

**UNSEEN GIFTS:  
TURNING TOWARD THE MARGINALIZATION OF ANOMALOUS EXPERIENCE**

by  
N. LUCAS PLUMB

A dissertation  
submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN  
PSYCHOLOGY**

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Research Topic

This research is part of a 15 year personal inquiry concerning the categories of experience that expand one's sense of what is "real"—as opposed to what Hafiz, a Sufi poet, calls "the unreal."<sup>1</sup> He suggests that the figure of the unreal comes to enslave us as children and subsequently restricts our ability to imagine other possibilities.<sup>2</sup> Socrates teaches that the "unseen—those unchanging things only perceived with the mind," are more real than "the seen—what can be touched and seen and perceived."<sup>3</sup> Amit Goswami emphasizes, however, that modernist Western culture is much more likely to designate material existence as real over one based in the unseen imagination.<sup>4</sup>

Experience based in the unseen is frequently *anomalous* in nature and defined by Etzel Cardeña, Steven Jay Lynn, and Stanley Krippner as not being perceivable by the five senses nor existing within a time/space continuum; thus, it is often considered non-normative or outside consensual reality.<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Lloyd Mayer finds that these states commonly bring a sense of connection to something beyond oneself that evokes awe or reverence as well as an odd "jolt" of recognition.<sup>6</sup> She also notes that anomalous experience is better explained by the laws of quantum rather than classical physics.<sup>7</sup>

Beginning in the early 1900s, physicists noticed that some events went "out of symmetry" with the laws of classical physics; these phenomena were referred to as

anomalous.<sup>8</sup> Other disciplines began to use the term as well. Cardeña, Lynn, and Krippner note that those who researched the paranormal used this term to depict what is “uncommon and deviating from ordinary experience or generally accepted explanations of reality.”<sup>9</sup> The root word for anomalous comes from the Greek language, in which *an* translates as “not” and *omalos* signifies “the same or similar.”<sup>10</sup> This meaning is originally attributed to a barren plateau on Crete named Omalos, which is surrounded by steep, rugged hills thus making them “anOmalos” or “not the same as Omalos.”<sup>11</sup>

In recent years, many who had defined reality from a more materialist, sensate, time-bound perspective have entered into anomalous states that are difficult to explain or situate within conventional Western schemas. Based on a 1991 Gallop poll, 13 million Americans have had a near-death experience in which their physical bodies technically died, but some part or essence still maintained an accurate awareness of actual events around them.<sup>12</sup> In addition to near-death, anomalous phenomena can include categories such as pre-cognition, mystical encounter, spontaneous healing, telepathy, after-death visitation, alien abduction, and remote viewing—the latter consisting of an ability to give accurate details of a distant, undisclosed location without any previous information.<sup>13</sup>

In his survey of Western civilization, Antonio Damasio reflects that as it turned more positivist in the early 1800s, anomalous types of experience—which can be difficult to measure or verify due to their mostly non-physical, non-replicable nature—became more circumspect.<sup>14</sup> Although many who hold to a materialist worldview still consider these experiences to be illusory, those who have undergone one generally find that they seem more real than conventional existence and evoke deeper feelings of essential truth. David Wulff indicates that “any experience qualified as mystical . . . leaves a strong

impression of having encountered a reality different from—and, in some crucial sense, higher than—the reality of everyday experience.”<sup>15</sup> Mark Matousak, who wrote about his own mystical opening, portrays this state as “filled, instantly with silent knowledge, washed through with a peace I’d never known before, a profound sense of wholeness. I suddenly knew that divinity is real, and that I was an inextricable reflection of that reality.”<sup>16</sup> Of his mystical encounter, Neville Goddard writes: “The most intimate relationship on earth is like living in separate cells compared with this union.”<sup>17</sup>

While these intense episodes of extrasensory awareness can be quite meaningful, they are considered difficult to express in words, thus theologian, Teilhard de Chardin, describes them as *ineffable*.<sup>18</sup> Sigmund Freud writes of them as *uncanny* to give a sense of their strangeness; Carl Jung uses the word *synchronicity* to illustrate their odd but meaningful coincidences; Abraham Maslow conceptualizes about *peak experiences* to convey their ecstatic dimension; Rudolph Otto refers to them as *numinous*, which he forms from the Latin word, *numen*, meaning “powerful presence or spirit”; Rhea White utilizes the term *exceptional human experiences*; Mayer speaks of them as *mind-matter anomalies* to point to their embodied aspect; Stanislov Grof calls them *non-ordinary* to stress their atypical nature; and Gerald May labels them as *unitive* to emphasize the strong sense of connection they evoke.<sup>19</sup> Those who have gone through these kinds of encounters will be referred to as *experiencers*—a term John Mack uses to classify those who have had alien encounters; in some cases, researchers use the term *experiencers*.<sup>20</sup>

The first contemporary volume on anomalies from a clinical perspective did not appear until 1982 with *Anomalistic Psychology*.<sup>21</sup> It would not be until 2003 that *Varieties of Anomalous Experience* was published, remarkably under the auspices of the

American Psychological Association.<sup>22</sup> Its editors, led by Krippner, openly acknowledge their book's literary precedent, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, written a century earlier by William James.<sup>23</sup> They note that "even when single and transitory, [this experience] is reported to have an enormous impact on the experient."<sup>24</sup> They concede, however, that "the study of anomalous experiences is still a marginal area of concern for psychology," and define as anomalous "an uncommon experience that is believed to deviate from ordinary experience or from the usually accepted explanations of reality."<sup>25</sup>

For this study then, anomalous experience will additionally be understood as having been devalued or *marginalized* by the conventional culture because of its unusual nature.<sup>26</sup> As defined by Jap Bos and Leendert Groenedijk, marginalization is the process whereby individuals, groups, or experiences that are clearly dissimilar from the *consensus reality* of a dominant culture must remain at the edges of influence and are frequently exiled.<sup>27</sup> Adam Crabtree sees consensus reality as a system that embraces those ideas and images utilized by the majority of the culture to designate what is acceptable in thought, feeling, and behavior.<sup>28</sup> When the consensus perspective is challenged, it results in what Aftab Omer has labeled *cultural gatekeeping*, which encompasses the process of marginalization:

Cultural gatekeepers [represent] the restrictive and resisting forces within a culture that maintain the dominant ideology and ensure conformity with that culture's rules, norms, values, and taboos. They personify a set of beliefs and practices that legitimize the status quo through the influence of political, economic, and media institutions.<sup>29</sup>

The gatekeeper consists of an *introjected* voice that is formed first by parental input and later through peer, institutional, and societal restrictions.<sup>30</sup> Sandor Ferenczi coined the term *introjection* to describe what occurs as individuals accept and internalize

parental or cultural norms, taking them on as their own personal beliefs or voices.<sup>31</sup> When this happens, introjected identities such as the *marginalizer*—a special case of Omer’s gatekeeper—are formed.<sup>32</sup> Omer warns that *introjects* or parts then raise their often critical gatekeeping voice around experience falling too far outside conventional reality.<sup>33</sup>

From a general interest in anomalous phenomena and a growing sense of the complexities of marginalization gained during five years of participation in my graduate school cohort, I began to focus on the ways that turning toward the marginalization surrounding anomalous experience might impact those who were trying to resolve and integrate such an encounter. I found it important to consider both anomalous experience and marginalization through three distinct, but interconnected categories—personal, cultural, and *archetypal*. The last consists of those universal patterns and lenses described by Jung that often unconsciously shape our lives and are “deposits of the constantly repeated experiences of humanity . . . a kind of readiness to produce over and over again the same or similar mythical ideas.”<sup>34</sup> John Van Eenwyk infers that although impersonal in nature, archetypes ultimately constellate on a personal level because “our minds at birth must contain inherent predispositions to perceive in categories.”<sup>35</sup>

