

Ole Vedfelt DSAP. The Phenomenology of Spirit in Childhood Memories

Ole Vedfelt. 31.07 – 2013. DSAP. Hilleroed. Denmark. Phone 0045 23 70 99 61 Break-

Out Session Thursday Aug. 22th. 13.30 - 15.00

Vedfelt@mail.tele.dk Length of text, literature, index 6286 words

The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Childhood Memories – Early numinous experiences in a desacralized world

CONTENTS

*Introduction - The concepts of Spirituality and the Numinous - Supramodal perception –
A general feeling of not being met in an empathic way - The Phenomenology of Spiritual
Childhood Memories - Complications and disturbances - New Inner Openings -
Therapeutic Recognition of Spiritual Sensitivity - The clear light of consciousness and the
depths of the soul – Literature - Index words*

Introduction

Throughout the many years of my work as a psychotherapist and meditation teacher, I've often witnessed clients and students spontaneously remember intense and vivid experiences, with religious/spiritual qualities, during a personal development process. Some of these experiences went back to childhood. Yet despite the fact that these events were experienced as particularly meaningful and important, the individuals often had never confided them to anyone, nor especially valued them later in life. Furthermore, after many years of therapy, meditation or affiliation with a religious community, they still had not been worked with or integrated into the individual's self-perception.

A prerequisite for remembering and valuing these experiences appeared to be a trusting connection to myself as a therapist and/or a trusting connection to a group, and that certain methods facilitated recall. The experiences often appeared in connection with a breakthrough and turning point in personal development, typically by working through a traumatic event, which had not been met by the individual's surroundings in a fruitful fashion. This renewed appreciation furthered personal development.

To further my own deeper understanding of this, I made systematic research into the spiritual childhood memories of 55 mature adults. A more theoretical account of *Religious peak-experiences in transpersonal psychodynamic and cybernetic perspective* can be found in Vedfelt 2007 and on dreams in *Cultivating Feelings through Working with Dreams* (Vedfelt 2009) and *The Dimensions of Dreams*. (Vedfelt 2002)

The concepts of Spirituality, the Numinous and Individuation

I will start with a definition of the key concepts: Spirituality, the Numinous, and Individuation. I will relate them to Jung's writings, and to a modern conception of the interplay between consciousness and the unconscious.

I use the term 'spiritual' to indicate phenomena and qualities, which have been described in religious traditions, but which can also be spontaneously experienced by individuals, with or without connection to institutionalized religion. My view is a continuation of the tradition from William James's varieties of Religious experiences, and Jung's depth psychology. As transpersonal psychologist Charles Tart puts it the word spirituality may denote the individuals direct experience of "ultimate purposes, higher entities, god, love, compassion," not necessarily bound to any specific religion (1996 p. 4, fn.). Likewise and before Tart humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow was concerned

with the subjective experience of concepts as the sacred, devotion, gratitude, the divine and prayer that people can have outside religious systems (1970).

The term 'numinous' was coined by the theologian, Rudolf Otto. It denotes especially intensive experiences of something sacred, divine and overwhelming which, in his view, underlies all religion. It has traits in common with Maslow's Peak Experiences (1970), as well as with states and levels of consciousness described in Eastern traditions and also the transpersonal psychologies.

In my opinion, these states have a transformative potential, and are of decisive importance as turning points in the personal process of maturation, that Jung called individuation.

In all of this Jung's was a pioneer. In the index of the "Collected Works of C.G. Jung", one finds several hundred references to 'spirit' and 'spiritual' (German: *Geist* and *geistlich*), and he often uses the word 'numinous' while referencing Otto.

In his paper "The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairytales" Jung describes the spirit as an autonomous dynamic principle, "with the capacity to produce images independent of sense perception (...) and the capacity for sovereign manipulation of these images" (CW 9:1, par. 393). In fairytales the spirit appears, according to Jung "when the hero is in a hopeless and desperate situation, from which only... a spiritual function or an endopsychic automatism of some kind can extricate him." (CW 9:1, par. 401).

