

Syncretistic Therapy

The text of a letter to an Australian therapist, in which several issues in the field of modern psychotherapy are raised. The distinction is made between regression and integration. The question is raised as to whether the uncritical incorporation of certain elements of Eastern mystical religion may be a collusion with the neuroses of Western society. More holistic models of human integration are outlined.

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Thank you for your letter of mid-February and its enclosed chapter on pre-natal emotional development. I find it difficult to know how to begin my response to you, since within your position there is so little stress on the sequentially ordered evolving trace of becoming. There is only Being. In that deep, receptive passivity of Yin-centredness, letter writing in the sense of time-sequenced, orderly linearity is virtually a contradiction in terms. Part of my difficulty also stems from the sense that everything I have to say may be ruled 'out of court' within your own terms of reference or else syncretistically and uncritically accepted and incorporated without judgement. However, I obviously do not have to accept your own position uncritically as a pre-condition for being able to engage in dialogue with you and, moreover, there are certain encouraging comments within your letter which give me at least the invitation to attempt a response.

For instance, you express the "hope that ... we can minimise any protocol or formalities which may incline us to be less than bluntly forthright in whatever we may have to reflect back". At another point you add "I assume that my experience is (also) self and culturally delimited within its own illusions of wholeness". You describe your own integrative work as a quest to "assimilate, feel through and explore each new model, game or system ... and then to allow [yourself] to react to its inbuilt denials, assumptions, vanities, solipsisms, etc." and you follow that comment with an invitation to perform the same task of integrative critique with respect to your own work. On the other side of the coin, however, you quite clearly articulate the possibility of mutual rejection, noting that this "inrolling tide of spirituality and California hippiedom" might actually "wholly and instantly alienate us", breaking down the possibility of any meaningful intercourse.

Perhaps the most significant comment which gives me hope of some work being possible is your statement and ownership with which I would thoroughly identify in the comments "if we look at the underlying relationship of any practitioner of any set 'system' of healing, therapy, art, sexuality etc... the method chosen reflects and expresses that individual's defences against his/her own particular pains and unresolved traumas and I most wholeheartedly assume that mine reflect my own fears in a similar manner". I think we need every ounce of critical skill and interpretative insight that we and others can bring to bear on the as-yet unresolved and unconscious material which exercises such a deep and potentially catastrophic grip on the behaviour of the social systems of the global village and on our own collusions with that core.

A word may be in order as to the way we have gone about working on your material in order to respond (the 'we' involves Evelyn Tovey, co-founding Trustee, colleague and research assistant who has gone over the material in some detail with me). A first full reading led to certain emotional/behavioural/intellectual reactions which we discussed at the time and then let matters rest for some weeks. Then came a period of intensive reading, first of your letter, then of the chapter and the marking up of particular comments, phrases, sentences, paragraphs which seemed to be particularly significant to us. These were then typed in and reprinted, with some commentary, on processor to give a working base which we both owned and could review. There followed a 48-hour period in which we let the material sink in, sharing our feelings and reactions, and trying to interpret the points of confusion or anxiety, repression and transference of which we became aware. Then we worked in individual brainstorming, focussing on the key points which were emerging. Our comparison of material showed a high degree of agreement and convergence which may say nothing more than that we have simply reinforced our common collusional centre in mutual self-defence. We would greatly appreciate it if there were anyway in which you could pin that kind of neurotic material and reflect it back to us for further work.

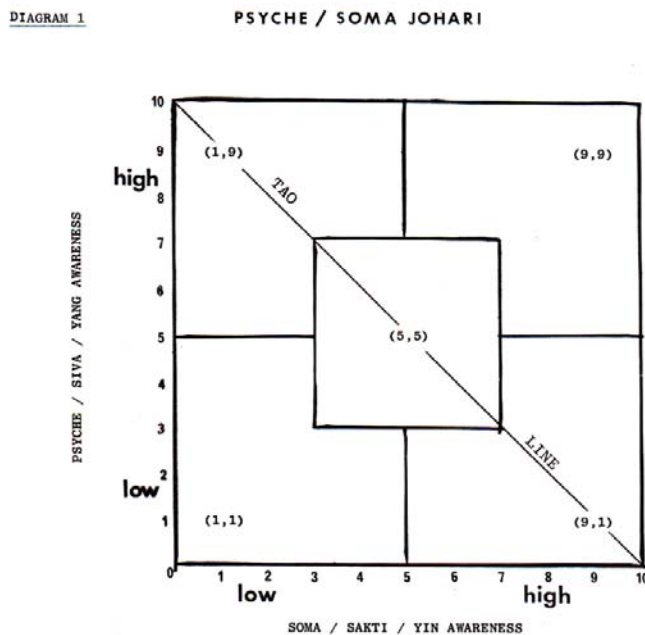
I am somewhat puzzled as to the use that can be made of any response that I can make. You speak of having given up reading since 1971. It would also appear that at around that time you experienced some kind of suppression of your critical/intellectual faculties, an elision of Siva/Yang and a conversion reaction of overwhelming Sakta/Yin. You speak of holding my letter close to your heart and I wonder what happened to your head! You speak of putting my papers reverentially on a table "in fond anticipation" and I have this fantasy image of some kind of Hindu shrine with some sacred writings on a table, and you as worshipper coming in and presenting a lotus or candle. This since of worship without work was also reinforced by your comments about there being 'some special magic' in my material which you wanted to appropriate. The imagery is familiar from the 'pairing culture' of Bion's group analysis, which is a response to anxiety and is adopted as some kind of defence against the implications and demands of work in the hope that out of some kind of intimate intercourse, the magical Messiah-child might be born. So your Yin in open warm moist welcoming receptivity awaits penetration by my Yang. There is somewhere the repressed excitement of the homosexual pair which is also fraught with dread, as mouth to mouth you breath out and I breath in, and then I breath out and you breath in, and so in our tantric co-responsive exhalation/inhalation there is that suspension of mental activity, that coalescence into ultimate unity and consciousness - which is the ultimate regression. It may be very convenient to be able to project the potential terrors of the perinatal experience to the antipodes and leave me handling the impingement on your behalf, while you, safe within your idealised world, protected by a world's width from your own denied negativities are free to "represent the highest manifestations" of idealised primal bliss.

