EXPERIENCING TEARS OF WONDER-JOY: SEEING WITH THE HEART'S EYE

William Braud
Mountain View, California

ABSTRACT: Experiences of "wonder-joy tears" are described—their felt sense, their triggers and circumstances under which they occur, their meanings and interpretations, and the impact they can have on life. Wonder-joy tears are not tears of pain, sadness, or sorrow. Rather, they are accompanied by feelings of wonder, joy, gratitude, awe, yearning, poignancy, intensity, love, and compassion. They are an opening up of the heart to the persons or profound circumstances being witnessed. These tears, with their accompanying chills and special feelings, seem to be the body's way of indicating a profound confrontation with the True, the Good, and the Beautiful—an indication of directly seeing with the eye of the heart, soul, and spirit. These kinds of tears also indicate feelings of profound gratitude for such confrontations. Additionally, they can indicate moments of profound insight. The article discusses the potential guiding and transformational aspects of these experiences.

> There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition, and of unspeakable love.
>
> —Washington Irving

A series of coincidences brought me here. I have come to this shop, in a part of this city that is new to me, in search of icons and incense. The small shop is closed. Next door, there is a large cathedral. Unlike the shop, the cathedral's doors are unlocked. I enter the building. The Russian Orthodox liturgy is new to me. For hours, I stand in the cathedral, amidst these Russian people, taking my cues from them as I participate in the liturgy—moving, bending, crossing myself when they do these things. My legs are tired from the standing; my heart, light and joyful. Choral singing and incense fill this large space, surrounded by candles and icons. I feel a sense of community and unity with the people and things around me. Throughout the liturgy, the celebrants have moved from area to area—appearing through doors, disappearing behind partitions, reappearing through other doors, alternately obscured by panels and curtains, revealed through gates and openings.

The liturgy ends. As the celebrants disappear into the sanctuary and close the gates and doors, I feel a sadness—a sense of loss. But now, a tall, solitary, burning candle is placed outside the holy of holies. Tears fill my eyes, and along with the tears come gooseflesh and feelings of chills and thrills—a tingling feeling in my spine, arms, shoulders, neck, and back. My breathing becomes slightly irregular. The tears intensify. I gaze at the single, tiny flame through watery eyes, as the chills continue. What has just happened has profound meaning for me. The celebrants have disappeared into the secret, holy place; they, and what they represent, are no longer

Requests for reprints should be sent to: William Braud, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Palo Alto, CA 94303; e-mail: william@integral-inquiry.com.
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accessible. Yet the single burning taper remains. I feel the sun has been taken away, hidden; but the spark remains as reminder and promise of the greater light that, although unseen, may be subtly sensed. The solitary candle is a tiny spark symbolic of, reflecting, a greater sun within. Eventually, the tears stop; the chills cease caressing my spine. I feel a profound gratitude.

Another occasion: A new library is being dedicated. I stand in a crowd on a crisp, sunny morning. I have been shifting position from time to time, seeking shadows to keep the sun from my eyes. Throughout the ceremony, there have been many moving moments. At the close of the program, the mayor shares a Native American story about telling one's secret wish to a butterfly's wings. The butterfly will keep the secret and take it to the sky. At this point, small children release butterflies. Many butterflies flutter upward, into the sky. Tears fill my eyes. Chills visit my spine. What I am witnessing is moving and meaningful to me. The tears and chills increase, persist. An orchestra of children begins to play. More butterflies take flight. My eyes fill with more tears of joy and wonder and gratitude.

I have had such experiences many times. I have come to call them *tears of wonder-joy*. The tears and chills are, to me, my body's way of indicating that the eye of my heart is open and functioning and encountering something of vast importance and meaning. I have come to recognize these wonder-joy tears as direct responses to the true, the good, the beautiful. Such tears are not tears of pain or sadness or sorrow. Rather, for me, they are accompanied by positive affect—feelings of wonder, joy, gratitude, yearning, poignancy, awe, intensity, love, and compassion. With them comes a feeling that my heart is going out to what I am witnessing. The tears, chills, and special feelings come upon me, unexpectedly and spontaneously, as experiences of grace—as bodily signals, signs, or indicators of encounters with the numinous; as my body's way of letting me know I am having an unplanned, unavoidable encounter with the Real.

In this article, I describe my personal experiences of wonder-joy tears. I relate the circumstances under which these experiences occur and the meanings I have come to attribute to them. I describe the similar experiences of others, sharing their first-hand accounts and mentioning their interpretations of these experiences. What are their physical reactions and accompanying feelings? What elicits these reactions and feelings? What impact do tears of wonder-joy have on our lives?[1]

A brief account of how I came to call these experiences "wonder-joy tears": In the early 1970s, I was preparing the earth for a vegetable garden and was listening, as I worked, to a portable radio. I happened to tune in a station in the midst of a reading of a short story which I learned, at the end of the broadcast, was a tale by H. G. Wells called "The Door in the Wall." It was, for me, a story of a special Something More beyond our everyday experiences. It was also a story of lost opportunities, of how habits and duties distract and prevent us from encountering that for which we secretly yearn. Eventually, I was able to find the story in a collection of Wells' tales, and it became a favorite of mine—one that I read often. In the early 1990s, while reading this tale once again, my attention was drawn to this passage.

> You know, in the very moment the door swung to behind me, I forgot the road with its fallen chestnut leaves, its cabs and tradesmen's carts, I forgot the sort of gravitational pull back to the discipline and obedience of home, I forgot all hesitations and fear, forgot discretion, forgot all the intimate realities of this life. I became in a moment a very glad and wonder-happy little boy—in another world. It was a world with a different quality, a warmer, more penetrating and mellower light, with a faint clear gladness in its air, and wisps of sun-touched cloud in the blueness of its sky. (Wells, 1927/1952, p. 148)

The phrase "very glad and wonder-happy" suggested a term for which I had been searching to describe the tears-and-chills experiences I so often had. "Wonder-happy" became "wonder-joy"—a perfect prefix, I felt, for these particular tears. Thus I began to use the term as a shorthand code for these special kinds of tears and for the fuller bodily and affective experiences that accompanied them.

The Felt Experience

> Tears such as Angels weep, burst forth.
>
> —John Milton ("Paradise Lost," I.620)

I am witnessing a scene or occurrence that calls forth tears of wonder-joy. It is a scene or activity that moves me deeply. Tears quickly fill my eyes. My skin erupts in gooseflesh, hairs standing on end. Something literally takes my breath away; I gasp, involuntarily. Chills run up and down my spine. I feel a tingling around my eyes, my head, and the back of my neck. The tone of the experience is positive. Toward the end of the experience, or afterwards, there may be some sadness. In the midst of the experience I feel love and compassion. My heart goes out to what I am witnessing. I feel gratitude. I feel a yearning, a poignancy, an intensity. Around me, and between me and the provoking event, there is what I can only describe as a thickness, as though the surrounding air somehow has a greater density. The experience comes upon me—unexpected, spontaneous. My attention is focused strongly upon what I am witnessing, what is provoking these feelings. I am strongly aware of the feelings themselves and the sensations that are being provoked. Other things fade from my attention. The rest of me pauses, shuts down temporarily. If I try, later, to describe the event that initially brought forth the wonder-joy tears, the tears may occur even more strongly than they did initially, and I weep. Sometimes, I am unable to relate the incident that originally provoked the tears—the feelings and the weeping are too intense. I must cease, and allow the feelings to subside before I am able to continue.

> I have had a tremor of bliss, a wink of heaven, a whisper
> And I would no longer be denied; all things
> Proceed to a joyful consummation. (Eliot, 1980, p. 209)

Curious about others' experiences, I query colleagues and students about their wonder-joy tears. From their reports, I learn that in such circumstances, always, there are the tears. Often, there is gooseflesh. Sometimes, there are the chills and thrills—electrical or tingling feelings in the spine, arms, shoulders, neck, and back. (The French have a special term for this—*frisson:* shiver, shudder, quiver, thrill.) More

rarely, there is an involuntary gasp, an irregularity in breathing, or a vocalization ("oh!" or "ah!" or "uh!"). Some report a feeling of warmth throughout the body. Others report warm, soft colors. Still others report a pulsing, expanding, aliveness in the chest area that may extend for three to four feet. Sometimes there is a quiet, gentle sobbing.

In connection with this experience, all report positive affect. There are feelings of joy, peace, and awe; feelings of love, compassion, empathy, and acceptance; feelings of unity, union, oneness, closeness, connection, and immersion. Some report a congruence of themselves and all life. There are feelings of gratitude, blessedness, intensity, yearning, poignancy. Some report feeling cleansed, renewed, a beginning. For some there is a feeling of being at home, of recognition, of safety. Others experience a lightness, a spaciousness, an expansion, a feeling of being uplifted, soaring. Some feel a release, freedom. There may be feelings of deep satisfaction; of being accompanied and not alone; of being fulfilled, loved, fully seen, known, held, released from the need to be fully responsible for one's own way or in charge; of daring to be vulnerable. More rarely, there is an experience of the facade cracking, of the surreal, of timelessness. There may be a paradoxical appreciation, a holding of opposites: joy/sadness, bitter/sweet, tragic/beautiful, confused/clear, amazed/normal. Some report sadness near the end of the experience.[2]

In terms of attention, there is a "stopping" at various levels. Attention is very focused, one-pointed—focused on the precipitating event and on the experience itself. Awareness of all else fades. Yet, there is awareness of a fuller spectrum of existence.

Just as the head is a part of the body, thoughts may be parts of the wonder-joy tear experience. However, these are thoughts that usually occur later, in the wake of the experience itself. Thoughts such as the following arise in the mind: These moments await us, are latent, under the surface. Why are these not more frequent? Why are they often absent? Why are they exceptions, rather than the norm? Life can be messy/tragic and exquisite. This kind of experience is what really matters. We have gone astray.

In summarizing his wonder-joy experience, one respondent said

> Tears are always mixed with feelings of exaltation, as if a transcendent dimension has been reached, as if the sacred has penetrated the mundane and come to earth. During these moments, everything feels serene and transformed. Although "happiness," "joy," and "peace" are part of the experience, these terms fail to catch the essence of these moments.

As I hear mention of chills, gooseflesh, and hairs standing on end in many of the accounts of wonder-joy tears, I recall Plato's (trans. 1993) ruminations on the feathering of the soul. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato likens the form of the soul to the combined capacities of a team of winged horses and their winged charioteer. In crafting this metaphor, Plato suggests that when a soul is perfect, it has wings and travels through the sky, helping to govern the cosmos. That which is noble, wise, and good nourishes the wings of the soul and makes them grow. Shame, evil, and the like are

detrimental to the wings and can destroy them. If the soul loses its wings, it drifts along until it grasps an earthly body and settles down, animating the body.

> Only the thinking of the friend of wisdom will make the wings grow, because, through memory, it is always as close as possible to that which by its proximity makes a god divine. When a man deals correctly with remembrances of this sort, he is always initiated perfectly into perfect mysteries, and he alone becomes perfect. Since he stands apart from the busy antics of humankind and draws close to the divine, he is rebuked by most people for being out of his wits. They do not realize that he is possessed. . . . Whenever someone sees beauty in this world he is reminded of true beauty and his wing-feathers grow. . . . When the recent initiate . . . sees a godlike face or some form of body that imitates beauty well, he at first gets goose bumps. . . . He is awestruck, as though he were gazing upon a god. . . . As he looks at him, his goose bumps go away and an unusual warmth and sweating seizes him. He is warmed by the effluence of beauty he receives through his eyes, which naturally moistens the wing-feathers. . . . and as the nourishing moisture flows over them, the shafts of the feathers swell and begin to grow from their roots over the entire form of the soul, which was feathered all over before. . . . Mortals do indeed call the winged one Eros (Love), but immortals call him Pteros (Feathered), because he necessarily develops wings. (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249c-252b)[3]

Could the experience of wonder-joy tears be the equivalent of the soul's feathering confrontation with forms of beauty that evoke reminiscences of a supermundane realm?

In the quoted passage, Plato's mention of being "possessed" also strikes a resonant chord for me. In the midst of wonder-joy tears, I do, indeed, feel possessed—my body and feelings captivated and enraptured in the experience.

As I dwell on the wonder-joy experience and its meaning, I come to appreciate more fully the last sentence of the quotation. I begin to feel that wonder-joy tears are indications and expressions of love.

Triggers (Circumstances) of the Experience

> In any really good subject one has only to probe deep enough to come to tears.
>
> —Edith Wharton (*The Writing of Fiction*, 1925)

I recall circumstances that have provoked my experiences of wonder-joy tears. In addition to the solitary candle and butterfly incidents mentioned earlier, I remember the following occasions:

- Seeing a watercolor painting by kindergarten children on "one big happy community"—crude yet colorful continents with hands reaching out for one another
- In a filmed version of John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, watching the gigantic, slow Lenny stroking a tiny mouse
- Witnessing the simple, natural acts of animals—good, innocent, artless
- Witnessing anything that is truly honest, open, free from guile or craft
- Finding a small bit of milk, unexpectedly, in the refrigerator, when I "knew" there was none left, and it being just enough to go with cereal—being overjoyed at such a simple

surprise and being grateful that I could be so moved by something so simple; knowing that my wife would appreciate this and be similarly moved, and that this simplicity is something we share

- As part of my work, reading proposals and dissertations in which the goodness and spiritual light of the writer shines forth from the pages
- Toward the end of, and immediately after, an experience of timelessness in which I lost awareness of my ego and individuality and merged with or became all that is, and was so thankful for having been blessed with such an experience
- Attending a performance of a particular entertainer after having wanted to do this for about 35 years, and having narrowly missed several opportunities
- When someone has related a very meaningful or profound experience that I, too, have had and have been very moved by—a feeling of sharing, of common experiences, or of common values or joys
- Witnessing certain profound synchronicities (meaningful coincidences)
- Witnessing miracles in which somatic conditions about which I was worried were instantaneously corrected or healed; accompanying this was extreme gratitude and great feelings of thankfulness, faith, hope, and love
- Witnessing, thinking about, or remembering the goodness, simplicity, and innocence of particular persons I know or have known
- Reading my own deeply held truths in the writings of others and feeling a kindred spirit in the writer
- Being in the presence of a sage—a wise, holy, old woman—in Athens
- Appreciating the meaning of certain buildings at the Acropolis in Greece—how truths and lessons were dramatized, communicated in permanent structures. Connected to this was a feeling of the meaning of the gods, goddesses, and archetypes; an anger and frustration at not having been taught such simple, true things many, many years ago; and a delight that I had at last seen and understood such simple, true things
- Realizing, suddenly, that I might be printing, on the feast of the Epiphany, the final copy of a book whose seeds had largely been sown 5 years earlier on another Epiphany, and remembering all of the curious, synchronistic occurrences that had happened on or very close to the three intervening Epiphanies
- Events that work out just right—sometimes with a feeling of relief, of being protected, watched over, cared for, or guided by unseen forces
- A student reading, in one of my classes, the "Tale of the Sands," a Sufi story in which I recognized so much more this time than on other occasions—especially the wind/spirit connection and the role of surrender, trust, letting go of the concrete body, of individuality, in order to move to another realm
- Reactions to certain mystical poetry and passages
- Considering the devotion, dedication, and energy that science fiction writer Philip K. Dick put into trying to understand his strange experience, and the energy, learning, and seeking he poured into his *Exegesis*—millions of words and years of work
- A guided imagery exercise in which I experienced a wonderful ball of light on the banks of a stream near a cliff. The light led me to a cathedral, and I was filled with awe, wonder, and a feeling of the numinous
- Seeing a television advertisement that features a view of the many intricate muscles of the human back and appreciating, with awe, Nature's wondrous architecture, design, and wisdom
- An image and feeling in meditation of standing on the Earth at the bottom of the sea with my upper body in the air, reaching for the fire of the sun—feeling large, balanced, and complete
- Seeing a Twilight Zone television episode, decades ago, called "Next Stop Willoughby"—about an "ideal," simple, uncomplicated community

- Reading a message about someone's 4-year-old daughter who asks her father, "When I'm old and then I die and then I'm a baby again, are you going to be my daddy again?"
- Experiencing Nature's beauty—for example, the coastal mountains shrouded in morning mist
- Certain musical selections, especially those featuring cellos or violins
- Reading accounts of other people's experiences of wonder-joy tears

As I prepare this listing, I often re-experience wonder-joy tear feelings. I relish this experience. I am curious about what these circumstance may have in common, and I ponder the qualities they share.

