

## Chapter 10

### Trauma, Synchronicity, and Paranormal Experiences in Analysis

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*No One Lives His Life.*

*Disguised since childhood, haphazardly assembled  
From voices and fears and little pleasures, we come of age as masks.  
Our true face never speaks....*

*And yet, though we strain against the deadening grip of daily necessity,  
I sense there is this mystery: All life is being lived.*

*Who is living it, then?  
Is it the things themselves, or something waiting inside them,  
Like an un-played melody in a flute?*

*Is it the winds blowing over the waters?  
Is it the branches that signal to each other?*

*Is it flowers interweaving their fragrances,  
Or streets as they wind through time?  
Is it the animals, warmly moving, or the birds that suddenly rise up?*

*Who lives it, then? God, are you the one who is living life?*

(Rainer Marie Rilke, 2005)

#### Introductory Remarks

In Rilke's beautiful poem, the two worlds that have informed the various chapters of this book, return again--as, our "disguised" or masked self on the one hand, "haphazardly assembled" and straining "against the deadening grip of daily necessity"--and on the other hand, an underlying mystery, like the un-played melody in a flute. This implicit, sometimes inaudible world proves to be the source of our true life--of our soul's life--"something waiting inside us" to be heard and seen, and appreciated for what it is--the "God" who supports us in being and is the source of our aliveness.

In this chapter I want to relate a series of strange and fascinating stories of encounters by psychoanalysts (including Jung) with anomalous phenomena. These encounters give hints or intimations of a second world, suggesting something akin to Rilke's underlying spiritual "mystery." They defy explanation by the normal physical laws that organize our sense of reality, and so they open to a realm of "non-ordinary reality" lying beyond the material and rational world that we think we understand. They provide us with some

admittedly speculative, but provocative "evidence" for the two worlds that we have been discussing as subjective realities.

Such experiences are called *extra-sensory* or *para-normal* experiences, known generally in the para-psychological community as *Psi*. The vignettes recorded below are all anecdotal and so they do not lend themselves to controlled or digitized scientific study. They cannot be objectively proven. But they *are* objectively reported, and to those who have experienced them, they are proven beyond a shadow of a doubt. They are remarkable, fascinating, and bring a sense of greater meaning--subjectively-- into the lives of those who have been graced by their occurrence. They bring intimations of something *more* to life--links to the world and to others that seem to transcend what we would expect from the usual way in which people and things are connected. In Figure 8.1, the Pilgrim is shown in the act of discovering that "something more" that lies in the space between the worlds.

### **Early Interest Among the Pioneers in Psychoanalysis**

Para-normal experiences have intrigued psychoanalysts since the very beginning of our profession, but they are rarely reported. All the early pioneers of depth psychology had a keen interest in anomalous phenomena, and took them seriously as worthy of investigation. Freud was especially interested in mental telepathy, which he called "thought transference" (Brabant, et. al. 1993, 79-81). Although Freud was loathe to compromise the scientific foundations of psychoanalysis by letting in the "black tide of mud--i.e., of occultism" (Jung, 1963, 150), both Jung and Ferenczi were far more interested in the scientific exploration of paranormal experiences. Freud tried to restrain them from going public with their findings, but then finally in 1911, he capitulated. In a letter to Ferenczi he wrote:

Jung writes that we must also conquer occultism and requests permission to undertake a campaign in the realm of mysticism. I see that the both of you can't be restrained. You should at least proceed in harmony with each other; these are dangerous expeditions, and I can't go along there. Regards to you, uncanny one. (Brabant, *Ibid.*: 274)

Ferenczi had become convinced that cases of thought transference in analysis were "extraordinarily frequent" (see Dupont, 1998, 33) and proposed that psychic phenomena might be involved in what he called the "dialogue of unconscious" that took place when analyst and patient meet at a deep level (*Ibid.*, 84-5).

### **Jung and Synchronicity**

Jung also was fascinated by the paranormal and, over the course of his life, experienced many uncanny moments that defied rational explanation. His interest in explaining these phenomena was in full flower during his student days at the Zofingia fraternity where he gave several lectures to his fellow students. In one of these he cited the well authenticated report of Emmanuel Swedenborg's famous vision (Jung 1897, para 129, p. 41).

Swedenborg had disrupted a garden party in Gothenburg in 1756 by suddenly announcing the great fire in Stockholm, 200 miles away. While staring at a clear evening sky, he had described the firestorm vividly in every detail including the advance of the fire to within three buildings of his own house before it finally was extinguished. Two days later a messenger from Stockholm arrived, confirming every detail. How, Jung wondered, could a man standing in one place visualize an event that happened 200 miles away at exactly the same moment? Any notion of the normal transmission of information across space seemed to be irrelevant in this example.

In some of Jung's other uncanny experiences, it was time, not space, that appeared to be relative. Jung (1955) reports the following example from his student days:

I remember the story of a student friend whose father had promised him a trip to Spain if he passed his final examinations satisfactorily. My friend thereupon dreamed that he was walking through a Spanish city. The street led to a square, where there was a Gothic cathedral. He then turned right, around a corner, into another street. There he was met by an elegant carriage drawn by two cream-coloured horses. Then he woke up. He told us about the dream as we were sitting round a table drinking beer. Shortly afterward, having successfully passed his examinations, he went to Spain, and there, in one of the streets, he recognized the city of his dream. He found the square and the cathedral, which exactly corresponded to the dream-image. He wanted to go straight to the cathedral, but then remembered that in the dream he had turned right, at the corner, into another street. He was curious to find out whether his dream would be corroborated further. Hardly had he turned the corner when he saw in reality the carriage with the two cream-coloured horses (Ibid.: para 973).

Again, how to explain such an event? The man's dream seems to have anticipated the actual event as though there were a kind of "foreknowledge" in the unconscious. Or perhaps time and space didn't exist in the unconscious?

Later, while practicing as a psychiatrist, Jung also had significant paranormal experiences. He cites the case of a woman patient who, despite all his efforts, proved to be psychologically inaccessible. She protected herself with a highly rational, intellectual defense which made any kind of deep analytic work impossible. Jung remarks:

I had to confine myself to the hope that something unexpected and irrational would turn up, something that would burst the intellectual retort into which she had sealed herself. Well, I was sitting opposite her one day, with my back to the window, listening to her flow of rhetoric. She had had an impressive dream the night before, in which someone had given her a golden scarab--a costly piece of jewelry. While she was still telling me this dream, I heard something behind me gently tapping on the window. I turned round and saw that it was a fairly large flying insect that was knocking against the window-pane from outside in the obvious effort to get into the dark room. This seemed to me very strange. I opened the window immediately and caught the insect in the air as it flew in. It

was a scarabaeid beetle... whose gold-green colour most nearly resembles that of a golden scarab. I handed the beetle to my patient with the words, "Here is your scarab." This broke the ice of her intellectual resistance. The treatment could now be continued with satisfactory results. (Jung, 1951, para 982)

In this instance there were simultaneous inner and outer events, the woman's dream and the outer appearance of the beetle that seemed to be meaningfully linked, but not in a way that either could have caused the other. So in these three examples of "spooky connections," the parameters of space, time, and causality seem to have been strangely suspended.

As a possible way of explaining these three events, and others like them, Jung began to wonder about what Leibnitz described as a kind of "pre-existing harmony"-- between an internal state of mind or psyche and the outer cosmic field of energy and matter. Could it be, he wondered, that mind and matter are unified by this underlying harmony—a unifying "third" which transcends the unsolvable dilemmas of space/time mind/body, cause/effect and unites these dualities in a higher (or deeper) trans-rational order?

Eventually (1951, 1955) this is precisely what Jung suggested. He offered the idea of *synchronicity* to provide a model for understanding such events. He grouped all his observations of *synchronous* events under three categories:

1. The coincidence of a psychic state in the observer with a simultaneous, objective, external event that corresponds to the psychic state or content (e.g., the scarab), where there is no evidence of a causal connection between the psychic state and the external event....
2. The coincidence of a psychic state with a corresponding (more or less simultaneous) external event taking place outside the observer's field of perception, i.e., at a distance, and only verifiable afterward (e.g., Swedenborg's vision and the Stockholm fire).
3. The coincidence of a psychic state with a corresponding not yet existent future event that is distant in time and can likewise only be verified afterward. [e.g. the student dream about the Spanish village he later visited] (Jung, 1951, para 984).

To summarize, by the term synchronicity he meant the co-incident of two events, one an *inner* experience, a dream, image, thought, feeling or intuitive perception, with an objective *outer* event (the fire in Stockholm or the beetle at the window), where the coincidence of these two events is "meaningful" to the person and where a causal connection between the two is out of the question. Inner and outer, psyche and physis, are therefore linked not by causality, operating in the space/time continuum, but by meaning which transcends it. So synchronicity is an *a-causal connecting principle based on meaningful coincidence*.