A personal expression of the archetypes occurs largely through the human *affect system* according to Donald Nathanson, who defines affect as “the biological portion of emotion—when some definable stimulus has activated a mechanism which then releases a known pattern of biological events.”<sup>36</sup> Tom Cheetham cautions that when affective reality is denied, it creates a sense of exile from others as well as from spirit.<sup>37</sup> Pointing to the deeper spiritual and cultural characteristics of affect, Diana Fosha reveals that “core affective experiences are conduits to contact with the essential self and to optimal

relational in-the-world functioning.”<sup>38</sup> Emphasizing the importance of accessing affect as a condition for *anomalous knowing*, Mayer suggests that “a state of distinct perceptual capacities available through intuition has been largely overlooked” and refers to “the emotional keys [that] are necessary to unlock the door of necessary sensitivities.”<sup>39</sup>

It is this affective capability in humans, or what Jung termed the *feeling function*, that allows humans to enter into a sense of connection and empathy with Other; the ancient alchemists called it *coniunctio*—Latin for “illumination through union.”<sup>40</sup> A parallel concept for this heightened awareness of unity is that of *participatory consciousness*. Omer defines it as “states unobstructed by a delusionary sense of a separate self,” contrasting it with “non-participatory states of consciousness [that] are adaptive to stressful or traumatic circumstances and subsequently maintained through the gatekeeping mechanisms of *adaptive identity*.”<sup>41</sup> He proposes that this type of identification, which can prevent access to unified, participatory states, is caused by the “unavoidable trauma in life that restricts us from experiencing the full expression of our being.”<sup>42</sup> On a personal level this trauma implies the need for what Melanie Klein terms, *reparative experience*, which can be understood as tending to the wounds of early separation to allow meaningful connectedness within oneself or with others.<sup>43</sup> Culturally, reparation implies the import of becoming accountable for oppressive states of poverty, segregation, or genocide.

Archetypally, reparative states are entered into through what Donald Kalsched calls “*transformative inclusion*, which leads to a breakdown of Psyche’s beleaguered ‘I’ into the [unitive] state of a divine/human ‘we’—the surrender of the ‘old’ personality to something larger.”<sup>44</sup> He portrays the psyche as that “organ of experience, which creates links and associations among elements of the personality in the interest of integration.”<sup>45</sup> Joseph

Coppin and Elizabeth Nelson speak of psyche as that “great repository of ideas, images, emotions, urges, and desires that appear in the world, whether its source is personal or collective, conscious, or unconscious.”<sup>46</sup> They note that this description “is unlike more limited definitions that often equate the psyche with the personal mind.”<sup>47</sup>

### **Relationship to the Topic**

In graduate school, I began to understand how anomalous experience can allow a deeper sense of connection—personally, culturally or archetypally. Conversely, I saw how marginalization undermines it. Although I was not particularly afraid to tell others about what had happened to me, I beginning to read in the literature of those who were. This brought an awareness of how images of anomalous knowing can become exiled, and I suddenly noticed how seldom people shared these experiences.<sup>48</sup> I began to reflect on my own experiences of the unseen—especially one that had occurred in 1991. It changed my perception of reality in profound ways and kindled intense responses in me that led to a number of critical, life-altering decisions. Certainly this particular episode had become the central defining point of my life. Thus it surprised me to realize how I had slowly, unconsciously diminished and even subtly marginalized the core of my experience—one that had seemed so remarkable, so mind-shattering at the time.

As a child, I do not recall specifically having had an anomalous experience, although I was labeled a “day-dreamer” and often scolded by teachers for window-gazing instead of concentrating on my studies. I do remember, however, that my perceptions and emotions were frequently denied or shamed. The adults around me would say, “Oh, you don’t really feel that way,” or “You’re just too sensitive,” and for additional containment,

they would sometimes add, “What will people think?” Being a fairly compliant youngster, I willingly denied the reality they wanted me to repress, but I remember times of intense loneliness as well as painful disconnection from myself and from others during childhood.

I eventually came to realize that most of the adults in my life had simply been trying to protect me from overwhelming experience and emotions that were too difficult, even for them to confront. In spite of understanding this intellectually, their restrictions have substantially impacted my ability to sustain a subjective, embodied reality. It was not until I entered therapy at age 29 that I began the long, complex process of reclaiming an experientially grounded reality. Then at 45, I went through the experience of slipping into a hyper-connected, unitive state that showed me images and understandings so outside cultural consensus that I have been trying to reconcile them ever since.

The path to my experience probably began when I was named project architect for a large educational complex and developed a friendship with one of the building officials assigned to it. Neither of us wanted to threaten our marriages, and we rarely saw each other due to living in distant cities; however, we talked frequently on spiritual topics, and the connection between us soon deepened. As a result, a powerful but sublimated energy started to reverberate through every aspect of my life touching my co-workers, my friends, my children, and even my partner. One day, I was stopped at a traffic signal after exiting the freeway; Ray Lynch’s etheric music, *No Blue Thing*, was playing on the car stereo.<sup>49</sup>

Suddenly, I went from sitting at that stoplight on an ordinary, sun-filled day to being enveloped by a kind of opaque cloud. It actually seemed as though I was not in a body anymore. I felt no fear as everything was so euphoric in this place that was no-place. I had such an astonishingly serene sense within me. Although this state could only have

lasted 30 seconds at most, I marked no time and felt dangled in forever.<sup>50</sup> It was like being in a kind of space-less knowing composed of ultimate oneness, a state of indestructible belonging that instantly repaired all past abandonments and human rejections.

I could not see anything below me or above me, and actually there was no way to tell where “I” stopped and this oneness began. During this experience, I also sensed that I knew absolutely *everything!* Later as I reflected on this feeling of unbounded knowledge, I realized that it was rationally quite absurd, but for those few moments, it felt absolutely true and accessible, even in subjects such as calculus or exotic foreign languages. The other facet of this experience that seemed remarkable was my feeling that everything was utterly perfect with the universe. I no longer had to struggle or worry about *anything!* Experiencing this helped me grasp the level of chronic anxiety I always seemed to carry.

Then as suddenly as I had been taken away from it, I was back in my truck. The car next to me was pulling away from the stoplight so I knew it was time to proceed through the intersection. The terrain around me was certainly familiar, but it seemed to be shimmering and quite vivid. Most of all, I felt absolutely ecstatic. This unitive experience continued to deeply impact me over the next several weeks.<sup>51</sup> My perceptions of life changed radically. I could read esoteric literature and effortlessly understand complex psychological concepts. Also I was able to connect intensely with others—from the unknown clerk in the video store to those in my most intimate circle.

Eager to share this incredible experience that had just occurred, I tried telling a few others about it and explaining its stunning qualities. Although no one tried to deny what had happened or overtly marginalized me, those I shared it with appeared unable to

respond to it in any substantial way and never brought it up again. I remember it feeling quite odd that they would have little or no curiosity about it, but with time I just learned to expect this lack of reaction. Unfortunately, normative culture seemed to have no readily recognizable categories into which I could place what had happened to me. While I would never trade my anomalous experience for anything in the world, holding its strange reality while participating in a more consensus one has not been simple or without consequence.

Graduate school finally helped me realize the significance of anomalous knowing, and I became more conscious of the subtle erosion that had occurred around its meaning. This helped me to start delivering my experience out of exile and enter into a participatory process around it. In so doing, I chose to research the ways in which turning toward a marginalized anomalous experience could provide a more aware relationship with what Omer calls “intensities of the imagination.”<sup>52</sup> Not only did I want to do this for myself, but also for others who had suddenly been thrust into the same kind of initiatory journey.