I ask others about circumstances that have elicited wonder-joy tears, and the following triggering events emerge:

- Witnessing good or noble acts
- Witnessing innocence or simplicity
- Witnessing gentleness or kindness
- Witnessing beauty
- Witnessing intelligence
- Witnessing displays of courage, bravery, and integrity
- Witnessing someone's desire to be of service
- Experiencing the holy, the numinous
- Experiencing connections, closeness, union
- Experiencing understanding
- Experiencing empathy, affinity
- Experiencing what is given freely
- Experiencing "myself out there"
- Connecting to the larger "circles of life" when not doing, thinking, or planning
- Experiencing need
- Reading experiences of wonder-joy tears
- Experiencing nature
- Experiencing a quality of stillness
- Making an effort to connect with an experience of the Divine through meditation
- Finding—in writings, depictions, or actions—clear expressions of what I hold most important, meaningful, or dear

Apropos of precipitating events, one respondent reports the following:

> It is generally an experience of humble loving goodness that prompts this response. A child rescued by a firefighter, a young woman who succeeds in not taking a drink, a mother who learns to appreciate her child, or a street person who is caring for his dog. These are experiences which are moving or touching or deeply felt or redeeming.

Another respondent writes:

> Central to all of these experiences is the sense that the human beings involved have achieved what they were somehow meant to be. They behave in exalted ways that demonstrate their divine, transcendent potential. It's as if the distance separating the Absolute and the human has been overcome, like God touching Man on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

Another way to say this: Wonder-joy tears are evoked when I experience and see in others displays of courage, bravery, and integrity in life-and-death situations. These qualities have always been considered part of an impeccably lived life. Contact with the virtuous side of life is both wonderful and joyous—wonder-joy.

Meanings and Interpretations of the Experience

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean.
—Tennyson ("The Princess," IV)

What do my wonder-joy tear experiences mean to me? In response to prolonged inner questioning, some clues have arisen. For me, wonder-joy tears are responses to encountering and appreciating what is truly important. They are responses to what is innocent, unspoiled, uncomplicated, artless. To me, they are bodily indications of the functioning of the eye of the soul, of the spirit, of the heart—direct responses to the true, the good, the beautiful, the sacred.[4] Tears of wonder-joy are somatic concomitants of my profound gratitude for encountering clear, pure, unambiguous instances or manifestations of the innocent, unspoiled, uncomplicated, and artless. Such tears are an appreciation of what could be or should be but has been missed, or from which we have gone astray—of what is less common than it could be. The experience of wonder-joy tears is an innate, automatic "empathy indicator" or "compassion indicator" or "gratitude indicator." For me, the experience is also a bodily indicator of profound insight into my own nature and the nature of others and the world.

Once, when I was keenly interested in behavior and ethology, I studied what used to be called "instinct" but which has more recently come to be called the eliciting of "fixed action patterns" by "releasing stimuli" (all innately determined). Nature seems to have programmed the nervous systems of animals to respond in certain fixed ways to particular cues in the environment. Such response patterns are functionally adaptive; they occur in the service of, and support, survival. Small birds respond, innately, with distress and avoidance to shapes that resemble the shadow of a predator hawk. A dominant wolf ceases its aggressive actions when a submissive wolf assumes a posture that exposes its vulnerable neck. Creatures with unusually large head size to body size ratios (as are found in the young of many species, including human infants) elicit caring and nurturing reactions on the part of adult animals. I sometimes think of wonder-joy tears as a sort of fixed-action pattern that occurs in response to specific releasing stimuli. The tears may serve as signals or tools, if we heed them, for discerning what is right, good, important, and authentic in a nonegoic sense.

Stated more poetically, wonder-joy tears may be signals or signs of an encounter with the numinous—an unplanned, unavoidable encounter with the Real. They may indicate that the veils of *maya* have been pierced—that the windows of perception have been cleansed so that we can see more clearly, more lucidly. Wonder-joy tears may provide clues that the real me, the real person, real reality (the "big" rather than the "little," the authentic rather than the false) is being confronted, appreciated, experienced.[5]

My own wonder-joy tear experiences—especially near their endings—are sometimes tinged with sadness; they have a bittersweet quality. The sad, bitter aspect may have to do with an appreciation of how far the "usual" has strayed from what could be, how we so often miss the mark. There is a yearning for some goodness or beauty that is intimated but which is not sufficiently present. Edgar Allan Poe seems to have captured some of this meaning in his essay "The Poetic Principle":

> And thus when by Poetry—or when by Music, the most entrancing of the Poetic moods—we find ourselves melted into tears—not as the Abbaté Gravia supposes—through excess of pleasure, but through a certain petulant, impatient sorrow at our inability to grasp now wholly, here on earth, at once and forever, those divine and rapturous joys, of which through the poem, or through the music, we attain to but brief and indeterminate glimpses. (Poe, 1850/1938, p. 894)

I ask others what wonder-joy tears mean to them—how do they interpret or understand these experiences? From their answers, the following meanings emerge:

- Wonder-joy tears signal an encounter with what is true, authentic, good, beautiful, real
- They are an indication of spontaneous compassion and empathy
- They have to do with grace, gratitude, humility, awe; they are a gift
- They indicate a certain clarity of perception
- They are a reminder or indicator of having strayed
- They are indicators of unity, of lack of separation; they remind us that separation is an illusion
- They are recognitions of "what I really am," recognitions of what is important to me but is sometimes missing: *I am that* and *I am not always that*
- They are a blessing
- They indicate newness, rebirth, growth
- They are an experience of the essence of life
- They indicate surprise
- They are a sign of letting go
- They are feelings of the presence of the divine
- They are affirmations of meaning, of that which is Greater, of the connectedness of all things
- They are indications of the functioning of the eye of the heart, the soul, the spirit
- They are psychophysiological indicators of a particular state of being
- They are our natural state

In the words of one participant in this inquiry:

> During these moments I feel one enters a larger form of consciousness than the everyday, a dimension of the psyche in which individual minds are not separate. Schopenhauer once asked why an individual would give his life to save another person. It's because, he answered, that at the critical moment he has become one with the individual for whom he's giving his life; there is no "other," only a single, shared experience that unites the two as one. In this sense, one does not give one's life for another; one is the other. Is this an expression of the One Mind that many wisdom traditions talk about? [An experience such as this] is a window to something more real than everyday forms of consciousness.

In the listing above of meanings and interpretations, a respondent mentions that

wonder-joy tears may reflect a simultaneous recognition that one is, or possesses the qualities, of what one is witnessing in such a moment and a recognition that one is not entirely that or always that. I feel the sense of this revelation is perfectly captured in a passage in Augustine's *Confessions* (trans. 1971): "What is that which gleams through me and strikes my heart without wounding it? And I shudder and I glow. I shudder, in so far as I am unlike it. I glow, in so far as I am like it" (XI, IX[11]).

Impacts and Consequences of the Experience

None are so desolate but something dear,
Dearer than self, possesses or possess'd
A thought, and claims the homage of a tear.

—Byron ("Childe Harold," II: xxiv)

In the momentary experience of wonder-joy tears, there is pleasure, joy, and a feeling of participating fully in something moving and profound. These feelings are revived when I relive the experiences through memory. If pleasure, joy, and the feeling of integration into the profound were the only effects of such experiences, these alone would make them notable, worthwhile, and deserving of further experiencing, study, and sharing. But there is so much more to these experiences. They have had, and continue to have, more pervasive and persistent effects on my life and work. As I experience and as I recall and ponder occasions of tears of wonder-joy, I acquire and remember insights that encourage psychological growth and spiritual development. These experiences yield fruits that can be transformative.[6]

The experience of wonder-joy tears forces me to pay attention in new ways—to attend more to my body and my feelings and to avoid emphasizing my thoughts as much as I usually do. Thus, wonder-joy tears serve a balancing function. They are not reactions of the head, but of the body and of the heart. There is a directness about the reaction and about the experience as a whole that engenders great trust. The experience is accompanied by a strong sense of authenticity. I appreciate—in a wordless, thoughtless way—that I am encountering a special truth, a special reality: "And the Truth distilled into my heart, whence the affection of my devotion overflowed, and tears ran down, and happy was I therein" (Augustine, IX, VI[14]); "And when they hear what has been revealed to the prophet, you will see their eyes gush with tears at what they recognize as truth therein" (*Koran*, V:83).

I recognize the great value of what I am witnessing or experiencing, in these wonder-joy moments, and this prompts me to realize more fully what is truly important in life; it prompts me to more fully consider my priorities. This realization and more mindful (heartful) consideration stays with me and helps me in later choices and decisions. The experiences are transient, but they foster the creation of tools of discernment that persist long after the experiences themselves have faded. I have literally made life changes based on different densities of experiencing wonder-joy in various circumstances, and such changes and movements in particular directions have always been correct. Never have I regretted choices based on the feelings and

indications concurrent with tears of wonder-joy.

These experiences, for me, are pointers: They serve as affirmations or confirmations of valued qualities that I am truly seeking, and provide immediate indications of how those qualities are recognized. Their aftereffects serve as reminders of my direction, help me stay on course, and allow me to make useful corrections in my path. Thus, experiences that produce tears of wonder-joy and the memories of these experiences serve a guiding function in my life. The experiences themselves serve a more direct guidance function: my body and feelings are automatically moved in certain directions, and a greater attraction is added to the events or qualities that precipitated the wonder-joy tears, so that the events are valued more and approached more readily in memory.

Wonder-joy tears also serve as confirmations or affirmations of Something More. They lead me to appreciate the great power, wisdom, and goodness that is behind things and shines through things.

I query others about the impacts and consequences of their wonder-joy tear experiences. They tell me that these experiences have had these self-perceived effects in their lives:

- I have greater appreciation of and respect for the miracle of life
- I have more awareness of the choice to love and to open my heart to people
- I have an increased commitment to care, to be kind, to affirm self and others, to reach out to others
- I realized that anger and depression cloud access to these experiences
- When I feel balance, ease, well-being, and no fear, wonder-joy tears happen more often
- My faith is restored or increased
- I feel release from the need to control
- I experienced being filled with joy
- I felt reconnected, temporarily less solitary
- I felt a confirmation of the perfection of all that is
- I gained a different perspective on life and my place in it
- I feel changed
- I was reminded of what I really am
- My actions have not changed, but my direction was confirmed
- I was reminded of the path I am on and what is really important

A respondent reported:

> Sometimes, I gather these thoughts together and frame goals and intentions for my life but more often, I encounter small markers like these tears which point the way. No, not point the way. They confirm the way and they give meaning to what I am doing. You could say that they change my story in the sense that they expand its meaning. I'm not being coerced. I'm being encouraged. The tears are a signal that what I have experienced is relevant to my own spiritual growth. I cannot see beyond here and now, but I am assured that this particular bit is moving toward the transformation I seek.

I feel wonder-joy tears can have effects upon our lives by providing us with an additional means of knowing—a way of listening to the heart, as this heartfelt knowing

is expressed through the body's actions, sensations, and feelings. At the least, these reactions can momentarily draw us out of our word-driven thoughts so that we can appreciate the world and other people in new ways. At best, in attending more fully to what wonder-joy tears may indicate or reveal, greater lessons can be learned and, if these lessons are sufficiently great, they may trigger profound changes—even transformations—in our lives.

Wonder-joy tear experiences are, nonetheless, relatively crude and gross experiences. For more subtle lessons, perhaps we might seek still subtler indicators.

To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

—William Wordsworth ("Ode: Intimations of Immortality," 1807)

NOTES

[1] For both the content and writing style of this article, I have been influenced by the works and writings of Rhea White and Rosemarie Anderson. I am indebted to Rhea White for her important work on exceptional human experiences (EHEs) and for her model of EHEs, which inspired the organization of this paper (see Brown & White, 1997; White, 1997). I have attempted to write this paper in the embodied writing style being developed by Rosemarie Anderson (see Anderson, 2001).

[2] The findings reported in this paragraph and throughout this report were derived from my own experiences and those of 12 additional research participants. Some of these participants were unselected students enrolled in a small research group at the time of this inquiry. Other participants were colleagues, selected purposely on the basis of my suspicion that they might have had experiences of the type explored in this chapter. The raw data consisted of written responses to a semistructured questionnaire. Participants' responses were taken through what I prefer to call an "experiential facet analysis and synthesis." The guiding metaphor for this work is that the process being studied (the experience of wonder-joy tears) is like a gem that is composed of many interacting facets (the major themes that are discovered and reported); the facets reflect one another, and they also reflect things outside of the gem. First, major themes were identified by the researcher working alone and by each respondent working alone. Next, the themes and findings were discussed and developed further in group meetings. The researcher integrated and summarized the findings, prepared them in tabular formats, returned them to the participants for their verification and approval, then reorganized the findings for presentation in this chapter. The qualitative research methods used in this inquiry share features of phenomenological (Valle, 1998), heuristic (Moustakas, 1990), experiential (Barrell, Aanstoos, Richards, & Arons, 1987), intuitive (Anderson, 1998), and integral (Braud, 1998) research approaches. The methods also rely on additional assumptions and principles of various transpersonal research methods presented in detail in Braud and Anderson (1998).

[3] In this passage, and throughout his writings, Plato exhibits the androcentric thinking and writing to which he had been conditioned by his time and culture. The gender-biased language ("man," "he," "him," "his," "god") reveals that he is writing of and for men, and of masculine experience. The highest values and yearnings of which he writes are otherwordly in nature—even this may bespeak a more masculine form of transcendent spirituality, which can be contrasted with a more feminine form of descendent, immanent, or embodied spirituality that is more fully grounded in the body and in the earth.

[4] The eye of the heart, soul, and spirit as a metaphor (or is it more than a metaphor?) for a special form of knowing figures prominently in a number of rich spiritual and wisdom traditions. The concept—albeit in different terminologies—may be traced through contemplative Greek, Neoplatonic, medieval monastic, and Eastern and Western Christian mystical thought, appearing strongly in the teachings of Plato, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Boethius, Gregory the Great, the Victorine mystics Hugh of St. Victor and Richard of St. Victor, and Bonaventure—to mention but a few of the most prominent exponents. The notion of the eye of the heart and knowledge of the heart is emphasized especially in the Sufi tradition, particularly in the work of Ibn 'Arabi. Recommended sources include McGinn (1995, 1996) and Corbin (1981).