By proposing that psyche and matter might be two different aspects of one and the same thing Jung was left to wonder what this irrepresentable, transcendental "something" might be. Here he took some solace from modern quantum physics which also has no

"name" for the "essential" (noumenal) nature of light, which also can appear (phenomenally) in either of two paradoxical forms, particle or light.

Near the end of his life, in a letter to Karl Schmid, Jung (1975) says:

Naturally we can postulate that there is "something" hidden behind these phenomena [matter and psyche] but this gets us no [further] since it is impossible for us to conceive what that "something" would have to be like in order to appear now as causality and now as synchronicity. I have just read that modern physicists have coined a name for it: the terrifying expression "universon," which is at the same time "cosmon" and "anti-cosmon." Such extravaganzas get us nowhere. This is where mythology begins (Ibid.:448)

Jung noticed one additional important psychological factor that seemed to accompany synchronous events--heightened emotionality in the subject. This observation was supported by the experimental results of J. B. Rhine who found that his positive results in ESP experiments fell off as soon as his subjects lost interest in the procedure (Jung, 1955: para 912). The fact that heightened affect seemed to be a necessary psychic condition to produce synchronous events suggested to Jung the presence of an *activated archetype*.

The effective (numinous) agents in the unconscious are the archetypes. By far the greatest number of spontaneous synchronistic phenomena that I have had occasion to observe and analyse can easily be shown to have a direct connection with an archetype. This, in itself, is an irrepresentable, psychoid factor of the collective unconscious (Jung, 1955, para 912).

In synchronistic events, Jung saw that the archetypal pattern seemed to be able to express itself in both physical and psychological form and this led him to propose an as yet unknown "substrate," a unitary background or "psychoid" dimension to reality.

This postulated unitary background to existence, in which the concepts of psyche and matter and space and time merge into a psychophysical space-time continuum, was where Jung considered the archetypes themselves as opposed to their phenomenal manifestations, ultimately to be located....The ability of the archetype to manifest synchronistically in independent psychic and physical contexts is itself an indicator of its fundamentally psychoid nature. (Main, 36)

In the above example of Jung's patient with the scarab dream, the activated archetype was presumably that of "rebirth." Both Jung and his patient were attending her inner state of defensive "entombment" together with the longing for liberation. In this "potentiated space" the age-old Egyptian symbol of rebirth, the scarab, appeared as the archetype in both its psychic and material form.

In the case of Swedenborg and the fire in Stockholm, Jung suggests the same thing, although he can only speculate as to the activated archetypal constellation [one likely candidate would seem to be "destruction."]:

I would only point to the fact that in Swedenborg's biography there are certain things which throw a remarkable light on his psychic state. We must assume that there was a lowering of the threshold of consciousness which gave him access to "absolute knowledge." The fire in Stockholm was, in a sense, burning in him too. For the unconscious psyche space and time seem relative. (1955: para 912)

By "absolute knowledge" Jung was referring to that "pre-existing harmony"--a dimension of meaning that doesn't seem to depend on human subjectivity but is "transcendental" or "self-subsistent"--"a meaning which is a priori in relation to human consciousness and apparently exists outside man" (Jung 1955, para 942).

In summary Jung came to believe that his principle of synchronicity was broad enough to encompass most of the kinds of paranormal events that were commonly reported, including those we will review in the next section. These include extra-sensory perception (ESP), telepathy (feeling at a distance), clairvoyance (seeing at a distance), precognition (foreknowledge of events) and psychokinesis (PK) in which the psyche produces effects in the world beyond its physical body.

However there was one additional paranormal category of events that Jung remained undecided about when it came to his synchronicity theory, i.e., *out-of-body experiences (OBE)*. He held back his discussion of these until the concluding part of his essay (Jung, 1955). In out-of-body experiences, there is the implication that the psyche can exist apart from the physical body as in the channeling of long-dead ancestors or messages from individuals alive in the past. OBE's such as occur in life-threatening crises, car crashes, or near-death experiences (such as we saw in Chapter 1) are perhaps the most dramatic examples. Frequently, on the threshold of death, or traumatic overwhelm, some part of the subject leaves the body and observes from a vantage-point above. In extreme cases the subject is in a coma—the heart is stopped and the EEG may be flat, and the eyes closed but visual perception goes on "from the ceiling." The miraculous thing is that a witnessing consciousness is present seemingly *independent of the brain*. The mind, in these cases, does not seem to be dependent on its brain!

This remarkable fact gave Jung a chance to speculate further on the body/soul relationship and how synchronicity might contribute to our understanding, especially as augmented by the findings of quantum physics. We will return to this discussion at the end of this chapter, after reviewing recent accounts of paranormal experiences in the analytic situation.

### **Paranormal Experiences in Analysis:**

It is not surprising that many anomalous experiences occur in psychoanalysis. The psychoanalytic situation lowers the threshold of ego-consciousness, encourages inwardly directed attention by both participants and privileges the "messages" from the unconscious mind, i.e., dreams, fantasy, etc. In Jung's language it may "activate the Archetype." Also, in the analytic situation often, infant-aspects of the patient emerge in

the transference that go back to the individual's pre-verbal history where extra-sensory linkages and paranormal levels of communication between infant and mother in the early attachment bond may have been active. Much of contemporary psychoanalysis is involved in exploring the mysteries of such early, pre-verbal communication and attunement between mother and infant, examining how it may be operative underneath the more conscious, language-mediated communication in analysis (Beebe, Jaffe and Lachmann 2000; Fonagy, 2001; Stern, 1985; Schore, 2003; Tronick, 1989)

Another reason for the frequent appearance of anomalous phenomena in analysis may be the fact that many patients have had a history of significant early trauma. As we have witnessed repeatedly in this book, it seems that at those "broken" places in the personality where we were shattered or catastrophically abandoned, we were also *broken open* to deep layers of the unconscious. And these deep--for Jung "psychoid" --layers seem to mediate another way of knowing that transcends our usual ways. In Rilke's language, they open us to the "unplayed melody" in the flute of our bodies, waiting inside us to be played.

In psychoanalytic circles it is widely reported (see Mayer, 2007, 101) that trauma survivors often have psychic powers beyond those of the normal population. Sandor Ferenczi in particular proposed in his *Clinical Diary* that "those who have 'gone mad' from pain, i.e. those who have departed from the usual egocentric point of view, [are often] able through their special situation to experience a part of that immaterial reality which remains inaccessible to us materialists" ... (Dupont, 1998, 33).

Many of the paranormal moments cited below had a very powerful impact upon the reporting practitioner, personally and professionally. In some cases such moments turned their world upside down, isolating them with the fear that they were somehow unstable and should keep the event to themselves. (Sometimes they did, not publishing or talking about their experience for many years.) In other cases, the anomalous experiences led to a whole new direction of creative endeavor within their professional lives and the realization that the world, and the way they lived their lives in it, would never be the same. Some of these encounters happened to the analyst alone, some to their patients, and some occurred in an intermediate space between the two where synchronistic connections seemed to link events.

The latter involved "meaningful coincidences" (like Jung's scarab incident) that seemed to defy normal cause and effect explanations. Something uncanny happens in the relationship between two people in which communication seems to occur outside the normal channels such as language, or predictable message-transmission. It is as though the message is carried through another invisible "medium," perhaps through a deep unconscious field. Often these experiences lead to a deeper understanding and healing connection between the analytic partners, both being suddenly present-to and joined-by a moving and unifying mystery. In short, these anomalous connections often seemed to quicken the soul, giving their subjects access to "another world" that suddenly seems to have penetrated "this" one. This can shake up our habitual conceptions of the world.

## Stories By Psychoanalysts

This "shake-up" was certainly the case with our first example of a paranormal experience--reported by the late psychoanalyst, researcher and clinician Elizabeth Lloyd Mayer, Ph.D. of California. What she discovered completely changed the way she perceived the world and led her into a major research project resulting in her remarkable book *Extraordinary Knowing: Science, Skepticism, and the Inexplicable Powers of the Human Mind* (Mayer, 2007), finished just before her untimely death.

### The Psychic Dowser and the Lost Harp

Elizabeth Mayer's life-changing experience came after consulting a psychic about a valuable lost object--her daughter's custom-made harp (Mayer, 2007, 2-3). Meg, her daughter, had fallen in love with this special harp when she was six years old and it was now 5 years later and she had begun performing. Her concert was on Saturday and Sunday and after the Saturday performance she had left the harp with other instruments locked up in the concert hall. But when she returned on Sunday it was gone--stolen. For two months Meg and her mother tried everything they could think of to recover the harp; they went to the police, consulted instrument dealers all over the country, put notices in the Harp Society newsletters, even went on television with a CBS news story--nothing worked.