### **Theory-in-Practice**

This study on anomalous experience is situated within the orientation of Imaginal Psychology. The term *imaginal* was first coined in 1647 and later pressed into use by Henry Corbin in the 1960s to describe an associative state apprehended through image; although commonly thought of as visual, images may be auditory, oral, tactile or even intuitive.<sup>53</sup> An imaginal approach, which reclaims *soul* as its primary concern and explores these images of the psyche, has evolved over the last fifty years.<sup>54</sup> Omer advises that soul can best be understood through a collage of meanings, so that while he defines it as “the individualizing property of being,” he additionally sees soul as “the self

that is inseparable from Other—the objective being brought to and expressed in a subjective state, [which] embodies that mysterious stillness, aliveness, and otherness at the core of being.”<sup>55</sup> Imaginal Psychology encompasses the concepts of the four other psychological orientations: cognitive-behavioral; depth; humanist; and transpersonal, but has its own distinctive theoretical perspective on the soul, or psyche as it is also known.<sup>56</sup>

Theories and practices used in this research are based in Imaginal Transformation Praxis, developed by Omer to conceptualize as well as experience the personal, cultural, and archetypal lenses through which existence is perceived.<sup>57</sup> He believes that “soul wants to experience its unitive nature,” which generally entails sacrificing some degree of individual identity.<sup>58</sup> This suggests differentiation of and *disidentification* from parts of the personality that restrict access to the soul’s participatory character.<sup>59</sup> Omer indicates that this allows “the emergence of a spacious awareness free from frozen images of self”; he defines disidentification as the ability “to loosen the grasping and clutching of personal or *adaptive identity*, which is formed in the course of coping with environmental impingement and overwhelming events.”<sup>60</sup> Omer explores these adaptive states:

[When] coping with overwhelm, the developing soul constellates self images associated with adaptive patterns of reactivity. These self images persist as an adaptive identity into subsequent contexts where they are maladaptive and barriers to the unfolding of Being.<sup>61</sup>

With Imaginal Transformation Praxis, disidentification is approached through an awareness of *psychological multiplicity*, described by Omer as “the existence of many distinct and often encapsulated centers of subjectivity within the experience of the same individual.”<sup>62</sup> When humans are unable to access a sense of their innate multiplicity, it is usually because either personal or cultural gatekeepers are attempting to protect the self from change, chaos, or dissolution by muting expression and inhibiting participation.<sup>63</sup>

Omer speaks of gatekeepers as “anti-transformative agents” that can instill doubt and self-condemnation within the individual.<sup>64</sup> This leads to reification, literalization, and fundamentalism.<sup>65</sup> For purposes of this study, however, the term marginalizer will be used because it relates to the more spatial implications of exile and exclusion brought on by anomalous experience. When one part of the adaptive self marginalizes other, less acceptable parts, it is called *internalized marginalization* or *oppression*.<sup>66</sup> The term marginalizer will be used to denote the part of the psyche that suppresses expression and whose function it is to prevent experience that might be overwhelming to the self. While this protection can be necessary, over the years it often results in dampened affect, stagnant cultures, and a lack of access to participatory consciousness. When this happens, it usually means individuals have fallen under the influence of what Omer calls *cultural trance states*.<sup>67</sup> He defines these as “collective states of complacent passivity and loss of individuality that deaden us to what is possible,” and contrasts them with *cultural sovereignty*—“an awakening from cultural trance and domination.”<sup>68</sup>

These trance states are often the basis of psychological and cultural exile, thus limit admittance to what Omer terms the *spacious center*; he defines this as the “dynamic interaction between a culture’s center and periphery [where] the creative potentials of diversity, conflict, and chaos can be actualized.”<sup>69</sup> An ability to express the highly subjective states that accompany marginalization from this center can loosen these trance states and support movement between the center and the periphery.<sup>70</sup> This kind of expression is thought by Omer to cultivate participation as well as cultural accountability that support the deepening of peer community and make possible reparative experience.<sup>71</sup>

Omer also sees gatekeeping as a primary deterrent to accessing states of ecstasy.<sup>72</sup>

In his theory on *the ecstatic imperative*, he asserts that “turning away from participation is turning away from ecstasy, which is a fundamental psychological necessity.”<sup>73</sup>

Constructive *ecstatic experience*—“a human birthright particularly noted by the absence of gatekeeping dynamics that restrict experience”—is gained through practices such as *reflexive participation*.<sup>74</sup> This work entails the loosening of adaptive identity through expression of various internal subjectivities or parts and “an ability to surrender through *creative action* to the necessities, meanings and possibilities inherent in the present moment.”<sup>75</sup> Implementing this kind of action involves opening to the imagination but also requires transgressing taboo in order to prevent the obvious dangers of exile.

The practice of reflexive participation is cultivated through seven steps that include: allowing a reaction to how one has been affected and becoming aware of that reaction; describing and expressing the reaction; identifying the *imaginal structures* that underlie the reaction from a personal, cultural, and archetypal perspective; and finally, unfolding creative action in response to the reaction.<sup>76</sup> Omer defines imaginal structures as “assemblies of sensory, affective, and cognitive aspects of experience constellated into images that both mediate and constitute experience.”<sup>77</sup> He finds that practices such as reflexive participation bring the ability to *transmute* experience, where working through a range of imaginal structures can change one’s relationship to the initial reactivity:

During the individuation process, imaginal structures are transmuted into emergent and enhanced capacities as well as a transformed identity. Any enduring and substantive change in individual or group behavior requires a transmuting of imaginal structures. This transmutation depends upon an affirmative turn toward the passionate nature of the soul.<sup>78</sup>

Omer also advises that transmuting such wounds as marginalization involves a “sacrifice of the retaliatory urge.”<sup>79</sup> This can be supported by the *Friend*, which he

describes as being composed of the mother, father, and peer principles; the Friend constitutes “those deep potentials of the soul to guide and act with passionate objectivity found at the threshold of an initiatory experience.”<sup>80</sup> Referring the impact of the Friend culturally, Omer contends that “the Friend is about reality, not conventionality.”<sup>81</sup>

Participation can likewise be expanded through *practices of possibility*, which Omer relates to the prophetic imagination and a *capacity* to envision alternate outcomes.<sup>82</sup> He thinks of capacity as “a distinct dimension of human development and human evolution that delineates a specific potential for responding to life experience.”<sup>83</sup> Omer warns that “we need practices of possibility because so much of conventional reality is based in despair.”<sup>84</sup> For this research, a tangential concept—the *As-if Friend*—was developed to support the validation of alternate realities and possibilities. This aspect of the Friend can act “as-if,” which Goddard sees as the belief that a desired outcome has already been achieved even though it may not be fully realized at that point in time.<sup>85</sup>

Transformative practices are also needed to restore expression and participation that has been marginalized through *cultural trauma*—a term that Omer uses to describe those experiences that overwhelm and originate from sources other than personal ones.<sup>86</sup> Unless cultural wounds are resolved, marginalized individuals have little accessibility to the spacious center and *radical peerness*, a state that Omer sees as “an embodiment of relationship based on mutual recognition of existential personhood.”<sup>87</sup> He suggests this kind of connection occurs as members of a community engage at the level of ritual and reflexivity; this enables “profound collaboration among those who participate, engendering a temporary suspension of fear, suspicion, indifference, conflict and even hatred.”<sup>88</sup> Thus radical peerness can frequently bring a sense of ecstatic connection.<sup>89</sup>