That leads naturally in to probably the most fundamental point raised for us by your writing, namely the process of idealisation and denial which emerges again and again. Strangely, in spite of your continuous stress on openness and acceptance, syncretism and inclusiveness, I find myself at many points needing to be more inclusive, rather than less, and sensing that behind your protestations of inclusiveness lies the cutting off of a huge dark area of valuable material, whose elision must stand for some kind of residual unconscious defence. I have the sense that this unacceptable area must hold for you, within the depths of the present but repressed parts of your being, those elements of "potential terror" which you are (understandably!) so keen for me to hold on your behalf. I am reminded of the tragic division

between Freud and Reich at this point, which seems to me to coincide with the very deep psyche/soma split. Freud with his intellectual, analytic, verbal, distanced, mental, schizoid position, appears to have been quite out of touch with the emotional and somatic manifestations of unconscious material, which were partly held by Rank and then supremely by Reich. The latter's concentration on sexuality, or body-armour, on the sensual and somatic body language as representing the wholeness, the hurts, the imprint of being, posed a massive threat to the schizoid defences of classical analysis and yet at the same time, evidenced precisely those defences, albeit in the antipodean position. He was soma, Freud was psyche, Reich was Sakti, Freud was Siva, or in the Taoist reification of the same fundamental split, Reich was Yin, Freud was Yang.

The position of integration would appear to require the bringing together of these two poles of the schizoid split to a condition of fundamental continuity and co-operative engagement. Integration is clearly not achieved by a conversion reaction from one pole to the other. I would suggest that both Freud and Reich were deeply caught up in the idealisation process, reifying both sides of the psyche/soma split. Processes of denial, however, were antithetical. Freud repressed and denied his somatic material and used his body to carry the unresolved, repressed, badness and negativities. Conversely, Reich denied and repressed certain areas of mental activity and was therefore particularly vulnerable to transference and incorporation of paranoid material which came increasingly to dominate both behaviour and writings as he aged.

We find the 'Johari diagram' which was originally used in the Blake/Mouton person/ task managerial grid, provides a fairly useful way of representing this kind of material [see diagram 1].



In our adaptation here the vertical axis stands for increased awareness of the Psyche/Siva/Yang material, that whole aspect of behaviour which is described as analytic / mental / critical / verbal/ construct - oriented / judgmental / differentiating/ acutely aware of historical process/cause and effect etc. The horizontal axis, on the other hand, represents rising awareness of soma / Sakti / Yin, associated with emotion/ experience/ acceptance/feeling/ symbolism/ unification/ uncritical acceptance of being in the here and now.

Now, obviously, near the origin, say point (1,1), is virtually autistic, deeply unconscious in either mental or somatic terms, intellectually repressed and quite

unaware of the physical, emotional, side of being. If we then move up the vertical axis to the

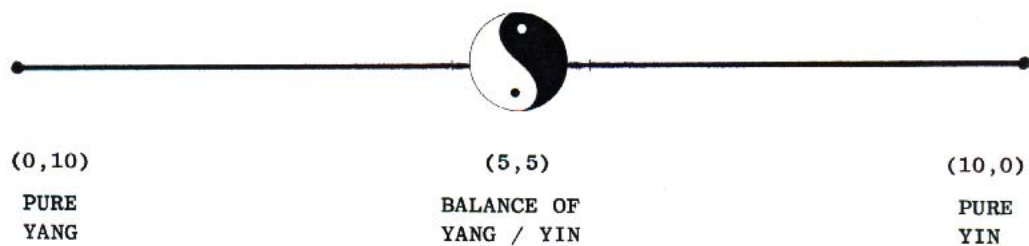
point (1,9), we come to the condition of almost pure Yang, the intensely cerebral, intellectual activity of the dominant psyche. This is the position which I sense Freud most closely occupied and it is the area in which I sense you are wanting to place me as a Yang dominant/Yin denying person, possibly as some kind of defence against your own awareness of being in the pole position at (9,1). Here, far out on the horizontal axis, is the highest level of awareness of somatic/Sakti/Yin material. This is the position with which I have associated Reich above.

The central position (5,5) represents a certain amount of awareness of both psyche and soma, Siva and Sakti, Yang and Yin. Here is the balanced 50/50 proportion of the Tao, with absolutely clear differentiation between the two zones; in practice it is characterised by conflicted ambivalence, the sense that each part is irreconcilably different from the other, that their energies are somehow working against each other.

The top right hand corner (9,9) is the zone of integration in which both psyche and soma reach maximum levels of awareness and co-operative, integrated-while-differentiated activity. Here, Siva and Sakti unite in the highest level of human awareness and potential fulfilment. Tragically the Tao treats the two elements as part of a single dimension, represented on the diagram by the Tao line from the top left corner to the bottom right. The Tao line is illustrated on its own in diagram 2, showing the position of pure Yang at the far left, moving through the balanced Yin and Yang at the centre, to the pole of pure Yin on the right.