[5] There are resemblances between wonder-joy tears experiences and the events that provoke them as described in this section and the *mysterium tremendum* and numinous experiences described by Rudolf Otto (1923/1958) in his classic work *The Idea of the Holy*.

[6] There are profound similarities between the wonder-joy tear experiences described in this section and the transformative weeping and sacred weeping experiences studied by Anderson (1997). Readers are strongly advised to consult the Anderson article and note the similarities and differences between the two forms of tears and weeping.

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The Author

William Braud earned his Ph.D. in experimental psychology at the University of Iowa in 1967. At the University of Houston, he taught and conducted research in learning, memory, motivation, psychophysiology, and the biochemistry of memory. At the Mind Science Foundation (San Antonio, TX), he directed research in parapsychology; health and well-being influences of relaxation, imagery, positive emotions, and intention; and psychoneuroimmunology. Currently, he is Professor and Research Director at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology (Palo Alto, CA), where he directs doctoral dissertation research and continues research, teaching, and writing in areas of exceptional human experiences, consciousness studies, transpersonal studies, spirituality, and expanded research methods.

MAPPING THE COURSES OF HEAVENLY BODIES: THE VARIETIES OF TRANSCENDENT SEXUAL EXPERIENCE

Jenny Wade
Corte Madera, California

ABSTRACT: The relationship between sex and spirituality is a controversial topic in transpersonal psychology. This article presents a phenomenological inquiry into the nature of nonordinary, transcendent experiences reported during sex. Based on the results of 86 interviews with heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual men and women ranging in age from 26 to 70, this study focused on spontaneously occurring experiences in individuals who had no prior history of tantric or other "spiritual" sexual practices. A phenomenological cartography is presented, based on the taxonomy developed by Grof (1975, 1988) and illustrated with numerous vignettes derived from the reports of the participants in this study. In conclusion, a vision of sex is considered that goes beyond more and better orgasms to genuine transcendence and integrated, embodied spirituality.

One of the most controversial pairings in transpersonal studies is the relationship between sex and spirituality. Sex is an inborn drive to unite with something outside ourselves, foreshadowing the notion of the transpersonal (identifying with something beyond the personal). In addition to the drive to merge physically with another, human beings seek a psychological unification. Metaphorically and literally, male-female sexual unions have parallels in virtually all spiritual systems, ranging from the interplay of the sexes in indigenous religions to creation stories from around the world, such as that of Shiva and Shakti, to male and female principles, such as yin and yang, to Shekinah and Sophia as divine female counterparts to the masculine god in esoteric Judaism and Christianity to the love poems of mystics in the ecstatic traditions, particularly Sufism.[1]

Furthermore, orgasm is, at least for a moment, a transcendence of the usual confines of time and space when the kernel of the self bursts open. There is a grain of truth in saying, "It was a religious experience," when referring to a particularly intense climax. Sex represents one of the most accessible roads to ecstatic experience, so it is hardly surprising that it is a path many people have found, whether their spiritual tradition recognizes, regulates, or forbids it.[2] Perhaps its very accessibility and highly personal quality, which bypass the intervention of ideology, authorities, and mediators, account for some of its troubled history in the annals of religion.

The fact is, whether spiritual traditions sanction sex positively or negatively in relation to the sacred, the ubiquity of nonordinary experiences during lovemaking

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cannot be denied—nor can the inclination of persons who have such experiences to connect such events with spirituality. Researchers of spiritual experiences invariably seem to uncover their link with sex in a majority of cases, often to their own surprise (e.g., Laski, 1961; Maslow, 1987). In addition, sex researchers publish records of spiritual breakthroughs and conversions, even among atheists (e.g., Maurer, 1994; Scantling & Browder, 1993). Thus, events that people consider to be sacred happen fairly regularly through an act that (a) many have been taught by secular as well as religious authorities to be profane, or even shameful, and (b) under circumstances that may be forbidden, or even "sinful" (e.g., in extramarital or homosexual relations). Outside of Taoism, Tantra, Judaism, and other religions that may teach techniques deliberately designed to bring about altered states during sex (but that also regulate acceptable practices and results), a fair number of people (perhaps 1 in 20, as suggested by Scantling and Browder's study) seem to have spontaneous, involuntary, nonordinary experiences while making love, regardless of their own beliefs and the mores of their societies. What happens to them, and how do they understand their experiences?

Despite the institutionalization of sacred sex in some religions and its documented recrudescence among the uninitiated, no one has attempted to study these states systematically as they occur in the absence of direction or bias provided by a particular ideology or technical instruction. This article, which describes part of an ongoing research project, represents the first report on the phenomenology and variety of transcendent sexual experiences as they occur naturally in a "naïve" (i.e., untrained) population.

RESEARCH METHOD

For a phenomenological inquiry into the nature of nonordinary sexual experience, the overall plan was to recruit a sufficient number of highly articulate participants who could describe extremely subtle, probably virtually ineffable, subjective events. Since the range of experiences was unknown, however, there was no preconception of how many individuals would be adequate for this kind of survey. Men and women of any sexual preference, marital status, and ethnicity over the age of 21 were eligible, provided they had not had training in Tantra, Taoist sexual techniques, or similar erotic arts designed to bring about altered states and/or create an ideology or expectation that might shape either the state itself or its interpretation.

Owing to the private and sensitive nature of the subject matter, recruiting was limited to personal and professional contacts and word of mouth. Although this introduced considerable bias, it seemed infinitely preferable to advertising through print and electronic media for two reasons: (a) in the initial stages of the research, it might be difficult to spot hoaxes or fantasies and (b) to screen out responses from people whose sexual interests would be at variance with the intent of the study. Recruiting took the form of e-mail solicitations through professional and personal networks, mentions of the study at lectures given in various institutions of higher learning, and referrals from these sources. Solicitations invited anyone who had had a "nonordinary, mystical, or transcendent experience during sex with a partner," or who knew someone who had, to participate. Anyone who self-selected based on that vague description was initially accepted. Only those who were using

psychotropic substances at the time of the events in question were eliminated to minimize the artifacts of other altered-state triggers.

Recruiting qualified people was not particularly difficult, despite the minimal wording. People who said they had never had "transcendent" sex, whatever they imagined it might be, were absolutely certain. The momentary loss of self, time, and space during orgasm is so familiar that people seem to identify this sensation as "ordinary." A powerful orgasm may jokingly be a "religious experience," but people seem to classify even the most exquisite climax differently from an experience of transcendence. In fact, one researcher who compared powerful altered states he had had ("cosmic consciousness," psychedelic experiences, and "the best orgasm of my life" [Smith & Tart, 1998, p. 104]) said definitely that the orgasms to which he was referring were "rather ordinary and certainly not 'mystical' " (A. L. Smith, personal communication, March, 1998). Thus, these stories come from self-identified volunteers with their own understanding of "nonordinary, transcendent, mystical experiences" during sex, discussed below.

The following report is based on the results of 86 interviews with heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual men and women ranging in age from 26 to 70. A surprisingly large number for a qualitative study, especially a phenomenological one, this sample was necessary once the full range of experiences began to emerge. Since the thrust of this article is a phenomenological cartography, no attempt will be made to provide a quantitative analysis of the results or detailed demographic data. However, some general qualification of the sample is offered to indicate its limitations. It is not representative of American adults demographically for the reasons stated; nor is statistical validity a goal in this project. Furthermore, no attempt has been made to include representatives of the full range of spiritual practices and beliefs, or of the full range of sexual proclivities and experience.

The sample consisted of 50 (58%) women and 36 (42%) men. The majority (77%) were heterosexual in their preference for partners (35 [41%] women; 31 [36%] men), followed by homosexual (16%: 10 [12%] women; 4 [4%] men), and bisexual (7%: 5 [6%] women; 1 [1%] man). Marital status was not a useful category for various reasons: (a) individuals were sometimes speaking of past events unrelated to their present marital status; (b) if married, they were sometimes speaking of extramarital events; (c) those with long, rich histories had had experiences while single, married, divorced, or outside of marriage; and (d) for same-sex connections, marital status was not necessarily a relevant descriptor.

The sample was predominantly White (88%). Other groups represented 12% of the total: 4 (5%) African-Americans, 4 (5%) Latinos, 1 (1%) Asian, and 1 (1%) Native American, respectively. Owing to the solicitation venues—mostly through universities and contacts in higher education—the sample was highly skewed toward people with advanced degrees: 24 (28%) had doctoral degrees (Ph.D., M.D., J.D.); 34 (40%) had masters degrees; 5 (6%) had some graduate education; 18 (21%) had bachelors degrees; 2 (2%) had associates degrees; and 3 (3%) had high school diplomas.

Concerning spiritual beliefs that might have a bearing on the subjective interpretation of nonordinary states, people were asked about the traditions in which they had been

reared and their present religious orientations. Forty participants (47%) had been brought up in households identified with various Protestant denominations; 21 (24%) were Roman Catholic; 16 (18%) were agnostic or atheist; 7 (8%) were Jewish; and 1 (1%) was Buddhist and 1 (1%) was "eclectic." As adults, the vast majority have shifted their spiritual orientation—some as a direct result of their sexual experiences—though the reverse did not seem to be true: they noted little, if any, crossover from a spiritual practice, such as meditation, and the types of experiences they had during sex (a full discussion of these findings is beyond the scope of this paper). At present, most follow less traditional paths: 40 (46%) considered themselves "eclectic" in their orientation; 13 (15%) atheist/agnostic; 10 (12%) "generally Christian" or a specified Protestant denomination; 8 (9%) Buddhist; 4 (5%) Roman Catholic; 4 (5%) Yogic/Hindu; 3 (4%) Pagan/Nature mysticism; and 1 (1%) each Islam, "Jewish mysticism," "New Age," and Transcendental Meditation. (Interestingly, of the 13 who said that they were now atheists/agnostics, 6 used theistic references throughout their records in describing the events and meaning of their sexual experience.)

Respondents were interviewed in a mutually agreed-upon location, or, if this was inconvenient, by telephone. The interviews were semistructured and took anywhere from 30 minutes to 2½ hours. They consisted of standard open-ended questions, followed by additional probes to develop promising lines of inquiry and to clarify. A few preferred to write about their experiences, and in those instances, the same questions and probes were used in a dialogical correspondence.

How adequate is this sample? As already noted, the intent was exploratory and the selection deliberately skewed. This is an ongoing study, and it is possible that there are experiences outside those represented here, but the degree of overlap among 86 cases suggests that this is at least an adequate first attempt to chart new territory. How trustworthy is the information? People may exaggerate or fantasize about their sex lives or avoid telling the entire story. A further difficulty exists when the events in question involve an altered state, which may be difficult to capture and convey in an ordinary state. This is complicated by the difficulty inherent in communicating phenomenological information verbally (e.g., describing the quality and nature of an orgasm). Furthermore, the accounts represent the self-reported version of a subjective experience uncorroborated by anyone else. Even in the few cases where both partners agreed to be interviewed, their own experiences frequently differed significantly from each other.

It would be difficult indeed to make any claims for the data if any single experience had to stand on its own. But, just as with near-death experiences, when person after person describes the same type of event, the same feelings, and the same insights, patterns begin to emerge. Each story is a data point; the more there are, the clearer the image. The patterns they produce may not form the sharp delineation of representational art, but they can give the softer, more layered images of impressionism. The emergent images are as meaningful and clear as those of Monet, van Gogh, or Seurat. Although only 86 people were interviewed, their stories represent more than 86 events. For some, a transcendent experience was a rare happening in a lifetime of sexual activity. Like any other profound spiritual event, such as a near-death experience, these one- or two-time occurrences were reported with great vividness from memories of times and partners often long past, sometimes as much as 30 years ago.

For many others, however, transcendent sex occurred with some regularity in a particular relationship, often covering two or three different types of experience over time. A fortunate few commonly have transcendent experiences whenever they make love and wonder why anyone would "bother" to have ordinary sex. They sometimes had a range of experiences to report. The net result is that no category mentioned below represents a single case.

Defining a Transcendent Sexual Experience

Owing to the variety, no simple definition of transcendent sex is possible. However, two factors consistently emerge from the narratives as characteristic of transcendent sex. The first, not surprisingly, is participation in an altered state that could not be ascribed to the use of chemicals or deliberate techniques. In these states, as illustrated below, the ordinary sense of time, space, and/or agency (in Cartesian-Newtonian or Formal Operations terms) is transcended. Furthermore, the altered state includes an awareness of the lover, if only as a conduit, and is rooted in the union of the two during sex. These altered states appear to be more or less independent of orgasm, which is considered a discrete state of its own. That was invariably true for the men: they entered an altered state that had no relationship to the timing or duration of their climax. It was true for the majority of the women, as well. For a few, however, being non- or mono-orgasmic during sex is either infrequent or impossible. These women were having an unending chain of orgasms that could last indefinitely, usually until their lovers withdrew the contact, although the events they described as transcendent had little or no (subjectively) discernible relationship to orgasm. (For most men and women in this sample, orgasm was either a nonevent or a problem relative to the transcendent sexual state. Some could not recall whether they had had one, as they were so much more drawn into other events; some said it became "irrelevant"; others found it a somewhat irritating distraction; and a couple found that orgasm shattered or ended the state.)

The second factor that differentiates transcendent from ordinary sex is the felt experience of a cosmic force engaging one or both lovers in the context of their relationship, especially their lovemaking. This cosmic force is most often described in the terms reserved for Spirit: God, the Divine, the Oversoul, the Void, etc. Some described it spatially, as a place they can enter, a world of cosmic power, intelligence, and love. For some, the force is implied: It is the invisible source of their journeys into other realms, or it makes the other realms possible. For others, it is a living entity that somehow arises from, but cannot be reduced to, the union of the lovers. The tendency to associate such experiences with the supernatural was marked, frequently resulting in deep personal transformation, spiritual insights, and even conversion.[3] Indeed, the interplay of both these factors—altered states and the felt sense of the numinous—creates a variety of sexual experiences that appear to have the same characteristics as those recognized in some of the major spiritual traditions.

The Varieties of Transcendent Sexual Experience

Classification of complex human experiences is fraught with difficulties, as any taxonomy is somewhat arbitrary and can never reflect the dynamics or richness of

an individual's experience per se. Rather than create a taxonomy specifically for this project, it seemed wise to determine whether an extant model would serve. The one chosen was developed by Grof (1975, 1988); it was selected for several reasons. First, he originally created a comprehensive cartography of transpersonal states arising from a variety of sources: his psychedelic research, holotropic breathwork, and experience working with individuals having spontaneous episodes of nonordinary states. It generally is congruent with perennial philosophy, although it contains more categories and differs in some details. Moreover, Grof has also frequently acknowledged the relationship between sex and various nonordinary states in his writings (e.g., 1975, 1985, 1988, 1998). His schema was also chosen for reasons of brevity (Rhea White's [1995] Exceptional Human Experiences classification is magnificent, but with more than 200 categories, it would not be easily reproducible in this venue. As it is, Grof's addition of a third grouping labeled "Intentional Psychokinesis" is omitted because it involves the "ability to influence the material environment . . . by simply wishing events to happen" [1988, p. 157], a category at variance with the involuntary, spontaneous nature of experiences sought for this study).

Grof's model does indeed cover the kinds of episodes arising during sex. What follows, then, is a brief recapitulation of Grof's complete taxonomy (1988, pp. 42-157), indicating where these sexual experiences fall and giving examples but also showing what types of experience have not (yet) been found to arise from sexual activity under the conditions noted above.