Finally, a wise and trusted friend of Dr. Mayer's suggested that she might try a dowser, i.e., a psychic who specialized in locating lost objects. Mayer was taken aback by this bizarre suggestion but was desperate enough to try anything! So eventually she was put in touch with a well known dowser in Arkansas. She called him up and asked if he could help locate her daughter's harp, stolen in Oakland California.

"Give me a second," said the voice on the phone. "I'll tell you if its still in Oakland." Long pause... then: "Well it's still there. Send me a street map of Oakland and I'll locate that harp for you." Skeptical and amused, Mayer sent him the map. Soon a call came. "Well, I got that harp located," he said. "It's in the second house on the right on X Street, just off of Y Avenue."

Oakland is a huge city and the intersection was many miles away. But Elizabeth Mayer climbed into her car and found the intersection and the house. She wrote down the number, called the police and told them she had a tip that the missing harp might be at that address. "Not good enough for a search warrant," they said and proceeded to close the case.

But Dr. Mayer was undeterred. She returned to the neighborhood with posters, on which she described the harp and offered a reward. She felt crazy doing this but she did it anyway. She put them up in a two block radius. Soon her phone rang. A man said he had seen the harp at his next-door neighbor's and would arrange to have the harp returned to her. Two weeks later after a series of circuitous phone calls, Dr. Mayer met a teenage boy late one night in the rear parking lot of an all-night supermarket. He looked at her



and said "The harp?" She nodded. Twenty five minutes later she turned into her driveway, the harp safely in the back seat. She couldn't believe what had just happened and she thought to herself, "*This changes everything.*"

Mayer (2007, 4) elaborates:

I was right. The harp changed how I work as a clinician and psychoanalyst. It changed the nature of the research I pursued. It changed my sense of what's ordinary and what's extraordinary. Most of all, it changed my relatively established, relatively contented, relatively secure sense of how the world adds up. If [an Arkansas dowser] did what he appeared to have done, I had to face the fact that my notions of space, time, reality, and the nature of the human mind were stunningly inadequate. Disturbing as that recognition was, there was something intriguing, even exciting, about it as well.

One of the ways this event changed Dr. Mayer's practice was that it made her very interested in anomalous phenomena and word of this interest got around. Patients started to consult her because they held a psychic "secret" and they needed a sympathetic place to tell it. Other patients found themselves confessing to such psychic secrets that they had long repressed. For example, one eminent brain surgeon reported with great embarrassment that he never operated on a patient until after he had sat by their bedside and seen a distinctive white light appearing around their head. Unless it appeared he knew it was unsafe to operate. When it did, he could go ahead and knew his patient would survive (Ibid.: 12). This anomalous secret had isolated him in his profession. He was afraid to talk about it, lest he be thought "crazy." Events like this proliferated in Dr. Mayer's practice.

Then in 1997, she and Carol Gilligan Ph.D., a psychoanalytic colleague with whom she had frequently discussed her harp story, decided to convene a discussion group at the biannual meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association called "Intuition, Unconscious Communication, and 'Thought Transference.'" They were inundated with applications. Attendees were asked to write an account of an apparently anomalous experience, personal or clinical. From these accounts, the following, from Susan Coates, Ph.D. an authority on early childhood, is illustrative.

### **Your Brother is Drowning! Psychic Intuition in a Child**

Some years ago I treated a very young girl who was four years old. In the second year of her treatment, I saw her on October second which is the anniversary of my brother's death. He drowned while saving someone's life when I was twenty-five years old and it was a profoundly painful loss for me. It's still very much with me, especially on October second. My young patient was playing out a theme that had preoccupied her for some time when out of the blue she suddenly turned to me, and said, "Your brother is drowning--you have to save him!" The hair stood up on the back of my neck and I said to her, "No one is going to drown because we will save them," and she went back to the play that she'd been

involved in that had no relationship to drowning or even to being overwhelmed. I hadn't been aware of thinking about my brother at that moment, but he's often on my mind on the anniversary of the day he died. There was no way that this child could have known about this fact of my life. I believe this kind of thing happens, though infrequently, and I also think you're right to use the word "anomalous" for it. It has happened only one other time in my practice and that was with an adult who is a therapist (Ibid.: 14-15).

This is certainly a vivid example of what Freud and Ferenczi meant by "thought transference," but it has other elements. Because it was the anniversary of her brother's death, most likely there was an unconscious field of *emotion* constellated in the "potential space" between Dr. Coates and her little patient. Many of the early experiments in ESP and telepathy showed that the psychic "powers" of individuals were enhanced if had emotional involvement with the experiment or its subjects. Also, the well-known "crisis apparitions" recorded by William James and his colleagues were usually between persons who were emotionally connected to each other (See Blum, 2006).

The second noteworthy thing about this example is that one of the parties is a four year old girl. As we saw in an earlier example of the four year old girl who asked her infant brother "tell me about God, I've almost forgotten," (see Introduction) children seem to be closer to that mysterious unifying world that stands "behind" this one. Sandor Ferenczi once speculated:

Certain signs indicate that the psychophysical personality of a child in the womb, or indeed after birth, is not yet completely crystallized, as it were, but exists still in a state of 'dissolution'... (before conception the individual was somehow still dissolved in the universe)...the childish personality is in much closer contact with the universe...the whole personality is still resonating with the environment [so that] so called supernormal faculties (clairvoyance, communication at a distance, etc) - may well be ordinary processes [such as are commonly seen in the animal world]. Here the first possibility to understand the so-called telegony (the influence of the mother's psychic experiences on the child in the womb)...Spiritualist mediums... owe their powers to a regression to this infantile state of omniscience and supreme wisdom. (Dupont, 1998, 80-81)

### **Prayer Before Birth: Poetry as a Vehicle for Uncanny Connections**

Another example of paranormal phenomena in the analytic situation comes from an article by Marilyn Mathew of London, titled *Reverie: Between Thought and Prayer* (Mathew, 2005). The author is especially interested in "maternal analytic reverie" which she views as the passage of unconscious communication between patient and analyst as the result of a "window" opening "in the meniscus of the analyst's self." (Ibid.: 383) This "window," she proposes, opens into a "void within" that can be a rich potential space for thought and inspiration.

...by opening 'doors and windows' in the perimeters of our psychic boundaries, we can think about the process of reverie as one which allows the soul to travel between thought and prayer, beyond our known selves, to experience the 'what is not.' (Ibid.: 383).

Mathew then describes her work with "Jane," a very impressionable and sensitive woman with significant early relational trauma, especially with her mother. Mathew finds herself in reverie one day puzzling over this analysand, while gazing out a window "into the blue," deep in thought. As the minutes tick by, she becomes aware that she is no longer looking at the scene out her window, but that, imperceptibly, the quality of her vision has shifted until she is no longer seeing at all.

Before long I am lost in a void of time and space; utterly elsewhere, utterly entranced. I do not realize I have been so engrossed, faraway and 'elsewhere,' until I come back to my embodied self.

Why, when I return from a state of reverie, do I so often find that I have been gazing out through a window? Is it possible that, coincidentally, this process has enabled an internal window to unlatch and swing open in my mind, allowing psyche access from one world to another? (Ibid.: 384)

Meanwhile, Mathew and her patient Jane have realized together that at a very young age, Jane had protectively withdrawn an essential part of herself into an inner refuge or psychic retreat. Jane's 4<sup>th</sup> pregnancy now seemed to offer the possibility of giving birth to this incubated part of herself, but she resisted this for fear that her inner infant-self would be traumatically un-met and abandoned as had happened in her own early life. We pick up the narrative of Mathew's description:

Six months previously I had heard a beautiful poem by Louis MacNeice for the first time. I had metaphorically tucked it away behind my ear, meaning to search it out, but somehow I had never got round to it. Then one weekend, out of the blue, an urgent thought arrived from nowhere and began to niggle ferociously. There was no peace until I ransacked my bookshelves, eventually finding the poem in a scruffy penguin paperback book. Marking the page with an old train ticket, I took it into my consulting room, and left it on the bookcase behind my chair—where I forgot about it again.

A few days later, Jane began telling me in a session about her childhood love of poetry, and the profound sadness that her mother had found it meaningless. Jane had won countless medals in competitions, reciting hundreds of poems.

"Was there ever one poem that meant more than any other?" I asked. "Yes," she replied instantly, "there's a wonderful poem by Louis MacNeice called "Prayer Before Birth"...I just wish I could remember how it goes."

I reached behind me, handing her the battered paperback. She opened it where it was marked with the train ticket. Here is the third verse:

*I am not yet born; provide me  
With water to dandle me, grass to grow for me, trees to talk*

*To me, sky to sing to me, birds and a white light  
In the back of my mind to guide me.*

This experience seemed to come from out of the blue, from the other side of the rainbow. It brought immense meaning and transformed our analytic relationship (Ibid.: 388).

