenant was just moving in. By way of test I asked my spirits his name. Without hesitation I received the reply: Hauptmann von Miiller. It later proved that the information was completely false. When in such a case I afterward reproached them gently, I often elicited this

sincere reply: "It is because we cannot do otherwise, we are obliged to lie, we are evil spirits, you must not take it amiss!" If I then became rude they followed suit.

"Go to blazes, you fool! You are always worrying us! You ought not to have summoned us! Now we are always obliged to stay near you!" When I used stronger language it was exactly as if I had hurled insults at a wall or a forest: the more one utters the more the echo sends back. For a time the slightest unguarded thought that passed through my mind produced an outburst from the inner voices.[25]

In the course of time, some of the voices became highly individualized and endowed with some characteristics more related to possession than to hallucination. The three most persistent of these he called "my highness," "the child," and "Roundhead." Here are some of Staudenmeier's descriptions of the first two:

Later there were manifested in a similar manner personifications of princely or ruling individuals, such as the German Emperor, and furthermore of deceased persons such as Napoleon the First. At the same time a characteristic feeling of loftiness took possession of me; I became the lord and master of a great people, my chest swelled and broadened almost without any action on my part, my attitude became extremely energetic and military, a proof that the said personification was then exercising an important influence. For example, I heard the inner voice say to me majestically: "I am the German Emperor." After some time I grew tired, other conceptions made themselves strongly felt and my attitude once more relaxed. Thanks to the number of personalities of high rank who made their appearance to me, the idea of grandeur and nobility gradually developed. My highness is possessed by a great desire to be a distinguished personality, even a princely or governing personality, or at least—this is how I explain after the event—to see and imitate these personalities. My highness takes great interest in military spectacles, fashionable life, distinguished bearing, good living with abundant choice beverages, order and elegance within

the house, fine clothing, an upright military carriage, gymnastics, hunting and other sports, and seeks accordingly to influence my mode of life by advice, exhortations, orders and threats. On the other hand, my highness is averse to children, common things, jesting and gaiety, evidently because he knows princely persons almost exclusively by their ceremonial attitude in public or by illustrations. He particularly detests illustrated journals of satirical caricatures, total abstainers, etc. I am, moreover, somewhat too small for him.

Another important role is played by the "child" personification: "I am a child. You are the father. You must play with me." Then childish verses are hummed. "The little wheel goes thud, thud, thud," "Comes a little flying bird." Wonderfully tender childishness, and artless ways such as no real child would show in so marked and touching a manner. In moments of good humour I am called Putzi, or else he says simply, "My dear Zi." When walking in town I must stop at the toy-shop windows, make a detailed inspection, buy myself toys, watch the children playing, romp on the ground, and dance in a ring as children do, thus consistently behaving with an entire absence of loftiness. If on the request of "the child" or "the children" (at times there occurred a division into several kindred personalities), I happen to pause in a shop and look over the toy counter, this personification bubbles over with joy and in a childish voice cries out ecstatically: "Oh, how lovely! It's really heavenly!··

Since the "child" personification has acquired a greater influence over me, not only has my interest in childish ways, toys, and even shops increased, but also my search for childish satisfactions and the innocent joys of the heart, a fact which acts upon the organism, rejuvenating and refreshing it, and driving away many of the cares of the grown man, accustomed more and more to use his intelligence. In the same way a number of other personifications also have a beneficial effect upon me. For example, my interest in art and understanding of artistic things have increased considerably. Particularly remarkable and characteristic of the profound division which takes place in me is the following fact: that whereas my interest in art was formerly very slight, especially as regards that of

antiquity and the Middle Ages, certain of my personifications are passionately interested in these latter and have continually impelled me to devote attention to them."[26]

Staudenmeier's experiments led him to a number of discoveries that I will not detail in this context—in spite of their being more extraordinary than mere possession experiences. As for the self-perfecting quest into which he stumbled unwillingly, he apparently failed to reach his goal. At least we know that two and one-half years before his death, at the age of sixty-six, he wrote in a postcard to a friend: "I am continuing with my work with desperate energy, but it is very slow and difficult. Although all four of the recalcitrant centers have received ample blows in their personifications partly from one another and partly from me, they fall back again and again into their old errors so that it really takes the patience of a lamb to persevere."[27]

The second case of a life profoundly affected by automatic writing is that of another scientist whose pursuit of knowledge became a pursuit of wisdom and a spiritual quest. The difference from Staudenmeier is that in this instance we can speak of a completed development, in the same sense that, in shamanism, the initiate not only plunges into seeming madness but emerges from it "reborn" before undertaking his work.

