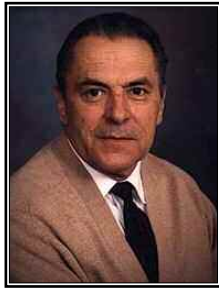


## THE CURRENT GLOBAL CRISIS AND THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY:

### A T R A N S P E R S O N A L P E R S P E C T I V E

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#### THE CURRENT GLOBAL CRISIS.

**H**UMANITY AS A WHOLE possesses enormous resources in the form of financial means, technological know-how, manpower, and womanpower. Modern science has developed effective means that could solve most of the urgent problems in today's world - combat the majority of diseases, eliminate hunger and poverty, reduce the amount of industrial waste, and replace destructive fossil fuels by renewable sources of clean energy. The problems that stand in the way are not of economical or technological nature; their deepest sources lie inside the human personality.

Because of them, unimaginable resources have been wasted in the absurdity of the arms race, power struggle, and pursuit of "unlimited growth." They also prevent a more appropriate distribution of wealth among individuals and nations, as well as a reorientation from purely economic and political concerns to ecological priorities that are critical for survival of life on this planet.

Diplomatic negotiations, administrative and legal measures, economic and social sanctions, military interventions, and other similar efforts have had very little success; as a matter of fact, they have often produced more problems than they solved. It is becoming increasingly clear why they had to fail. The strategies used to alleviate this crisis are rooted in the same ideology that created it in the first place. In the last analysis, the current global crisis is basically a psychospiritual crisis; it reflects the level of consciousness evolution of the human species. It is, therefore, hard to imagine that it could be resolved without a radical inner transformation of humanity on a large scale and its rise to a higher level of emotional maturity and spiritual awareness.

The task of imbuing humanity with an entirely different set of values and goals might appear too unrealistic and utopian to offer any real hope. Considering the paramount role of violence and greed in human history, the possibility of transforming modern humanity into a species of individuals capable of peaceful coexistence with their fellow men and women regardless of race, color, and religious or political conviction,

let alone with other species, certainly does not seem very plausible. We are facing the necessity to instill humanity with profound ethical values, sensitivity to the needs of others, acceptance of voluntary simplicity, and a sharp awareness of ecological imperatives. At first glance, such a task appears too fantastic even for a science-fiction movie.

However, although serious and critical, the situation might not be as hopeless as it appears. After more than half a century of intensive study of holotropic states of consciousness, I have come to the conclusion that the theoretical concepts and practical approaches developed by transpersonal psychology, a discipline that is trying to integrate spirituality with the new paradigm emerging in Western science, could help alleviate the crisis we are all facing. These observations suggest that radical psychospiritual transformation of humanity is not only possible, but is already underway. The question is only whether it can

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“The heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of.”

BALISE PASCAL

be sufficiently fast and extensive to reverse the current self-destructive trend of modern humanity.

OLD PARADIGM WORLD VIEW, MYTH,  
AND VISION UNDERLYING THE GLOBAL CRISIS

The old vision driving the Western technological civilization received powerful support and justification from science based on the Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm and monistic materialism. This world view is based on the metaphysical assumption that the universe is a mechanical system that is strictly deterministic and in which matter is primary. Life, consciousness, and intelligence are seen as more or less accidental side-products of matter, essentially flukes that happened in an insignificant section of a giant universe after billions of years of evolution of inert and reactive inorganic materials.

In the old paradigm, the universe and nature have no guiding intelligence or creative blueprint. All the incredible complexity of forms revealed by various scientific disciplines from astronomy through biology to quantum-relativistic physics has been attributed to meaningless play of material particles. Particles of inorganic matter just happened to generate organic compounds and these just happened to organize themselves into cells. The entire Darwinian evolution from unicellular organisms to humans is seen as having been guided by accidental genetic mutations and natural selection. According to this world view, the principal mechanism of evolution in nature is survival of the fittest and the militant strategy of the selfish gene. This seems to explain and justify pursuit of individual interest in competition with and at the expense of others from personal life to collective economic, political, and military pursuits.

This was further reinforced by the findings of depth psychology pioneered by Sigmund Freud and his followers, which purported that all our behavior is, in the last analysis, driven by basic instincts. From this perspective, feelings of love are nothing but reaction formation to our innate hostility or desexualized interest in our parents, ethical behavior is based on fear of punishment, esthetic interest is psychological defense against powerful anal impulses, and so on. Without societal restrictions, penal institutions, and superegos created by parental prohibitions and injunctions, we would indulge in indiscriminate promiscuous sexual acting out, killing, and stealing (Freud: *Civilization and its Discontent*). Religious beliefs and spiritual interests of any kind are essentially attributed to superstition, gullibility, primitive magical thinking, primary process, obsessive-compulsive behavior resulting from suppression of anal impulses, and unresolved Oedipal or Electra complex, or result of serious psychopathology (Freud: *Totem and Taboo, Future of An Illusion*).