Lastly, Omer finds that cultural trance states generally restrict awareness of what Jung named the *objective psyche*.<sup>90</sup> Jung believes that this aspect of the psyche tends to be “independent of human or cultural influence.”<sup>91</sup> Jung indicates that the objective psyche has the “ability to heal, to make whole, [but] is at first strange beyond all measure.”<sup>92</sup> Omer points out that in a culture which undermines the unseen, truth must rely on mostly personal interpretations for its base, a condition that places too great a burden on the individual, often adaptive self.<sup>93</sup> Used in this sense, the term *objective* does not connote science’s positivistic meaning of the word, but something more vast, more archetypal, and more universal. In their exploration of the participatory paradigm, John Heron and Peter Reason refer to this sense of objectivity as *givenness*.<sup>94</sup>

### **Research Problem and Hypothesis**

After considering the numerous elements that inform this topic and situating them conceptually in Imaginal Transformation Praxis, the following Research Problem was established: In what ways can turning toward the marginalization surrounding anomalous experience become transformative? Extensive studies have been done around anomalous experience itself, but little research has been conducted in relation to first approaching its marginalization to reclaim and validate the original experience. The Research Hypothesis stated: The revaluing of an exiled anomalous experience is enhanced through exploring its marginalization within a ritualized container and engaging in practices of possibility that invite images from the objective psyche.

## Methodology and Research Design

The first efforts at creating a methodology that responded to both the subjective and objective states of awareness typical of anomalous experience were based on Heron and Reason's *participatory research paradigm*.<sup>95</sup> Heron gives a flavor of its character:

The participatory worldview allows us as human persons to know that we are part of the whole rather than separated as mind over and against matter. . . . Every boundary, every finite limit to the seeing and hearing of my perceptual field, declares its latent infinity. Each limit in containing the known declares there is an unknown beyond it. . . . The circumscription of our perceiving is fraught with the boundlessness of the given.<sup>96</sup>

While participatory methodologies have played an important part in the effort to validate types of experience that relate to the givenness of the objective psyche, *Imaginal Inquiry* was developed by Omer to further refine and expand this process.<sup>97</sup> He believes that a crucial element within this research approach is the necessity for *reflexivity* in relationship to imaginal structures that influence interpretations made by the researcher.<sup>98</sup> Omer defines reflexivity as “the capacity to engage and be aware of those imaginal structures that shape and constitute our experience.”<sup>99</sup> Jung and others note that by being conscious of these structures, researchers or observers can factor in the interpretive lenses that impact the validity of their research outcomes and lead to unconscious bias.<sup>100</sup>

Imaginal Inquiry was utilized for this study in part because of its perspectives on anomalous experience. Omer maintains that “the Imaginal Approach encourages us to try on something unlike ourselves—the anomaly, the uncanny.”<sup>101</sup> This research focused its methodology on evoking the experience of marginalization around the anomalous episodes of its 12 participants. One person dropped out of the study due to her fears about sharing her experience with the group; the other 11 attended all three sessions and completed the

research activities with a few minor exceptions. Participants were recruited through contacts with therapists and agencies where I had worked as well as from specific populations thought to have a high incidence of such experiences. The 12 were selected on the basis of having had an experience within the last 10 years, which they considered so out of the ordinary that it was hard to reconcile with conventional, everyday reality.

Several parameters were established for participation. For example, an applicant's level of psychological awareness was taken into consideration as was their mental health. The methodology was designed to provide a gradual turning toward marginalization over the course of the research. Participants were aware that this was a focus; they were not, however, told that their work with practices of possibility and images from the objective psyche would be evaluated regarding the ability to revalue their anomalous experience.

Assisted by three co-researchers, Irene Ives, Joy Stephenson Kolker, and Ilka de Gast, I conducted three data collections sessions—each two weeks apart. The first two sessions were approximately six hours long and the final one lasted four hours. These took place at Lomi Psychotherapy Clinic in their group room, which I had designed just eight months earlier; it opened onto the newly landscaped inner courtyard. Care was taken to create a sense of sanctuary for exploring the stories of anomalous experience.

To evoke an experience of marginalization, participants viewed various clips from the film, *Phenomenon*, with its story of anomalous knowing.<sup>102</sup> Omer's *multiplicity triads* were then utilized to encourage expression from three positions—the Experiencer, the Marginalizer, and the As-if Friend. These forms supported expression from parts of the psyche that may often have been previously exiled. Experience was similarly evoked by *stereograms*, defined as three-dimensional images that require the viewer to release

initial perceptions in order to find a previously unseen figure.<sup>103</sup> The group then worked with guided visualization to request images of possibility from the As-if Friend.

To facilitate expression of what was evoked during the research, participants were asked to respond to journaling questions, participate in group discussions, and do an art-making process with collaged images. During the final session, each participant and researcher selected key moments from the research—one individually and one for the group as a whole. This facilitated a process of interpretation and integration within the inquiry. Participants also shared how they had been affected by the research and the gifts they were taking from it. In debriefs that were held apart from the data collection sessions, researchers met on four separate occasions to discuss their interpretations and integrate various aspects of the work. This allowed concerns about participants to be voiced and provided an opportunity for researchers to be accountable for any imaginal structures that might be influencing or biasing interpretations around the research.

### **Learnings**

Data from the research sessions and researcher debriefs was articulated through five learnings. The following cumulative learning was condensed from them: The marginalization surrounding anomalous experience can be transmuted through sharing the stories about these immensities of the imagination within ritualized peer communities, encouraging disidentification from the introjected marginalizer and engaging in practices of possibility that lead to the ecstatic states of participatory consciousness.

Each learning was viewed from six distinctive perspectives: first, a brief phenomenological description of what happened during research sessions; second, an

account of how I, as the researcher, was affected by what happened; third, an exploration of my imaginal structures that had been activated during the research process; fourth, an overview of the theories used to make meaning around what had happened; fifth, an interpretive section based on those theories; and sixth, an assessment of validity in relation to the research, including any bias that might have impacted outcomes. This last segment addressed what quantum physics calls the *observer effect* where researchers' unconscious structures can distort or misrepresent meanings and interpretations.<sup>104</sup>

Learning One found that those intensities of the imagination present within anomalous experience require ritualized storytelling and the attunement of a shared group field in order to be normalized, validated, and reclaimed. The commonality of the stories and the valuing of them by peers were pivotal for participants—and for the community as a whole. Learning Two centered on the awareness that anomalous experience, which is culturally taboo, evokes an archetypal force field of marginalization resulting in negative affects and attitudes of devaluation, self-exile, or privatizing. The process of turning toward marginalization appeared difficult for participants to tolerate but was critical in opening the group to expanded expression and as-if perspectives. Learning Three found that the introjected marginalizer operates in an embedded and projected way related to anomalous experience until it can be consciously recognized and expressed, allowing for disidentification from exiling voices. The ability to disidentify from the introjected marginalizer was critical for increased creativity, expression, and the revaluing of anomalous experience. Learning Four focused on how access to images of possibility arising from the objective psyche is impeded by the dynamics of marginalization but can be restored through practices that engage an “as-if” perspective and allow the

reinterpretation of cultural trance states. When participants were able to meet the As-if Friend, they found an extended sense of possibility and access to non-normative interpretations that could address the four restrictive beliefs they had described earlier. In Learning Five it was discovered that a ritualized peer community, which engenders creative expression, positive affect, and the ecstatic states of participatory consciousness is foundational for transmuting the marginalization around anomalous experience. It was not until the data had been closely studied that the importance of radical peerness in demarginalizing and revaluing anomalous experience became apparent.