In his essay "Psychology and Religion" Jung argues that the spontaneous religious experience has a unifying and healing effect on the psyche and on psychosomatic disorders. Conventional religion can even, be a hinder between the individual and this form of contact, he claims. (CW 11).

The relation between spirituality and the process of individuation is a main

Ole Vedfelt DSAP. The Phenomenology of Spirit in Childhood Memories

theme in Jung's early breakthrough work, "The Symbols of Transformation" (CW 5) and remains so in his last work "Memories, Dreams, Reflections".

Jung especially refers to Otto's characterization of mystical awe-inspiring and fascinating aspect of the experience of "the sacred." (Otto, 1917)

In "Two Essays on Analytical Psychology", Jung describes how, in a certain stage of the individuation process, the persona; our mask towards the outer world breaks down. The consciousness is overwhelmed with archetypal contents, cosmic imagery, big dreams, the sense of being infinitely big or infinitely small, changes in body perception, and projections of godlike qualities upon the analyst and ego inflation (CW 7, par. 250). In his Tantra seminars, Jung compared stages in the individuation process to the levels of consciousness in Kundalini yoga (Tantra 1932).

Summing up Jung's stance: The Spirit is a creative, archetypal force, it has healing capacities and it appears in symbolic form. It is connected to individuation and altered states of consciousness, and it particularly manifests itself in desperate and hopeless situations.

My presentation focuses mostly on the spirit in altered states of consciousness, while Jung is more concerned with the manifestation of the spirit in unconscious processes. However, there is no opposition between the two perspectives.

Supramodal perception

When Rudolf Otto describes religious experiences, he is referring to a particular feeling (*Gefühl*) and excitement (*Erregtheit*), which is different to conceptual perception and comprehension. He maintains that the Christian religion is far too rationalistic – the more orthodox, the more rationalistic (Otto, 1917, 1950 p. 8).

Jung use the symbols as a vehicle to approach these non-rationalistic experiences. He understands the symbol as an image that describes in the best possible way the dimly discerned nature of the spirit.” (CW 8, par. 644)

Through his interviews about peak experiences, Maslow finds that communication demands an empathetic, more poetic and metaphorical language like dreaming, free association and fantasies (Maslow, 1970 p. 84-85). Ken Wilber, a leading theorist in transpersonal psychology, speaks of wholeness orientated “mandalic sense” and “vision logic”. (1990, p. 70)

In Eastern traditions, streams of energy and Chakras are focused on in meditation, involving experiences of, symbols, bodily sensations, subtle perceptions and holistic experiences of different levels of consciousness.

The experiences that these authors are referring to can be understood as a form of perception with its own built-in form of appropriateness. They combine all experiential modalities: feelings, thoughts, inner body sensations, inner images, etc., then go beyond them and synthesize them into a united 'supramodal' experience.

Therefore, supramodal experience lies behind all creative and artistic expression: images, stories, music, poetry, etc. It is also found in the metaphors of everyday language in all important personal and emotional matters like, for instance, dark moods, red-hot anger, taking a stance, feeling heavy-hearted, being a cold person, etc. (Vedfelt 2009)

Studies in what psychologist John Kihlstrom calls, “the cognitive unconscious”, reveal that our rational consciousness can only process a tiny bit of the many meaningful processes, which take place beyond consciousness (1987). In an overview of current research, Bargh and Chartrand estimated that 95 percent of incoming

information is processed subliminally (1999). As I have described in my two books *Consciousness* (1996) and “*Unconscious Intelligence*” (2002), supramodal perception is important in creating connections between consciousness and the unconscious, because it can carry much more information than ordinary consciousness.

Furthermore, the supramodal experience is our first, deepest and most comprehensive language. The understanding of the supramodal way of experiencing has made it possible to prove that babies and small children have formidable social, emotional and cognitive intelligence. (Meltzoff & Borton, 1979) (Trevarthen 1996) (Stern, 2010)

It is therefore possible that spiritual childhood experiences can create an important bridge to creative inner states, which the adult experiences during an individuation process.

All of this is importance for the investigation, because it requires a secure setting and a possibility to access supramodal states for the participants. The individuals in this investigation participated in groups with experiential, analytical and creative work including dreams, active imagination, meditation, bodywork and painting. Most of the group members were helping professionals, who were working with their individuation process.