Our current scientific world view provides implicit or explicit support for our ethics and life strategy. In Western capitalist society, personal success at the expense of others has been glorified. It appears perfectly natural to create a better future for one's own group at the expense of others (e.g. plundering non-renewable resources of fossil fuels and turning them into pollution in pursuit of our own living standard, seeing killing of innocent civilians in other countries as "collateral damage" in the pursuit of our own

security, etc). We are unable to see and appreciate the critical importance of cooperation, synergy, and peaceful coexistence for planetary survival. We are also brainwashed into believing that our well-being is directly proportionate to and depends critically on material means – personal income and possessions, growth of the gross national product, and so on. There are additional specific problems related to the current political situation in the United States, a country which, because of its enormous economic and political power, represents the key player in the global crisis. The democratic ideals are cherished and defended primarily by American liberals. The leading philosophy of this group is humanism; this is typically linked with atheism, because religious beliefs of any kind appear to this group to be naïve and in conflict with reason and the scientific worldview. This perspective thus does not address the spiritual hunger and needs. History shows that these are important and powerful forces inherent in human nature, more powerful than sex, which Freud saw as the primary motivating force of the psyche (Andrew Weil: *The Natural Mind*). The social concerns of liberals, their philanthropic efforts, ecological awareness, and antiwar protests in their present form lack a deeper ideological basis and spiritual foundation. They can thus easily be dismissed as signs of weakness alien to capitalist mentality.

This seems to account for the widespread appeal of the fundamentalist and neocon groups, who present their ideas cloaked in religious terminology. These groups violate in many ways the basic principles of democracy, but address the spiritual needs of their followers. These followers tend to overlook that their leaders are feeding them useless religious dogmas and dangerous delusional nonsense, which only exploit their spiritual needs and do not actually satisfy them. Even in this distorted form, however, allusions to the divine are extremely powerful and can override democratic ideals and basic human decency.

Religion that should unite (*religare* = to bind together again) becomes a divisive element in the world, separating not only one creed from another ("we are Christians, you are pagans," "we are Moslems, you are Infidels," "we are Jews, you are Goyim"), but also one faction of a religion from another ("we are Catholics, you are Protestants," "we are Shiites, you are Sunnis"), in a way well-known from history. In recent years this split has taken also a specifically American form radically dividing the population, including the Christian community, into two irreconcilable camps ("we are the chosen ones who will experience 'rapture'; we will be united with Jesus, you will be left behind").

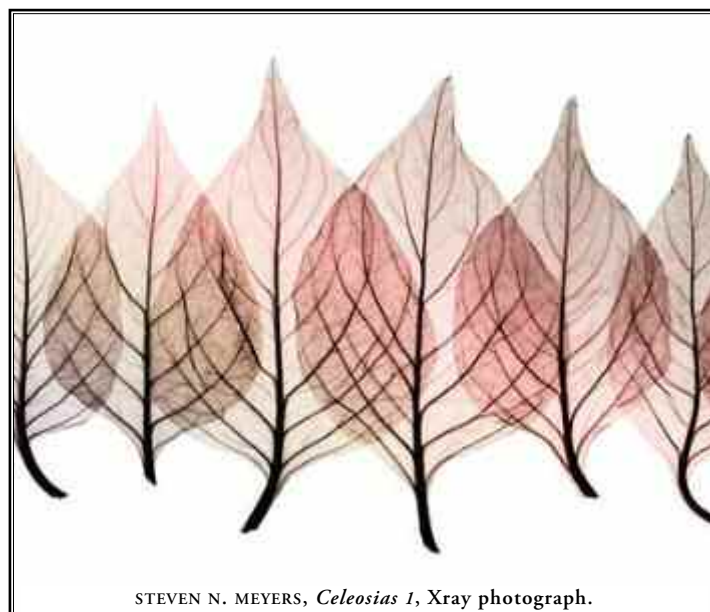
The convictions, which drive these Christian fundamentalists are based on misinterpretation of the Biblical description of the Armageddon and the Apocalypse. Their beliefs are so preposterous and fantastic that they would provide a sufficient basis for diagnosis of psychosis if they were reported by an individual psychiatric patient. Unfortunately, in contemporary United States they dominate the thinking of tens of millions of people and have found their way into the highest echelons of the government. Dangerous trends in the global situation, such as destruction of the environment, industrial pollution, political crises, and increase of violence are actually welcome by

this group, because they are signs of the approaching Armageddon and herald the imminence of “rapture” that will unite them with Jesus (see the scary entries on the Internet concerning the “rapture index”). It is more than unfortunate that this insanity affects the political decisions on the highest level and has at its disposal the formidable American military power. Occasional heavy-handed and highly inappropriate references of our Commander-in-Chief to the war in the Middle East as a “crusade” feed into the equally deluded ideology of *jihad* entertained by Moslem fundamentalists and make the global situation particularly precarious.