### **Significance and Implications of the Study**

The contributions of this research will ultimately be found in how fully it supports experiencers, therapists, and all those embedded in cultural trance states to turn toward and to transmute the marginalization of anomalous experience. Omer contends that until the exile around these experiences is brought into awareness and expressed, it is unlikely that the center-periphery dynamic, which “engages and recognizes differences that were previously denied, suppressed, and trivialized,” will sustain the broader culture.<sup>105</sup>

There are ample myths available—both ancient and modern—that explore exile, the workings of cultural trance, and the longing for deepened connection to the sacred so evident in contemporary symptoms of societal distress. In researching this topic, I frequently peered through a mythological lens to clarify as well as reflect on the relationship between marginality and expanded states of reality. Kalsched believes that “the central issue of all myths and religions is finding the balance between human states of reality and numinous ones,” or what Socrates calls the seen and unseen.<sup>106</sup> *The Cave*,

in which Plato writes about the nature of reality, describes men chained to chairs that only face forward, allowing them to see just shadows of the real Forms that are actually behind them and merely projected onto the cave walls.<sup>107</sup> Larry and Andy Wachowski's futuristic film, *The Matrix*, which was chosen as this research's guiding myth, utilizes images based on Plato's *Cave*. The film's plot explores the possibility of being liberated from normative reality—the matrix—by ingesting a red pill and working with The Oracle.<sup>108</sup> Another myth reviewed for this research is Suhrawardi's 12<sup>th</sup> century, *Recital of the Occidental Exile*, which addresses issues similar to those of *The Cave* and *The Matrix* but from a more sacred or esoteric perspective.<sup>109</sup>

The learnings from this dissertation have provided several implications for research participants, the orientation of Imaginal Psychology, psychotherapists, the culture, and for me personally. The first implication lies in the value of an expanded awareness in relation to the amount of marginalization that exists around anomalous experience. Second, is the importance of encouraging therapists to explore and value stories of anomalous experience from their clients. Third, is the need for broadening Imaginal Psychology's influence with respect to cultural understandings of anomalous experience. Fourth, is the necessity of recognizing the difficulty our culture has with creating adequate rituals and practices to honor anomalous experience. Fifth, is the necessity of creating peer communities to help transmute marginalization and create fertile ground for participatory consciousness.

Certainly the fear and doubt of marginalizing voices make difficult adversaries in Western culture. If, however, anomalous experience as I have come to understand it actually is the calling card of the imagination, it is an unseen gift that humans can ill-afford to devalue. This research, with its foundation of ritualized peer community,

expressions of psychological multiplicity, and practices of possibility has constructed scaffolding from which experiencers can begin to transmute the marginalization around these non-ordinary encounters and deeply revalue them. Perhaps then those possibilities that are our birth-right—and which are found in the expanded perspectives of participatory consciousness—can unfold at the personal, communal, cultural, and global levels.

## Endnotes:

- 
1. Hafiz, "This One is Mine," *The Gift: Poems by Hafiz, The Great Sufi Master*, trans. Daniel Ladinsky (New York: Penguin Group, 1999), 51.
  2. Ibid.
  3. *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo* (Great Books in Philosophy), trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), 95. Plato writes that Socrates defines the soul as being "unseen by man," and the body as "the seen." He states that "the soul when using the body as an instrument of perception, that is to say, when using the sense of sight or hearing or some other sense, the soul too is then dragged by the body into the region of the changeable, and wanders and is confused; the world spins round her, and she is like a drunkard when under their influence."
  4. Amit Goswami, *The Self-Aware Universe: How Consciousness Creates the Material World* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 1993), 13.
  5. Etzel Cardeña, Steven Jay Lynn, and Stanley Krippner, ed. *Varieties of Anomalous Experience: Examining the Scientific Evidence* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2001), 397-440. The authors give a sense of how anomalous experience is treated: "Initially, a person experiences a spontaneous anomalous experience. Anomalous implies that the experience is unexpected according to standard Western science. It does not commit to any particular type of explanation. Labeling an experience as 'anomalous' often results in its not being considered as part of consensus reality. It is then neglected and forgotten, and anyone who says they have had one is often laughed at and considered deluded."
  6. Elizabeth Lloyd Mayer, *Extraordinary Knowing: Science, Skepticism, and the Inexplicable Powers of the Human Mind* (New York: Bantam Dell, 2007), 214, 220.
  7. Ibid., 254.
  8. "Broken Symmetry: Answering the Solace of Quantum," *Physorg*, October 7, 2008 [article online]; available from <http://www.physorg.com/news142605505.html>; Internet; accessed 23 November 2008. This statement is made about symmetry:

2008 Nobel laureates in physics, Makoto Kobayashi and Toshihide Maskawa of Japan, showed that in certain conditions, antimatter does not obey the same rules as matter. Spotting the anomaly "is a bit like holding up a book and looking in a mirror, and then realising (sic) that instead of seeing reverse writing, you see proper writing," said Philip Diamond of Britain's Institute of Physics. This symmetry break could only be explained by the presence of three families of particles known as quarks, Kobayashi and Maskawa suggested. Nearly three years later, their hunch was confirmed in experiments. . . . Physicists say the Universe is built on broken symmetry. Creation was not a soothing, balanced event, they say. It was, essentially, a lopsided affair. Had things been symmetrical in the Big Bang 13.7 billion years ago, equal amounts of matter and antimatter should have been formed, rather like the hole you dig in the ground is equal to the mound of earth that comes from the hole. The problem is that matter and antimatter are deadly rivals. When a matter particle collides with its opposite-charged foe, the two annihilate each other in a puff of energy. To use the image of the hole, the mound will fill the hole you have dug. But something happened in the seething soup of primal particles in the instant after the Bang. Matter gained the upper hand over antimatter. Thanks to this excess of matter, we have the galaxies, the stars, Earth and all the life on it. Without this mysterious victory, we wouldn't be here. How to explain the enigma lies at the heart of work that earned two Japanese and an American the 2008 Nobel Physics Prize on Tuesday. Their achievement, in exploring the violation of symmetry, strengthened and widened the conceptual model of fundamental particles and forces, the Nobel Prize committee said. "Every particle of matter has an opposite number, the antimatter

---

particle,” Etienne Auge, deputy director of the National Institute of Nuclear Physics and Particle Physics (IN2P3), told AFP: “What is strange, though, is that we are living in a world that consists almost entirely of matter.”

9. Cardeña, Lynn, and Krippner, *Varieties of Anomalous Experience*, 4.

10. English to Parsi Epistemological Dictionary; available from, <http://www.babylon.com/definition/anomaly/Other>; Internet; accessed 6 November 2008.

11. Yannis Samatas, Personal Communication to author (November 6, 2008). Samatas writes: “I am a native Greek and know my language well. Omalos means flat, even. The plateau of Omalos is a flat area surrounded by high mountains, as you write correctly, and its name comes from the word ‘Omalos.’ Anomalos = not omalos = not flat, rough. Anomalos is also used [in Greece] for “pervert”; for example, a pedophile is an ‘anomalos’.”

12. Daniel Williams, “The Science of Near-Death Experiences,” *Time Magazine* (August 31, 2007); available from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1657919,00.html>; Internet; accessed 11 November 2007. According to a Gallop poll in 1991, approximately 13 million Americans (5% of the populations) claimed to have had a near-death experience. This is up from 8 million surveyed in 1981. “The highly respected Gallup Poll Organization conducted an eighteen month survey on life after death employing strict sampling methods and statistical procedures. The results were published by George Gallup, Jr. in 1980 under the title, ‘Adventures in Immortality.’ Gallup found that over 8 million persons in North America have had a NDE. Undoubtedly his findings have established the NDE as a verifiable phenomenon, worthy of study and consideration.”