During two weekends, which were part of rather advanced developmental group work there was a particular focus on spiritual childhood memories. During the second of these weekends, the participants made an “inquiry” and two peer observes wrote down short summaries of the individual experience of childhood spirituality. This material was then analyzed and systematized to extract some common experiences.

A general feeling of not being met in an empathic way

Most of the participants gave examples of spiritual seeking early in childhood, which was met with resistance from the surroundings, and which then created inner conflict and loneliness. In some cases, spontaneously experienced spirituality was suppressed through rational argument, religious wishes directly ridiculed. Typical comments were: “There was a lid on spirituality. How it was met (by others) did not fit together with the fulfillment I felt.” “I got some very confusing answers. Had no sense of being able to get a cohesive response.”

I give the persons a pseudonym

Dorte: says in the inquiry “..rational home. 'Big Bang' – the explanation of the universe. You did not go to church. Everyone was baptized and confirmed, anyways. Everything religious was ridiculed and was embarrassing to talk about. Dorte chose to go to Sunday school, but was sometimes mocked for it. Found spirituality in nature. Had certain places she visited repeatedly. Prayed to God, but felt ashamed of it, confused about it: Whom should she direct her prayers to? It was difficult for her to be alone with her need for spirituality. It became guilt-laden.”

Charlotte at the age of 6 made contact with an inner sense of being a different kind of intimacy to oneself, a light that comes to one” and a commonality greater than ourselves” She feels that her rational surroundings estranged her from her inner life and sensitivity.

Else was raised Catholic. She had to live with many “oughts” and “shoulds”, which felt like a burden. During the course she discovered something light and easy within herself. She remembered an aunt and grandmother who radiated this, and with whom she felt close to, without putting it into words. She felt that the lack of understanding, and all the “oughts” and “shoulds”, forced her to doubt that, which came

from within herself.

Fenja developed a strong religiousness as a child, but felt misunderstood and unseen by her parents, who were busy with work. Her grandmother and grandfather were important. Especially her grandfather, who sensed life in everything, for examples the Scandinavian Huldra, (a female forest creature found in Scandinavian folklore) or the living spirits in rocks. She also had an intense interest in dreams. Yet this spirituality was considered 'unclean', and mixed with a risk of punishment. Love had conditions, and hell was a possibility.”

The Phenomenology of Spiritual Childhood Memories

Experiences in Nature

The most common spontaneous access to spirituality – which almost all the participants shared – were experiences in nature. I have already presented three examples of this and would like to share two more.

Hanne remembers from 5-6 years old: ”She is lying on her stomach in the grass looking at a blade of grass, she feels at one with the universe and the Earth and can almost feel the curvature of the Earth. This is an experience which recurs. “It's very positive,” she says, and adds that otherwise her childhood did not have too many positive experiences.”

Ivan's childhood home was totally dominated by a brutal stepfather and his motorcycle friends. His mother was anxious and submissive. Over and over again in his childhood, in books and notebooks, he drew the same image of a face screaming, mouth wide-open and with a big cross over the mouth. Starting at the age of 9, he walked with a

boy of 14-15 in the Norwegian nature. He enjoyed being there and could lie and look at the stars – and had his own sense of wholeness there. At home, he could have the feeling that he was outside of the whole thing, like in a state of being split, not knowing what he wanted. This feeling could still overpower him.

Sacredness: Objects, Places, Rituals

Many participants talk about an attraction to rituals.

Karen had a sacred stone she sat on, where she had conversations with God. In the evening, an angel sat on her windowsill, making it difficult for her to fall asleep, until she asked her mother to let the angel out. Her mother did this gladly, and Karen would settle down.

Lone had a “Grandfather Tree”, in which she would climb up and feel safely connected to nature and higher helping powers.

Mads got a large, heavy solid wood table from his godfather. It was somehow magic. It was a troll. Mads did not really have much contact with his godfather, but the term “godfather” was charged with mystical importance.