DIAGRAM 2

THE TAO LINE



Without much deeper understanding of precisely what was going on in 1970 it is difficult to speak with precision, but it seems to us that there may have been some kind of conversion reaction from the Yang intensive experience of graduate school, via the Reichian experiential encounter, which leads to the condition you describe as being 'awash' in a new dimension of consciousness, to the position of identification with pure Yin receptivity. It is a position which you describe beautifully and with which, apparently, you still identify completely today, but it may just represent simply a redistribution of the fundamental defences of idealisation and denial. Although the presentation appears antithetical, there is little dynamic difference between the pure Yang, denied Yin, and the pure Yin with denied Yang. Both present a pole of the schizoid split with the antithetical pole deeply repressed. Conversion from one extreme to the other is, of course, a fairly common phenomenon and is, indeed,

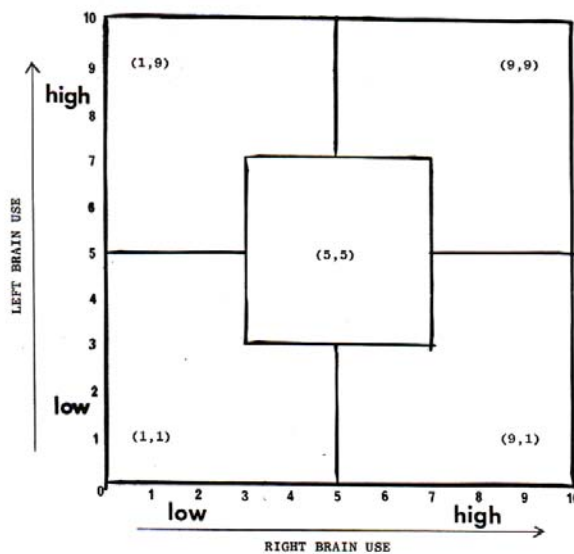
reversible, though with each reversal the defences of splitting and idealisation are undermined and the person becomes more aware of the cut off and denied parts of being, which are held in abeyance within their current position.

Not, of course, that mental activity is completely cut off within the Reichian/Yin/soma position and that takes us into another way of understanding the splitting or idealisation process in terms of dominance of those activities associated primarily with either the left or right hemispheres of the brain (see diagram 3).

DIAGRAM 3

LEFT BRAIN / RIGHT BRAIN

JOHARI



It is difficult to separate the elements of regression from those of the left/right idealisation within your writing, for both appear to be intimately connected parts of the same defensive position. In this response, however, I must deal with the left/right brain splitting first, because we need every ounce of skill and ability at our fingertips if we are to find our way with any sense of reality testing and discernment among the intricate labyrinths of regressive fantasy which characterise the pre-egoic state of foetal unconsciousness.

First of all, there is that comment on your own biography:

"And I could see that ALL that prevented us from feeling this simplistic unity, sharing it, **LETTING IT BE** sufficient fulfilment for ALL of our egoic and supra-egoic needs... was simply **TO LET GO OF ALL SELF-LIMITING SYSTEMS AND SCHEMATIC PARADIGMS .. to be willing to begin anew each new instant with our ONLY GIVEN REALITIES: ' I breathe, I feel, I touch, I share, I surrender,' - etc.**"

It is, of course, fascinating to note that at this fundamental point of clarification of your own position you actually grammatically state the opposite of what you mean. The sentence only makes sense if the phrase 'was simply to let go' is replaced by 'was simply not letting go'. I wonder how far this kind of unconscious reversal represents the ambivalence that you still feel about that paradigm shift which feels like a ' conversion reaction' and of which you use the phrase 'great personal reaction'. I sense that it may well be the splitting off and denial of left brain capacity and the idealisation of right brain behaviours from this point on which leads to your fundamental elision of causal space-time sequencing, the suspension of the

critical faculty, the total acceptance of all phantasies, reifications, symbols as equally and authentically true and real without any possibility of assessment or judgement, so that the regressive, psychotic is as equally valid as the egressive, reality-oriented. Hallucination is as much a source of data as observation etc. Within this position there are no possible criteria of selection or critical judgement for instance, as to whether anything I am saying might make more or less sense than anything that you are saying and therefore within that position dialogue is a total impossibility. It seems to me that while this position is maintained, there is no way of so examining our own or anyone else's 'underlying relationship of any set "system" of healing, therapy, art, sexuality, etc...' to see how far that material does actually reflect and express the individual's defences against his/her own particular pains and unresolved traumas. Of course we need the receptivity, the symbolism, the feeling/awareness of right brain material but not at the expense of cutting off the left brain! This position rings so clearly as a reaction from an over-dominant concentration on schizoid left-brain material (point 1,9 in diagram 3) to its pole antithesis (point 9,1). The path of wholeness must bring these two functioning elements together (point 9,9).

The same kind of position emerges in your comment :

"And the dis-discovery of the new overview/perspective which might suffice to render this special time of para-normal experience both comprehensible and attractive of the HIGH CELEBRATION which it most certainly deserves, must then be sought in other realms: in the direct spiritual guidance which exists innately in everyone and/or the **DEEP INTUITION** of our feminine right-brain or **YIN CONSCIOUSNESS**."