In trying to understand this experience theoretically, the author mentions Levy Bruhl's *participation mystique*, Melanie Klein's *projective identification*, and Jung's concept of *synchronicity*, (Ibid.: 390) none of which are very satisfactory and all of which represent our usual psychoanalytic left-brain theorizing. Then in some final thoughts--thoughts that restore the soul to her essay and to her readers, Mathew concludes:

Reverie is, I believe, both a process and a state of mind. It is the "void within" and the eye of the mind's heart. Reverie dims daylight, and turns the mind's reflective mirror to glass, illuminating an inner darkness. Moving between thought and prayer, it is reverie that extends psyche's vision beyond the doors and windows of our minds into the cathedrals of our souls. *Thus we gain benefit from what is and usefulness from what is not.*

### **Making Contact with the Lost Soul: Mysterious Telephone Linkages**

Our next example comes from well known psychoanalyst Shelly Alhanati, Ph.D. who has written extensively on early childhood trauma and its implications for how we work with, and make genuine human contact with, patients who have suffered catastrophic disruptions in their primary bonding and attachment relationships. (Alhanati, 1997, 2002, 2004).

Dr. Alhanati describes her work with a patient where the usual verbal/interpretive methods of psychoanalysis simply didn't work. The woman had ostensibly come into therapy because she was having difficulty writing a book, but her more serious underlying disturbance involved cutting, burning, and anorexia. She had been born prematurely and spent the first three months of her life, untouched and unheld, in an incubator. The result was she felt utterly empty and vacant of a core self, lacking in vitality and missing some essential element of aliveness.

Alhanati's communications with this patient elicited blank robotic responses that seemed to go nowhere and she began to agonize about how to reach this very out-of-contact patient.

The first meaningful contact they made with each other, says Alhanati, came in a very unorthodox manner....

.... "in the dark, wordless night of our minds. Sometimes literally, only in our dreams."... For example: One day, I was on the phone talking to a mechanic about my car, and he asked me for my phone number. I rattled off a number

which was totally foreign to me. I quickly corrected it, but I was struck by the way this unknown number had rolled off my tongue with such ease, as if it were my own. I was haunted by the phone number all day, and I asked my husband if he knew that number. He said he did not, and suggested that maybe it was one of my patient's numbers. I looked in my phone book, and it was hers. I had no idea that I even knew her number.

The next day she came in and said she had wanted to call me but could not bring herself to do so. Then she reported a dream:

*A little girl was trying to talk to a woman, but her words were coming out all garbled, like she was under water. It was interesting because the woman was understanding her anyway, even though you couldn't really hear the words.*

The fact that Dr. Alhanati was unconsciously carrying around her patient's phone number in her mind at the very time the patient wanted to call her is perhaps not as "anomalous" a connection as the previous vignettes but, provides a good example of how an unconscious field is established between therapist and patient...a field which potentiates communication that is outside the usual means of verbal interchange or other conscious visual signals.

Melanie Klein's theory of projective-identification is perhaps sufficient to understand this seemingly uncanny coincidence, although telepathic influences cannot be ruled out. If we took Ogden's useful (1990) definition of projective identification as "when the projector by means of actual interpersonal interactions with the 'recipient' unconsciously induces feeling states in the recipient that are congruent with the 'ejected' feelings," (p. 79) then we could make the following sense out of this unusual event: The "little girl" inside the patient who felt an unconscious (denied or "ejected") longing to make contact with her analyst (a desire which is "under water" and garbled in her dream) has somehow through their interpersonal interactions induced precisely this feeling state in her therapist who now actualizes this unconscious desire for contact by confusing the patient's phone number with her own. Now, in the analyst's mind, the two share one telephone number (state of identification) and a call to *her own number* would have been a call to her *patient*--precisely the patient's dissociated desire.

While the term "projective identification" may advance our understanding somewhat, it is just one of the mysterious formulations that pass for explanation in contemporary psychoanalysis--like Bion's "O" or "thoughts without a thinker," or Ogden's "analytic third" or Winnicott's paradox or Schore's "right brain to right brain" communication. It would be equally possible to imagine that the uncanny wordless communication that passes between infant and caretaker is mediated by paranormal, extra-sensory linkages such as Jung's synchronicity.

In any case, whatever we call it, openness to this level of communion requires courage. Alhanati (2004) summarizes her work with patients such as this one:

Patients who have had ruptures in their earliest attachments need us to live their experience with them first--as they live it: to touch them non-symbolically first--to embed ourselves in their experience without making meaning of it first--to surrender to the experience--so that a true starting point can then begin to be found, for the first time, with us (p. 761).

### **"Whose Unconscious Is It Anyway?" Fear of Knowing**

The following example may give us clues about the developmental process through which a capacity for telepathy develops in a person in response to trauma. Antony Bass, then Supervising Analyst at the New York University Postdoctoral Program, reported his long-term work with a very diffuse, "spacey" female patient ostensibly in treatment for an eating disorder (Bass, 2001). The patient told him that she had a way of knowing things about people long before she knew how she knew, and that this ability frightened her. She was a prolific and vivid dreamer and her dreams also frightened her because they threatened to reveal more about herself than she wanted to know.

One day in a session in which the patient was commenting again about how she "knew things" about people she really had no way of knowing, Bass asked her if there was anything of this nature she knew about him. He reports the following conversation:

"As a matter of fact, she said . . . she knew I would be leaving the hospital a few months before I did to open my private office. And she was pretty sure that my wife had had a miscarriage about four months earlier, just before Thanksgiving. Well, her second consecutive bull's-eye just about knocked me out of my chair. I had never spoken of my wife, much less of her miscarriage, which indeed had taken place four months earlier. . . . whose unconscious is it anyway? (Ibid.: 692)

Bass speculates about how his patient might have intuited this information and begins to realize that whatever implicit messages he was "broadcasting," her "receiver" was an extraordinarily sensitive instrument that she had come to mistrust. Indeed she had become afraid of it. He began to wonder why.

What began to emerge were recollections of incest with a grandfather -- incidents that, as she put it, she had never really forgotten but never really known. She had come to sense her grandfather's state of mind at a distance, to know what he would be expecting from her, whether he would be coming to her for sex or for something more grandfatherly (Ibid., 692).

This kind of development of extra-sensory ways of knowing as a way of helping protect a child from possible traumatic violation, may be a common factor in many cases of ESP. Elizabeth Mayer (2007) reports a similar case from her own practice of a woman who consulted her because her own intuitive knowing beyond the evidence was becoming impossible to live with. Each time she experienced an incident of this "spooky knowing" she would begin to panic, felt crazy and began to dissociate. Exploration of her personal history revealed that as a child she had frequently lived in terror--terror of her father who

was episodically uncontrollably violent. In order to protect herself, Mayer's patient had somehow learned to intuit when her father was driving home drunk, giving her just enough time to hide herself and her younger sister in a closet so they wouldn't get beaten.

During the late afternoons I'd start listening for him. It was a funny kind of listening. It was like listening with my whole body, not my ears. I don't know how to describe it except to say I was tuned in, vigilant with every part of me. Suddenly I'd know--know he was fifteen minutes away and driving home drunk. Then I'd hustle me and my sister into the closet...My dad didn't drink all the time. So there was no predicting. I had to stay tuned in every day, be ready, and never trust any pattern. (Ibid.: 100).

In both the above cases, the patients' adult fear of their telepathic abilities becomes understandable, given that these abilities were part of an early defense against dissociated traumatic experience. When their uncanny abilities emerged later in their lives, the linked dissociated fear and traumatic affect came up with it.

### **Telepathic Dreaming**

While fear may be one catalyst for developing telepathic abilities, a close, intimate and "entangled" relationship, such as occurs in psychoanalysis or psychoanalytic training, may be another. This example comes from Robert Stoller, the famous Freudian analyst who trained in San Francisco with Ralph Greenson who was his esteemed mentor and supervising analyst. Stoller had quite a number of telepathic dreams during his life and encountered others from patients, but was urged not to report them for fear of compromising his career. He wrote them up anyway but his text was not published until after his death in an article called "On Robert Stoller's 'Telepathic' dreams (Mayer, 2001). Here is Stoller's account of the main event that initiated a series of telepathic dreams.

"I was doing supervisory work as a candidate with Dr. Ralph R. Greenson; we got along well. I found myself most impressed with Greenson's deep understanding of my patient and his capacity, far beyond mine, to read her unconscious processes despite my being with her daily. (He had first referred me the patient, a relative of friends of his.)

I sketch in these few details in order to suggest to the reader what was powerfully present in the supervision—an intense relationship on my part. At this time, 1960, our relationship was warm, but I kept a respectful distance.