Regrettably, in the brief space of this article, it is not possible to develop any of these cases fully outside the condensed content presented here for classification. The full records are luminous with joy, peace, discovery, insight, and inspiration, and they have typically been life-changing events. However, only such quotes as illustrate the phenomena for classification can be given here. Nevertheless, it is hoped that at least a tiny bit of the radiant bliss will shine through.[4]

Transpersonal Experiences

Experiential Extension Within Consensus Reality and Space-Time

1. Transcendence of Spatial Boundaries

a. Experience of Dual Unity—Loosening and melting of the boundaries of the body ego and a sense of merging with another person into a state of unity and oneness.[5]

Perhaps the most common of transpersonal sexual experiences is the sense of the two lovers' merging into one being. Respondents report not only a strong sense of psychological and spiritual union, but physical, as well, including, as seen in the second example, the sharing of kundalini. These are accompanied by profound feelings of sacredness and love, also noted by Grof with other subjects and relationships (1975).

> Then, any sense of separateness between us dissolved. I couldn't even tell whether I was making love to her or being made love to. I can hardly even tell you what our physical

> bodies were doing because it was like our bodies were part of the flow and ebb of all this energy and Spirit body. We were all mixed together in this mysterious, melting dance. Body awareness merged with all the other levels. . . . We were one moving, touching mass of energy and awareness, not two separate poles of consciousness. . . . .I sort of felt like a woman and a man . . . where all we were was one being, one love, kind of a melting together. (Kyle)

> Often . . . my partner will start to feel the energy in her pelvis, and it goes in shock waves up her spine. She'll begin to have kriyas, . . . and my body will react. I'll feel it almost like my spine is a radar dish or something. Her spine is sending out this wave, and my spine catches it and responds. . . . And sometimes vice versa. (Nanette)

b. Identification with Other Persons (None.)

c. Group Identification and Group Consciousness—Expansion of consciousness to a global awareness of an entire group of people by race, nationality, cultural heritage, religions, profession, shared ideology, or destiny.

Some women identify with all women's experience, and in so doing, find their femininity affirmed, making them expand more into that part of themselves and feel more empowered.

> They feel like they're very, very close, all women. Not an identity, but *all women*. My identity falls away, and I'm identified with all women now and back in time, and their state of mind. There's not a separation. . . . My way of being a woman is so much greater from having had this experience. I grew up Catholic . . . with the body being sinful and touching it being sinful. . . . A sense of rapture that came from so many different places, and how wonderful it was to have that . . . and that sense of unity [with all women]. (Kristin)

d. Identification with Animals—Complete and quite realistic identification with members of various species.

Animal identification in this group may not be well-matched with Grof's because his examples display an abstruse knowledge such as might be ordinarily be known only to biologists or animal specialists. Sex respondents report more feeling states than an unusual knowledge of actual animal behavior or attributes. The potential degree for cultural determination appears to be high in this sample, but perhaps also in this category of experience, given the reports of various indigenous groups to identify with culturally significant organisms, such as grubs, salamanders, vultures, spiders, scorpions, ants, snakes, frogs, weasels, baboons, rats, and coyotes, while this North American sample mentions only predators—usually mammals (wolves, bears, and the big cats), but also birds of prey. These most puissant animals in modern-day North America, however, are often the ones associated with shamans, who are among the most powerful individuals in their societies (Eliade, 1951; Kalweit, 1988; Walsh, 1990; Wolf, 1991). Metamorphosis into animals during lovemaking typically involves aggressive, rough sex play, which, along with the above, may suggest fantasy. Participant perception, however, is that of being overtaken (possession), confusing the causal link between sex play and the shift. Increased

strength, bestial mannerisms—growling, snarling, scratching, biting, fighting, or wrestling—and the altered-state sense of actually being and thinking like an animal manifest in ways quite contrary to subjects' everyday personalities and sex play.

> With that [electrical charge] comes a power and a strength that makes me feel invincible, like [I] could run through the woods and jump over trees any time now. . . . It's that kind of strength. If I'm the wolf, my hips and butt and legs, especially the tops of my legs where the quadriceps are, feel different. Definitely leaner, sinewy—God, I wish I were sinewy!—kind of like a haunch sort of a musculature so you could spring. When I'm a wolf, it seems easier to move and jump about, and when I'm a bear, it doesn't. As the bear, I feel the weight of the head, really, really big, and very, very heavy. (Kim)

e. Identification with Plants and Botanical Processes (None)

f. Oneness with Life and All Creation—Identifying with the totality of life on this planet, including all humankind, flora and fauna (extending to viruses and single-celled organisms).

A number of individuals report an opening of self to identify with all creatures.

> There's a connection with the universe that happens. I sense a connection with the flora and fauna, all the other animals [and people] in the world. The experience has more of a horizontal plane to it, the immanent reality. But with the sense of oneness and connection, certainly. It's a different plane, closer to the ground, about union with all living creatures. . . . We're really connected, all of us with each other for all time and all space. And there's a sense of "how vast the universe!" (Terry)

g. Experience of Inanimate Matter and Inorganic Processes—Identification with macroscopic and microscopic phenomena of inorganic nature (e.g., consciousness of fire, the ocean, iron, and quartz).

Rarely do individuals go into the microcosm during sex, but when they do they see and become part of the interplay of energy and matter.

> It's almost like a biologist or physicist looking at subatomic particles or things under the electron microscope, the basic patterns of energy that the universe is made of: forms of waves and rays and points and the interplay of expansion and contraction, progressions, and the experience of densities. I'm having all kinds of visions and insights, the kind I imagine physicists have, where there's the confluence of energy and matter, the regeneration of life and death. (Donna)

h. Planetary Consciousness (None)

i. Extraterrestrial Experiences—Travel within this solar system, and to other stars, and galaxies; witnessing explosions of supernovas, contraction of stars or identifying with these entities and events.

A number of people (mostly women) journey blissfully through outer space, flying along in the darkness surrounded by stars and planets.

And then again I felt myself in the cosmos, but this time it felt like in the solar system with solid planets and gaseous planets being present and around me. I seemed to be in outer space. There was a lot of space between what was out there, blackness with points of lights, stars. . . . There seemed to be a presence of other planets too, and I was floating. (Vivian)

We were among the stars. It was black, and there were all these stars, and it was like we were flying, both of us flying. It was mostly a visual impression, but it was accompanied by that feeling of incredible openness and joy. I was just incredibly happy. It was very much a feeling of being my true self, being who I really am, authentic. (Jill)

j. Identification with the Entire Physical Universe (None)

k. Psychic Phenomena Involving Transcendence of Space (out-of-body experiences, traveling clairvoyance and clairaudience, and telepathy)—Leaving the body; moving to another place in the physical world; occasionally moving to experiential realms and subjective realities that appear to be entirely independent of material reality; reading the minds of other persons.

Out-of-body experiences are common. Usually the experience involves moving to a place suspended above the lovers and looking down at them in the here-and-now (very similar to OBEs reported under other conditions, though in this case usually accompanied by feelings of great peace and wonder.)[6]

I suddenly found myself having for the first time what I would call a transcendent kind of experience. I was out of my body observing me and my lover lying in bed from above, perhaps near the ceiling. I'd never heard of such a thing and didn't know how to explain it, but it was a very strange phenomenon suddenly looking down at the two of us. (Dick)

Along the other dimensions of spatial plasticity Grof includes in this category, some (mostly women) report being transported to different urban and pastoral locations, but most often under the sea. This transportation is typically accompanied by ecstatic feelings.

There was a time when we were like dolphins in the water. I saw other fish in the water, but I was more aware of us. . . . The water was very blue, and it was extraordinarily peaceful, joyful. (Jill)

In a striking case of telepathy, a man making love with his date at a party became aware that his best friend, who was attending the same celebration, needed help.

I went into an emptiness, and in that emptiness an awareness came to me that Tom was in danger. . . . And it was such truth that I knew he was in danger. . . . So I immediately came back into my body. I said, "Oh my God, oh my God. Something's wrong with Tom."

She said, "No, there's not. He's still at the reception. He's having a great time. . . ."

I started running down the street throwing on my clothes. . . . As soon as I turn the corner, there's this mob of people. In the center of it was Tom and this huge Hell's Angels

type of guy brawling with him. Without hesitation—and I'm just a little guy—I lunged. I just jumped on this guy's back, trying to get him in a headlock. He was a huge, huge fellow. . . . *This guy could have taken me out with his thumb, if he had wanted to,* but I just had this tremendous energy. . . . That evening, Tom said, "You should really be hurting." And I should have been because that was a brick wall [the attacker] threw me against, several times. I was not bruised or in any kind of physical pain out of the experience, during it or afterward. (Esteban)

2. *Transcendence of the Boundaries of Linear Time*

a. Embryonal and Fetal Experiences (None)

b. Ancestral Experiences—Historical regression along biological lines to periods preceding the subject's conception and an identification with one's own ancestors.

Some respondents feel transferred back in time into the bodies and personalities of their forebears, which usually is something of a shock. For example, one woman found herself as a Celtic priestess during the Roman conquest of Europe.

I was there during the time when the Roman empire was invading Gaul. . . . I have this sense that I died in a Roman prison. Some of the most excruciating pain I've ever experienced was a vision that I had right after we'd made love, this feeling that they were burning my trees, burning my groves. (Ardrigh)

At the time the incident occurred, she knew nothing consciously about ancient Celtic culture, nor about her own ancestry, but her identification with these events was so strong, she decided to check into her origins.

I didn't even know the names of my great-grandparents. . . . I did the research later. I found out that the groves were sacred in the Druid tradition. They actually worshipped in groves of trees, and that's why I was just so upset that my trees were burning. I've tried to verify some of the other stuff as actual historical occurrences, and of course, the Roman empire eventually overtook Gaul up almost into Ireland. . . . But when I get in that guise, I can speak Gaelic fairly well, and I don't even know Gaelic. It's the damnedest thing. [My lover] has written down some of the stuff I said . . . and it's old, old Gaelic. We've actually looked it up. (Ardrigh)

No claims are made here for the veridicality of such events, but their felt validity is sufficiently strong that most other participants spoke of conducting similar research or experiencing uncanny manifestations and synchronicities in conjunction with these past-life episodes.

In another example, a White man whose mother had always been troubled and fascinated by fair-skinned African-Americans who could almost "pass" for Whites found himself as the Creole mistress of a White plantation owner who later married a Black man.

I had six children in that life. Three of them passed for White because their father was a planter, a White planter. One of them, one of the children who passed for White, is my

> mother in this lifetime. She was my son in that lifetime. The person who is now my mother left New Orleans and came to Minneapolis and passed as White in that lifetime. In this life, she also went from New Orleans and Tennessee to Minneapolis. (Richard)

c. Racial and Collective Experiences (None)

d. Past Incarnation Experiences—Participation in episodes occurring at another time and place in history. The person maintains ego-identity, while experiencing the self in another form at another place and time.

Persons report past-life experiences without any sense of their biological lineage. These events frequently mimic those of past-life regression therapy in revealing (sometimes foretelling) fundamental conflicts that are not apparent to the lovers at the present time. In one, a couple on their second date relived a history of several years' duration in which they met, fell in love, had an illicit affair, created an unintended pregnancy, lost the child, and split up in Victorian times. The story was particularly disturbing as they were just falling in love and had no belief whatsoever in reincarnation or other "nonscientific" phenomena. They married and were together for a long time, but by the time of the interview, they were separating.

> The story was dictating to us, like watching a movie, and you don't get to change it if you don't like what's going on. It was playing out, and we were being shown something. . . . I didn't see any similarity in it with us at that time, though it did say something about why we felt so compelled to be together even though we didn't know each other that well; why we felt so familiar, like we'd always been together. It was overriding my logical mind, which was a big override for me. The rational part of me dismissed it. I'd say to myself, "Oh, you were just daydreaming." I believe we were given an opportunity to be with each other in a different context, but we haven't been able to do it. We made the wrong choices again in this lifetime. It's too painful to continue. (Carolyn)

Unique among the sexual experiences, only those involving past lives in some way seem to place both partners in a shared altered state. Respondents usually describe this as "finishing each other's sentences" or "like we both had the same movie going in our heads, but we weren't making it up."

e. Phylogenetic Experiences (None)

f. Experiences of Planetary Evolution (None)

g. Cosmogenetic Experiences (None)

h. Psychic Phenomena Involving Transcendence of Time—Psi phenomena including precognition, clairvoyance, and clairaudience of past and future events; psychometry (obtaining history or information from touching an object); time travels.

Some respondents reported instances of precognition. Like the past-life experiences, future insights seem to involve negative outcomes, although the feelings associated with them tend to be peace and calm acceptance. For example, one woman who was

resuming with great hope a relationship that had been suspended for a number of years, suddenly saw the future.

> I felt that we were lifted into levels of possibility, of unfettering connection, though perhaps not yet realized, which existed at some level still to be reached. I was thoroughly confident that the path was there even though I was perhaps on it alone. The feeling was of liberation . . . being freed . . . a sense of opening to another unknown dimension of experience. . . . [In this one transcendent moment,] it was as though I was lifted into a dimension of truth beyond ordinary rational understanding, wherein I knew it to be the realm of false hope. The disjunction of this overwhelming feeling and the uncertainty of what I knew to be the more likely outcome of our association was not at all upsetting. There was a refreshing calm that settled over and stayed with me for days. (Leah)

3. Physical Introversion and Narrowing of Consciousness—Organ, tissue and cellular consciousness.

Cellular awareness tends to be reported in two ways, one of which is not necessarily congruent with Grof's definition in that it involves a sense of the "aliveness" of individual cells owing to an unusually charged sense of the entire body during sex.

> It was an experience of being both completely and totally aware of every cell in my body—and of every cell in my body vibrating at the same frequency—and yet not even inhabiting my body at exactly the same time. (Betty)

The second type of experience seems to draw the individual down into the cellular or molecular microcosm.

> It's as if I dove into your eyeballs, and I got into the interstitial spaces and into the vitreous humor and started to push my arms and legs out to make everything wider. And all of a sudden you feel that you operate from a very contracted place, relatively. Muscles relax where you normally don't even know that they're there because, at the time, you thought they were part of an immovable structure. Now I can lean back, now I can stretch out and feel limber and really unfurl. (Sabu)

Experiential Extension Beyond Consensus Reality and Space-Time[7]

a. Spiritistic and Mediumistic Experiences—Mediumistic and channeling experiences, in which the individual's countenance, gestures, and voice are dramatically changed. Sometimes the individuals perceive a discarnate entity, but they may also be taken over by an alien entity or energy form.

Perceiving other entities happens more often during sex than the sense of being changed into one (except for animals, noted above). Called "shapeshifting" or "morphing" by participants, these occurrences normally involve the rapid succession of a number of different faces superimposed on the partner's actual visage (*trespasso*).

> At least half a dozen times, I've had an experience with my eyes open where I'd see my lover's face morph into all these different faces. [There] might be 20 different faces. I

don't remember them all, but some are more memorable than others, so I'd recognize them when they came up again. (Vivian)

Other experiences include the sense of physical manifestation, and could involve not only physiological changes, but movement, such as gestures and glossolalia.