These objects could also have had a more anxiety provoking, numinous character. In her childhood home, Nana had a terrifying cross with the words “God Sees Everything” on it. Ola's grandmother had a little angel figurine, which he was so afraid of, it had to be taken out of the bedroom before he could fall asleep.

In some cases, a teddy bear, doll or toy animal took on a life of its own and became imbued with magical qualities.

Several of them imagined themselves to be babies switched at birth. Freud called fantasies like these, which he routinely came across in his patients, “The Family

Romances”. Jung demonstrated a spiritual importance through the similarity with countless myths, where the hero had two sets of parents: the child of gods, yet raised by human beings. 3 participants described imaginary friends, which they experienced as real (CW5).

Sofie experienced that, “the church was a little incomprehensible, but a safe and good foundation, a feeling of access to something that was greater, and that she could get something from. Reverence. Prayer gave a great sense of security in oneself, and you could ask to be taken care of.”

Some of the participants found that their spirituality concentrated on mythological motives, for instance hiding in the restroom and writing fairy tales, and drawing Bible stories at school.

Death

Death was an important theme. One person found comfort in that Grandmother lived on a star, which she could see in the sky; another in that his mother lived like an angel, and he would meet her after death. Fenja experienced – despite the sorrow at her grandmother's funeral – that God's will had been done.

Several people spoke of precognitive experiences in connection with the death of a loved one, for instance hearing Grandmother's voice call out from a great distance. The intuitions were explained away by the adults. There were two especially striking example's. At a family gathering a 10-year-old girl exclaimed to her own surprise about her beloved 10 year elder brother. Next time you come in the newspaper it will be for your funeral. The brother shortly after died of a sudden outbreak of cancer. Another girl, Tine told at school, that her close friend was dead. Everybody were shocked and the

flag came on half-mast. Actually, the girlfriend was not dead. However, some month later the girlfriend died unexpectedly. The two girls I have just mentioned were met with strong condemnations. Both women were spiritually gifted and had an ongoing serious work with individuation and meditation later in life.

Surprisingly many participants remembered spiritual experiences while burying dead birds, which is one of the few possibilities children have to stage a burial ritual themselves. One person stated that this had compensated for parts of herself, which had been killed. Another told that he felt a great sense of responsibility and had grown from it.

Changes in States of Consciousness and Cosmic Experiences

Many participants described from the age of 5-7 plus minus 2 years changes in their states of consciousness and Cosmic Experiences similar to phenomena described in the mystic traditions and in Jung's work in relation to individuation.

Some experiences were recurring, some without demonstrable cause, others related to trauma, abandonment or illness. There could be nightmares with a racing heart, free-fall, whirling and rotating motions without images or words. There were experiences of disappearing into formlessness, turning into nothing, and becoming infinitely small or infinitely large. Feelings of expansion of the body was common and can be compared to the perception of subtle energy, and to opening to higher levels of wholeness.

Several participants described experiences of meeting something divine in a cosmic form, in all cases connected with awe, or even nightmarish, but also "alluring" and fascinating, like

Rudolf Otto's descriptions of the numinous as "Mysterium, Tremendum et Fascinans".

Near-death experiences with out-of-body experiences and of being drawn through a dark tunnel into the light were reported in several cases, as described by Moody in his book *Life after Life* (1975).

In an attack of fever at the age of 6, Pia had an experience of being sucked into a tunnel of light and sound, which seemed to surround her. It was at the same time protective and anxiety-provoking.

Peter, at the age of 5, had a near-death experience in connection with an accident with a tractor. Afterwards, he could sit in the yard and imagine a sphere, which returned to him in his meditations as an adult. The sphere is found in ancient philosophy and used as a sign of wholeness and perfection; The sphere was one of Jung's favorite symbols of the Self and wholeness.

God for some appeared as a luminous figure. Rikke, at the age of 5, dreamed: "Her friend Inga says that God is in the hallway, and that Rikke should come out and look. Rikke is frightened that God will be judgmental towards her, in contrast to Inga, who is so kind. But God is standing there, great and luminous, looking with love and acceptance at both girls, who are standing hand in hand." Rikke had a very strict father. After this dream, she was less worried in relation to him.