In keeping with that distance, it had always been my style to greet Greenson with no more than a "hello." One day, however, I followed this with "How are you?" and would not have even noticed having done so had he not in fact answered in a non-perfunctory manner. ... "I am all right now," [he said] "but we had a terrible experience over the weekend. Saturday night Danny had a motorcycle accident in the San Francisco area and was almost killed. He had never been on a motorcycle before, and was just trying it out when he lost control and was smashed up and taken to the hospital. He has a compound comminuted

fracture of the left leg, but it looks like he will be okay. I only hope that he will be able to start medical school on time.” Danny is his son, whom I had known somewhat since he was sixteen (Ibid.: 636).

At this point, apparently, Robert Stoller went white with shock. All the color drained from his face. He had dreamt precisely this event--down to the exact words--a few nights before!

I was astonished, having just had an experience that never happened before in my life (and has never happened again). On the previous Saturday night/Sunday morning (the night of Danny’s accident) I had the following dream—unlike any I have ever had in my life before or since, unlike in its theme and its details, although using in its manifest content an environment with which I had once been familiar. Here is my dream: I am back again in the emergency area of the San Francisco hospital where I had worked in the forties as a medical student and intern. The appearance of the emergency area is as undistorted as I would remember it years later, if awake. They bring in a medical student: [they announce that] he has just received a compound comminuted fracture of the left leg (Ibid.: 637).

When Robert Stoller reported this uncanny coincidence to his supervisor, Greenson was reportedly shaken by this revelation, and although he had always had an antipathy to anything mystical or uncanny, he was convinced that this was an inexplicable telepathic occurrence—something that simply couldn’t be explained away.

Stoller apparently was too. Because from this point forward, he began to record in a journal, uncanny events with his own patients and to write them up for possible eventual presentation in the form of a paper--a paper he would never complete. Here are two other examples of the kind of experiences which unsettled and fascinated him--both dreams from the same female patient, whom he was supervising with Greenson.

On a Saturday night before her session with Stoller on Monday, his patient dreamed:

There was a party going on at somebody's home. There was a big crowd of people milling around in a large room, which instead of having a wall had one whole side made of glass. An older man whom I do not know but who was very kindly was there. He walked by me carrying some large object and suddenly smashed through the glass. I was terribly frightened that he was hurt, and yet in some strange manner he was not. There was glass all around. (Ibid.: 639)

Stoller reports that on Saturday night, he had been at a party for a political candidate. After the speaker finished chairs were being moved out of the living room through the sliding glass doors that made up on wall of the room. Stoller had carried chairs several times through the open door but then someone closed it. Carrying another chair and with the back-lit glass invisible, he had crashed through the glass. There was glass everywhere but he remained uninjured.



Some months later, as his new home was being constructed the same patient dreamed on Monday:

I am walking through a house that is under construction. I walk from one end to the other; I get to the part that is to be the bathroom. And I walked into the bathroom and saw that they were building a sunken bath. Someone had put an initial in the still soft cement.

Stoller reports that there is no reason to believe that the patient knew he was having a home built and that on the day before his patient's dream he had indeed walked through his unfinished house:

...I discovered that the sunken bath, put in the day before, had been mildly vandalized, with an initial traced in the hardening terrazzo. (Ibid.: 639)

These reports are extraordinary and defy any causal explanation. Stoller gives no information in his posthumously published paper about whether he discussed these telepathic moments with his patient. Nor does he speculate about why they happened with these particular individuals. He does mention, at the end of his article that in all his examples, the telepathic dream occurred during a separation, i.e., over a weekend or during a time when he was away. Secondly, he notes that the patients had few if any associations to those elements in the dreams that reproduced the actual events in his life, and finally, that these elements were different than any that had shown up in his patients dreams before and as far as he could remember, they never recurred (Ibid.: 650).

It may also be noteworthy that the cases he mentioned were all supervised by Greenson, making Stoller's supervisor a 'common denominator' in all these accounts. There is some reason to believe that his relationship with Greenson was "highly charged" for Robert Stoller--perhaps archetypally so-- as indicated by a footnote to his account that he had an impulse to omit:

I am in a sense a 'Greene-son.' My mother's maiden name was Greene. When she met Dr. Greenson, she said "My God, he looks just like my father!" (who died when I was five years old. Was I not then Greenson's grandson?" (Mayer, 638)

Might not the activated archetype in this case have been the "Father-son" archetype? This might explain that "lowering of the threshold" accompanying the profusion of uncanny synchronicities during this brief period of Stoller's life--a period, he says, that ended shortly thereafter and never returned.

### **When Outer Events Mirror Inner Events**

This example comes from Jungian psychoanalyst Ann Ulanov who describes her work with a male patient who reached a powerful insight in his analysis. It demonstrates how

an encounter with synchronicity can help fill a gap created by early trauma, introducing us to a great mystery beyond our "pathology." Ulanov (2004) reports:

“We had been working hard on a repetition compulsion that featured a sexual fetish: obsessive attraction to a woman’s nylon stocking. It aroused him to awe as well as excitement; a kind of reverence stirred his body and soul. This dissociated obeisance clearly dwelt alongside his long, fruitful partnership with his wife. He felt himself thrown back and forth between fascination with the fetish object on the one side and his conscious humiliation and wish to rid himself of the enthrallment to it on the other. He had imaginatively engaged both of these opposites in conversation for some time in the analysis. On the particular session when the repetition broke open, we were speaking again of an earlier traumatic event when his father—with his mother also present—in exasperation at his repeated calling out from his room at night, ousted him from bed, flung him into the dark attic, and locked the door. He shook in terror. Within a few moments, thankfully, his father released him again (Ibid.: 414-15).

In response to this remembered trauma, Ulanov offers an interpretation:

I hazarded the comment that for a few seconds in the attic he had felt himself gone, annihilated. He had been out of existence momentarily and ever after had carried inside himself a great gap, a place where he did not exist. He housed in himself an interruption of his life. At that moment he saw the stocking as what he had created to bridge the gap. The stocking linked the two sides together, being and non-being, existence and its annihilation....His awe rose before the stocking that had moved his whole being to life....

Our subsequent sessions continued moving through and working over these insights. But before the next session, he sent me through priority mail a newspaper clipping and photograph he had just received from an out-of-touch distant neighbor that arrived right after our decisive session. The photo showed that his original childhood house had been struck by lightning, but it only burned and destroyed the old attic room, nothing else. He felt pictured there the obliteration of his repetition complex built around the fetish object, leaving the rest of him intact. The stocking had accomplished a transformation into a blazing perception and here, remarkably enough, outer reality confirmed his inner work (Ibid.: 415).

This is a classic example of what Jung meant by Synchronicity--an outer event clearly linked to an inner event--not by cause and effect, but by meaning. Dr. Ulanov says that such experiences where the usual categories of time, space and causality seem to dissolve, show the unitary nature of reality--what Jung refers to in his Synchronicity paper as "absolute knowledge." (Jung, 1955, para. 912). In this interactive field, she says, we get a glimpse of a wholeness that is numinous and beyond anything we can imagine:

...“we expand to acquire non-sensory knowledge of events that transgress the usual subject-object dualism as well as any outer-inner dichotomy. Instead we

experience continuum, a linking of parts into whole, or more accurately, we glimpse a whole of which we compose the parts (Ulanov, Ibid.: 416).

And then Ann Ulanov challenges those of us working in this field with a question. Having witnessed such synchronous and uncanny connections she asks:

What then can we call this unitary field, this homeland of the gods? My clinical experiences have brought me to the conviction we must name this great presence in order to go on relating to it. If it remains anonymous, our clarity of perception of it fades... We need to find our own names for this presence that undergirds the ritual of treatment and enables us to do our work...

We know our names never define this presence, but they do focus our meditative gaze... Guntrip tells us that the healthy person is the loving person (Guntrip 1975). What, then, do we love? In Winnicott's words, what experiences make us feel alive and real? In Klein's words, What are we grateful for and to whom? In Freud's terms, what is the work we love? In Jung's terms, what is the infinite which summons us? (Ibid.: 418-420)

### **Precognitive Dreams: The World Trade Center Disaster**

The following example from Kleinian analyst and poet, Annie Reiner (2004, 2006) concerns a female patient, "Laura," with special psychic abilities expressed through anomalous knowledge, synchronicities and pre-cognitive dreams. Stimulated by her patient's unusual psychic abilities, including a proliferating incidence of uncanny coincidences (Jung's synchronicity) Reiner is both fascinated by the "spiritual" implications of the material and also worried about Laura's defensive use of spirituality as an escape from the emotional pathology resulting from her early trauma history. Consequently her two papers wrestle with exactly the same issues framed by title of this book, trauma and the soul.