When she steps into that place, she gets rougher sexually. There's a rawness. She even smells different. And she said my eyes seemed a lot darker when I looked up. I have light hazel eyes, and she said they were so dark it was almost like black eyes. Her sense was that they weren't my eyes at all. (Lynn)

We would spontaneously start speaking in tongues, and at first I felt kind of embarrassed about that, like "What is this?" . . . Either he would start speaking in tongues, or I would, and when that started happening, it was another signal that this wave of energy is coming over us, through the different movements of my tongue or different hand gestures, perhaps mudras. (Leona)

b. Energetic Phenomena of the Subtle Body—Experience of various energy fields described in mystical traditions of ancient and non-Western origin (e.g., kundalini).

As might be expected, kundalini effects are well represented. They typically involve unusual percepts of light, heat, energy, and liquification, and they seem to behave in the same ways described in the Tantric literature, with which very few of these subjects had even a passing familiarity (one couple was upset by an episode of amrita).

I'm aware of energy, patterns, and electric colors. . . . When it moves past certain areas of the body, the body will tend to get kind of tingly. It's like there's pure crackling, surging, grinding, burning energy. Boundaries tend to expand, and . . . the further the energy goes up the spine, it seems like the more intense it gets, and I start getting into an altered state. (Reginald)

The light was just going through me . . . and shooting out of the top of my head. I had feelings of white lights shooting out of the top of my head. . . . You think of sunlight or lightning, but nothing like *this!* . . . I started crying because it was overwhelming, an emotional effect like "Oh, my God, I'm coming *home*. I got home." A feeling that I'd been separated for a long time, like coming together, and finally being *home*. (Suzette)

c. Experiences of Animal Spirits (None)

d. Encounters with Spirit Guides and Suprahuman Beings—Interactions with spirit guides, teachers, protectors, and beings of light.

During sex, people may have visions of supranatural beings (e.g., angels and predeceased loved ones). In some cases they feel themselves or their partners manifesting divine forms (e.g., their Ideal Form in a platonic sense). More commonly, they sense an ephemeral Third presence or divine entity that is cocreated with and by the lovers, yet also independent of them.

I had a little sister who died when I was 10 and she was 6. And I felt her presence in the room right then. . . . When I was growing up, she was really close to God because she was

dying the whole time she was growing up. I felt her close to the divine Presence, as if she came from God. So as an adult, whenever I had an altered state—well, not whenever but sometimes when I've had them—I would see her. . . . I didn't have a sense of myself as being just me, but of a divine Presence being around. (Armand)

Sometimes when we make love, I see my lover's face grow young, and she looks 20 years old to me. She has that radiant, lit-up-from-within beauty, almost as if she is divine herself in a way, as if she becomes a perfect version of herself. It's like looking at images in a church, or icons that can be suggestive of something beyond themselves. There's something transcendent even in the vision of her, like when great art gives rise to religious feeling. When she transforms before my eyes, I've been displaced to a different environment where everything has become radiant because *she's* my environment. I'm going into a holy place. (Blake)

I've always had a sense of movement beyond myself. I have no illusions that my partner and I are creating that. . . . I haven't come to a good term for that. . . . Some of the native peoples call it the Great Mysterious. . . . By our coming together . . . maybe there's something that we're doing that is the kindling in the midst of that fire, but . . . that fire comes from somewhere else, not just from the two of us. . . . Making love . . . is a way to go to church, talk to God, connect with God, however you might understand that. (Roland)

e. Visits to Other Universes and Meetings with their Inhabitants (None)

f. Experiences of Mythological and Fairy-Tale Sequences (None)

g. Experiences of Specific Blissful and Wrathful Deities—Experiences with deities associated with the forces of light and good or darkness and evil.

Somewhat rare, these experiences concern deities associated with archetypal forms (e.g., Sappho and Kali). The majority of these deities are ambiguous in their presentation, such as Kali, whose fierceness is as much relished as feared.

I beheld this dark man, fairly shadowy, I really couldn't come up with any features other than a rack of antlers. . . . It was Carnanuss, . . . the [Celtic] lord of the forest and the hunt [who symbolizes to me] the seduction into the wilderness, the betrayal of that trust and murder. I think that's the degree of anxiety I have around this figure. . . . My Catholic background said it was the devil, but it was Carnanuss. (Zebediah)

All of a sudden, I heard this horrible roar . . . and a serpent came out of the water, the rainbow serpent, and he dived back in and I could never quite see its head but I could see its body where it came in and out and in and out. It was frightful and beautiful, shimmery, very bright. (Natasha)

h. Experiences of Universal Archetypes (None)

i. Intuitive Understanding of Universal Symbols (None)

j. Creative Inspiration and the Promethean Impulse (None)

k. Experience of the Demiurg [sic] *and Insights into Cosmic Creation* (None)

l. Experience of Cosmic Consciousness—Identifying with the supreme and ultimate principle that represents all Being characterized by formless, dimensionless, infinite awareness, knowledge, and bliss.

Participants describe unitive experiences in the same language of the *unio mystica* of Western contemplative traditions, especially omniscience and overwhelming joy.

> It's a very boundariless time, and then comes the Light, mostly a flood of bright, whitish-yellowish light. . . . It's as though the Light were all the universe that's not me, the part of the universe that I don't think I'm usually connected to. That Light definitely represents the life force, the universal force, the god force without the deity. . . . I'm content in the Light because I'm also there observing it. I love it when this happens, but there is that moment when it begins, and I step in it without that awareness. It is maybe nondual for a few seconds, and then I'm there observing it, so it's not there. (Esther)

> It's *real!* . . . At the same time I felt it coming from the outside, it was also coming from the inside. It was evident that it was also in me. I participate in divinity in a direct, inclusive way. There's no separation at all. All those mystical incantations about the entire universe being embedded in the person, or that the soul of the human being participates in that, it was all suddenly manifest. . . . Was there a face to God? No. Or a presence? *The presence was us.* It wasn't a call, it wasn't a sign. All the things I had interpreted as it weren't true. We were just there. It just *was.* Oh, yes, it's real. I become all of me but with my ego or subpersonalities all gone. Just God is left, and I am that. (Zebediah)

m. The Supracosmic and Metacosmic Void—Experience of primordial emptiness, nothingness and silence; the Void that is supraordinated to and underlying the phenomenal world.

Several describe nontheistic nonduality in terms very like those of Buddhism, though it is hard to do them justice in a short excerpt.

> I sensed that I had gone some place, and that once I came out of it, I knew I had been there, but not when it happened. You know how there's the being in something, and then the knowing that you were there. So when you come out of just being and you get to the knowing part, you're an observer apart from what comes in that moment. Everything was dropping away, no sensory perception, and there is no way to describe it. There was nothing but union in that moment, but I couldn't tell you union with what. And immediately afterward were the tears, tears of joy, incredible joy that I felt the privilege of having this incredible gratitude and awe. (Marta)

> There was nothing there. The boundaries of the body *went*, and yet there was an awareness of doing, so there was an awareness of action, but the sense of the body was not. There was this dissolvingness, and this losing of boundaries. And then there was this incredible nothingness and everythingness. Out of this feeling of nothingness and no-self, there was yet all possibility and all potentiality. It was probably for only an instant, but in that instant there was no time and no space. . . . Yet there was somehow an awareness of what was happening, an awareness of something and nothing all at the same time. . . . There was just a more complete sense of really pure awareness, just no sense of self. The completeness of the nothingness was enormous. (Ann)

Transpersonal Experiences of Psychoid Nature

1. Synchronistic Links Between Consciousness and Matter—Acausal connections linking various types of transpersonal experiences to physical events in the phenomenal world, especially the meaningful coincidences of events separated in time and/or space.

Grof recognizes a number of phenomena in this general category that include experiences people report during sex, especially unusual connections between their actions and natural forces. As Grof notes, these are clearly subjective intrapsychic events, but they are also meaningfully connected with specific physical changes in consensus reality (1988, p. 148). Subjects in this study speak of both meaningful and magical synchronicities. A few think, for example, that their lovemaking creates a "bubble" in time.

> We must have made love in our customers' houses hundreds and hundreds of times. We always did it at our own pace, never hurried. . . . It was the right thing to do in that moment, and in that moment, our sex ran the world. Once we started, we were completely safe. It was as though, somehow, through our strong desire to make love and our freedom from embarrassment, we were never caught. With this particular man, our love was so confident and sure it seemed that the universe honored the magic in us . . . but feeling as though the whole world is in me, and I'm the whole world. And it worked. We were never caught, ever. . . . It amazed me that it was only just as we were putting ourselves back together that the customers came back. Never before. (Francine)

Others have a sense of participating in the forces of nature.

> Our caressing and touching was slow and languorous, and we were moving very slowly together. There was a real sense of connectedness to each other. We were looking into each other's eyes a lot, and I started feeling as if our boundaries were melting. . . . We had an orgasm together, which was lovely, really lovely. We were both kind of trembling in that moment. And then the bed started to shake. And then the whole room started to vibrate. So right at the moment that we were having this intense climactic, orgasmic experience, suddenly the whole world was shaking. There was an earthquake! (Roland)

2. Spontaneous Psychoid Events

a. Supernormal Physical Feats—Spectacular physiological changes in the body or seemingly impossible achievements (e.g., stigmata and luminosity of the body of various saints).

See the above description of unusual physical engagement in an unequal fight without physical injury (Esteban's narrative in *1.k. Psychic Phenomena Involving Transcendence of Space*). According to Esteban, he threw himself on the back of a much larger man who was attacking his friend, attempting a headlock. Although Esteban notes above that he suffered no injuries, he was not, in this instance, supplied with superhuman strength:

> It was kind of comical in that [the attacker] just picked me up, plucked me off his neck and threw me against the [brick] wall. That should have hurt me, probably should have

broken some bones. But I immediately got up and lunged at him again. In fact, I lunged at him about four or five times. I was obviously not in my right mind. All I knew was that I had to protect Tom, and yet Tom is bigger than I am. He's got a lot better chance than I do of taking care of himself. (Esteban)

b. Spiritistic Phenomena and Physical Mediumship (None)

c. Recurrent Spontaneous Psychokinesis (Poltergeist) (None)

d. Unidentified Flying Objects (UFO Phenomena) (None)

CONCLUSIONS

Based on these findings, the numerous vague allusions in the literature to nonordinary experiences occurring during sex appear to represent an astonishing array of altered and transpersonal states. Many of these are consonant with the experiences described in the spiritual literatures of various traditions, including the far-travelling and otherwordly episodes of indigenous religions and those associated with various stages of contemplative practice in the esoteric and perennial systems. Although another classification scheme would yield different results, this one allows for the extensive range of phenomena and tends to point to clusterings around experiences of higher-order entities and organisms, connectedness, terrestrial and organic (as opposed to inorganic) processes, and archetypal imagery. Thus, sex appears conducive to an unusually broad range of experiences in which agency, temporality, and space are differenct from the consensus reality.

Probably owing to the recruiting method, the majority of these experiences were positive, so positive, in fact, as to be ecstatic. These results can hardly be viewed independently from their context, even though not all of the sexual relationships were happy ones. Where negative emotions were either present or foreshadowed, they still seemed to be productive of valid realization and insights and thus were positively valued by the subjects. (Destabilization of ego boundaries as a consequence of transpersonal experiences is reported in this sample, but the experiences themselves were still quite positive.)

At this point, it seems clear that naturally occurring sex can be just as effective as other processes in bringing about altered and transpersonal states, including those vaunted by traditions that highly regulate and repress bodily desires. Since these naïve subjects were not deliberately attempting to bring about the events, and since their spiritual beliefs were usually at variance with any expectation of a "religious experience" during sex, they were not especially helpful informants concerning causal factors. Several reasons suggest themselves, however.

To the extent that altered states are associated with changes in brain electrochemistry, they can be generated by many factors, such as lack of nourishment or sleep, sensory deprivation or overload, repetitive sounds or motions, drugs, contemplation, etc. Sex often involves a number of these—especially repetitive motion, sensory overload, and a concentrated focus similar to meditation—not to mention the

changes in body and brain chemistries as hormones are released into the bloodstream. Of course, some individuals are more inclined to be somatically attuned or swept into states of absorption. Other factors suggest that relaxation, letting go of all physical effort, and becoming highly concentrated in the present contribute as well. (A full treatment of these factors is outside the scope of this paper.)

The fact that sex can take people to the same realms as trance, meditation, drugs, etc. may well support the notion that the phenomenal worlds of human experience fall into certain universal patterns, as has often been suggested by materialists and transpersonalists alike. No matter what the trigger, there are only so many "destinations." Realizing that sex can transport uninitiated and disbelieving people to so many of these points, though, is powerful, new knowledge that can potentially benefit many. Transpersonal psychologists are well positioned to use such knowledge effectively.

For instance, just making this information public would open a discourse with those who are now shamed and silent. One of the saddest findings has been learning that with rare exceptions, subjects had never told another person—not even their partners—about their experiences prior to the interview for fear of being considered crazy. Just as in the early days of near-death research when people were afraid to tell about what happened to them, they expected ridicule—and often had to struggle alone trying to make sense of events that severely undermined their belief systems. Many also knew their partners were unsympathetic to "spiritual stuff." So it was easier to suffer profound experiences alone than bring them out into the open, effectively creating more distance in the relationship regardless of the positive nature of the experience itself.

Finding a spiritual outlet for discourse was also difficult. As the results indicate, few people's traditions value nonordinary experiences, and many—perhaps most—overtly discourage any thought of the convergence of sex and the sacred. Even for those who left mainstream practices, few found their experiences honored in recognized contemplative traditions and instead have developed their own idiosyncratic, personal practice (as have others, such as near-death experiencers who have had profound spiritual experiences at variance with the dogma of recognized paths). Only a handful of people said they were willing to discuss their sexual experiences in spiritual venues.

Acceptance of this type of embodied spirituality seems rare, despite attempts by some feminists for greater acknowledgment of the body. Sex continues to have a troubled relationship with most spiritual traditions, but as an accessible medium for transpersonal experiences, greater awareness could foster discourse around its potential for transpersonal openings, personal transformation, and spiritual knowing. To the extent that sex is treated as a "lower" form, an unworthy desire, or a hazard to "true" spirituality, its potential will be repressed and its discoverers marginalized. These are not merely issues for some conventions, or for women, but for any approches to spirituality in contemporary culture.

Certainly, sex is not the path for everyone (and thinking that it is, or should be, runs the risk of creating yet another hurdle for performance, however implicit). But it can

be recognized as a powerful method of transpersonal journeying. Knowing that it can lead to the same places and realizations that recognized spiritual paths do can open new areas of exploration. With a map of the territory, those who have been there can come out into the open, enjoying the affirmation of knowing that their experience is neither unique nor shameful and sharing their gifts with the larger community. Others can at least learn that there is a new world out there, a vision of sex that goes way beyond more and better orgasms, whether they wish to attempt to reach it or not. Just knowing how uplifting and inspirational sex can be may be helpful to those who have suffered sexual wounding and abuse in the past, including those who have been spiritually marginalized for their preference in partners. Indeed, the fact that there seems to be no difference between the ability of homo- and heterosexuals to undergo transpersonal experiences during sex could be extremely beneficial, especially for adolescents and others coming to terms with their sexual preference.

The potential for working with such embodied forms of spirituality is great. It sheds light on altered state experiences and triggers. It suggests that the body can be far more incorporated with spiritual practices than has hitherto been explored by most traditions. It can significantly reduce the shame associated with the body, sex, and particular ways of having sex, and certainly it can heal and transform. In short, knowing about transcendent sex can open new horizons in everyday living and loving.