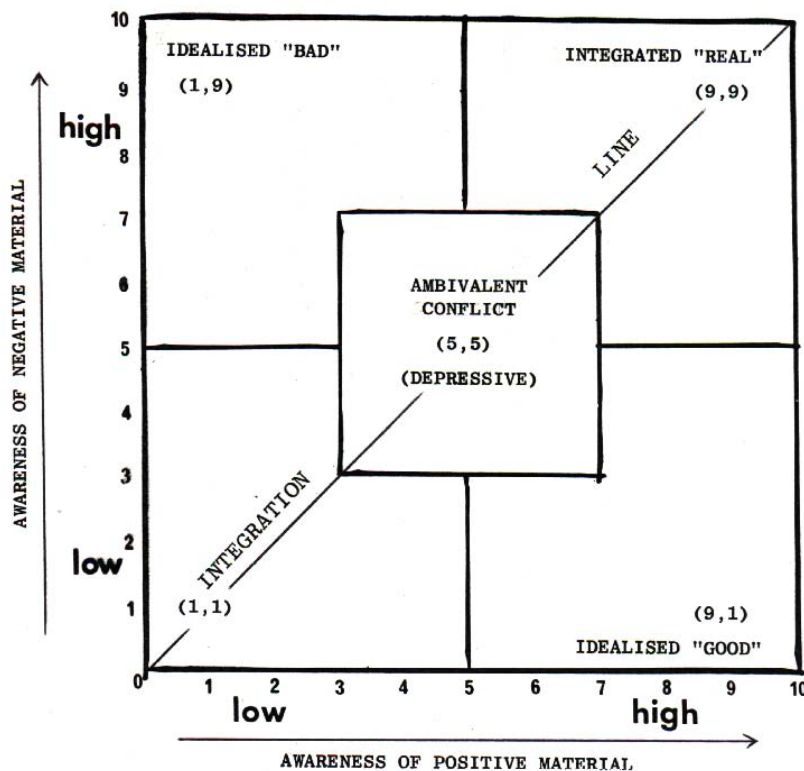
Here, for me, is one of the most important points of convergence in your material. This is, if you like, the Rosetta Stone, the multi-lingual decoder of the early intrauterine material. I find there is the implication of idealised goodness in the words 'high celebration'. Clinical evidence would seem to indicate that it is by no means a universally blissful experience, and that this is indeed a rear-projection of later splitting. Then there is this fundamental parallelism between universally innate 'direct spiritual guidance' and the 'deep intuition of our feminine right-brain or yin-consciousness'. I think your use of the word 'innate' in association with the ground of religion is absolutely accurate for religious behaviour, ritual, myth, ideology, symbol, practice and experience 'makes sense' so much better if interpreted as commonly owned displacement of the common elements of intrauterine experience, from the deep bliss of blastocystic sphericity through the emergent eternity of umbilical unity with the ground of being, to that point of crucifixion, splitting, talion and crushing inhumanity displaced from the cervix into the sacrificial victims and boundaries of all world religions.

However, beyond that let us examine the implications of the last few words of your sentence in which you make the identification between 'feminine', 'right-brain' and 'yin' (and so by implication, 'Sakta'). The glaring sexism of this kind of comment speaks deeply of the idealisation, the splitting, and the repression behind it. My right brain is as male as my left brain. Evelyn's left brain is as female as her right brain. This kind of position leads to the division of the sexes in utter uncritical collusion with the fundamental sexual splitting of tantric Hinduism, which is so deeply reincarnate in the paternalism of our own Western society. One of the implications of your statement would appear to be that in your celebration of Yin consciousness you have also, and inevitably cut off your maleness. In your celebration of femininity you have denied to womanhood all the richness of verbal,

analytic thought. In your celebration of right brain behaviour you have effectively denied and split off all left brain function.

DIAGRAM 4

GOOD / BAD JOHARI



And when you add to this the 'good/bad' splitting of valuation which is also implicit throughout your work (see diagram 4), it would appear quite clear that your own position in its present configuration is that of major idealisation and splitting of mental/emotional/experiential fields into good and bad, with the good identified with the somatic/Sakta/Yin/right brain/female/here-and-now uncritical acceptance of being in a condition of unified passivity, dominated by symbolism and feelings. The result is that the objective or goal of all endeavour is held up as some kind of totally purified, one-dimensional, half-view of a blissful intrauterine regressive field - a position which is incredibly attractive, very seductive and coincides with that offer of bliss, heaven, and ultimate ecstasy which is the phantasy opiate of all world religions.

It is, of course, only achieved with the investment of massive psychic energy into the maintenance of the splitting as a defensive mechanism, together with the repression of negativity and its displacement and projection, both personally and institutionally. At a social system level it is this kind of dynamic which leads the in-group to perceive itself as

ideal and good, the out-group as idealised bad. It is the ground of racist persecution and prejudice. White is good, black is bad. In the pole position to your own, of course, it is the ground of paternal sexism, male is good, female is bad. When, at levels of macro-system, this kind of splitting begins to be acted out and the internal badness projected across a nation boundary and perceived as persecutory from both sides of that boundary then the phantasy becomes reified and assumes the proportion of international 'plague' (to use Reich's term) with increasing armour, terror, aggression and eventually, the ultimate struggle of war, in which each idealised in-group seeks to annihilate the idealised out-group which poses such a threat to the maintenance of its own ego defences.

This kind of process of idealisation once in place can also be displaced into time, so that one may perceive the past as bad and the here-and-now as good, or the intrauterine field as good and the post-natal field as bad. I sense that both of those positions are concomitant within your own current presentation leading to the elision of conscious time-sequencing and the elevation of the timelessness of intrauterine 'eternity', into the preferred or idealised position. At a different level, for the Marxist the intrapersonal world as a causal element is cut off and denied, while all power is perceived as lying in the environment. Your own position is antithetical to that. There is a denial of social parameters, of information and learning from people, from history, from the environment, and it is only the intrapersonal depth of being which is the ground of all awareness reality consciousness and truth.

Not only is the deep intrapersonal world idealised in this way, but it is also cleansed of any element of differentiation, of selectivity, of critical assessment. There is an undifferentiated, totally accepting, non-sequential, non-causal unification of this idealised, intrapersonal field, which leads me to deal with the next major issue, namely that of regression. Before I come to that, however, I must raise the issue of another fundamental contradiction within your material. Conceptually and experientially you affirm a position of 'pure Yin-receptive consciousness' and yet in your therapy and practice you appear to be working with elements which rely deeply on the tantric Hindu base (however later subsumed within Taoist thought and practice). Here the process of maturation is identified with the awakening of Sakta, the great coiled female intuitive emotional part, and then a raising of Sakta through the five chakras, the fundamental fusion of Siva/Sakta which brings about the transcendently blissful realisation of supreme non-duality. The progression can be represented diagrammatically by the line from point 9.1 to 9.9 up the right hand side of diagram one.