Her case also shows how a patient like Laura with such extraordinary "knowledge" can be overwhelmed by the coincidence of her thoughts with actual outer events, making her feel "crazy" and blurring the differentiation of inner and outer worlds. She struggles with the delicate question of how the therapist should respond in such cases--especially with knowledge of a catastrophic trauma history in the background. As Reiner describes, Laura's psychic capacities tended to "inflate" her, and inspired a series of impulses toward acting out that her analyst felt obliged to discourage. In the following example, we see Laura's therapist trying to chart a middle way between full acknowledgement of her patient's psychic abilities *and the world they open her to*, on the one hand and a reductive effort to relate them to traumatic ruptures in her early history on the other.

Like many people with psychic capacity, Laura was one of those "innately sensitive" individuals recently brought to our attention by Elaine Aron (1996). Or, in the language of Jerome Bernstein's recent book (2005), she could be described as one of those finely attuned, poetic souls who occupy a "borderland" between the sacred and profane worlds. Gifted and artistic, Laura's prolific early paintings and poems provided a container for the

overwhelming affects she suffered as an infant and child. She was born prematurely, spending her early days in an incubator. Then she was sexually and physically abused by her father and brothers. Finally she was forced by her mother to watch perverse sexual acts in the family. Ms. Reiner is led to wonder how she avoided becoming overtly psychotic, and reaches the conclusion that *becoming psychic* may have represented a flight into the astral regions of the mind as an escape from the unbearable affects that she could not metabolize.

Laura's precognitive experiences both inflated her and made her anxious. They began to intensify in her analysis, as dissociated memories of her abuse started to emerge. On one occasion for example, while sitting with a new acquaintance, "Nancy," who reported to Laura that her brother had just died, Laura, who had not known of the brother's death beforehand, immediately saw a brilliant ball of white light and heard the brother's voice saying "Tell my sister I'm alright" and that "I found my song". Laura confided these "messages" to Nancy who was flabbergasted because her brother, an aspiring musician, had been crushed by terrible stage fright and at his memorial, Nancy had eulogized him as a "singer without a song" (Reinier, 2004: 317).

Laura also had psychic dreams. She could tell the difference between a normal dream and a psychic one. Psychic dreams were "quieter" she said, and "have a listening quality." They "don't come out of the confusion of my mind." On the Sunday night before Tuesday, Sept. 11th, 2001 when the World Trade Center was destroyed, Laura had one of her psychic dreams. She reported it to her analyst shortly after the events of 9/11:

I was on a plane flying very low in New York City on its way to L.A. It was going to crash—everyone was panicking, but I was calm. I said. "We're going to crash, some will survive, some won't." We crashed and hit the city. Then I was in another plane and it was going to crash too. Again, I wasn't panicked. I went into the cockpit and there were four pilots—two were American Airlines pilots because I saw those pins with the little wings. I didn't see the other two pilots but I kept saying, "Why are there four pilots? Did the other two kill the American pilots? Did they have heart attacks? Why are there four pilots? Again it crashed into the city (Ibid.: 322-3).

In the next part my boyfriend Jason and I were going to get on a plane that was going to crash. I thought. "that's just the way it is these days...when you get on a plane—it crashes." This plane was also going to LA but it was in Pennsylvania or Washington DC. We were waiting in a little French restaurant—the waitresses were speaking French. The plane was leaving at 4 or 5 and I said. "Come on, we have to leave!" We ran out but we didn't make it and saw the plane crash into a field. I wanted to talk to you about it (Ibid.: 323).

Not surprisingly, both Laura and her analyst were overwhelmed upon hearing this dream. Ms. Reinier was additionally worried about her patient because she seemed to be completely destabilized sobbing uncontrollably in her session, having seen a vision of

multitudes of angels companioning the victims as they leaped from the flaming buildings to their death in the street below. She wanted to go to New York City to help.

At this point, Reiner makes an interesting interpretive move.

“I told Laura that although she seemed to have intuited these terrible events before they occurred, and that her feelings about this tragedy were certainly understandable on that realistic level, I also wanted to draw her attention to another aspect of the dream which reflected her own internal struggle. Seeing the insanity, chaos and violence stimulated for her the insanity and violence of her family. For a sensitive child it was like watching their destruction over and over again. Her primitive efforts to rescue her parents by identifying with them meant that she too was felt to be going down with the two crashed planes. Her ability to intuit telepathically the suffering of others derives from a deep capacity for love, which could not develop properly in the face of such traumatic early events, becoming rather an idealized spiritual love. [So she] removed herself to a place of pure angelic love where she could survive her terror, but while this escape to the angels appears to make her safe it also divides her, as part of her stays with her family emotionally and part of her leaves” (Ibid.: 324).

Here Laura’s analyst tries to strike a delicate balance—normalizing and honoring her patient’s psychic gifts on the one hand, while at the same time avoiding undue fascination and reification of these abilities which might contribute to her patient’s grandiosity. Instead, she moves the focus to her patient’s current feelings, finding analogies to feelings from her personal history. This is sound clinical practice with people who tend to become identified with their psychic abilities—especially those with a trauma history which has left their ego’s un-integrated and weak. The danger for them is always what Ken Wilber (1998) calls “spiritual bypass” of early emotional conflict, and one must therefore work carefully with them to personalize and ground their split-off affects in the body.

Throughout her account, Reiner struggles to acknowledge that her patient has a genuine visionary gift, a wise and higher self. Given her Kleinian background, she has some difficulty however giving the spiritual world any “reality” or ontological status. She remains concerned (no doubt from repeated experience) that her patient will elevate, spiritualize and escape the hard work of emotional and inter-personal grounding (affect regulation and mentalization) needed for a “true” (not defensive) spiritual life.

As we see in Laura’s case, when the bond with the parents is thwarted, a new bond may be sought, one which is forged in an abstract relationship to love, to God or absolute truth. It is a precocious spiritual connection, however, a substitute for the necessary physical and emotional relationship to the parent and born of that troubled attachment (Ibid.: 320).

Further she says:

A distinction needs to be made between a true spiritual perspective and infantile fusion with the mother. If oneness with the universe is based on that primitive fusion, it has as its essence ambivalent feelings of love and hate and confusion between the two. Without a containing mother, the child's split or fragmented psyche ascends to an illusion of oneness with an idealized mother, so that what seems like mental expansion is really the self, bleeding out into an unbounded mental universe in a manic identification with a primitive and concretized God" (Ibid.: 323).

### Comment

Reiner assumes that the "oneness" that Laura never experienced with her mother converts itself into a precocious spiritual "oneness" with the universe and that this bypasses the development of the infant's "mentalized affectivity" (Fonagy et al. 2002). From a clinical standpoint, she is no doubt correct to warn us against this flight into the astral regions. A spiritual oneness can be a bypass and often is placed in the service of defense, just as she alleges.

However this isn't always the case. In my clinical experience, what Jung calls synchronicity can sometimes play an important role in sustaining someone in being "celestially" while work goes on "underneath" to construct the links between thought and affect-in-the-body--links that have been broken by primitive defenses or perhaps never developed. It is as if the patient comes in with a "scaffold" of synchronous connections and bizarre ideas that explain them, and this scaffold holds them in being while work goes on "below" on the embodied "house" of their incarnate existence.

For example, I remember a patient whose early life with her mother had been repeatedly and violently ruptured, and who, as a result suffered a huge split between inner needs and her intellectually armored and sophisticated adaptation to reality. In the midst of an idealized transference which existed side by side with a shaming and denigrating defense (see Chapter 3 on Dis), she came into a session and excitedly announced that while driving to my office, she had followed a car with my initials and phone number repeated exactly on its license plate! As we explored this uncanny coincidence it was clear to me that this synchronous event had encouraged her and made her feel hopeful. It also made her afraid (to be "crazy") but she knew (from her wide-ranging psychoanalytic reading) that my Jungian training would make me at least sympathetic to her experience, if not enthusiastic.

The synchronicity had provided a link between the outer world and her feelings of idealized love as though to support these feelings which were continually attacked and denegated by her inner tyrant. It was as though the license plate said "see, you do have a connection to him....the 'world' sees it and acknowledges that it matters."

Of course it would be easy to dismiss this as a delusional transference, but we would miss something important if we did this. Certainly this woman and I had a lot of work ahead to help her metabolize the love and hate she would feel for me as our work progressed.

Eventually she would need to reach a state of creative *ambivalence* transforming the archetypal idealizing and diabolizing energies directed at me, into usable ego capacities. This disillusioning process happened soon enough. But for awhile, we shared something real, i.e., our mutual amazement at the mysterious ways of the universe in bringing the inner and outer together as though they were parts of a transcendent whole. To return to the frontpiece of this book, it was as though we were both cast in a story written by an ancient shaman with binocular vision-- one eye looking out and one eye looking in.