What we need to counteract this dangerous religious propaganda that has succeeded in deluding and blinding so many Americans, is a new guiding myth, an exciting new vision, one that would be based on the best of science and also spiritually informed, one that would appeal to both rational and spiritual aspects of human nature. We need a vision that is truly democratic (not one confusing democracy with aggressive export of values and goods of Western capitalistic society) and that provides genuine satisfaction of human spiritual needs. It seems relevant to include here a passage from the Stanford lecture of the Czech president, Václav Havel, to illustrate this point:

“I am deeply convinced that (the answer) lies in what I have already tried to suggest – in that spiritual dimension that connects all cultures and in fact all humanity. If democracy is not only to survive but to expand successfully and resolve those conflicts of cultures, then, in my opinion, it must rediscover and renew its own transcendental origins. Planetary democracy does not yet exist, but our global civilization is already preparing a place for it: It is the very Earth we inhabit, linked with Heaven above us. Only in this setting can the mutuality and the commonality of the human race be newly created, with reverence and gratitude for that which transcends each of us, and all of us together. The authority of a world democratic order simply cannot be built on anything else but the revitalized authority of the universe.”

In the following text, I will try to outline such a vision on the basis of my observations made in years of research of holotropic states of consciousness. It is not a construct or result of speculation, but a worldview and life strategy that emerges spontaneously in individuals who, in the process of freeing themselves from the imprints imposed on them by the trauma of their birth and their early life, have had profound transpersonal experiences. Deep experiential work of this kind generates what we can call “spiritual intelligence.”



STEVEN N. MEYERS, *Celestias 1*, Xray photograph.

It is not difficult to understand that an important prerequisite for successful existence is general intelligence - the ability to learn and recall, think and reason, and adequately respond to our material environment. More recent research emphasized the importance of “emotional intelligence,” the capacity to adequately respond to our human environment and skillfully handle our interpersonal relationships (Goleman, 1996). Observations from the study of holotropic states confirm the basic tenet of perennial philosophy that the quality of our life ultimately depends on what can be called “spiritual intelligence.” Spiritual intelligence is the capacity to conduct our life in such a way that it reflects deep philosophical and metaphysical understanding of reality and of ourselves. Buddhist scriptures refer to this kind of spiritual wisdom as “*prajñā paramitā*.” Unlike the dogmas of organized churches, spiritual intelligence acquired in the process of experiential self-exploration has the power to override the scientific worldview of materialistic science. At the same time, it is equally effective as a remedy that can counteract the useless dogmas of organized religions.

UNLIKE THE DOGMAS OF ORGANIZED CHURCHES, SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE ACQUIRED IN THE PROCESS OF EXPERIENTIAL SELF-EXPLORATION HAS THE POWER TO OVERRIDE THE SCIENTIFIC WORLDVIEW OF MATERIALISTIC SCIENCE. AT THE SAME TIME, IT IS EQUALLY EFFECTIVE AS A REMEDY THAT CAN COUNTERACT THE USELESS DOGMAS OF ORGANIZED RELIGIONS.

FINDINGS OF  
MODERN  
CONSCIOUSNESS  
RESEARCH AND  
TRANSPERSONAL  
PSYCHOLOGY

Observations from psychedelic therapy, holotropic breathwork, and the work with individuals undergoing spiritual crises have shown that the human propensity to violence and greed has much deeper roots than current biological theories (naked ape, selfish gene, triune brain) and psychological theories (psychoanalysis, ego psychology, and related schools) assume. Deep motivating forces underlying these dangerous traits of human nature have their origin on the perinatal and transpersonal levels of the psyche, domains that mainstream psychology does not recognize (Grof 2000). The finding that the roots of human violence and insatiable greed reach far deeper than academic psychiatry ever suspected and that their reservoirs in the psyche are truly enormous could in and of itself be very discouraging. However, it is balanced by the exciting discovery of new therapeutic mechanisms and transformative potentials that become available in holotropic states on the perinatal and transpersonal levels of the psyche.

I have seen over the years profound emotional and psychosomatic healing, as well as radical personality transformation, in many people who were involved in serious and systematic experiential self-exploration and inner quest. Some

of them were meditators and had regular spiritual practice, others had supervised psychedelic sessions or participated in various forms of experiential psychotherapy and self-exploration or shamanic rituals. I have also witnessed profound positive changes in many people who received adequate support during spontaneous episodes of spontaneous psychospiritual crises (“spiritual emergencies”).

As the content of the perinatal level of the unconscious emerged into consciousness and was integrated, these individuals underwent radical personality changes. They experienced considerable decrease of aggression and became more peaceful, comfortable with themselves, and tolerant of others. The experience of psychospiritual death and rebirth and conscious connection with positive post-natal or prenatal memories reduced their irrational drives and ambitions. It caused a shift of focus from the past and future to the present moment and enhanced their *élan vital* and *joi de vivre* – ability to enjoy and draw satisfaction from simple circumstances of life, such as everyday activities, food, love-making, nature, and music. Another important result of this process was emergence of spirituality of a universal and mystical nature that, unlike the dogmas of mainstream religions, was very authentic and convincing, because it was based on deep personal experience.