NOTES

[1] No slight is intended here concerning same-sex unions, as will be clear below. The above statement merely reflects the vast majority of the historical literature.

[2] Sex and spirituality seemed more conjoined in ancient times. From what little is known of true indigenous cultures, distinctions were not originally made between sex and spirituality. In the established global religions today—Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism—esoteric and mainstream conventions may either embrace or reject sex as conductive to spirituality, *though it appears that the vast majority of forms deny the role of the body to some extent.* Virtually all of them regulate sexual expression, even when it is considered a spiritual path, such as in Judaism and Vajrayana Buddhism. The history of sex and spirituality is beyond the scope of this article; for a brief overview, see Wade (2000).

[3] *Preliminary findings on the transformative powers* of these experiences have been reported in Wade (1998, 2000).

[4] Slightly fuller records have been published previously (Wade, 1998, 2000), and complete ones will be forthcoming.

[5] Category titles and descriptions derive, as noted, from Grof (1988, pp. 42-157), though most are paraphrased, since this version of Grof represents long prose descriptions of his more concise 1975 version. Grof has expanded his cartography over the years, and continues to do so. Where the 1988 and 1975 versions still coincided closely, paraphrasing here is closer to his 1975 schema, owing to its conciseness.

[6] Incidentally, out of body experiences in this sample do not include the dissociations of sexually abused individuals; in fact, although the sample includes people who have been abused, they not only reported being present in their bodies during the events, but to have been healed to some degree or another by their embodied yet transcendent sexual encounters.

[7] Grof's outline format in terms of hierarchical organization of numbered and lettered categories is not consistent; nevertheless, this paper conforms to his system for consistency and ease of cross-referencing.

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The Author

Jenny Wade, Ph.D., is a researcher, writer, consultant, and graduate school teacher specializing in consciousness studies, especially with regard to human development. She is presently senior consultant for Nova Consulting, an organization development firm maximizing individual and organization potential using integral approaches, and she also directs the joint doctoral program offered through the Standing Conference on Educational Research and St. Martin's College of the University of Lancaster. Previously, she chaired the doctoral program at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology. She is the author of* Changes of Mind: A Holonomic Theory of the Evolution of Consciousness. *Her research interests include prenatal and near-death memories, as well as other evidence for consciousness independent of known cellular processes; organizational applications of developmental theory; and nonordinary states of various kinds.

CHAPTER 2

EXAMPLES OF EXCEPTIONAL CHANNELING

Hastings, Arthur. (1991). With the tongues of men and angels: A study of channeling (pp. 11-25). Fort Worth, Texas: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

We will begin by looking at several contemporary cases with exceptional features. In some of these cases, the material is exceptional in quality or content. In others, the skills involved go well beyond the talents of the individual doing the channeling (Hastings, 1988). These cases will illustrate some of the ways in which channeling has been used and the level of messages that are possible.

TECHNIQUES

First, we will review some of the processes through which this material is actually received. The Ouija Board, now manufactured by Parker Brothers, has been around since the late 1800s. It is a well-known parlor entertainment and is sold only as a game, according to the manufacturer. In 1967, the board actually outsold the game of Monopoly. The participants place their hands on a sliding pointer which, apparently by itself, moves to letters and numbers on the board to spell out messages. The actual movement of the pointer comes from subconscious movements of the operators' hands, but the question is where the messages come from. Often they claim to come from spirits.

Messages may also come through automatic writing or, in modern times, typing or computer word processing. The individual experiences a slight dissociation, and the message is written or typed without conscious volition.

Another mode of the channeling process could be called an inner voice. Messages, teaching, poetry, information, profound (or trivial) thoughts are spoken in a mental voice.

While in a light trance, the individual may feel inspired by another presence and speak words that come spontaneously. The early Christians called this prophecy, a gift of the Holy Spirit. As the channel moves into a deeper trance, similar to hypnosis, the individual's personality moves aside and another begins to appear until the other is predominant. This is similar to possession states found in tribal societies and to divination and oracular ceremonies in which a deity is presumed to possess the speaker.

HEALTH DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

We will now turn to abilities and skills that have manifested in a channeling mode, beginning with advice on health. The most famous psychic in America is probably Edgar Cayce, who was born in 1877 and died in 1943 (H. L. Cayce, 1964; Sugrue, 1945). He is best known for his clairvoyant readings on health. During his life, he gave about sixteen thousand readings for individuals, speaking while his conscious mind was in a trance state. Most of these readings were about health problems, diagnosing the person's physical state and giving instructions for treatments (E. Cayce, 1970). Cayce would be told the name of the individual, and he would describe what the individual's health conditions were. This might include heart and circulation problems, nerve disorders, organ malfunctions, spinal misalignments (in the language of chiropractic), and nutritional needs. Cayce often referred to stress, exhaustion, overexertion, poor mental attitude, and the individual's spiritual state, and so has been referred to as holistic. After his diagnosis, he would give recommendations for treatment. These were generally oriented toward natural remedies such as folk medicine, over-the-counter remedies, herbal preparations, formulas for colds and eye disorders, and castor oil packs for skin and circulation problems. He would also recommend exercise, diet, and attitude change. We should note that he did not hesitate to recommend surgery in certain cases, including one recommendation for himself.



Edgar Cayce, America's most famous psychic, channeled health readings in a hypnotic trance.

The diagnosis and treatment were remarkable in that Cayce performed them at a distance. Sometimes the patients were in the room or the same house; usually, however, they were miles away, often thousands of miles. According to records, many of the diagnoses were confirmed, either by physicians or the individuals involved, and the remedies were reported to be effective, including some in which medical treatment up to that time had not been successful. Some recent clinical work has attempted to confirm several of Cayce's remedies, with some success (McGarey, 1970, 1983). A recent experimental study suggests that Cayce's often-prescribed remedy of castor oil packs may have value in stimulating the immune system (Grady, 1988). Unfortunately, there were no objective investigations of his work; current study remains based on case transcripts and correspondence kept at the time. A study of 150 cases, selected randomly from the files, found that correspondence from patients and physicians reported good results in 43 percent of the cases and negative results in 7 percent. For the remainder, there was no follow-up data (E. E. Cayce and H. L. Cayce, 1971). As the authors point out, however, some of the subjects of the readings were present, and one cannot exclude the role of unconscious perception of some symptoms.

Edgar Cayce was referred to by his own entranced self as a channel for higher consciousness. He said that the information was received by his subconscious mind from the subconscious minds of other people or from the Akashic Records. (In occult terminology, the impressions of all actions and events on the skein of space-time are called the Akashic Records.)

Occasionally, an entity spoke through Cayce—the Archangel Michael, an angel named Halaliel, and some spirits of the deceased. However, Cayce consistently chose to use his own mind for the channeling state, rather than allow other entities to speak. He said it was his own subconscious that did the speaking.

Other channels have given health diagnoses. Mrs. Eileen J. Garrett's guide Abdul Latif claimed to be the spirit of a twelfth-century Arab physician and often would diagnose physical and mental illness. In contemporary times, neurosurgeon C. Norman Shealey has called upon intuitive diagnosticians, including channels, for information on physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of illness (Shealy and Myss, 1988). The best ones, he says, are more than 90 percent correct, even at a distance. I asked Shealey if there was a difference in accuracy between a channeled diagnosis and one that was simply psychic, without an outside entity. Shealey said that the accuracy depends on the individual, not the method used.

In recent years there has been much discussion of psychic surgeons. The best known of these are located in the Philippines and Brazil. These individuals claim to be possessed by spirits of doctors and carry out procedures in which they seem to make incisions in a patient's body with their bare hands, producing blood and tissue, or they perform minor operations

without usual medical procedures. Careful observation of these practices has found them to be based on sleight of hand, with no paranormal aspects (Randi, 1982).

LITERARY CREATION

The channeling mode stands out as a source of creative literature. The British poet and artist William Blake was highly responsive to what he termed spiritual perception. His major prophetic work, a long poem titled *Jerusalem,* apparently came to him entirely through the dictation of an inner voice. He said he had written "from immediate Dictation, twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time, without Premeditation & even against my Will; the time it has taken in writing was thus render'd Non Existent, & an immense Poem Exists which seems to be the Labour of a long Life, all produc'd without Labour or Study" (Wilson, 1971, p. 78). The authors of it, he said, were in eternity. It was as though the material had been prepared somewhere else and was being read off to Blake, a characteristic that has been reported by most channels who are given written compositions.

At the beginning of his poem *Milton,* Blake deliberately cultivated inspiration from the Daughters of Beulah, muses on the third plane, for his writing. "Come into my hand," he wrote, "By your mild power descending down the Nerves of my right arm From out the Portals of my brain, where by your ministry The Great Eternal Humanity Divine planted his Paradise" (p. 78).

Other authors have incorporated material from channeling into their writing. William Butler Yeats (1938) based his mystic work, *A Vision,* on channeled messages from his wife, who was a medium. James Merrill (1982), a contemporary American poet, has used messages channeled through a Ouija Board as an integral part of his works, including the *Book of Ephraim* and *Mirabell's Books of Number.* His writings have received a Bollingen Prize and a National Book Award.

The finest literary works produced by channeling came through Mrs. Pearl Curran, a St. Louis, Missouri, housewife (Prince, 1927; Litvag, 1972). She and some friends were experimenting with a Ouija Board in 1913, and a spirit came through claiming to be Patience Worth, an Englishwoman of the seventeenth century.

Soon Mrs. Curran found the words coming directly into her mind, rather than being spelled out on the board. Over the next twenty years, Patience (as she came to be known) dictated award-winning poems, short stories, and novels that were well reviewed. Her poetry was ranked with that of Amy Lowell, Edgar Lee Masters, and others who are still widely known today, though Patience is largely forgotten. The poetry was blank verse, generally romantic, and would not be in style today. But there are still some nice pieces. Patience usually composed spontaneously, being given a topic by one of the people in the room and beginning dictation within a few



Pearl Curran of St. Louis received messages from the spirit of Patience Worth who dictated novels, stories, poems, and plays.

seconds. Here are two examples, the second one regarding people who considered her not to be real.

ON FEAR

The shadow of valor,
The sheath of every sword.
And yet he who fears may plunge
Him headlong to the fray
If he but love.
He who fears
Must love over his fearing,
For love be the sun
That dispels that shadow.

(Worth, January 22, 1925, p. 1913)

PATIENCE WORTH

A phantom? Weel enough,
Prove thyself to me!
I say, behold, here I be.
Buskins, kirtle, cap and pettyskirts,
And much tongue!
Weel, what hast thou to prove thee?

(Braude, 1980, p. 159)

Once she was asked for a poem for children to say at night, one more cheerful than "Now I lay me down to sleep," with its images of falling and dying. She took a month to consider this, then composed the following.

A CHILD'S PRAYER

I, Thy child forever, play
About Thy knees at close of day.
Within Thy arms I now shall creep
And learn Thy wisdom while I sleep.

Amen.

(Worth, July 31, 1919, p. 1913)

Mrs. Curran wrote impressive novels and plays from dictation by Patience Worth. *The Sorry Tale*, published in 1916, was a 325,000-word epic story set in the time of Christ and was favorably reviewed by *The New York Times*. The novel *Telka*, a medieval idyll, was a 60,000-word play written in archaic dialect, with 90 percent of the words said to have Anglo-Saxon roots. This is a remarkable feat because the words in the works of Shakespeare are only 59 percent Anglo-Saxon in origin, and the King James Bible is 77 percent Anglo-Saxon in origin. Knowing which words have Anglo-Saxon roots is a scholarly task, yet Patience did it without research, at least on this side. Not only that, most of the prose of *Telka* is in iambic pentameter verse (like the plays of Shakespeare). A third novel was *Hope Trueblood*, a novel about Victorian England, written, the dust jacket noted, "by a Pre-Victorian writer." The reviews in Great Britain were favorable; most of the reviewers assumed the book was written by an English author rather than a spirit on the other side of the Atlantic. Patience wrote in a dialect that was both archaic and peculiar. Some of her obscure seventeenth-century words were identified by scholars only after research.

Patience carried on lively conversations with the Currans and their friends. She had a sharp tongue and did not hesitate to put people in their place. Once, when the seance group tried to hurry her, she observed, "Beat the hound and lose the hare." Another time, when the company returned from a refreshment break, she commented, "Swilled enough, and still they grunt for more!"

On the theme "Patient God," she said "Ah, God, I have drunk unto the dregs, and flung the cup at Thee! The dust of crumbled righteousness hath dried and soaked unto itself, e'en the drop I spilled to Bacchus, whilst Thou, all-patient, sendest purple vintage for a later harvest" (Slightly edited, from Worth, February 8, 1914, p. 62). When the group discussed this, Patience said, "Tish, tish, Ye driveleth!"

In these examples of written composition, there was usually nonstop dictation without any obvious composition process. Patience could also dictate chapters for each of two or three on-going novels plus poems and

table talk in the same evening. There were rarely any changes or corrections; the material came through in final form. The dictation was notable for its rapidity. In one evening session, Patience dictated 5,000 words for *The Sorry Tale*. (Another example of this process is the English automatic writer Geraldine Cummins, who could write 2000 words in an hour and a half.) The Patience Worth writing was of good quality. However, as is true for ordinary writing, not all channeled works meet the standard of a William Blake. I have read many poems, parables, and essays that appeared to be expressive of feelings and ideas relevant to the channel, but which either did not have the universal qualities that we expect of literature or whose composition was simply deficient.

MATHEMATICS: SRINIVASA RAMANUJAN

One of the major contributors to modern number theory in mathematics received formulas through a channeling process. Srinivasa Ramanujan (1887–1920) was a mathematical genius (Harman and Rheingold, 1984).

He grew up in a small village in India, poor and uneducated. At the age of sixteen, given an out-of-date mathematics book, he learned all of the theorems, then went forward on his own. Eventually, he sent some of his work to mathematicians in England and was recognized as an outstanding mathematical theorist.



Srinivasa Ramanujan, a brillant mathematician, received number theorems from Indian goddesses.

Ramanujan said that he received many of his mathematical concepts from the Indian goddess Namagiri, a local deity, and from Saraswati, the deity of language, song, and logic. The formulas given to Ramanujan were acknowledged to be brilliant. When Cambridge mathematician Godfrey Hardy saw Ramanujan's formulas, he said, "They must be true, because if they were not true nobody could have had the imagination to invent them." Interestingly, not all were correct when the proofs were worked out; some were wrong.

Regarding the rest of science, I have reviewed channeled materials in astronomy, physics, evolution, geology, and various technical subjects. There are rare correct predictions, but much discussion of scientific theories, mostly appearing to be extrapolations of ideas of the time. *Oahspe*, published in 1882, discusses cosmic vortexes, the planets, creation of races, space ships, angels, and other topics. A description of one vortex in the 990-page volume has been taken to describe the Van Allen radiation belt around the earth. Jacob Lorber (1800–1864), a German prophet (Eggenstein, 1973), wrote of what we would call galaxies and supergalaxies, revolving around central suns. He gave the lifespan of elementary particles to be one trillionth of a second, reasonably correct. Andrew Jackson Davis (1875) predicted in *The Principles of Nature*, first written in March 1846, the discovery of an eighth planet. The eighth planet, Neptune, was discovered in September 1846, but its presence had been hypothesized for several years. Other data about Neptune, such as its satellites, diameter, and composition were off the mark. Davis also described a ninth planet, and Pluto was discovered in 1933. *The Urantia Book* (1955) includes extensive descriptions of the creation of our solar system, evolution of life, human races, social institutions, and history. These are described as if from the vantage point of outside entities helping the Earth to develop. More recently, Andrija Puharich (1974) received messages from the Nine, which included one or two theoretical formulae in physics. However, they do not appear to have scientific meaning. Stuart Edward White (1940) in *The Unobstructed Universe* received reconceptualizations of the principles of the universe such as, "The essence of Time is Receptivity . . . the essence of Space is Conductivity . . . the essence of Motion is Frequency" (p. 107). These appeared to be thought experiments designed to expand the thinking of the recipients. Messages purporting to come telepathically from UFO occupants often have scientific information, but, to my knowledge, none of these have proved to be technically or theoretically useful.