As we have seen in Chapter 1, sometimes a precocious spirituality can make a difference in whether a child survives or not. Sometimes, precocious access to the spirit world (like Jennifer's near death encounter with her angel) can give a child the sense that he/she has a "right to be here" when no human person ever has. Of course this is not a permanent solution. For every bright angel there is a dark one--complementary sides of the same daimonic factor in the unconscious--a "protector/persecutor" in my language. Chapters 3 and 9 show the dark, persecutory sides of this figure, whose light, protective ministrations have been "worn out" by repeated trauma. When that happens, there is no substitute for the slow painstaking working through that we saw, for example, in the case of Mike in Chapter 4.

### **Out of Body Experiences: Jung's Fourth Synchronicity**

The preceding paranormal events in analysis leave us with many questions--but few answers. Naturally enough, science wants to know whether such things are "true" or not, within the parameters of cause and effect reality as science knows it. But as we have seen, no proof of these events can be given within that paradigm, because in each instance, the very idea of cause and effect (as we know it within the material world) is unthinkable. So we are left with a mystery. These uncanny events are true in the psyches of those who experienced them, i.e., they represent psychological truth, subjective truth, the soul's truth. From time immemorial these stories have been told and they will be told far into the future. They give us a window into a non-ordinary dimension of reality that is home to mystery, and home to the soul.

If we want to encompass them in psychological theory, it will require a new paradigm--a depth psychology that opens to an a-causal connecting principle operating in a time-and-space transcending continuum. This is what Jung gives us with the notion of synchronicity.

In concluding this chapter, and to compound the above mysteries, I would like to return to the fourth category of paranormal events that Jung wants to include within his theory of synchronicity, out of body experiences or OBE. This topic also gives us a chance to look at some interesting hypotheses about synchronicity offered by Jung on the one hand and by Pim Van Lommel, a Dutch Cardiologist who reports on out-of-body experiences of dying cardiac patients. Both men end up using Quantum physics to provide possible clues to the a-causal, time and space-transcending nature of these experiences. We start with Jung.

Jung reports an incident from his earlier medical education where a female patient almost died while giving birth to her first child. After thirty hours of fruitless labour and massive loss of blood the baby was delivered via forceps delivery, but the mother began to sink into a coma. Jung (1955: paras 950 & 951) says:

[Suddenly] she had the feeling that she was sinking through the bed into a bottomless void. She saw the nurse hurry to the bedside and seize her hand in order to take her pulse. From the way she moved her fingers to and fro the patient thought it must be almost imperceptible. Yet she herself felt quite all right, and was slightly amused at the nurse's alarm. She was not in the least frightened. That was the last she could remember for a long time. The next thing she was aware of was that, without feeling her body and its position, she was looking down from a point in the ceiling and could see everything going on in the room below her: she saw herself lying in the bed, deadly pale, with closed eyes. Beside her stood the nurse. The doctor paced up and down the room excitedly, and it seemed to her that he had lost his head and didn't know what to do. Her relatives crowded to the door. Her mother and her husband came in and looked at her with frightened faces....All this time she knew that behind her was a glorious, park-like landscape shining in the brightest colours, and in particular an emerald green meadow....full of little gay flowers such as she had never seen before.... "I knew that this was the entrance to another world, and that if I turned round to gaze at the picture directly, I should feel tempted to go in at the gate and thus step out of life."

The next thing that happened was that she awoke from her coma and saw the nurse bending over her in bed. She was told that she had been unconscious for about half an hour. The next day ... when she felt a little stronger, she made a remark to the nurse about the incompetent and "hysterical" behaviour of the doctor during her coma. The nurse energetically denied this criticism in the belief that the patient had been completely unconscious at the time and could therefore have known nothing of the scene. Only when she described in full detail what had happened during the coma was the nurse obliged to admit that the patient had perceived the events exactly as they happened in reality.

Jung notes that such relatively common out-of-body experiences demonstrate that in coma or other traumatic states in which normal consciousness (dependent on the cerebral cortex) is extinguished, and normal sense perception suspended, some sort of consciousness continues to be possible. How to explain this? Jung explores two possibilities.

First, he speculates that sub-cortical centers in the brain stem--a "neural substrate"--could remain active, although these lower centers contain nothing but chains of reflexes that are unconscious. Nevertheless, Jung reasons, lower forms of insect life that have no cerebrospinal nervous system at all, but merely a double chain of ganglia, (such as the honeybee), are now known to be capable of sophisticated communications to their co-workers, through dance, about direction and distance to feeding grounds etc. Therefore if rudimentary creatures like insects with nothing but a ganglionic system can achieve the



same sophisticated communication as our cerebral cortex, we cannot rule out the possibility that a nervous substrate like the sympathetic system could produce thoughts and perceptions when the cortex of the brain is de-activated by trauma (see Jung, 1955, paras 956-7).

Then there's a second, more radical possibility: Jung suggests that...

“perhaps the psychic processes that go on in us during loss of consciousness are synchronistic phenomena, i.e., events which have no causal connection with organic processes. This last possibility cannot be rejected out of hand in view of the existence of ESP, i.e., of perceptions independent of space and time which cannot be explained as processes in the biological substrate. Where sense perceptions are impossible from the start, it can hardly be a question of anything but synchronicity (Ibid.: para 955).

If we took this seriously, says Jung, we would have to...completely give up the idea of the psyche being somehow connected with the brain (Ibid.: para 947).

The synchronicity principle possesses properties that may help to clear up the body-soul problem. Above all it is the fact of causeless order, or rather, of meaningful orderedness, that may throw light on psychophysical parallelism. The "absolute knowledge" which is characteristic of synchronistic phenomena, a knowledge not mediated by the sense organs, supports the hypothesis of a self-subsistent meaning, or even expresses its existence. Such a form of existence can only be transcendental, since, as the knowledge of future or spatially distant events shows, it is contained in a psychically relative space and time, that is to say in an irrepresentable space-time continuum (1955, para 948).

Some recent studies in the Netherlands on out of body experiences have led investigators to a hypothesis remarkably similar to Jung's "irrepresentable space-time continuum" as an explanation for how consciousness and perception can remain intact while the brain is "off line." These studies seem to suggest that Jung's "neural substrate" hypothesis is unlikely, given the profound loss of electrical activity, even in the brainstem. This tends to support his more "radical" hypothesis of synchronicity.

### **Out of Body Experiences During Cardiac Arrest**

The relevant studies were done at the Rijnstate Hospital in Arnhem, The Netherlands and reported by Pim van Lommel (van Lommel, 2006) based on an extensive study of 344 survivors in ten Dutch hospitals, initiated in 1988 (Van Lommel et al., 2001). Eighteen per cent of these survivors reported vivid recollections of the time while they were clinically dead. Van Lommel became fascinated by these reports because during their cardiac arrest, circulation and breathing had ceased and the person was declared brain dead--yet a veridical and accurate report of their experience (confirmed by nurses etc.) could be elicited later in some cases. How could this be? How was consciousness

possible without the brain, Van Lommel wondered, and what kind of consciousness was it?

How could a clear consciousness outside one's body be experienced at the moment that the brain no longer functions during a period of clinical death, even with flat electroencephalogram (EEG) (Sabom, 1998)? Furthermore, even blind people have described veridical perceptions during out-of-body experiences at the time of their NDE (Ring and Cooper, 1999). Scientific study of NDE pushes us to the limits of our medical and neurophysiologic ideas about the range of human consciousness and mind-brain relation. (Van Lommel, 2006, 139).

Pushes us to the limit indeed! Here is one confirmed report by a nurse in Van Lommel's earlier study.

During night shift an ambulance brought in a 44-year –old cyanotic, comatose man into the coronary care unit. He was found in coma about 30 minutes before in a meadow. When we went to intubate the patient, he turned out to have dentures in his mouth. I removed these upper dentures and put them into the “crash cart.” After about an hour and a half the patient had sufficient heart rhythm and blood pressure, but he was still ventilated and intubated, and he was still comatose. He was transferred to the intensive care unit to continue the necessary artificial respiration. Only after more than a week did I meet again with the patient, who was by now back on the cardiac ward. The moment he saw me, he said: “O, that nurse knows where my dentures are.” I was very surprised. Then he elucidated: “You were there when I was brought into hospital and you took my dentures out of my mouth and put them into that cart, it had all these bottles on it and there was this sliding drawer underneath, and there you put my teeth.” I was especially amazed because I remembered this happening while the man was in deep coma and in the process of CPR. It appeared that the man had seen himself lying in bed, that he had perceived from above how nurses and doctors had been busy with the CPR. He was also able to describe correctly and in detail the small room in which he had been resuscitated as well as the appearance of those present like myself. He was deeply impressed by his experience and said he was no longer afraid of death (Ibid.: 138-9).