The process of spiritual opening and transformation typically deepened further as a result of transpersonal experiences, such as identification with other people, entire human groups, animals, plants, and even inorganic materials and processes in nature. Other experiences provided conscious access to events occurring in other countries, cultures, and historical periods and even to the mythological realms and archetypal beings of the collective unconscious. Experiences of cosmic unity and one’s own divinity resulted in increasing identification with all of creation and brought the sense of wonder, love, compassion, and inner peace.

What had begun as psychological probing of the unconscious psyche conducted for therapeutic purposes automatically became a philosophical quest for the meaning of life and a journey of spiritual discovery. People who connected to the transpersonal domain of their psyche tended to develop a new appreciation for existence and reverence for all life. One of the most striking consequences of various forms of transpersonal experiences was spontaneous emergence and development of deep humanitarian and ecological concerns and need to get involved in service for some common purpose. This was based on an almost cellular awareness that

the boundaries in the universe are arbitrary and that each of us is identical with the entire web of existence.

It was suddenly clear that we can not do anything to nature without simultaneously doing it to ourselves. Differences among people appeared to be interesting and enriching rather than threatening, whether they were related to sex, race, color, language, political conviction, or religious belief. Following this transformation, these people (like many of American astronauts who have seen the earth from outer space (see Mickey Lemle’s documentary *The Other Side of the Moon*) developed a deep sense of being planetary citizens rather than citizens of a particular country or members of a particular racial, social, ideological, political, or religious group. It is obvious that a transformation of this kind would increase our chances

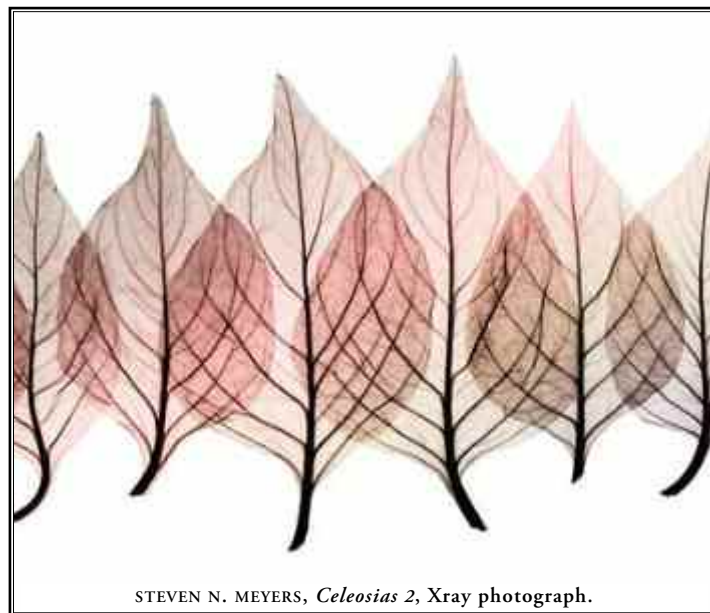
for survival if it could occur on a sufficiently large scale.

A NEW VISION OF  
REALITY  
AND A NEW MYTH  
TO LIVE BY

The image of the universe at large underlying the new vision is based on philosophical implications of quantum-relativistic physics and the anthropic principle. It acknowledges consciousness as a fundamental aspect of existence, equal or possibly supraordinated to matter, rather than its accidental product, an epiphenomenon of

matter. It sees the universe as a product of superior creative intelligence and permeated with it (*anima mundi*). Instead of the Newtonian supermachine consisting of separate building blocks (elementary particles and objects) it portrays the universe as a unified field, an organic whole in which everything is meaningfully interconnected.

New biology recognizes that evolution of species was guided by creative intelligence and that synergy and cooperation between species was at least as important guiding principle as Darwin’s survival of the fittest. The biosphere and its inhabitants cannot be understood when we take into consideration only materials that constitute them without explaining where order, forms, meaningful relations, and esthetic aspects of creation come from. Concepts similar to Sheldrake’s morphic resonance and morphogenetic fields are critical for understanding the function of DNA and the genetic code, as well as the relationship between consciousness, memory, and the brain (see Sheldrake’s *New science of Life*). Holographic thinking pioneered by David Bohm and Karl Pribram threw new light on the relationship between the part and the whole (see Bohm’s *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* and Pribram’s *Languages of the Brain*).



STEVEN N. MEYERS, *Celeosias 2*, Xray photograph.

Ervin Laszlo has provided a brilliant model of the interconnected universe in his concept of the “psi-field” or akashic field (see Laszlo’s books *The Creative Cosmos*, *The Connectivity Hypothesis*, and *Science and the Akashic Field*).