This position of integration appears to be achieved only at the expense of two major levels of defence. Firstly, in so far as the integration is achieved it is within the idealised good field of experience, the negativities are completely elided from the experiential matrix and denied/repressed, both within the behaviour of the therapy group and also, I think, within the writing which you have shared with us. I suspect it is this process which makes people react outside and after the group process, while experiencing complete suppression of negativity within its boundaries. It is as if there are two diagrams, diagram 1a and 1b. 1a refers to an idealised good field, but has as the other side of its coin, its shadow image, diagram 1b, which refers to the idealised bad field - than which nothing more persecutory, horrifying, terrifying, threatening/enraging can be imagined. The reification of heaven holds as its concomitant the denied reification of hell. The defensive presentation of the idealised good field is achieved only at the expense of the repression of the idealised bad field. The position of blissful ecstasy is as much a psychotic defensive presentation as that of projection of

paranoid terror, though obviously it is somewhat more comfortable, socially seductive and acceptable to present the former rather than the latter pole of the defensive position.

In the early stages of resolution of the defences of idealisation which split the experiential field into good and bad elements (again see diagram 4) there may be a conversion from one idealised pole to the other. In other words, the person presenting at 1,9 in an intensely paranoid position may undergo a 'religious' conversion which apparently completely banishes the paranoia, reverses the defensive splitting and positions the subject at point 9,1. The person moving in this direction obviously sees the change as extremely good. Someone moving in the other direction feels as if they have fallen out of paradise into hell, though all that has happened is that the denied field has become conscious and the conscious field has become denied in each case. There may then typically be a period of oscillation, slowly damping between the two fields, until a certain amount of depressive stability is reached in which both good and bad elements of experience are held in disintegrated juxtaposition, with the energy vested in both fields held in conflicted ambivalence, resulting in a very flat and energy-less presentation. Maturation through the depressive position may then lead to an integration of the good and bad fields as the subject moves towards the 9,9 point in which the energy of idealisation is withdrawn and both positive and negative experiences can be accepted at full strength and handled as part of the real world. The origin to 10,10 line on this diagram now presents the 'integration line' of the good and bad fields. Distance from this line represents the degree of splitting. Low values on the line indicate the degree of regression.

The similar line in diagram one, clearly represents the integration of psyche and soma, Yang and Yin, Siva and Sakta. Similarly in diagram three, the integration line represents the co-operative harnessing without defensive gating of the two hemispheres of the brain, though as I have indicated, the integration lines of diagrams one and three in your own position would appear to be within the idealised good field, or 9,1 position of diagram four. You will by now have realised that I am using successive Johari diagrams to represent the multidimensional levels of idealisation/integration within psychological space. To each of these two dimensional fields we can add a third dimension, emerging vertically from the paper at the origin and indicating the degree of regression/egression of the field vector.

Tantric Hinduism appears, traditionally, to have been able to reach a position of Sakta/Siva integration but at the cost of massive regression to that position of undifferentiated unity, represented by extremely early intrauterine symbiosis. It is as if the direction of time is reversed and maturation/achievement is vectored into reverse time, toward the origin or conception point of human existence. Here the proto-being in its infinitesimal size, experiences the finite as infinite. In its deep unawareness of the passage of time, it experiences the temporal as eternal. It would seem that it is this position which exercises a major and dominant influence on all your current perceptions and dynamics as represented in the written material you have shared with us. Now it is clearly important to recognise this material and to own it as the matrix from which our present here-and-now consciousness has been generated. But to make it the goal or objective of meditation, therapy etc. is clearly a stance of fundamental collusion with defensive flight from some subsequently experienced trauma. The reversed time-trace is epitomised in Nirvana, as the drop returns to the ocean to be absorbed within it. It is the point of complete collapse of all boundedness. It is nothing and it is all. There is no differentiation. It is the point of timeless being, which is the same as non-being. It is, in your terms, a 'cetacean experience': the tiny protoplasmic blob 'awash' in

the sea of the infinite womb-belly has the same kind of experience as that of the whale in the infinite world sea.

Not that the word 'infinity' is being used correctly in these kind of instances, it is simply a relative judgement of the finite from a much smaller perspective. So this repetitive awareness of infinity signals the regressive identification with the tiny. At this very early stage of development, of course, the rate of change within the embryo is extremely high, in comparison to which the changes experienced within the surrounding world are, to all intents and purposes, irrelevant. The environmental time-base has an eternal quality to it in comparison to the existential time-base. So you write:

"Then let us begin our quest for understanding of all of these factors exactly where our children themselves began within our feelings and our experience ... at that very beginning-point of desire which served as either conscious or mindless prayer for the in-coming of the child spirit through our mortal lovemaking and communion. And start we there.. then we have infinity as our matrix and God as the only determinant. Beyond this, there are the vast and infinitely intricate networks of affect and **THE EXPERIENTIAL INFINITY OF INFLUENCES**, interactions and synergies upon which we may only meditate in pure surrender."

It is as if the beginning point of understanding of the material with which you wrestle is deep in the blastocystic position and facing backwards to the origin of all time. So the beginning point is regressive and the time direction is reversed. Your own description of the position is expressed with beautiful sympathetic clarity:

"But for the child within, and for the entirety of its physical existence **THROUGH** this phase (Level III) of prenatal emotional development, **THE MOTHER IS THE UNIVERSE-AT-LARGE**. Her feelings and the complex psychophysical reactions/abreactions which they elicit **ARE THE EXPERIENTIAL INFINITY IN WHICH THE PRENATAL CHILD SWIMS**."