13. Cardeña, Lynn, and Krippner, *Varieties of Anomalous Experience*, vii-viii.

14. Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1999), 308-309. Damasio refers to the discounting of subjective experience in research:

The resistance found in some scientific quarters to the use of subjective observations is a revisitation of an old argument between behaviorists, who believed that only behaviors, not mental experiences could be studied objectively, and cognitivists, who believed that studying only behavior did not do justice to human complexity. . . . The conscious mind and its constituent properties are real entities, not illusions and they must be investigated as the personal, private, subjective experiences that they are. The idea that subjective experiences are not scientifically accessible is nonsense. . . . The idea that the nature of subjective experiences can be grasped effectively by the study of their behavioral correlates is wrong.

15. David Wulff, “Mystical Experience,” in *Varieties of Anomalous Experience*, ed. Cardeña, Lynn and Krippner, 397.

16. Mark Matousek, “From Cynic to Mystic,” *Common Boundary* (March/April 1992): 19.

17. Neville Goddard, *The Neville Reader* (Camarillo, CA: DeVorss & Company, 2005), 122.

18. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Melieu* (New York: Harper Touchbooks, 1968), 56 in Hans Schwarz, *Theology in a Global Context: The Last Two Hundred Years* (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans Publishing, 2005), 429.

See also, Jens Brockmeier, “Ineffable Experience,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 9, nos. 9-10 (2002): 79-95.

19. Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* trans. David McClintock (New York: Penguin Group, 1941),

---

132. “The term ‘uncanny’ applies to everything that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come into the open.”

See also, C.G. Jung, *Synchronicity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960), 19; Abraham Maslow, *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences* (New York: Penguin Books, 1964), 19-20; Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1960), 7; Rhea White, “Exceptional Human Experiences and the Experiential Paradigm,” *ReVision* 18 (1995): 18–25; Gerald May, *Will and Spirit: A Contemplative Psychology* (New York: Harper One, 1987), 52-3; Stanislov Grof, *When the Impossible Happens: Adventures in Non-ordinary Realities* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, Inc., 2006), xxiii; Mayer, *Extraordinary Knowing*, 4.

20. John Mack, *Passport to the Cosmos: Human Transformation and Alien Encounters* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999), 3-4.

21. Leonard Zusne and Warren Jones, *Anomalistic Psychology* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1982).

22. Cardeña, Lynn, and Krippner, *Varieties of Anomalous Experience*, 397-440.

23. William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: New American Library, 1902).

24. Ibid.

25. Cardeña, Lynn, and Krippner, *Varieties of Anomalous Experience*, 4-6.

26. Aftab Omer, Proposal Defense for author (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, June 21, 2006).

27. Jaap Bos and Leendert Groenendijk, *The Self-Marginalization of Wilhelm Stekel: Freudian Circles Inside and Out* (New York: Springer, 2007), 1-9. Bos and Groenendijk give a thorough portrait of marginalization, including the phenomenon of self-marginalization.

28. Adam Crabtree, *Trance Zero: The Psychology of Maximum Experience* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1997), 21.

29. Aftab Omer, “Leadership and the Creative Transformation of Culture,” *Shift: At the Frontiers of Consciousness* 6 (2005): 30-33.

30. Aftab Omer, Personal Communication to author (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, April 23, 2007).

31. Robert Clark, *The Literary Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Introjection,” [encyclopedia on-line]; available from <http://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=564>; Internet; accessed 13 March 2008. Ferenczi defined *introjection* as “taking into the ego, parts of the outside world and making them the object of unconscious phantasies.”

See also *A Dictionary of Psychology*, Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press (2001) [dictionary on-line]; available from <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O87-introjection.html>; Internet; accessed 14 November 2008. “Introjection is a defense mechanism whereby an instinctual object is symbolically, or in fantasy, absorbed by a person, or instinctual energy is turned inward, as when a depressed person turns aggression back on the self.”

32. Aftab Omer, *Imaginal Process I*, course notes (Petaluma: CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, January 1998).

---

33. Ibid.

See also, Jonathan Moller, "Our Culture is Our Resistance," *Illegal Voices* [article on-line]; available from [http://www.illegalvoices.org/our\\_culture,\\_our\\_resistance/the\\_end\\_of\\_idealism.html](http://www.illegalvoices.org/our_culture,_our_resistance/the_end_of_idealism.html); Internet; accessed 29 May 2007. This is especially difficult for populations of color as their gatekeepers have the added element of being based on values from a dominant, often oppressive, culture:

In many cases, being raised in white-dominant spaces is not a choice, although voluntary involvement is. In both cases, participants must recognize that, historically, such spaces impart values that, while dressed in democratic language, are intended to further white supremacy; create confusion and division; and, as a means of self-perpetuation, can make white-acculturated people of color unwitting agents of white supremacist ideology. How internalized marginalization and oppression function are critical considerations. Very honestly, there are internal struggles being waged by conscious people of color all around us. The sense of estrangement from communities is real, as is the indignation some people of color feel when whites assume that people of color have no other interests but race. We need to be actively supporting one another through these explorations, exhibiting care and knowledge. Internalized oppression for people of color, manifested as guilt or defensiveness, helps no one, and we need to see these issues of privilege as collective issues for all of us in the movement.

34. Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, Collected Works*, Bollingen Series XX (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 7, par. 190, in John Van Eenwyk, *Archetypes and Strange Attractors: The Chaotic World of Symbols* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1997), 22.

35. John Van Eenwyk, *Archetypes and Strange Attractors: The Chaotic World of Symbols* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1997), 65. He defines archetypes as "structural elements or dominants in the psyche which are in themselves indescribable, but which express themselves as dream and fantasy images in consciousness."

36. Donald Nathanson, *Shame and Pride: Affect, Sex, and Birth of the Self* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 49.

37. Tom Cheetham, *After Prophecy: Imagination, Incarnation, and the Unity of the Prophetic Tradition* (New Orleans: Spring Journal Books, 2007), 21. Cheetham suggests: "The withering of a primordial 'poetic' sympathy is an archetypal phenomenon—it is an ever-present possibility inherent in the human condition [and] marks the beginning of our exile."

38. Diana Fosha, *The Transforming Power of Affect: A Model for Accelerated Change* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 154.

39. Mayer, *Extraordinary Knowing*, 9, 196. Mayer uses this term interchangeably with mind-matter anomalies, anomalous experience, anomalous mental capacities, and anomalous cognition.

40. Nathan Schwartz-Salant, *Jung on Alchemy* (London: Routledge, 1995), 8, 10. Swartz-Salant defines coniunctio as "the union of different substances."

41. Aftab Omer, Personal Communication to author (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, June 8, 2007).

42. Aftab Omer, *Psychology of Community Making I*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, June 2005); Omer states that "experience is silenced by adaptive identity." Aftab Omer, *TA Seminar*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, February 27, 2008).