Modern consciousness research and transpersonal psychology have shown the painful limitations and misconceptions of Freudian psychoanalysis in understanding the human psyche in health and disease. It suggests urgent need of radical revision of the most fundamental assumptions of mainstream psychology and psychiatry in the following areas:

#### THE NATURE OF THE HUMAN PSYCHE AND THE DIMENSIONS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Traditional academic psychiatry and psychology use a model that is limited to biology, postnatal biography, and the Freudian individual unconscious. To account for all the phenomena occurring in holotropic states, we must drastically revise our understanding of the dimensions of the human psyche. Besides *the postnatal biographical level*, the new expanded cartography includes two additional domains: *perinatal* (related to the trauma of birth) and *transpersonal* (comprising ancestral, racial, collective, and phylogenetic memories, karmic experiences, and archetypal dynamics).

#### THE NATURE AND ARCHITECTURE OF EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOSOMATIC DISORDERS

To explain various disorders that do not have an organic basis (“psychogenic psychopathology”), traditional psychiatry uses a model that is limited to postnatal biographical traumas in infancy, childhood, and later life. The new understanding suggests that the roots of such disorders reach much deeper to include significant contributions from the perinatal level (trauma of birth) and from the transpersonal domains (as specified above).

#### EFFECTIVE THERAPEUTIC MECHANISMS

Traditional psychotherapy knows only therapeutic mechanisms operating on the level of the biographical material, such as remembering of forgotten events, lifting of repression, reconstruction of the past from free associations, dreams, and neurotic symptoms, reliving of traumatic memories, and analysis of transference. Holotropic research reveals many other important mechanisms of healing and personality transformation that become available when our consciousness reaches the perinatal and transpersonal levels.

#### STRATEGY OF PSYCHOTHERAPY AND SELF-EXPLORATION

The goal in traditional psychotherapies is to reach an intellectual understanding how the psyche functions, why symptoms develop, and what they mean. This understanding then becomes the basis for developing a technique that therapists can use to treat their patients. A serious problem with this strategy is the striking lack of agreement among psychologists and psychiatrists concerning the most fundamental theoretical issues and the resulting astonishing number of competing schools of psychotherapy. The work with holotropic states shows us a surprising radical alternative – mobilization of deep inner intelligence of the clients that guides the process of healing and transformation.

Western materialistic science has no place for any form of spirituality and, in fact, considers it incompatible with the scientific worldview. It sees any form of spirituality as reflecting lack of education, superstition, primitive magical thinking, or serious psychopathology. Modern consciousness research seriously challenges this misconception and shows that spirituality is a natural and legitimate dimension of the human psyche and of the universal scheme of things. However, in this context, it is important to emphasize that this statement applies to genuine spirituality based on direct personal experience and not to ideologies and dogmas of organized religions.

#### THE NATURE OF REALITY: PSYCHE, COSMOS, AND CONSCIOUSNESS

The necessary revisions discussed up to this point were related to the theory and practice of psychiatry, psychology, and psychotherapy. However, the work with holotropic states brings challenges of a much more fundamental nature. Many of the experiences and observations that occur during this work are so extraordinary that they cannot be understood in the context of the monistic materialistic approach to reality. Their conceptual impact is so far-reaching that it undermines the most basic metaphysical assumptions of Western science, particularly those regarding the nature of consciousness and its relationship to matter.

The new world view and basic life strategy that emerge spontaneously in the process of deep exploration are the following:

#### 1. ON THE INDIVIDUAL SCALE

Our deepest needs are of spiritual nature; material means can not, in and of themselves, bring us fulfillment and happiness, once we have reached satisfaction of basic biological needs (food, security, shelter, sex). In the course of biographically oriented psychotherapy, many people discover that their life has been inauthentic in certain specific sectors of interpersonal relations. For example, problems with parental authority can lead to specific patterns of difficulties with authority figures, repeated dysfunctional patterns in sexual relationships can be traced to parents as models for sexual behavior, sibling issues can color and distort future peer relationships, and so on.

When the process of experiential self-exploration reaches the perinatal level, we typically discover that our life up to that point has been largely inauthentic in its totality, not just in certain partial segments. We find out to our surprise and astonishment that our entire life strategy has been misdirected and therefore incapable of providing genuine satisfaction. The reason for this is the fact that it was primarily motivated by the fear of death and by unconscious forces associated with biological birth, which have not been adequately processed and integrated. In other words, during biological birth, we completed the process anatomically, but not emotionally.

When our field of consciousness is strongly influenced by the underlying memory of the struggle in the birth canal, it leads to a feeling of discomfort and dissatisfaction with the present situation. This discontent can focus on a large spectrum of issues – unsatisfactory physical appearance,

inadequate resources and material possessions, low social position and influence, insufficient amount of power and fame, and many others. Like the child stuck in the birth canal, we feel a strong need to get to a better situation that lies somewhere in the future.