Susanne, was as a single incident sexually abused by a stranger at the age of 6, when the family was on summer holiday. During the rape, she had an out-of-body experience with a vision of intense, supernatural light-behind-light- behind-light. It held both strong allure and inspired awe. Afterwards she was very shocked and could not tell about it to the adults who just accepted, that she had a day off. In therapy, she had worked with the shock but never on the resourceful spiritual part of the experience.

Experiences of supernatural light-behind-light in gradually higher and

clearer levels are known from mysticism as very “high” states of consciousness, and are described in Dante's “Divine Comedy”. In Christianity, God is often described as light.

Complications and disturbances

Trauma and Neglect

Many of the examples referred to above illustrate that trauma and neglect can intensify spiritual life. It has also been shown that they can create complications in relationship to experienced reality, and in relationship to one's sense of self. For some participants, trauma and neglect led to disillusionment and a conscious rejection of spirituality with reported serious consequences.

Ulla, who grew up in a chaotic, alcoholic environment, had asked Jesus to make her ailing grandmother well, but her grandmother died. After this, she rejected Jesus and later became Buddhist. During the course, she gave the impression that she had thus rejected an essential emotional and corporeal part of herself .

From *Vibeke's* inquiry it is evident: “...used many hours sitting on the swing, where she sang hymns. Had a clear experience of God's presence”, but that she “gave God a dishonorable discharge”, because Mother (on top of what was otherwise plaguing her family) never stopped beating her little sister. “In a way, my abandonment of my spiritual space was catastrophic, because anorexia took power”, she states in the inquiry

Åge, who grew up in a poor sharecropper's family and was constantly bullied by a large flock of neglected children, “Damned God”. His contact with spiritual longing did not appear until well into adulthood, after going through an intensive therapy process.

If spirituality actually became intensified, it could become a “survival strategy”, as one of the participants called it. At the same time, it left behind a constant longing to get it integrated into sustainable relationships.

Seduction

The frequency of stories of sexual abuse from the girls was remarkable. An image was often painted of a spiritually sensitive girl, who felt lonely and sought out emotional contact in the form of a spiritual father or guide, who could see, recognize and give her affirmation. This was exploited by a seductive adult male.

Sarah, wore from puberty, always loose fitting pullovers, which would hide her female form from her fathers sexual gaze. Her father was a church functionary. On Sundays, she helped him prepare church services. Then sexuality was completely out of the picture, and she got the spiritual intimacy with him that she wished for

Berit, who had been sexually abused by an uncle, had developed an ability to “go out-of-body”. As an adult, this had become a part of her sexuality in the sense that it gave her many spiritual experiences. Although, she did miss “being more in her body”.

For the boys, seduction often took on another character. There were several examples of mothers, who felt spiritually alone with a rather materialistic and/or rationalistic fathers. In these case, the mothers formed a spiritual alliance with their sensitive sons, where they felt elevated above the world of the fathers. This created difficulties in getting spirituality to ground in their masculine identities.

Anders was adopted at the age of two after a period in an orphanage. His childhood was shaped by his longing to get to know his biological parents, whom he does not now and by a sense of estrangement towards his adoptive parents. This split seemed

to be repeated in his ability to believe in his own spiritual experiences. After a meditation, he could share vivid supramodal experiences with the group, and seemed to be emotionally touched. Later he would lose feeling contact with the experience, the imagery faded. He started to wonder if it was just an intellectual construction. He would then define himself as person who not had the capacity for inner experiences - until the next experience. His work in the group slowly contributed to a more conscious relationship to his own inner life and to a very new experience of acceptance and trusting if somebody told him that he was a good person, which people often did.

New Inner Openings

The more practiced the participants became in at being present through recognition of and reflection on spiritual states, the better they became in rediscovering and describing earlier spiritual experiences where they actually had good contact with the surroundings. They now had schemata that could integrate overlooked positive experiences.

In general, people who had grown up in rural surroundings received more support than those from cities where atheism and rationalism were more widespread.

At the end of the course, many people stated, that spirituality had much more importance to them, than they had been aware of earlier and that it could take many forms that they had not been able to appreciate.