I am speaking of Emanuel Swedenborg, who may be called a modern shaman, not only because of the nature of his journey, his visionary experiences, and the multiplicity of his interests and gifts, but because his whole spiritual adventure unfolded from his following the bent of his inner nature.

Swedenborg, mineralogist, physicist, biologist, philosopher, and adviser to the Swedish government in the early eighteenth century, has been one of the few men of encompassing genius in the history of Europe. William Blake, Goethe, Heine, Balzac, Emerson, Henry James, the Brownings, and many other writers have praised him or acknowledged a debt to his ideas, while his scientific theories foreshadowed what dozens of specialists were

to confirm in the following years. He was the first, for instance, to formulate the idea of cerebral localizations and to describe the functions of the brain cortex. Also, a hundred years before the neuronal structure of the brain cortex had been observed, he attributed the primary functions of nervous control to little oval particles in the gray matter. Arrhenius, in an introduction to the cosmological section of Swedenborg's ***Prodromus Principiorum Rerum Naturalium,*** concluded:

> If we briefly summarize the ideas which were first given expression by Swedenborg, and afterwards, though usually in a much modified form—consciously or unconsciously—taken up by other authors in cosmology, we find them to be:
>
> The planets of our solar system originate from the solar matter—taken up by Buffon, Kant, Laplace, and others.
>
> The earth and the other planets have gradually removed themselves from the sun and received a gradually lengthened time of revolution, a view again expressed by G. H. Darwin.
>
> The suns are arranged around the Milky Way, taken up by Wright, Kant, and Lambert.
>
> There are still greater systems in which the milky ways are arranged, taken up by Lambert.[28]

Swedenborg's early stage of spiritual development may be seen as that of a gnani-yogin. He was at first a scientist who turned his attention more and more to the basic questions of science (such as the nature of matter, or the mind-body problem) until, at the age of forty-two, he established a great synthesis of the knowledge of his time in the three big volumes of his ***Opera Philosophica et Mineralia.*** Driven through this work to consider the nexus between the infinite and the finite, eternity and time, he produced next a book entitled ***Of The Infinite.*** In the second part of this book, far from the a-religious stance that was characteristic of his early career, he proposed that the true divinity in man is an acknowledgment of the existence of God, "and the sense of delight in the love of God." His interest now

turned to the "science of the soul," to complete which, he said, "all the sciences are required that the world has ever eliminated or developed." His reflections on this matter constitute the content of two volumes that he completed at the age of fifty-one and that bear the title The Economy of The Animal Kingdom. (This is a gross mistranslation from his Latin original; "animal" here stands for his word aninza—"soul." The title should be "The Organization of the Soul's Kingdom," that is, the body).

It was apparently during this time that Swedenborg had the first clear-cut indications of an order of experience other than that with which he was familiar. He became very interested in his dreams, of which he started to keep a journal, and he discovered an ability to cut off his sense impressions when he wanted to think intensely. Perhaps of greater importance is his statement that when men of science who have the power of synthesizing, "after a long course of reasoning make a discovery of the truth, straightaway there is a certain cheering light, a joyful confirmatory brightness, that plays round the sphere of their mind; a kind of mysterious radiation—I know not whence it proceeds-that darts through some secret temple of the brain." The following quotation from later writing probably refers to the same experience, or to the development of it in subsequent years:

> . . . a flame of diverse sizes and with a diversity of color and splendor has often been seen by me. Thus while I was writing a certain little work hardly a day passed by for several months in which a flame was not seen by me as vividly as the flame of a household hearth; at the time this was a sign of approbation, and this happened before spirits began to speak with me viva voce.[29]

Experiences of this type, culminating in a vision of Christ, profoundly changed Swedenborg and resulted in a book entitled Of The Worship and Love of God. After this, not even his writing would be his own: his next eight volumes were, as he said, inspired: "Nay have I written entire pages, and the spirits did

not dictate the words, but absolutely guided my hands, so that it may [be assumed to be]* they who were doing the writing."

Signe Toksvig, author of an appreciative biography of Swedenborg, writes of The Word Explained: "There probably never has been anything written so overpoweringly alien to normal interest as these Biblical commentaries by Swedenborg, nor anything more foreign to the results of modern Biblical research. Neither has anything served so much to conceal the true greatness of the man. No one who chances to meet him first in these earnest crossword puzzles can be blamed for turning quickly away."

There are indications that some of the contents or the exegesis were repulsive to his own mind. Yet Swedenborg respected it all as revelation, for "these words were written by my hand, and dictated by Isaac, the father of the Jews. . . ." Other parts were written by Jacob, by Abraham, by Moses, or by "the Messiah himself through Abraham."