Elsewhere you describe the 'little womb-child' as 'still well and truly safe within its mother's infinite belly' in which it is caught up in an 'all time/no time process', which is also a 'no time/infinity flow'. You refer on several occasions to the 'magical moment in the timeless universe of the womb when the mother/child feelings are one' and I sense that much of your group work represents an attempt to enable people to recapture and to stay with that magical moment. So you issue a kind of invitation to experience this idealised regression corporately:

"Perhaps it is our time at last, to look within our selves, each other, and within the very womb-time beginning of us all ... to discover yet again the seeds of infinity, of consciousness, of mortal life itself which manifest through the high tantric communion therein. It is a time of magic, a time of re-birth, **A TIME OF FEELING** for every one. With so little effort needed, perhaps we can now begin to surrender into these self-revealing mysteries and in those silent wonders renew our openness ... together."

Now that is fine, provided it is clearly seen to be a stance of regressive abreaction leading to a subsequent experience of egressive integration, in order with greater clarity and maturity to engage in the here-and-now. That is not the impression given. It is as if the adult here-and-

now experience in which you are caught up is precisely and deeply identified as a condition of fixated deep intrauterine idealised regression. Your consistent description of your present adult here-and-now stance as a practitioner has massive parallels with your description of the pure Yin-centred, receptive, non-judgemental, oceanic, timeless consciousness of the deep pre-natal state, with its unawareness of cause and effect chains and the only access to information being that of its own internal world.

Again, I think you are beautifully accurate in your description of the ground of religion as being fundamentally associated with the deep pre-natal world. As you say :

"... there exist and will always remain the basic treatises and teachings upon which our ongoing spiritual explorations and unfoldments are inevitably based -- or to which they inevitably turn, and upon which the great organised religions of the world are said to be founded. In this area, too, we have the personal experience of millions of individuals who have been able through various means to transcend the bondage of the Earth-plane chronologies which seem to hold most humans quite willingly transfixed in a very delimited experience of 'here-and-now' materiality, who can testify to the **high levels of awareness and the expanded dimensions of consciousness which are NATURAL ATRIBUTES of prenatal (and even pre-incarnate) states of being.**"

The states of consciousness evoked within religious systems are clearly representations of the deep pre-natal state, but far from being healthy systems of integration, such great collusional reifications of defensive behaviour facilitate social regression away from the painful realities of the here-and-now into the safety of some idealised preconscious womb-world, in which the devotees are indeed 'quite willingly transfixed'. As you so beautifully put it a little further down the same page :

"Perhaps now, at last, it is time that we can acknowledge with a great sense of ultimate relief that **EACH 'PATHWAY TO INFINITY' REVEALS A COMMON PRENATAL EXPERIENCE OF PROFOUND AWARENESS AND SENSITIVITY ... AND THAT EACH OF THESE PATHWAYS TO INFINITY REVEALS THE SAME ... INFINITY!**"

There would indeed appear to be a set of convergent pathways to infinity within the world religions, and the parallel syncretistic regressive therapies, which are their contemporary expression in certain cultures. However, I think we must recognise that a 'pathway to infinity' is simply an existential re-coding of the 'pathway to infinitesimality'. That all such pathways have in common a massive defence against anxiety is indicated by your 'great sense of ultimate relief'. One is left with the fundamental question, 'relief from what?' In other words, when we experience the presentation of regression and idealisation as a way of being then the diagnosis of fixated defence must also and at the same time raise the question 'defence against what?'

Time reversal emerges again in your comment:

"When we begin to project ourselves backwards in time, in to that ancient water-world of the Womb, and try to comprehend conceptually what this experience might be like (WAS like) to a Womb-Child, it is important to remain open -- to approach

this new meditation with a surrendered approach which might hopefully re-create the total Yin-centred experience of the prenatal child."

So the goal of 'this new meditation' is the attempt to recreate and recapture that 'first fine careless rapture' of the blissfully en-wombed pre-natal experience, which is precisely, and I think here you accurately express your own stance, a point of self 'projection backwards in time'. That rear-projection carries specifically the fundamental defences against psychotic anxiety as represented by splitting, denial and regression.

Only in the pre-implantation blastocystic condition do we, in reality, parallel the condition described at the very end of your paper:

"In pursuing delineation of the nature of prenatal consciousness , then, we have cast ourselves adrift in the infinite sea of **Wholistic Phenomenology**, trying to find security within an ever-expanding infinity-of-infinities... and feeling quite at home at that!"

So 'wholistic phenomenology', which you describe as the practical/conceptual formulation of your own position, is an 'infinite sea' in which you are quite happily adrift, finding your security 'within an ever-expanding infinity-of-infinities' which, re-coded existentially, would seem to refer to that ever-decreasing embryonic trace as it moves backwards in time through the blastocystic toward the fertilised ovum and then even further into the sundered gametes and their origin deep within the parental tissue. It is as if to remain still at any point is to be overwhelmed by anxiety from the future and therefore forced to move further back. I am left with this beautiful picture of you as a perfect blastocystic sphere, shrinking steadily and rolling gently backwards up his idealised mother's right fallopian in regressive ecstasy.