Therapeutic Recognition of Spiritual Sensitivity

A complication in itself is that a person's special spiritual talent does not fit into the cultural patterns, and the greater the innate spiritual intelligence present, the more expressed this complication becomes.

Tine, at the outset of a long-term therapy process, that she had a hard time formulating herself in words, and that she mostly could feel herself through bodily sensations, which were in turn difficult to put into words. This made it difficult for her to communicate her inner-most feelings with other people and made her insecure. At the age of 6-7, she was sexually violated by a family member. She did not dare to tell anyone and was not able to work through it until she went to therapy in her mid-30's. At age 17 she became depressed. Excerpt from the inquiry: "I cried and cried, sat and stared into space. Mother drove me to the doctor and a psychiatrist and I got pills. No one tried to talk to me. The medication clipped my thoughts off. It was indescribable. The abyss."

She stopped taking the medication. She got an education in healthcare, became highly regarded at work and continued to develop professionally. When she was supported in describing her experiences through bodily sensations, inner-imaging, drawings of emotions and intuitive experiences of wholeness, she came across as spiritually gifted.

Tine described a "special spiritual space, when they had finished dinner and her mother sat in her chair. Then she might crawl up in her lap, and a special state appeared

As a child she often lay on the couch as a child and fell into a trance-like state by looking at the patterns on a Persian carpet. This gave her a feeling of going behind, behind, behind – like going out into the universe. It was alluring and awe inspiring. During a meditation at the course, she had an experience of being surrounded by the universe, which was full of light, and she said: "This was probably the place I was seeking as a child, when I looked at the carpet, and now I've found it."

Recognition of these qualities led her to a healthy core and a stable

character, which made her able to express herself and her life goals very clearly. Tine is the participant who as a girl had a precognitive experience of the death of a girlfriend (see above).

Sabrina is a helping professional. She is well-functioning in her work and as mother of teenage children, and she has great spiritual sensitivity. She can sink into very dark moods at times, where she feels hopeless, sad, heavy, frightened and withdrawn. This can be initiated by rather mild rejection. She can clearly see that this is irrational, yet that does not change her emotional reaction.

Neglect and abuse marred her childhood. Her father was an alcoholic; irritable and violent when drunk. Her family lived in the country in a very remote area. Her mother was often away from home, so Sabrina was alone with her father. Her best friend was her horse, with which she many good experiences in the surrounding nature, where she lives in a fantasy world.

One night when she was 9 year old, she ran away from home with her horse and spent the night in the forest. No one noticed. In the morning, she woke as a golden light streamed down around her. It was a warm, wonderful sensation, which engulfed her and her horse. She had absolutely no sense of her body, yet experienced a wholeness, where she felt both good and that nothing bad could happen to her.

She had seen a psychologist who specialized in trauma. He told her she should not go out of her body. My method, on the contrary, is rather to find some way to accept and encounter what is real and feels healing for the person. In this case with a mature and socially grounded with whom had a good contact I suggested she made a drawing of the good out-of-body state.

I used drawing paper 45 x 60 centimeters. She said her experience was too big for that. I suggested we tape together as many sheets of drawing paper as she needed: 4 sheets. She picked up the crayons and something started to happen on the paper: delicate strokes in peach blossom color. “It's vibrations”, she told me. In addition, blue waves and white light appeared, as she contemplated the experience. She was at one with the light, felt completely herself.

It was a revelation for her that she could share her experience with someone. A completely new experience. I asked if she could draw this new experience. On a single sheet of paper, she drew an orange sun cupped by two shells with openings in them. She said she was afraid her head would explode; she would rather go back to the first experience. I said it was fine with me. My acceptance loosened her up, so she made a new drawing: herself in full figure, with different shades of light blue. Her head opened upwards. Her colors from the first drawing became an up-side-down cone with the widest end in the air. “That's the light, that's the foundation”, she explained.

The next day she told the group, that after this work she became very calm. She sensed waves of warmth and soft energy, washing up through her body. She had never felt so comfortable and glad. Slept long and well, and woke only once to something that sounded like an explosion inside of her. She fell asleep again and had a very vivid and colorful dream.