43. Robert Young, "New Ideas about the Oedipus Complex," *Melanie Klein and Object Relations* 12, no. 2 (1994): 1-20.

- 
44. Donald Kalsched, *The Inner World of Trauma: Archetypal Defenses of the Personal Spirit* (London: Routledge, 1996), 172.
45. *Ibid.*, 66.
46. Joseph Coppin and Elizabeth Nelson, *The Art of Inquiry: A Depth Psychological Perspective* (Putnam, CT: Spring Publications, 2005), 5.
47. *Ibid.*
48. James Hillman, "Peaks and Vales: The Soul/Spirit Distinction as a Basis for the Differences between Psychotherapy and Spiritual Discipline," in *Working With Images: The Theoretical Base of Archetypal Psychology*, ed. Benjamin Sells (Woodstock, CT: Spring Publications, 2000), 114.
49. Ray Lynch, *No Blue Thing*, audio CD (Ray Lynch Productions, Released, 1989).
50. Lucas Plumb, "From Temples to Chicken Coops," unpublished essay by author (April 1992).
51. To compound my difficulty with integrating this experience, it was also around this time that the watch I was wearing stopped, then a second, brand new one did as well. Other unexplainable incidents occurred that convinced me that I was in some kind of heightened state of awareness. I began to noticing precognitive capacities as when I woke up in the middle of the night at exactly the moment my niece came into the world, sensing that her birth had just taken place. One day I also had the experience of an intense energy passing between myself and my friend when we were not actually touching.
- It was also during these two months that I had a death dream—as it would turn out the last of several I had been given over an eight month period following a relatively minor bicycle accident. In this particular nightmare, I was about to be killed by several heavy panels that were rapidly falling toward me. As they came to within just a few inches of crushing my body, a radiant light suddenly appeared—like the one often described in near-death experiences as extremely bright but not hurting one's eyes. Abruptly, and for no particular reason, the panels suddenly halted their downward trajectory, lined up in a neat row and ascended back into this light. I then awoke and felt myself in an intense state of bliss. To this day, I have never had any subsequent death dreams.
52. Aftab Omer, Personal Communication to author (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, February 22, 2008).
53. The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, s.v. "Imaginal" [dictionary on-line]; available from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imaginal>; Internet; accessed 12 December 2007.

See also, Henry Corbin, *Mundis Imaginalis or the Imaginary and the Imaginal* (Ipswich, UK: Golgorooza Press, 1976), 1-21; Henry Corbin, *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Ṣūfism of Ibn 'Arabī* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960), 4, 179.

Corbin translates the Islamic term *alam al-mithal* into Latin, calling it *mundus imaginalis*. By using the term *world*, or *universe*, he tends to set up a duality around the term *imaginal*. By calling it "an intermediate world" he sets up an even more difficult sense of separation: "An intermediate world between the universes can be apprehended by pure intellectual perception and the universe perceptible to the senses, the world of Idea-Images, of archetypal figures, of subtile substances, of 'immaterial matter.' This world is as real and objective, as consistent and subsistent as the intelligible and sensible worlds; it is an intermediate universe . . . a world consisting of real matter and real extension, though by comparison to sensible, corruptible matter these are subtile and immaterial. The organ of this universe is the Active Imagination." He regards the imagination as an "intermediary between thought and being"; his definitions,

---

however, often tend to invoke a dualistic flavor when he modifies imaginal using such words such as “world” or “universe.”

54. Aftab Omer, *Imaginal Process I*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, February 1998).

55. Aftab Omer, *Integrative Seminar III*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, May 5, 2002); Omer, Personal Communication (June 8, 2007).

See also, Fred Alan Wolf, *The Spiritual Universe: How Quantum Physics Proves the Existence of the Soul* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 31.

Many, ranging from modern scientists to perhaps the Buddha, introduce great confusion into the search by not differentiating between spirit, soul, and self. Based on my research, the spirit appears to be virtual vibrations of vacuum energy; the soul turns out to be reflections of those virtual vibrations in time, and the self is an illusion arising from reflections of the soul in matter, appearing as the bodily senses [affect] suggested by the Buddha. . . . The soul arises alongside [an] intangible field of probability—as virtual processes in the vacuum of space.

56. Aftab Omer, *Imaginal Process II*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, March 19, 2006). Omer explains that “We’re reluctant to categorize in a privileged way a certain mode of experiencing. Like saying ‘that drumming tape took me into the imaginal realms.’ All experience has an imaginal core or base whether it’s a drumming tape or a fight with a friend. The imaginal unifies experience; it is not a separate thing.”

See also, D. T. Suzuki, Personal Communication to Corbin, 1954, Ascona, Switzerland, in Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, n. 41, 354-55. In the esoteric sense, D. T. Suzuki once advised Corbin about this state by waving a spoon from his tea, and announcing, “This spoon now exists in Paradise. We are now in Heaven.”

57. *Dissertation Handbook* (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, 2006), 108.

58. Aftab Omer, *Imaginal Process II*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, May 21, 2006).

59. Ibid.

60. Aftab Omer, *The Psychology of Community Making I*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, June 25, 2005); Omer, Personal Communication (February 22, 2008).

61. Ibid.

62. Aftab Omer, *Imaginal Process I*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, July 1998).

63. Aftab Omer, *Integrative Seminar II*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, July 2005).

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Gail Pheterson, “Alliances Between Women: Overcoming Internalized Oppression and Internalized Domination,” *Signs* 12, no. 1 (1986): 146-160.

---

67. Aftab Omer, *Integrative Seminar III*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, October 2004).

68. Omer, "Leadership and the Creative Transformation of Culture," 31.

See also, Charles Tart, "Self Observation," interview with Jeffrey Mishlove, *The Intuition Network*, Thinking Allowed, 1991; Peter Russell, *Waking Up in Time: Finding Inner Peace in Changing Times* (San Raphael, CA: Origin Press, 1998), 88; Crabtree, *Trance Zero*, 145-157; Robert Inchausti, "Breaking the Cultural Trance: Insight and Vision in America," *Essays on Deepening the American Dream*, no. 5, Fetzer Institute (Spring 2004).

69. Omer, "Leadership and the Creative Transformation of Culture," 32.

70. Ibid.

71. Aftab Omer, *Research Practicum III*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, April 2000).

See also, John Boots, "The Lost Child at the Center of Intuitive and Reparative Experience," *Psychoanalysis Downunder* 3 (April 2003): 2 [journal on-line]; available from [http://www.psychanalysis.asn.au/downunder/backissues/issue3/323/lost\\_child](http://www.psychanalysis.asn.au/downunder/backissues/issue3/323/lost_child); Internet; accessed 13 August 2007. Boots writes about Kleinian use of the work *reparative* which he bases on Melanie Klein's work: "When I use the term 'reparation' I am thinking primarily of those constructive and creative urges in the internal world directed at repairing good objects that form the core of the personality, feared to have been damaged by sadistic and aggressive impulses. Klein's formulation of the theory of reparation and the depressive position grew from clinical observations of children's distress at their own aggressiveness."

72. Aftab Omer, *Imaginal Process I*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, June 1998).

Omer conceptualizes the *ecstatic imperative* utilizing four principles. First: "Ecstasy is a fundamental psychological necessity and reactivity is the ecstatic imperative manifesting through the dead concrete of our adaptive identities." Second: "Turning away from reactivity is turning away from the necessity of ecstasy, thus it is a reifying, concretizing move. Third: "Learning to ride the wave of reactivity, i.e., reflexive participation, is our way out of the prison of adaptive identity, thus we need specific practices to ride the wave." Fourth: "Turning away from participation is the turning away from necessity."

Omer also states that "psychological capacities emerge through processing, assimilating, and metabolizing our experience. Our stance towards difference is fundamental to our relationship to life, and we experience difference when people who have more power impinge on our experience. Power used in that way colonizes our experience. We then perceive that difference in terms of impingement; we start to mobilize a stance toward difference, i.e., toward the essential heterogeneity of life. Turning toward difference is the turn toward necessity, toward experience. The turn toward ecstasy is about the encounter with difference."

73. Ibid.

74. Omer, Personal Communications (June 8, 2007).

75. Aftab Omer, *TA Seminar*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, October 2006); Aftab Omer in conversation with Jürgen Kremer, "Between Columbine and the Twin Towers: Fundamental Culture as a Failure of the Imagination," *Revision* 26, no. 2 (2003): 38. In his interview with Kremer, Omer points out the importance of differentiating between ecstatic states that are *constructive* versus those that are *destructive*. Omer, *Integrative Seminar I*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, September, 1999).