Whatever is the reality of the present circumstances, we do not find them satisfactory. Our fantasy keeps creating images of future situations that appear more fulfilling than the present one. It seems that, until we reach these imagined goals, life will be only preparation for a better future, not yet “the real thing.” This results in a life pattern that my client have described as a “treadmill” type of existence (the image of a hamster running inside a rotating wheel) or “rat-race” way of life. The existentialists talk about “auto-projecting” into the future – always imagining oneself in some more satisfying situation in the future and attempting to create it. This strategy is a basic fallacy of human life. It is essentially a loser strategy, since it does not deliver the satisfaction that is expected from it. From this perspective, it is irrelevant whether or not it brings fruit in the material world. In Joseph Campbell’s words, it means “getting to the top of the ladder and finding out that it stands against the wrong wall.”

When the goal is not reached, the continuing dissatisfaction is attributed to the fact that we have failed to reach the corrective measures. When we succeed in reaching the goal of our aspirations, it typically does not have much influence on our basic life feelings. The continuing dissatisfaction is then blamed either on the fact that the choice of the goal was not correct or that it was not ambitious enough. The result is either substitution of the old goal with a different one or amplification of the same type of ambitions.

In any case, the failure is usually not correctly diagnosed as being an inevitable result of a fundamentally wrong life strategy, which is in principle incapable of providing satisfaction. This fallacious pattern applied on a large scale is responsible for reckless irrational pursuit of various grandiose goals that results in much suffering and many problems in the world. It can be played out on any level of importance and affluence, since it never brings true satisfaction. The only strategy that can significantly reduce this irrational drive is full conscious reliving and integration of the trauma of birth in systematic inner self-exploration and connecting to the transpersonal level of the psyche.

Modern consciousness research and experiential psychotherapy have discovered that the deepest source of our dissatisfaction and striving for perfection lies even beyond the perinatal domain. This insatiable craving that drives human life is ultimately transpersonal in nature. In Dante Alighieri’s words, «The desire for perfection is that desire which always makes every pleasure appear incomplete, for there is no joy or pleasure so great in this life that it can quench the thirst in our soul» (Dante 1990).

In the most general sense, the deepest transpersonal roots of insatiable greed can be described in terms of Ken Wilber’s concept of the Atman Project (Wilber 1980). Our true nature is divine – God, Cosmic Christ, Allah, Buddha,

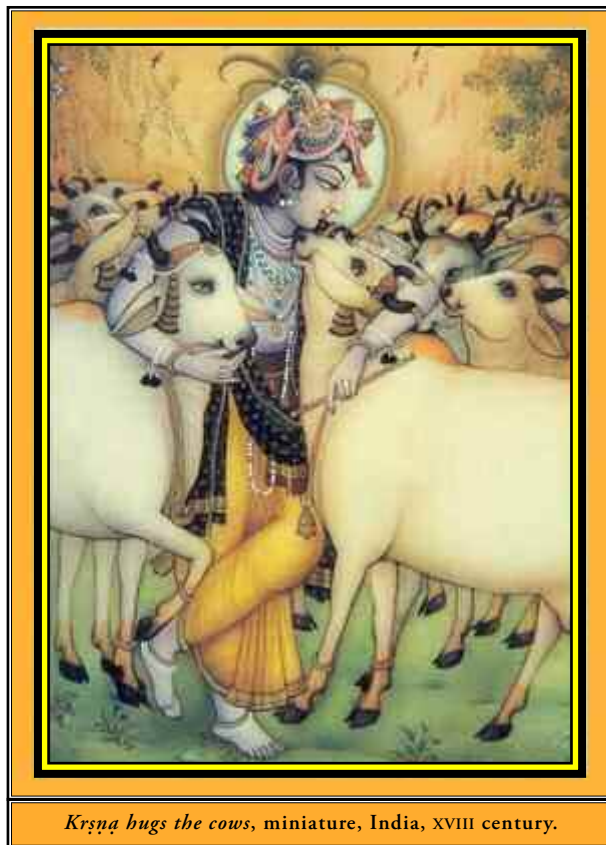
Brahman, the Tao, the Great Spirit – and although the process of creation separates and alienates us from our deep source, the awareness of this fact is never completely lost. The deepest motivating force in the psyche on all the levels of consciousness evolution is to return to the experience of our own divinity. However, the constraining conditions of the consecutive stages of development prevent an experience of full liberation in and as God.

Real transcendence requires death of the separate self, dying to the exclusive subject. Because of the fear of annihilation and because of grasping onto the ego, the individual has to settle for Atman substitutes or surrogates, which are specific for each particular stage. For the fetus and the newborn, this means the satisfaction experienced in the good

womb or on the good breast. For an infant, this is satisfaction of age-specific physiological needs. For the adult the range of possible Atman projects is large; it includes – besides food and sex – also money, fame, power, appearance, knowledge, and many others.