She is riding on a large, white horse in a lovely landscape. Her boyfriend appears, also on a big, white horse. They see a great herd of horses. A mare lies down to foal. It can talk and tells the couple to take care of her foal. Then the horses kick off some golden horseshoes. The couple gathers them and puts them in their backpacks. They drive the horses across a river to a lovely green field, where they can graze. Her boyfriend

picks up the foal in one arm and put his other arm around Sabrina's shoulder as they cross the river.

They arrive back at the farm where they live (in reality). They put the foal in a corral with green grass. It grazes and plays. The house looks as it always does: in fine shape, but now there is an extra bedroom. They put their backpacks under the bed. The picture of a woman nursing a child hanging over the bed comes to life.

This dream is different from the other dreams she has had, which were more focused on conflict and suffering. It has a completely positive atmosphere, permeated by development and problem solving.

It makes sense to see the dream as an answer from her unconscious intelligence about the previous day's therapeutic process.

There is a "Coniunctio", a union of opposites on many levels: people and nature, male and female, mother and child. A central symbol is her horse, suggesting a positive object of attachment from her childhood. It further symbolizes body and instincts united with her dream ego. This matches her bodily well-being all the way down to her autonomic nervous system and the state of sleep.

There are typical symbols of transition and individuation: crossing a river, birth as a new beginning, golden horseshoes as symbols of happiness and prosperity. A nurturing motherly principle coming to life. The horseshoes are placed under the couple's bed. In waking reality, Sabrina and her new boyfriend would like to have a baby.

Sabrina's experience in this therapeutic work was a spiritual peak experience, which in my opinion can initiate an important restructuring of her inner personality structure and her relational world. It was prepared in earlier sessions and had

to be continued.

The dream matches this and confirms that we are working at high level of personality organization. It is highly archetypical according to Jungian research (Kluger 1955). It is big dream and points to a transitional phase in an individuation process.

The session had a strong impact on Sabrina, who for weeks was connected to the peaceful inner state of being and bodily wellbeing. This state is of cause, not everlasting. When the possibility for such high-level inner transformations happens, the person will have to work on many issues in relation to the older inner structures and the personal relations. However, it is a turning point and a very promising start.

I am in this case not taking a stance in the philosophical battle about the relationship between spirit and matter. Mind over matter seen from an Eastern spiritual point of view is a recognized ontological perspective: spirituality is the foundation. Spirit and various subtle middle-states, described for instance in Kundalini yoga, organize the body and not the other way around. In Eastern tradition, the experience would be seen as a state, which allows access to a higher consciousness.

In Western depth psychology, the focus would be on future integration of the archetypal level in everyday life, and in personal relations. I believe both options can exist simultaneously.

The clear light of consciousness and the depths of the soul

The investigation seems show to, that experiences with numinous qualities is a normal phenomenon in childhood, and stored in memory especially in the ages 5 – 7 years old, with lesser variations plus/minus 2 years.

The age when most experiences occur indicates an important transitional

phase in the life of a child. The child has acquired language and starts to form new concepts of the self and the world. The child still has a connection to the archetypal world, and to the supramodal perception, but must also adapt to the concepts of society, pragmatic rules and a rational world of concepts.

Something healthy in the child tries to create a comprehensive experience of the two modes. To holds open “the doors of perception” - as William Blake and Aldous Huxley (1954) called it – open to an inner world that can contain and balance the psychic wholeness.

Under pressured circumstances, the child withdraws to mental states and levels, which maintain the connection to wholeness, and which makes mental survival possible.

During this phase, as Erich Neumann (1954) describes it, the individuation process presses for a transition from mother archetype to father archetype. This could be a parallel to Jung's interpretation of the spirit in fairytales, where the Wise Old Man appears, when the hero – the childish self – is in a hopeless and desperate situation.

As we have seen, the openness, presence and acceptance of the spiritual experience by the surroundings is essential to the preservation of wholeness and still is in a more mature age.

If the child's experience is not met and understood, and instead becomes twisted or restricted by society's rationalism or by conventional religion, then the blockage can become permanent.