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The defensive structures are clear. The integrational agenda in forward-facing time raises the spectre of the material which lies behind the defences, in the management of which those precise defences, neurotic though they may be, are supremely a functional response. What was it that stressed so transmarginally (to use Frank Lake's term) as to lead to the divorce of psyche and soma, Yang and Yin, Sakta and Siva? What impingement set up the schizoid gating between the hemispheres of the brain, leading on to conversion reactions, the flip from one side to the other, with all terror displaced and focussed into the rejected side? What experience was so deep and significant, so fundamentally traumatic that it reified the bad field into unmitigated hell, emptied of all possible positivity and conversely reified the previous good-enough mixture of good and bad into a blissfully idealised heaven? What experience in its developmental trace was faced by the emergent psyche which made it turn round and recoil in dread, leaving the unfaceable forever behind it, and flying as adult away from history into the here-and-now, and, in parallel flight, as regression away from primal trauma to the earliest possible pre-natal state?

There are a couple of pointers in your writing, quite apart from the grammatical dislocations and occasional reversal of meaning, which give indication of the ambivalence and the presence of the negative field, held buried below the surface.

There is that beautifully sensitive section in which you are so clearly and existentially aware of the totality of experiential data fed across the life-supporting boundary of the symbiotic relationship between foetus and mother. You note that :

"IT IS COMMON FOR THE MOTHER TO ATTEMPT TO SUPPRESS HER OWN EMOTIONAL FEELINGS IN ORDER TO PROTECT HER CHILD. AND YET IT IS OFTEN PRECISELY THIS ACT OF SELF-DENIAL AND SELF-OPPRESSION WHICH CAN ULTIMATELY CAUSE THE PRENATAL CHILD THE MOST PAIN OF ALL! "

If I really do hear you at this point, rather than simply your second hand recounting of the experiences of others, then here within the prenatal field, recovered at great cost, are memories which form for you the nucleus of the 'most pain of all', in comparison to which the pre-traumatic experience of prenatal, pre-egoic existence is a haven to be recovered at all cost. You continue: .

"What the child CAN 'know' from any such consciously chosen emotional suppression and/or genuinely 'innocent' (i.e. non-consciously chosen) repression is ONLY that **"SOMETHING HAPPENED TO ITS MOTHER"** which was somehow 'so terrible' that it could not even be processed-through (abreacted through) the mother's whole-being consciousness! And THAT must be something very primordially terrifying, and something to be feared indeed! And when we recall that, initially at least, **THE MOTHER'S CONSCIOUSNESS/BODY-MIND IS THE EFFECTIVE UNIVERSE-OF-EXPERIENCE OF THE PRENATAL BEING AND THE PRIME SOURCE-RESOURCE OF ALL OF ITS PRENATAL CONDITIONING AND PATTERNING** ... then something as apparently commonplace as ongoing 'maternal anxiety' or 'sexual frustration', for example, takes on entirely new dimensions of potential meaning and importance. For now we can perhaps begin to see that even the most commonplace 'trials and tribulations' of our everyday lives can and will exert a profound effect upon our children-to-be: either in serving as the seed-source for the development of habit-patterns and tendencies in the womb-child and/or as dynamic and painful examples/experience of NON-RESOLVABLE TENSIONS AND CONFLICTS -- either or both of which can be predicted to affect the womb-child's freedom to develop its full capabilities and potentials for effective self-realisation.

"And here **IT IS ESSENTIAL TO BEAR IN MIND THAT IT IS RARELY THE MATERNAL EMOTIONAL REACTIONS OR ABREACTIVE DISCHARGES WHICH ARE DANGEROUS TO THE PRENATAL CHILD ...RATHER IT IS THE INTERNAL, CONFUSIONS, UNDISCHARGED FEARS AND OVERALL PSYCHOPHYSICAL. DISINTEGRATIONS WHICH ARE THE INEVITABLE CONSEQUENCES OF ALL. REPRESSED FEELING WHICH ARE SO DAMAGING TO THE DEVELOPING CHILD WITHIN THE WOMB !"**

Here there is awareness of material which was 'so terrible' as to be unhandlable by even the mother, that infinitely resourceful and caring environment, that existential God in which the prenatal child lives and moves and has its being. At that point you move from existential into displacement language with the comment 'and that must be something very primordially terrifying, and something to be feared indeed!' There is an intellectual appreciation of the

inevitability of transmarginal stress as being something pitched beyond pitch of bearing and yet which, without the possibility of supported catharsis cannot be recovered in experience. Then there is the secondary displacement from self to the next generation. The use of the word 'our' identifies you with the parent and distances you from the adult who as prenatal child had this experience. I sense that the fact that you see these 'tensions and conflicts' which result from the experience as 'non-resolvable' represents an existential awareness of as-yet unresolved material which has to date proved impossible for you to handle.

The second pointer, or clue, within your writing concerns birth itself. There is a strange attenuation of your material around this point. It is as if birth is a boundary, a terminus of the prenatal world, to encounter which is to experience a form of death, rather than to pursue a continuous life-trace into the very different post-natal field. Conversely, the post-natal field itself appears to have birth as an origin, it is discontinuous from the prenatal environment. You refer to certain qualities and experiences as 'innate' for instance, on two or three occasions, as if the post-natal being has a new beginning, quite different from conception. So I am left with birth as a discontinuity, which is the subject of three, for me, significant references. The first two occur in the brief passage:

"the child will inevitably be feeling the ALL of its mother's emotional feelings -- the totality of her emotional experiences, for better or worse, "til birth do them part," and even long after that initial **RITUAL OF SEPARATION AND RE-UNION**

Here, the intrauterine child relates to the womb-world under the symbolism of marriage. There is a mutual sharing of the good things, the bad things, 'for better for worse', which would seem to indicate the idealisation of the intrauterine state as some kind of coitus. Here the whole foetal person stands in for the part of the adult male. The foetus is male. It is the content contained by the female container (whatever the sex of the foetus!). The symbolism when placed in association with the rejection and denial of the male, left-brain, elements in the rest of your writing makes me also question the possibility of an inside/outside or self/environment split, in which badness is vested in the content and goodness is invested in the container. There is a fundamental denial of the self and an idealisation and affirmation of the environment, leading to an identification with the womb-world and a collapse of the egoic significance of its contained child. This would, of course, be quite consistent with the internalising of idealised badness, the point of splitting and displacement at the perinatal phase of gestation, where self and other awareness is already in place.