Overall, in the scientific areas, channels have provided very little useful information. The material seems to emerge from the point of progress of science at the time of writing, perhaps with some extrapolation or modification. Creativity in science is more frequently reported to come from hunches, intuitions, and dreams, rather than channeling. If it occurs, it is not publicly discussed, perhaps understandably. It also seems to be the case

that the communicator, whoever it is, must draw on the knowledge of the individual doing the channeling, and most persons channeling now and in the past, including UFO contactees, are not scientifically sophisticated.

MUSIC

A number of respected musical compositions have come through the channeling process. The most famous is Giuseppi Tartini's "Sonata in D for Violin," named "The Devil's Sonata." Tartini dreamed that the Devil was his slave. He gave him the violin, and reported: "How great was my astonishment when I heard him play with consummate skill a sonata of such exquisite beauty as surpassed the boldest flights of my imagination. I felt enraptured, transported, enchanted: my breath was taken away and I awoke. Seizing my violin I tried to retain the sounds I had heard. But it was all in vain. The piece I then composed, 'The Devil's Sonata,' was the best I ever wrote, but how far below the one I had heard in my dream" (Harman and Rheingold, 1984). This is not exactly the same as direct channeling, but seems quite close to the process.

We can now turn to Rosemary Brown, an English psychic, who one day in the 1960s discovered Franz Liszt standing by her piano in spirit form (Brown, 1971, 1974). Since then, Liszt, Chopin, Beethoven, Schumann, and other composers have dictated musical compositions to her which have been put in print by recognized music publishers (Brown, 1977, 1978, 1980). One phonograph album (Brown, 1970) has been recorded. Mrs. Brown has minimal musical training, and the compositions are often dictated an element at a time, which musicians tell me is tedious and difficult. The style and form are very much like those of the composers. As musical pieces, they are short and usually not complex, but some have been judged quite good. Musicologists have studied these pieces, and there is a case to be made that these are genuine transmissions (Parrott, 1978). Such compositions could be written by musicians trained in composition, but they are beyond Mrs. Brown's capability in terms of her experience, training, and knowledge of the technicalities of composition. Why are the composers' spirits doing this? They say that they are trying to show that they still exist and that life continues after death. This case will be discussed more in Chapter 16.

Another example of channeled music is that of contemporary American harpist Joel Andrews, who performs music said to come from Saint Germain, the Elohim, and other advanced masters (Andrews, 1989). When I visited him, Andrews told me that the skill and composition of the music is beyond what he could do himself. He says that he receives the music in four ways: auditorily, he may hear chords or notes; visually, he may find his eyes focusing on particular strings; kinesthetically, his hands may automatically move toward certain strings; and verbally, he may hear words telling him the key signature or other information.

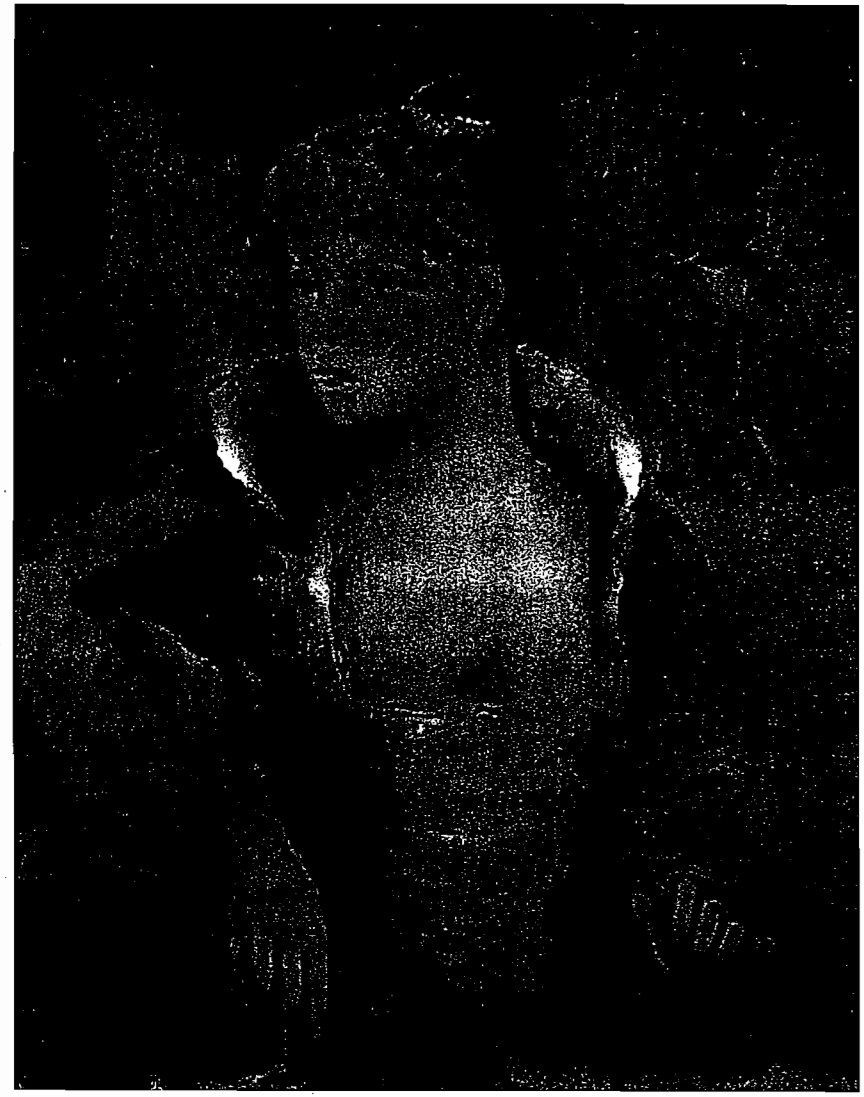
There have been several cases of musical mediums who played improvised piano music, presumably under the control of spirits who included Liszt, Thalberg, and Chopin. These are described in the *Encyclopædia of Psychic Science*, edited by Fodor (1966), and the similar encyclopedia by Leslie Shepherd (1984). Listeners who had actually heard some of the performers while living were impressed with the performances.

ART

Turning to painting, William Blake said that he drew upon his spiritual vision to see angels and spirits, and his notebooks are filled with heads and figures of these visions. To a critic who said that these came from his own mind, Blake commented, "How very Anxious Reynolds is to Disprove & Contemn [*sic*] Spiritual Perception!" (Wilson, 1971, p. 79). The contemporary Brazilian medium Luiz Gasparetto channels paintings said to come from deceased artists Degas, Picasso, van Gogh, Monet, Manet, Toulouse-Lautrec, and others (Dubugras, Gasparetto, and Espiritos Diversos, 1979; Gaetani, 1986). Gasparetto goes into a light trance, takes pastels or acrylics, then sketches very rapidly, doing some pictures in three to five minutes, others in an hour. He often does this in a darkened room, sometimes with the paper upside down, sometimes with both hands working on drawings simultaneously, and even with his feet.

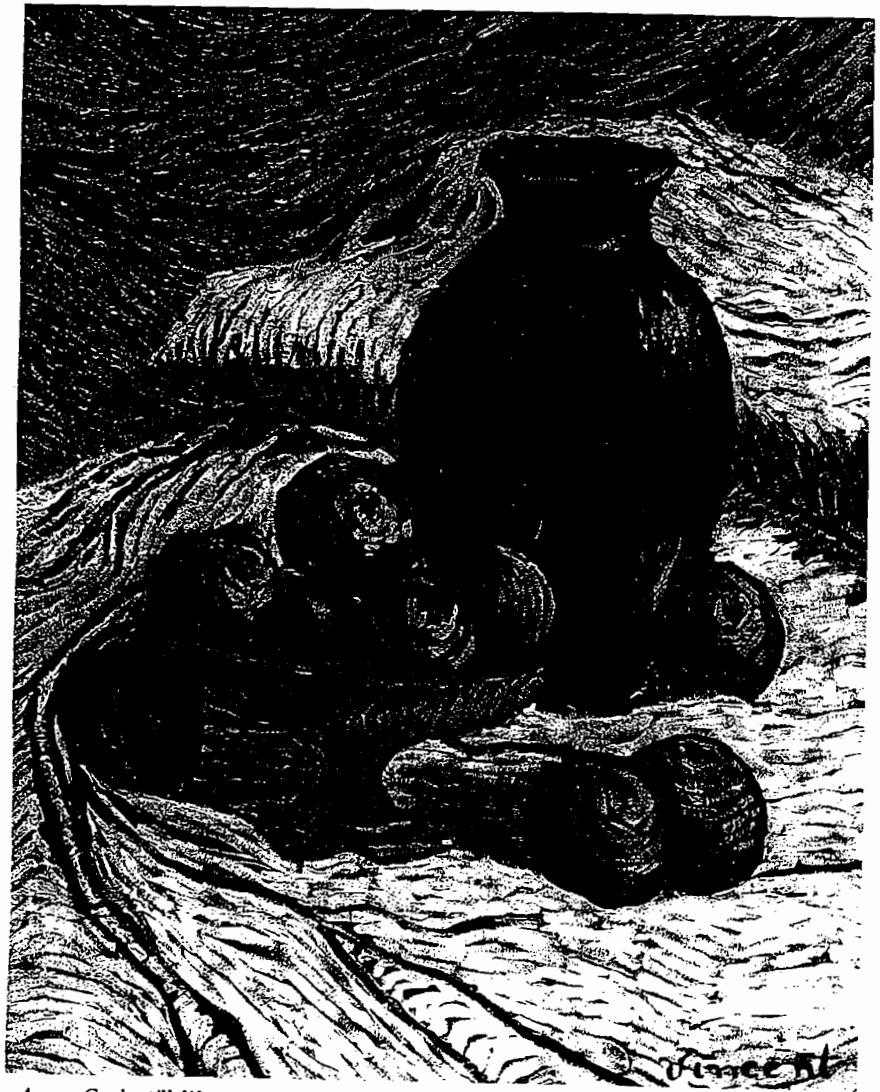


Luiz Gasparetto, Brazilian medium, channels paintings and sketches from well-known, deceased artists.



A Degas painting channeled by Gasparetto.

The drawings certainly reflect the style of the painters, though they have not been judged by experts for the more subtle characteristics of the artists. The ability to paint this rapidly and under difficult conditions is striking. As with Mrs. Brown's music, the painters say that through Gasparetto, their intent is to prove that there is survival of death.



A van Gogh still life transmitted through Gasparetto.

There have been other mediums who have produced paintings and drawings credited to spirits. As with Gasparetto, these were often produced very rapidly, in darkness, sometimes with both hands, and so on. (See Fodor, 1966, and Shepherd, 1984, for examples.)

RELIGION AND PSYCHOLOGY

Many messages from the channeling process can be categorized as spiritual teachings. Generic New Age platitudes are frequent, but a few communications are quite sophisticated systems of psychological or spiritual development. There is ample precedent for channeled religious teaching, since this process of receiving information and teaching from sources outside the self is a form of revelation found in many traditions.

An example of a current channeled spiritual teaching is *A Course in Miracles* (1985a, 1985b, 1985c). The material was dictated by an inner voice to Dr. Helen Schucman, an academic psychologist. The speaker eventually identified himself as Jesus, much to the embarrassment of the recipient, who considered herself to be an atheistic Jew. The dictation could stop in midsentence and begin at the same point days or weeks later. The Course has a complex, interlocking structure that leads one to believe that it was composed with the entire scheme in mind. It is sophisticated psychologically and is a system of concepts and practices that are intended to transform perception and personality. Since its publication in 1975, 700,000 copies have been published. Interestingly, like some of the writing by Patience Worth, many pages of the prose are in subtle iambic pentameter, as though whoever wrote it did not have enough to do, so they put it into verse also.

The material is in three volumes, a text, a set of lessons, and a manual for teachers. The text deals with salvation, guilt, love, fear, judgment, atonement, and other elements of spiritual life, usually with a psychological flavor. Here is a sample on "change."

> Many stand guard over their ideas because they want to protect their thought systems as they are, and learning means change. Change is always fearful to the separated, because they cannot conceive of it as a move toward healing the separation. They always perceive it as a move toward further separation, because the separation was their first experience of change. You believe that if you allow no change to enter into your ego you will find peace (1985a, p. 45).

An excerpt from lesson 188, "The Peace of God is Shining in Me Now," which is a guided meditation, reads: "Why wait for heaven? Those who seek the light are merely covering their eyes. The light is in them now. Enlightenment is but a recognition, not a change at all" (1985b, p. 347). This excerpt is in rough iambic pentameter, though the verses are not tied to the sentences.

The Course is the most systematic spiritual system that has come through a channeling mode. There are many who study its teachings individually or in small groups. A recent survey of readers of *Common Boundary*, a publication oriented toward psychotherapists interested in spirituality, listed the volumes of the Course as the most influential book they have read.

There are other modern channeled teachings that present spiritual and psychological teachings. The material channeled by Jane Roberts from a personality named Seth is well known (Roberts, 1970). It emphasizes that the mind is not limited to the conscious ego. Exercises and techniques are given to expand the consciousness of the self into a larger reality. Another spiritual program was presented by Alice A. Bailey, an Englishwoman who wrote twenty volumes of esoteric material said to be inner dictation from a Tibetan master (A. Bailey, 1922). Both the Seth writings and the Bailey teachings have a following of study groups and institutions that are devoted to the material. Later chapters will examine channeled spiritual and psychological systems more fully.

GARDENING AND COMMUNITY

Messages on both practical and spiritual matters have come through the channeling process to members of a small community at Findhorn, in northern Scotland (Hawken, 1975). In the early 1960s, Peter and Eileen Caddy and Dorothy MacLean began hearing inner guidance coming from the devas, or angels of the forces of nature. These devas gave instructions on gardening and growing plants in the cold, inhospitable subarctic climate. Composting, time of planting, thinning, fertilization, landscaping, and other practices were explained to the group, who knew little about these subjects. Under the instructions of the devas and nature spirits, they learned to be sensitive to the energies of plants, to talk to them, and to develop a relationship to the needs of nature. The astonishing results were crops of fruit and vegetables and beds of flowers and herbs that were large, healthy, and exceptionally productive for the sandy soil and location.

Along with the horticultural advice, there were messages of spiritual inspiration emphasizing the oneness of nature and humanity and the qualities of attunement and alignment with these values (Caddy, 1976). There was more to cultivate than just the plants; the group gradually increased in size, as other seekers joined it. It became a spiritually based community, with the members individually and as a group receiving inner guidance on community organization and decisions. The original founders eventually left, but the community continues, attempting to provide a model for living and working together in harmony with each other and with nature (Findhorn Community, 1976; Popenoe and Popenoe, 1984). Here is a case in which the channeling process has contributed to a social institution, one which considers itself a center of light in the world.