In an adult individuation process, the inner patterns and the relationship patterns of childhood are worked through methodically often focusing on negative experiences, on resistances, shadow aspects and so on. To awaken forces, which can

synthesize the separated parts of our personalities, we can on the other hand benefit by turning inward to the spiritual childhood memories eternal source of rejuvenation.

By reconnecting to the earlier stage the old experiences can be and integrated on a new and higher level of consciousness and personality organization. Here we find the germs of the clear light of consciousness, as described in Eastern philosophy, and the depths of the soul as described by Western depth psychology.

Bibliografi

Barg, J.A. og Chartrand, T.L.: "The unbearable automaticity of being", *American Psychologist*, årg. 54 (1999), nr. 7 (s. 464-479).

Jung, C.G.: "*Psychology and Religion*". CW 11.

Jung, C.G.: "The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairytales". CW 9:1.

Jung, C.G.: *Symbols of Transformation*, CW 5

Jung, C.G.: "*Spirit and Life*" IN: CW 8.

Jung, C.G. (1932) *Tantra Yoga Bericht über das Seminar*. Zürich

Kihlstrom, John. (1987). The cognitive unconscious. *Science* 237.4821 (September): 1445–1452.

Kluger, H.Y. (1955): Archetypal dreams and »everyday« dreams. *Israel's Annals of Psychiatry and Related Disciplines*, Vol. 13, s. 6-47. Haifa.

Maslow, Abraham: *Religions, Values, and Peak-experiences*, Penguin Books, New York, 1970.

Meltzoff, A.N. og Borton, W.: "Intermodal matching by human neonates", *Nature*, nr. 282 (1979) (s. 403-404).

Ole Vedfelt DSAP. The Phenomenology of Spirit in Childhood Memories

Moody, Raymond. (1975). *Life after Life*

Neumann, Erich (1954): *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, Princeton University Press, New York,

Otto, Rudolf: *Das Heilige*, Trewendt & Granier, Breslau, 1917.

Saucier, G. og Skrzypinska, K. (2006): "Spiritual but not religious? Evidence for Two Independent Dispositions", *Journal of Personality*, årg. 74 (2006), nr. 5 (s. 1257-1292).

Stern, Daniel (2010) *Forms of Vitality. Exploring Dynamic Experience in Psychology and the Arts*

Tart, Charles T.: "Introduction", I: Tart, Charles T. (red.): *Transpersonal Psychologies. Perspectives on the Mind from Seven Great Spiritual Traditions*, Harpercollins, San Francisco, 1992 (s. 1-7).

Trevarthen, C. og Aitken K. (1994) *Brain development, infant communication, and empathy disorders*, *Development and Psychopathology* (p. 597-633).

Vedfelt, Ole: (2002) *Ubevidst intelligens*. (Unconscious intelligence). Danish and Swedish Editions, Gyldendal and Natur och Kultur

Vedfelt, Ole: (1996) *Bevidsthed*, Gyldendals Forlag, København, German edition (2000)

Bewusstsein. Walter Verlag. Düsseldorf. Excerpt in English in: Vedfelt, Ole: (2000)

Consciousness - Introduction to Cybernetic Psychology in Energy & Character,

International Journal of Biosynthesis -Somatic Psychotherapy (Part 1, april, s. 38-55)

(Part 2, august, s. 42-61)

Vedfelt, Ole. (2002) *The Dimensions of Dreams*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. London (German. Danish, Polish, Swedish editions.)

Ole Vedfelt DSAP. The Phenomenology of Spirit in Childhood Memories

Vedfelt, Ole. (2007) *Religious peak-experiences in transpersonal psychodynamic and cybernetic perspective*. Psyke & Logos 28(2007), nr. 2 (s. 675-705).

Vedfelt, Ole: (2009) *"Cultivating Feelings through Working with Dreams"* IN: Jung Journal. Culture and Psyche. Fall 2009 Vol. 2. nr. 4 The San Fransisco Jung Institute Library Journal.

Wilber, Ken. (1990) *Eye to Eye – The Quest for the New Paradigm*, Shambhala Publications, Boston.

Index words

Childhood memories, spiritual

Numinous experiences, early

Peak-experience

Spirituality

Individuation

Unconscious intelligence