Even more significant is the interchange of birth and death within the ritual language of the marriage service. For the prenataally regressed being, birth is indeed identified with the terminal boundary. In so far as adults are themselves at some point still unconsciously fixated prior to the trauma of birth in an eternal womb field, birth imagery is associated with death. In some unconscious and inarticulate way the whole being's awareness that birth was, in fact, survived, seems to be the ground of myths of immortality and resurrection, as if death as birth is simply a matrix or opening into a new world. Be that as it may at the terminus of life, it is quite clear that the reverse is true here at the beginning of the post-natal field. Birth is experienced as death, the womb-world is bounded, there is no exit and life requires the maintenance of defence against ever engaging that massive threatening life-destroying experience of parturition. If we start to unscramble this material, I take it, there is bad news in that the myths of life after death appear to be reified constructs of perinatal experience, but

there is good news for the foetally regressed, namely that there is in fact life after birth. The transition, even though traumatic, can be survived.

Toleration, however, may only be possible at that stage of maturity by calling into being and use the most massive and primitive defences against psychotic anxiety which then fixate and lay the foundations of all subsequent experiences of attenuated resource (placental failure), massive impingement (physical trauma in the birth canal) and loss (the fundamental bereavement of the womb-world).

It is not at all insignificant that the material is described in schizoid distancing and depersonalisation as 'ritual'. So much ritual of our adult world is in fact an attempt so to relive birth as to be able to handle its boundaries without pain. The caesura is visited again and again, yet nearly always in such a way as to reify and strengthen the fundamental defences associated with the experience and it is here, more than at any other point in experience that the fundamental splitting and cleavage of psyche/soma, good and bad etc. must be located. It is in flight from this point that the regressive drive takes its energy and it is in the attempt to maintain and retain forever the experience of containment within the idealised good womb that we find the most fundamental defences against loss and mourning. To resolve this world-grief requires weeping out the loss of heaven, for it is the idealised womb from which the babe is evicted in phantasy, with all bad experiences obliterated and denied in the light of the overwhelming negativities of parturition.

The idealisation of birth emerges again a little later in your paper: ,

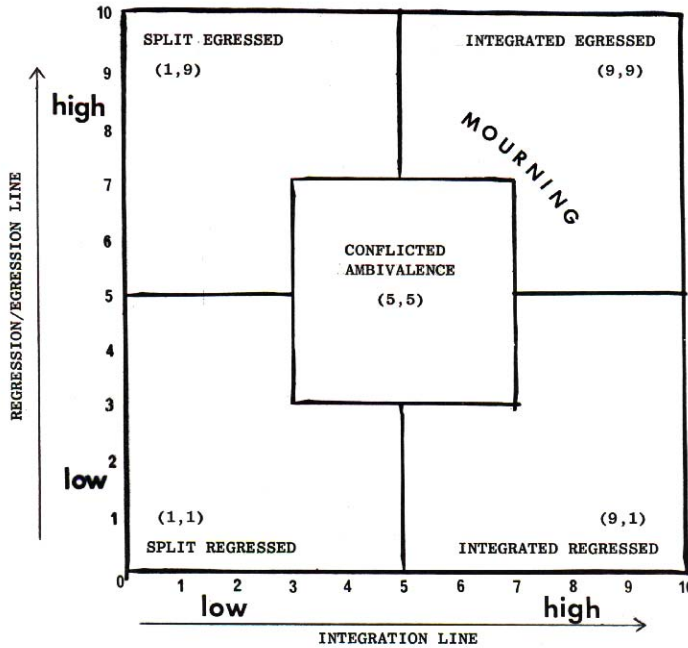
"With the first stirrings of desire which beget our children, through the long and short journey of pregnancy, and through the magical eternity of the ritual of birth and first-breath reification we can come to know, to learn, to embrace our birth-rite heritage of communion with all sentient life, of simple and unspoken **ONE-NESS WITH THE ALL OF (OUR RE-) CREATION.** "

Here again, it is not your own birth which is the issue. The displacement is into the birth of your children. For the father, the wife's birthing of his child may be idealised as 'the magical eternity of the ritual of birth'. Most women know differently and everyone of us, in the depths of our own perinatal experience has a very different story to tell. It may well be that it is only in so far as that material can be handled in regressive abreaction and sustained catharsis on our own behalf that the defensive energy of splitting can be lowered, so allowing the various stages of integration, which have been mapped in the preceding pages - the integration of psyche and soma; the integration of left and right; the integration of good and bad; and then finally, the integration of the intrauterine and post-natal fields across an experience which, though traumatic, was survived, and can be approached and passed through in either direction, until its associated terrors are no longer embedded in the defensive armouring of the maturing adult [see diagram 5].

DIAGRAM 5

EGRESSION / INTEGRATION

JOHARI



Perhaps some of the deepest pain of all has to be worked through in the process of mourning as we come to recognise that that idealised womb-world was never that good - it always involved good and bad, and as we mourn the loss of the ideal, we begin to see the real.

Then further we begin to let go of the womb-world as objective and goal and turn around to face our future with our eyes still moist from the shuddering grief as we let go of Paradise Lost, but able with far greater reality, much less phantasy, to relate in the here-and-now with the world as it is - the world of responsibility, of

work, of the struggle for survival, of a social environment with its stresses and strains, in which with emergent maturity we must seek to play our part until death puts an end to our contribution.

* * * * *

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