Because of our deep sense that our true identity is the totality of cosmic creation and the creative principle itself, substitutes of any degree and scope – the Atman Projects – will always remain unsatisfactory. Only the experience of one’s divinity in a holotropic state of consciousness can ever fulfill our deepest needs. Thus the ultimate solution for the insatiable greed is in the inner world, not in secular pursuits of any kind and scope. The Persian mystic and poet Rumi made it very clear:

*All the hopes, desires, loves, and affections that people have for different things – fathers, mothers, friends, heavens, the earth, palaces, sciences, works, food, drink – the saint knows that these are desires for God and all those things are veils. When men leave this world*



*Kṛṣṇa bugs the cows, miniature, India, XVIII century.*

and see the King without these veils, then they will know that all were veils and coverings, that the object of their desire was in reality that One Thing (Hines, 1996).

## 2. ON THE COLLECTIVE LEVEL

As biological organisms, we are embedded in the natural environment and we critically depend on clean air, clear water, and soil. Our highest priority has to be to protect these vital resources necessary for survival and health. No other concerns, such as economic profit, nationalistic ideological, religious motives should be allowed to override concerns about health and survival of the individual and the species. As Buckminster Fuller reminded us, we are “spaceship earth” with limited resources. This requires to orient ourselves on renewable energy resources that will always be available and do not pollute our environment (solar energy, zero point energy). It should not be allowed to produce materials that are not biodegradable without providing for recycling or their destruction. The escalating chemical pollution of water, air, and soil, accumulation of radioactive fallout, and floating plastic in the ocean covering an area of the size of Texas should be a serious warning.

Our unity with nature, as well as all fellow humans, dictates that we should transcend racial, sexual, national, cultural, political, and religious boundaries and divides and create a planetary civilization. Violence has to be eliminated as an acceptable means of solving conflicts. We should have world constitution that sees protection of the environment and human life as the highest imperative. Our primary focus in foreign politics should be on synergy, cooperation, and making friends, not fighting enemies (and certainly not making enemies). United States with its incredible resources of scientific know-how and economic means should become the leading force in the development of alternative energies. This goal deserves a concerted effort of the best minds in science, comparable to the Manhattan project. Development of alternative renewable sources of energy would also be a long-term radical solution of serious political problems. Its success would make us independent of the Middle Eastern oil and eliminate thus the dangerous economic dependence on the Arab world. It would also be probably the most effective way of combating terrorism of the fundamentalist Moslems and the danger of *jihad*.

It should be possible to develop programs that would help American economy and, at the same time, help underdeveloped countries, make friends, and generate respect in the world. This could involve such projects as helping to develop infrastructure in India, irrigate parts of Africa, and eliminate hunger and diseases in the world. Increasing living standard of underdeveloped countries has also been shown to be the most effective way of combating social unrest and the danger of Communism.

### LESSONS FROM HOLOTROPIC STATES FOR THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SURVIVAL

Some of the insights of people experiencing holotropic states of consciousness are directly related to the current global crisis and its relationship with consciousness evolution. They show that we have exteriorized in the modern world many of the essential themes of the perinatal process

that a person involved in deep personal transformation has to face and come to terms with internally. The same elements that we would encounter in the process of psychological death and rebirth in our visionary experiences make our evening news today. This is particularly true in regard to the phenomena that characterize what I refer to as the third Basic Perinatal Matrix (BPM III) (Grof, 2000).

We certainly see the enormous unleashing of the aggressive impulse in the many wars and revolutionary upheavals in the world, in the rising criminality, terrorism, and racial riots. Equally dramatic and striking is the lifting of sexual repression and freeing of the sexual impulse in both healthy and problematic ways. Sexual experiences and behaviors are taking unprecedented forms, as manifested in the sexual freedom of adolescents, premarital sex, gay liberation, general promiscuity, common and open marriages, high divorce rate, overtly sexual books, plays and movies, sado-masochistic experimentation, and many others.

The demonic element is also becoming increasingly manifest in the modern world. Renaissance of satanic cults and witchcraft, popularity of books and horror movies with occult themes, and crimes with satanic motivations attest to that fact. Terrorism of the fundamentalist fanatics and groups is also reaching satanic proportions. The scatological dimension is evident in the progressive industrial pollution, accumulation of waste products on a global scale, and rapidly deteriorating hygienic conditions in large cities. A more abstract form of the same trend is the escalating corruption and degradation of political, military, economic, and religious institutions, including the American presidency.

Many of the people with whom we have worked saw humanity at a critical crossroad facing either collective annihilation or an evolutionary jump in consciousness of unprecedented nature and dimension. Terence McKenna put it very succinctly: «The history of the silly monkey is over, one way or another» (McKenna, 1992). We either undergo a radical transformation of our species or we might not survive. It seems that we are collectively involved in a process that parallels the psychospiritual death and rebirth, which so many people have experienced individually in holotropic states of consciousness. If we continue to act out the problematic destructive and self-destructive tendencies originating in the depth of the unconscious, we will undoubtedly destroy ourselves and seriously damage life on this planet. However, if we succeed in internalizing this process on a large enough scale, it might result in an evolutionary progress that can take us as far beyond our present condition as we now are from primates. As utopian as the possibility of such a development might seem, it might be our only real chance.