The author gives evidence to contradict those researchers who suggest that there is *some* remaining brain function in NDE's, perhaps in the brainstem. He cites an extensive series of studies showing that anoxia, following cardiac arrest, causes cerebral function to be severely compromised, with sudden loss of consciousness and of all body reflexes including the abolition of brain-stem activity with the loss of the gag reflex and of the corneal reflex and the respiratory reflex. Electrical activity, he says, appears to be completely absent after a very short period of time and normal EEG activity may not return for hours after cardiac function has been restored. The author muses:

Such a brain would be roughly analogous to a computer with its power source unplugged and its circuits detached. It could not hallucinate; it could not do anything at all. (Ibid.: 142).

The fact that consciousness can be experienced *independent of a functional brain*, leads the author to an hypothesis about two "kinds" of consciousness in NDE's, analogous to the findings in Quantum physics about the two discreet, yet simultaneous ways in which light behaves--either as particles (photons) or as waves. With experiments that show both to be true, there is no objectivity. The consciousness of the researcher and his design of the experiment define the result.

Van Lommel then introduces the Quantum concept of non-locality (non-local connectedness) which he considers established by Aspect et al (1982) based on Bell's theorem.

Non-locality happens because all events are interrelated and influence each other, implicating that there are no local causes for an event. Phase-space is an invisible, non-local, higher-dimensional space consisting of wave-fields of probability, where every past and future event is available as a possibility. The quantum physicist David Bohm has called this dimension the implicate order of being (Bohm, 1980)...Within this so-called phase-space no matter is present, everything belongs to uncertainty and neither measurements nor observations are possible....The act of observation instantly changes a probability into an actuality by collapse of the wave function.

In Van Lommel's idea, the kind of consciousness that must be present outside the body, separate from the material brain is consciousness in the phase-space, comparable with the probability fields known from quantum mechanics, whereas the bodily-linked waking consciousness in real time and space is analogous to that normal consciousness dependent on the brain. These two are complementary aspects of consciousness--one immeasurable, eternal and indestructible in phase-space with non-local interconnectedness, and the other defined by the space and time operating in our manifest waking world and therefore measurable (as particles).

Our whole and undivided consciousness with declarative memories finds its origin in, and is stored in this phase-space and the brain only serves as a relay station for parts of our consciousness and parts of our memories to be received into our waking consciousness. This is like the Internet, which does not originate from the computer itself, but is only received by it. In this concept consciousness is not rooted in the measurable domain of physics, our manifest world...During life, our consciousness has an aspect of waves as well as of particles, and there is a permanent interaction between these two aspects of consciousness. When we die, our consciousness will no longer have an aspect of particles, but only an eternal aspect of waves. The interface between our consciousness and our body is eliminated. (Ibid.: 146)

With this hypothesis, Van Lommel can explain not only the accounts of consciousness during OBE's when the brain is "off line" but the uncanny connections and coincidences that happen in the various other paranormal events we have explored above and that Jung called synchronicity. People in widely separated times and spaces participate (with part of their consciousness) in phase space in which all past, present, and future is enclosed and non-local connections are present. This might be analogous to the "cloud" of the Internet which doesn't stop transmitting when we unplug our laptops. Van Lommel concludes:

....we should consider the possibility that death, like birth, may well be a mere passing from one state of consciousness to another. We can also conclude that our waking consciousness, which we experience as our daily consciousness, is only a part of our whole and undivided consciousness. The interconnectedness with this enhanced consciousness can be experienced during a critical medical situation...during meditation or deep relaxation (experience of oneness), during changing states of consciousness during regression therapy, hypnosis, isolation, or the use of drugs like LSD or during the terminal phase of life (death-bed visions). The interconnectedness with these informative fields of consciousness also explains enhanced intuition, and prognostic dreams and visions, and it explains apparitions at the moment of death and in the period following death....

One could call this our Higher consciousness, Divine consciousness, or Cosmic consciousness (Ibid.: 148-9).

## Summary and Conclusions

The reader will readily see the correspondence between Van Lommel's speculation of a non-local higher-dimensional phase-space with its wave fields of probability in which everything belongs to uncertainty and Jung's postulated unitary transcendental background or "psychoid" substrate in which concepts like psyche and matter, time and space are all relative and merge into a psychophysical space-time continuum. For each author this idea of a unitary background to existence, like the "cloud" of the Internet, may explain the continuity of consciousness when the individual ego or "laptop" is unplugged so to speak, i.e., when the brain is clinically dead or catastrophically compromised, or even during severe moments of dissociation following trauma. Gregory Bateson was perhaps getting at the same thing when he said (many years ago) that perhaps "there is a larger Mind of which the individual mind is only a subsystem" (quoted in Arden, 1998: 5).

Both Jung's concept of synchronicity and Van Lommel's notion of "phase space" are admittedly speculative models, but they are useful just the same. They open up conceptual space and give us ways to think about the unthinkable. They represent the left brain trying to figure out what the right brain has just experienced (see McGilchrist, 2009).

The really important thing is the *encounter* with synchronous events, some of which we have described in this chapter. These encounters seem to open up "another world." They

allow us momentary glimpses into a possible underlying unity of mind and matter, inner and outer, causality and a-causality, that may be as close to "God" as we will ever get. To be open to these experiences requires courage, because it stretches our usual paradigms of understanding in the direction of mystery and wonder, both of which as Einstein said are the beginning of science. There are some signs that psychoanalysis, as a profession, is beginning to find the courage to embrace this wider vision.

Beyond the mechanistic materialism of modern science, synchronicities imply something immaterial operating in our material plane. Synchronous events provide a tiny window into what physicist David Peat (1987) calls an "underlying harmony or mosaic in nature, a pattern that is 'the umbilical cord that connects thought, feelings, science and art with the womb of the universe which gave birth to them'" (Ibid.: 9). The possibility begins to dawn on us that mind and body, spirit and matter, psyche and physis, might simply be different aspects of a single reality viewed through different frames of reference (see Jung, 1947, para. 418). This, at least was Jung's idea. Quantum physics and Einstein's discovery of the relativity of space/time had opened up for him the idea of a "trans-psyche reality underlying the psyche" (Jung, 1948, para 600 note).

There are implications here for our cosmological understanding, for our role, as human beings, in the cosmos itself. It was Heisenberg who said "the same organizing forces that have created nature in all its forms are responsible for the structure of our soul and likewise for our capacity to think" (quoted in Godwin (1991: 629). How could it be otherwise, given that we all have material roots that go all the way back to the primeval fireball that set the universe in motion? The mystery "without" may mirror the mystery "within."

Jung thought that we needed a cosmology that made sense of the whole, if we were to be healers—some story or understanding of the wholeness of the world—and that if we had this it would also make for a wholeness of the individual and thus help to heal the great alienation and fragmentation of modern man. The concept of synchronicity, elusive as it is, might point to such a cosmology—to a fundamental realm of unbroken wholeness underlying our perceived world of fragmentation and separateness. Openness to this underlying wholeness would be the beginning of a new paradigm in our psychoanalytic thinking.

David Peat, the British physicist who collaborated with David Bohm and has written an interesting book on synchronicity (Peat, 1987), thinks that events such as those we report in this chapter offer a "window" into an earlier time in our civilization when science, religion, philosophy and art were united in an awe and wonder-filled exploration of the world that led to both knowledge and understanding. Today, knowledge has accumulated so dramatically under the aegis of science and specialization that it has crowded out what used to be called the humanities, philosophy and religion so that we live in an over-specialized, compartmentalized and de-sacralized cosmos. Any sense of wholeness or the meaning that derives from an awareness that we live "between the worlds," has come to be described as superstition or illusion. As Peat says: "Somewhere along the way the human race lost the spice and excitement of simply being alive" (Ibid.: 239).

The "spice and excitement" that Peat references is precisely what it feels like to lead a soulful life, and the psychotherapy profession ("psychotherapy" meaning care of the soul) is therefore uniquely equipped to promote a renewal of that wonder and openness that restores excitement to the soul. To fulfill this important destiny however, psychoanalysis or depth-psychotherapy must hold the binocular view we advocated at the beginning of this book (see frontspiece) with one eye looking "out" (at mystery) and one eye looking "in" at the mysteries of the inner world. Such a view opens the possibility of a new paradigm in psychoanalysis--one which "sees through" outer appearances and parameters into a much deeper world providing an "implicate" order to our increasingly specialized and fragmented "explicit" world.

In all the examples cited in this chapter, the experience of the paranormal by the analyst, and often by the patient too, was the main thing that "broke through" the old paradigm or the old defenses. It "shook them up" and inspired them to write down the story so that we could read it. As Jung says (1963b) under the impact of such experiences...

...reason evaporates and another power spontaneously takes control--a most singular feeling which one willy-nilly hoards up as a secret treasure no matter how much one's reason may protest. That, indeed, is the uncomprehended purpose of the experience--to make us feel the overpowering presence of a mystery... [Synchronous events] break through the monotony of daily life with salutary effects, (sometimes!) shaking our certitudes and lending wings to the imagination. (1963b, para's 787-789)

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