But, according to Toksvig, Swedenborg early began to lose faith in the declared identities of the spirits, and it is evident that he was worried by their claim that "they were doing the dictation." At the end, he came to believe that the spirits claiming to be Biblical patriarchs were truly impostors. Yet his own writing continued,† now inspired by more trustworthy entities. In a diary entry of this period he stated that he did not accept any "representation, vision or discourse" from spirit or angel without reflection on them "as to what thence was truthful and good." Since "truthful" and "good" were to him from the Lord, he could say that he had been instructed "by no spirit or by any angel but by the Lord alone from whom is all truth and good."

This is an important statement. No longer does Swedenborg

*** The original source is unclear at this point.**
† The eight volumes of *Arcana Coelestia,* written during this period, were a new attempt to explain the inner meaning of Genesis and Exodus.

equate the fruit of inspiration with truth, nor does he leave this decision to reason alone. The ability to ***discriminate*** truth, like the confirmatory light experienced during his writing in earlier years, is in itself a gift of intuition. ***He*** could only say, "I ***know.***" During the later decades of his life he produced his most profound works, in which he ***brought together*** his highly uncommon inspiration with his ordering, critical mind. Through the years his discrimination became more subtle, we may surmise, so that he could be enriched by messages beyond his reasoning faculties and still be a creator and master of his world picture. Thus, when a friend asked him how many he had succeeded in persuading of the truth of his doctrines, he could say, after reflection, that he thought he had "about fifty in this world and about the same number in the other."[30]

I have given what might seem inordinate attention to these two illustrations of automatic writing because of their bearing on much of what I have touched upon in this chapter. Both Staudenmeier and Swedenborg are instances of visionaries and men who experienced possession states; both illustrate the unleashing of unsuspected forces within their own psyches; both raise the question as to the boundaries between mysticism and schizophrenia; and both evidence what we regard as supernatural or "psychic" abilities.*

Beyond all this, these two lives illustrate another more fundamental feature of the dimension of spontaneity that we have been discussing: they were solitaries who learned everything from their own experience and inspiration. In contrast to individuals who have trodden the way of meditation on symbolic forms or the way of emptiness, they are eminently free from tradition, finding guidance only within themselves. And, we may add, only individual instances can properly illustrate the way of

*** Staudenmeier could cause action at a distance and was able to impress an image on a photographic plate; Swedenborg was well known for feats of clairvoyance that have become historical.**

expression. *What* is expressed may be in the final analysis the same for each enlightened prophet, all the disciples of Melchizedek being prompted by a selfsame inner spirit. And yet their ways are unique, and their process of realization directed by their peculiar background and situation. Their way is essentially *the way of vocation,* that of listening to their inner voice, and their path one of gradual approximation. Had Swedenborg not taken down the messages of the spirit-world imposters, would he have been able to know them for what they were, and receive the more refined messages of later years? *

The way of forms is based upon the predication: "Here is a truth: assimilate it; make it yours." The way of expression starts out from the opposite prospect: "The truth lies within you, and you can find it only by forgetting the ready-made answers."

These are two attitudes that bear upon life in general, not merely upon the sphere of meditation. An extension of the assimilative and unitive approach is an attitude of respect for established forms and feelings of reverence for crystallized wisdom. The formalist is typically pious. The corresponding extension of the way of expression to life at large is that self-assurance and disrespect for established forms which is frequently part of the personality of a genius and has given rise to the stereotype of the artist as a rebellious man. By questioning established knowledge those who have followed the way of expression have been able to contact—to a greater or lesser extent—the source of all answers without intermediaries, and thus have given new words, sounds, shapes to the eternal truth.

The same two attitudes may be seen in education, where the formalistic declares: "I have a truth. Listen!"; and the permissive, trusting a natural development within the individual, holds

* It is interesting to note that the phenomenon of intrusion is commonplace in spiritualistic circles. A remarkable instance of it may be found in William Yeats's work, "**A** Vision," completed after years of automatic writing frequently interrupted by "false teachers."

that the child can be nourished but cannot be guided without risk of interference or conditioning.

These attitudes may be found again in ethics, as a trust in absolutes, principles, and laws on the one hand, and a trust in free choice and responsibility on the other. In politics, they take the extreme forms of theocracy and democracy; in cultural styles, those of traditionalism and individualism, past-orientation and present-orientation.

In all these spheres today we seem to be passing from a state of formalism to one of relinquishing forms and seeking inner orientation. Our culture seems to be at a point of transition where the old forms are dying and people do not want new ones but seek to grasp the meaning that the older traditions have failed to express through excessive repetition.

Humanity is increasingly aware of the prison it has built for itself, and individuals want to be freed from what they are made to swallow whole by their environment. Because of this, man's metaphysical drive is leading him in the direction of expression, liberation, revelation from within.