Let us now look into the future and explore how the concepts that have emerged from consciousness research, from the transpersonal field, and from the new paradigm in science could be put into action in the world. Although the past accomplishments are very impressive, the new ideas still form a disjointed mosaic rather than a complete and comprehensive new worldview. Much work has to be done in terms of accumulating more data, formulating new theories, and achieving a creative synthesis. In addition, the existing information has to reach much larger audiences before a significant impact on the world situation can be expected.

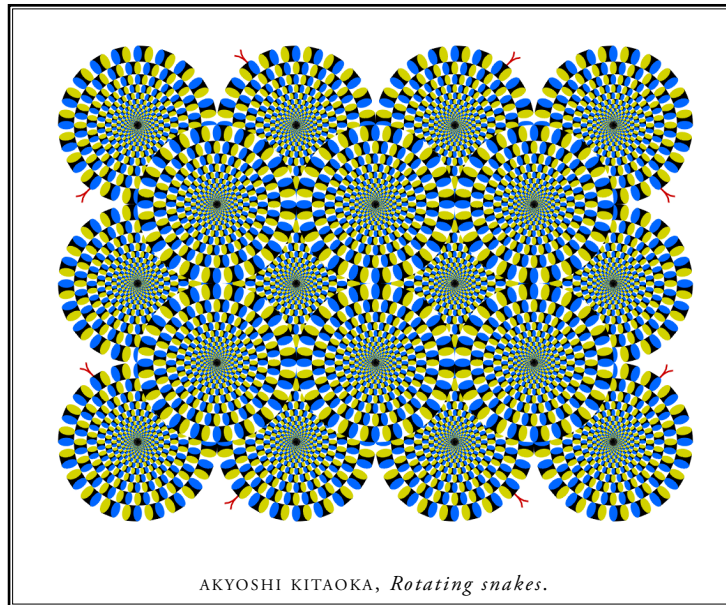
But even a radical intellectual shift to a new scientific paradigm on a large scale would not be sufficient to alleviate the global crisis and reverse the destructive course we are on. This would require a deep emotional and spiritual transformation of humanity. Using the existing evidence, it is possible to suggest certain strategies that might facilitate and support such a process. Efforts to change humanity would have to start with psychological prevention at an early age. The data from prenatal and perinatal psychology indicate that much could be achieved by changing the conditions of pregnancy, delivery, and postnatal care. This would include improving the emotional preparation of the mother during pregnancy, practicing natural childbirth, creating a psychospiritually informed birth environment, and cultivating emotionally nourishing contact between the mother and the child in the postpartum period.

Much has been written about the importance of child rearing, as well as disastrous emotional consequences of traumatic conditions in infancy and childhood. Certainly this is an area where continued education and guidance is necessary. However, to be able to apply the theoretically known principles, the parents have to reach sufficient emotional stability and maturity themselves. It is well known that emotional problems are passed like curse from generation to generation. We are facing here a very complex problem of chicken and egg.

Humanistic and transpersonal psychologies have developed effective experiential methods of self-exploration, healing, and personality transformation. Some of these come from the therapeutic traditions, others represent modern adaptations of ancient and native spiritual practices. There exist approaches with a very favorable ratio between professional helpers and clients and others that can be practiced in the context of self-help groups. Systematic work with them can lead to a spiritual opening, a move in a direction that is sorely needed on a collective scale for our species to survive. It is essential to spread the information about these possibilities and get enough people personally interested in pursuing them. An important part of these efforts would be creation of a network providing psychological assistance and support to individuals undergoing spontaneous psychospiritual transformation in spiritual emergencies. Currently, many of these people are misdiagnosed as suffering from psychosis and the potentially healing and evolutionary process of transformation is arrested by tranquilizing medication (Grof and Grof, 1989, 1991).

The comprehensive vision described above can be seen as a mosaic consisting of many pieces, each of which represents the results of research in a particular scientific discipline. Further refinement and development of its various parts thus requires interdisciplinary cooperation and communication of the theoretical concepts and their practical application with the help of various media. We seem to be involved in a dramatic race for time that has no precedent in the entire history of humanity. What is at stake is nothing less than the future of life on this planet. If we continue the old strategies, which in their consequences are clearly extremely self-destructive, it is unlikely that the human species will survive. However, if a sufficient number of people undergo a process of deep inner transformation, we might reach a

stage and level of consciousness evolution at which we will deserve the proud name we have given to our species: *homo sapiens sapiens*.



AKYOSHI KITAOKA, *Rotating snakes*.

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