---

76. Aftab Omer, Personal Communication to author (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, May 2, 2008).

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid.

79. Omer, *Imaginal Process I* (June 1998).

80. Omer, *Integrative Seminar II* (June 2005); "Experience and Otherness: On the Undermining of Learning in Educational Organizations" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1990).

See also, Cheetham, *After Prophecy*, 21. Cheetham never uses the term, Friend, but speaks of Khidr, who he describes as "the archetypal figure of the personal spiritual Guide," suggesting that "he is the True Prophet, the inner guide of each person, the Angel Holy Spirit, whose appearance to every person is *for each one unique*." (emphasis existing) In Islam, Khidr is called *The Green Man* or *Verdant One* and Christianity uses the term *Holy Spirit*. Cheetham suggests that "the inability or the refusal, to hear the voice of the Verdant One, and so recognize the inner meaning of the Word severs the link between the human person and the reality of the Imagination. By depriving us of the connection between language and divinity, this incapacity renders us deaf, dumb, blind, and lame. In this condition, we are so profoundly isolated that all our interactions with the world and the persons who inhabit it are hindered by ignorance, lack of sympathy, and the disoriented gropings that arise from a dim, inarticulate desire to restore the lost connection."

81. Aftab Omer, *TA Seminar*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, December 3, 2008).

82. Omer, *Imaginal Process II* (June 2005).

83. Aftab Omer, Personal Communication to author (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, August 7, 2008); Michael Murphy, *The Future of the Body: Explorations Into the Further Evolution of Human Nature* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam Book, 1992), 541-542. Murphy speaks to *metanormal capacities* in his book, *The Future of the Body*, which he defines as those that "emerge from normal abilities that have been developed through life-encompassing practice. Some mystics and saints, for example, have loved God with such passion that they realized a joy that did not depend on the satisfaction of ordinary needs or desires." Murphy states that ". . . human nature harbors extraordinary attributes that may appear in sickness, healing, or programs for growth, wither spontaneously or through formal discipline. While such attributes require long-term cultivation for their fullest development, they frequently appear to be freely given, sometimes when we do not seek or expect them."

84. Omer, *The Psychology of Community Making I* (June 2005).

85. Goddard, *The Neville Reader*, 139, 172, 178, 179, 186, 198, 226.

86. Omer, "Leadership and the Creative Transformation of Culture," 32.

87. Omer, Personal Communication (August 7, 2008).

88. Omer, "Leadership and the Creative Transformation of Culture," 33.

89. Aftab Omer, *The Psychology of Community Making II*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, June 23, 2007).

90. Aftab Omer, *Research Practicum I*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, November 2000).

---

91. Jung, *Collected Works*, vol. 12, *Psychology and Alchemy*, Bollingen Series XX (New York: Pantheon, 1953), para. 44; para. 51.

92. *Ibid.*, para. 44; para 33, 28.

93. Aftab Omer, *Integrative Seminar III*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, November 2000); Michael Conforti, *Field, Form, and Fate: Patterns in Mind, Nature & Psyche* (New Orleans: Spring Publications, 1999), 25, xx. Conforti suggests that a humanist or behaviorist-based culture will assign a higher valence to the personal, not realizing that an archetypal field must influence outcomes and accountabilities. He states:

A reductionist may suggest that this specialized tuning can be simply explained as a conscious selection process through which the individual may choose by what he will or will not be influenced. However, when we realize the consistency of archetypal expression and see the high degree of synchronistic experiences constellated around it, we are forced to consider that this process involves much more than personal selection. Cognitive or behavioral theory is limited in its understanding of phenomena because it seeks explanations solely in the domain of the personal experiences, desires, and history of the individual.

Tremendous efforts abound to solidify the ego's (not the Self's) position as the central player in the drama of life. Entire schools of thought are built around this premise. The theories of Subjectivity and Constructionism are but two that attempt to diminish the importance of the objective psyche. Each searches for truth and ultimate meaning in the individual's personal, subjective reactions, all part of a trend that I call "personal, subjective relativism." Many modern Jungians have also shifted their orientation away from the nature of the objective psyche and its archetypes to focus on the subjective reactions of their clients.

94. John Heron and Peter Reason, "A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm," *Qualitative Inquiry* 3, no. 3 (1997): 275; Heron and Reason are explicit about the difference between personally constructed realities and archetypal ones: ". . . we argue that the constructivist paradigm is unclear about the relationship between constructed realities and the original givenness of the cosmos, and that a worldview based on participation and participative realities is more helpful and satisfying."

See also, Jung, *Collected Works*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. trans. R. G. C. Hull, Bollingen Series. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 9i, in Conforti, *Field, Form, and Fate*, 2. Jung also speaks to this in relation to archetypes: "The structure [of archetypes] is something given, the precondition that is found to be present in every case."

95. Heron and Reason, "A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm," 279. Note that these theorists use a more Jungian sense of the term objective.

96. *Ibid.*; Heron, *Sacred Science: Person-centered Inquiry into the Spiritual and the Subtle* (Wilshire, UK: Redwood Books, 1998), 237.

97. Aftab Omer, *Research Practicum IV*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, July 2001).

98. Aftab Omer, Personal Communication to author (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, June 2, 2003).

99. Omer, *Imaginal Process I* (January 1998).

100. Jung, letter to Wolfgang Pauli, *Letters*, vol.1, 174ff, in Michael Cazenave, *Science et Conscience: Two Views of the Universe*, Edited Proceedings of the France-Culture and Radio-France Colloquium, Cordoba Spain, trans. A. Hall and E. Callander (Oxford, UK: Pergamon Press, 1984), 253, in Marie Louise Von Franz, *Psyche and Matter* (Boston: Shambala Press, 1992), 261. "Michael Cazenave

---

cites a remark made by Jung in a letter addressed to Wolfgang Pauli on the subject of the unconscious. “If one puts oneself in the position of a human observer, the situation is that of ‘an absolutely unconscious space in which an infinity of observers observe the same object.’ If, on the other hand, one tries to approach matters from the point of view of the Self (archetype of the Totality), ‘there is only one observer [situated in the collective unconscious] who observes an infinity of objects’.”

See also, Niels Bohr, *The Philosophical Writings of Niels Bohr*, vol. 1 (Woodbridge, CT: Ox Bow, 1987), in Alan Wallace, *The Taboo of Subjectivity: Towards a New Science of Consciousness* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000), 71.

101. Aftab Omer, *Integrative Seminar I*, course notes (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, April 1999).

102. Gerald Di Pego, *Phenomenon* (Burbank, CA: Touchstone Pictures, 1996).

103. Marc Grossman, *Magic Eye Beyond 3D: Improve Your Vision* (Kansas City: Magic Eye Inc., 2004), 5-6.

104. Goswami, *The Self Aware Universe*, 141; Coppin and Nelson, *The Art of Inquiry*, 14. Speaking to the importance of the observer, Coppin and Nelson, in their writings about depth psychological inquiry suggest “engaging in a stillness, allowing knowledge, insight or wisdom to come forth of its own accord. One surrenders the need to seek or pursue, to put one’s self forward, or to champion one’s own ideas.”

105. Omer, “Leadership and the Creative Transformation of Culture,” 32.

106. Kalsched, *The Inner World of Trauma*, 168; Omer, Personal Communication to author (Petaluma, CA: Institute of Imaginal Studies, November, 2006).

107. Plato, *Plato’s Phaedo*, with commentary by R. Hackforth (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

108. Larry and Andy Wachowski, *The Matrix* (Los Angeles: Warner Brothers Films, 2000).

109. John Renard, *Seven Doors to Islam: Spirituality and the Religious Life of Muslims*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 234-35.