COMMENTS

In these channeling cases, we can observe several characteristics worthy of consideration. First, there are a variety of skills demonstrated that come from outside the conscious mind of the person, including musical composition, health diagnosis, mathematics, painting, literary composition, and religious teaching. These are specific and organized, purposeful, and directed toward an audience. These communications usually come from a personality or source of consciousness. They may come only as an inner voice, or the source may give a name or identification.

Second, the creation of the material is effortless, immediate, and spontaneous, with no apparent conscious construction of the material. The individual appears to be a recipient, rather than a participant, in the production, though the person may be very active in using the information or developing the material. For example, Jane Roberts wrote several books herself expanding on the channeled material from Seth.

A third characteristic is that some of the skills are at the level of exceptional human capabilities, such as complex literary composition, the multiple evening dictations of Patience Worth, and the clairvoyant perception of Cayce. They can be at the level of prodigies or gifted individuals, though the persons channeling do not appear to have these qualities.

Fourth, there is accessing of information and concepts of an ethical and spiritual nature, such as the messages of religious prophets and religious teachings.

Finally, it is notable that the channels themselves in these cases are not abnormal or dysfunctional. They are usually normal, healthy individuals.

Other cases could be cited where this process has provided information, ideas, and guidance. The cases discussed have been contemporary, but historical cases also show a variety of ability, cultural contribution, and social impact. Whatever the origin, it is evident that this process of channeling has the capability of making important contributions to our knowledge and experience.

THE EXPERIENCE OF SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE

Natti Ronel, Ph.D.
Ramat Gan, ISRAEL

ABSTRACT: This paper focuses on spirituality as part of a broad understanding of intelligence and the inquiry into human abilities. Based on a theistic approach, spiritual intelligence is perceived as an ability to understand the world and oneself through God-centeredness and to adapt one's life accordingly. It is a basic ability that shapes and directs all other abilities. Relying on the personal experience of known spiritual authors and lay people, several attributes of spiritual intelligence, such as faith, humility, gratitude, integrative ability, the ability to regulate emotions, morality and the ability for moral conduct, and the ability for forgiveness and love, are portrayed in a non-inclusive description. Spiritual intelligence is considered as developmental in nature, built through the accumulation of separate experiences, as manifestations of spiritual intelligence appear in an individual's life in an increasing manner. An illustrative example of spiritual intelligence in action is provided.

Key words: faith, God-centeredness, human abilities, morality, spiritual intelligence.

Introduction

The study of human potential, abilities, and performance is the center of interest of various disciplines such as religion, philosophy, and sociology. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, modern psychology has attempted to lead this study and provide what is considered a scientific measurement of human intelligence, based on empirical data (Nevo, 1997). However, one may argue that the choice of data and the methods of measurement mostly reflect the researcher's basic assumptions about the nature of human potential and abilities. Hence, the definition of intelligence and the scope and methods of its measurement have varied and multiplied in time.

In his widely published book, *Emotional Intelligence*, Goleman (1997) succeeded in bringing emotional intelligence – a concept previously presented by Salovey and Mayer (1989–90) – into the discourse of lay people, as a means of understanding real-life issues. Similarly, I will attempt to describe the relationship between intelligence, spiritual faith, and a spiritual way of life, as a real-life issue central to people and cultures all over the world.

The term "spirituality" covers a broad spectrum of meanings and many definitions. In the current paper, I have chosen to adhere to a theistic approach to spirituality, based on faith in God. Being aware that different people from different backgrounds and at different times understand God differently, I will

E-Mail: roneln@mail.biu.ac.il

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attempt here to address the common denominator within this variety, that is, the perception of God as sacred, transcendent, supreme, and ultimate. Within this framework, spirituality is understood as the quest for the sacred (Pargament, 2007), a concept that may address some aspects of the non-theistic approach to spirituality, such as Buddhist spirituality, as well (Goleman, 2005). Consequently, I will attempt to apply the notion of intelligence to the discussion of theistic spirituality by re-introducing "spiritual intelligence" (to be defined later) – a term previously described by Emmons (1999, 2000), as well as others (e.g., Halama & Strizenec, 2004; Noble, 2000) - and to analyze its contribution to the understanding of human potential, abilities, and performance.

My aim here is to present spirituality as a basic quality from which certain skills or capacities arise. As already mentioned, my emphasis is theistic, i.e., that I understand spirituality in relation to God, but without adherence to any religious specification of God. In a non-inclusive description I will portray various attributes of spiritual intelligence, such as faith, humility, gratitude, integrative ability, the ability to regulate emotions, morality and the ability for moral conduct, and the ability for forgiveness and love. I will show how these virtues construct distinct, applicable, and adaptive ability. I will then discuss the development of spiritual intelligence, basing my arguments on results from research on the development of domains that are connected to the spiritual such as moral development, faith development, and so forth. Before the conclusion, an example of the experience of spiritual intelligence will be presented.

What is the Nature of Intelligence?

Within psychology, there are several diverse, conflicting ways of understanding intelligence. A prominent controversy refers to the generality of intelligence – does intelligence represent a general, core ability, named *g* (Carroll, 1997), or is it an umbrella term for different, loosely related abilities that construct multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1995)? A second controversy refers to the level on which intelligence is based – is it a representation of a physiological function of the brain neurons that defines one's potential and abilities (Eysenck, 1994), or is it a function of complex cognitive mechanisms not reducible to the realm of biology (Anderson, 1992)? Another debate relates to the domain of intelligence: Is intelligence a mental, purely cognitive function (Cantor & Harlow, 1994; Gardner, 2000; Hunt, 1997), or is it connected to other human domains, such as emotional content (Mayer & Salovey, 1993; 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1989–90)?

The last controversy relevant here is whether values, beliefs, and attitudes play a role in defining and studying intelligence – is intelligence a morally neutral ability for processing information and its context (Gardner, 1999), or is it connected to personal virtues and moral conduct (Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1994; Sternberg & Kaufman, 1998)?

Apart from these controversies, there are also commonly held views about intelligence (Nevo, 1997; Sternberg & Kaufman, 1998); namely, that intelligence is related to a basic potential ability or abilities and to performance, and that it is connected to the acquisition and processing of knowledge. This basic ability or abilities guide people in adapting to and understanding the world.

The Study of Spiritual Intelligence

Previous Studies

Gardner (e.g., 1995) established the concept of multiple intelligences that represent distinctively different human abilities. Emmons' work (1999) took it further, to include the spiritual as a distinct intelligence. According to Emmons (2000), specific abilities and competencies construct spiritual intelligence and may guide adaptive problem solving. He offered five characteristics that may illustrate spiritual intelligence: (a) an ability for transcendence; (b) an aptitude for reaching spiritual states of consciousness; (c) penetration of the sacred into everyday performance; (d) service of the spiritual as a resource for problem solving; and (e) the capacity to be virtuous, internally and in behavior. In a qualitative study of the spirituality of nine adults, Noble (2000) confirms these five characteristics, but adds two more: (a) "the conscious recognition that physical reality is embedded within a larger, multidimensional reality with which we interact" (Noble, 2000, p. 3); and (b) the search for psychological health of oneself as well as of others.[1]

Responding to Emmons (2000), Mayer (2000) questions whether one might speak of spiritual intelligence or consciousness, while Gardner (2000) opposes the inclusion of the spiritual as an intelligence, pointing to the need to differentiate between intelligence as ability and its use in various domains, including the spiritual. At that time, Gardner included the spiritual function within a distinct existential intelligence, although he later admitted that the criteria for separate intelligences are judgmental rather than an algorithmic conclusion (Gardner, 2003). On the other hand, Halama and Strizenec (2004) argue that the spiritual and existential are separate intelligences, although they may overlap. Kwilecki (2000) agrees with Emmons that spirituality may represent a distinct mode of adaptation and claims that spirituality represents a different-than-secular understanding of values and aims in life.

Although spiritual intelligence is a relatively new concept, different authors view it entirely differently. Zohar & Marshall (2001), for example, reduce Gardner's multiple intelligences to represent three basic intelligences: intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. The spiritual is the core intelligence that describes the ability to solve problems that relate to values, vision, and meaning. According to these authors, creativity is a major aspect of spiritual intelligence, and spiritual processes are manifested in physiological ones. Halama and Strizenec (2004) review other diverse comments and views about spiritual intelligence. For example, Sinetar (2000), cited in Halama & Strizenec

(2004), understands spiritual intelligence as inspired thinking within the general context of creative talent. MacHovec (2002), cited in Halama & Strizenec (2004), emphasizes the broad cross-cultural context of spiritual intelligence and considers it as a general sign of personality, while Bowling (1999), in Halama & Strizenec (2004), defines spiritual intelligence as knowledge of the sacred. Vaughan (2002), however, argues that spiritual knowledge must be expressed in the world through wisdom, compassion, and action: "Integrating spiritual intelligence means living in accordance with one's core beliefs" (p. 31). On the same line, Kass and Lenox (2005) conclude that when individuals practice life as an agent for spiritual growth they achieve their full choice of human potential. The centrality of spiritual intelligence to individuals' lives is also expressed in the conception of Rogers and Dantley (2001), who view spiritual intelligence as the root of thinking, which precedes any accepted sets, structures, or categories of thinking. Wolman (2001) continues this notion, while emphasizing the manifestations of spirituality and spiritual intelligence in everyday activities and relationships. This perspective of spiritual intelligence as a lived experience is one that frames this article.

Approach of this Inquiry

Since its early days (e.g., James, 1984), the psychological study of both religion and spirituality has presented knowledge acquired through personal experience (Richards & Bergin, 1997; Slife, Hope, & Nebeker, 1999). Accordingly, this inquiry into spiritual intelligence is based mainly on different sources of experiential knowledge (Borkman, 1990), that is, knowledge acquired through personal experience of theistic spirituality. Different religions and spiritual traditions and different people understand the term "theistic spirituality," as well as the image of God, differently. Here, however, I attempt to avoid any theological discussion or metaphysical disagreement, and to target common meanings based on the diverse personal experiences of people who follow a spiritual way of life. The focus of my discussion is subjective personal experience, based on subjective personal definition and narrative. Consequently, while they are diverse, all the sources describe personal experiences. The first source is the personal accounts of famous spiritual leaders such as Gandhi (Settel, 1995), Julian of Norwich (1997), St. Ignatius (Puhl, 1951), John of the Cross (1991), St. Augustine (2004), and others. I attempted here to follow what I perceive as the common essence of these influential thinkers, i.e., the central role of the spirit in most if not any human experience. Therefore, their writing is reflected throughout the entire text. The second source is the teachings of a widely known contemporary spiritual master from Israel – Shlomo Kalo[2] (see, e.g., Kalo, 2005). Finally, I learned from the real-life experience of many individuals whose struggle for spirituality I have witnessed following 15 years of studying followers of different 12-step programs (Ronel & Humphreys, 1999–2000; Ronel & Libman, 2001), running ongoing experiential courses on professional implementation of the 12-step program, as well as working as a therapist in public and private settings (e.g., Ronel, 2008; Ronel & Claridge,

1999). The 12-step ideology stresses the personal understanding and experience of theistic spirituality, which is also expressed here.

Spiritual Intelligence in Practice

As already established, there are many different definitions of spirituality and how it is represented in one's life (Emmons, 1999; Richards & Bergin, 1997; Noble, 2000). From a theistic perspective, however, according to Kalo: "A spiritual purpose is – to expose spiritual thinking, spiritual feeling, spiritual will; to become entirely liberated from the secular, that is ….to be for God and for God only" (1993, p. 29). Accordingly, the spiritual action "is but the purification of your mind and the achievement of self-mastery on the way of awakening to see and to know yourself as an inseparable part of The Eternal. And this is gained by devotion to God and confidence in Him" (Kalo, 1999a, p. 80).

According to Kurtz & Ketcham (1992), "spirituality is, above all, a way of life" (p. 68). Theistic spirituality is a basic intention directed towards God and consists of an inner struggle (Ronel, 2000). Following Kalo's recurring theme (e.g., 1991), this struggle is characterized by an endeavor to purify one's mind. This view of spirituality acknowledges that there is a "dark side of the soul" and a conflict between the ego and the yearning for God (Kurtz, 1999). Human spiritual development is therefore a confrontation with one's "dark side" and an immense struggle to purify oneself from the other side, based on free will. In Kalo's (1999a) words, "One of the most important, independent spiritual acts that a sincere spiritual person should at all times, always, assiduously perform and never abandon in any circumstances, is the removal of non-spiritual elements from oneself, that is, to constantly and uncompromisingly depart from anything that has the odor of the ego" (p. 140). This view is also mirrored in Alcoholics Anonymous' 12-step approach, in which alcoholism is perceived as rooted in self-centeredness and recovery is attained while struggling for a higher power according to one's understanding of this power (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976; Kurtz, 1999; Miller & Kurtz, 1994). A similar line of thinking is found in St. Ignatius' spiritual exercises: "We call Spiritual Exercises every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all inordinate attachments, and, after their removal, of seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul" (Puhl, 1951, p. 1).

In the theistic approach, the spiritual struggle is based on spiritual knowledge related to God and the yearning for God. This knowledge leads one beyond the "darkness" of the ego and the everyday routine. Different people, in different circumstances, display different abilities to gain this knowledge. The ability to spiritually know, or the ability to yearn for such knowledge, produces the ability to choose and to adjust one's life accordingly. When the latter is activated, any other abilities of the individual are put in the service of the spiritual, which is the main struggle in life. Step 11 of AA states this clearly: "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1965, p. 96).

What I have discerned here that may define spiritual intelligence is a fundamental and general ability that may present itself in any domain of life. Spiritual intelligence is an experience-based ability to understand the world and ourselves through God-centeredness: an ability to long for, to realize and to know God, to recognize and to choose the way towards God in all circumstances, as well as to detect self-centeredness and the manifestations of the ego in various situations, and to adapt the life accordingly.

From this proposed definition of spiritual intelligence, it can be inferred that the higher a person's ability to perceive and understand through God-centeredness, the less he or she is influenced by self-centeredness and ego. As Miller (2005) stated, ''there is a higher standard, an ideal, an intended nature for human beings that exists apart from context and human thought'' (p. 17). Spiritual intelligence may assist one to see things as they are, free from self-distortions (Vaughan, 2002). The essential similarities among the theistic spiritual teachings of different people at different times and places (see, e.g., Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992) support this claim. The following description of the attributes of spiritual intelligence, based on different spiritual sources, also exemplifies these similarities.

The Nature of Spiritual Intelligence: A theistic perspective

Different people experience multiple ways of realizing and knowing God, as well as various ways of struggling against their self-centeredness. However, the ability to adapt these apparently different ways to the spiritual quest is a fundamental one. ''Spirituality permeates to the very core of our human be-in, affecting the way we perceive the world around us, the way we feel about the world, and the choices we make based on our perceptions and sensations'' (Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992, p. 68). Similarly, Pargament asserts: ''When people sanctify, they look at life through a sacred lens'' (2007, p. 35). The spiritual core ability may present itself in any ability that a person possesses. Spiritual intelligence may be presented within the entire person (Miller & Delaney, 2005), in any human function or domain, whether it is philosophy (e.g., Augustine, 2004), music (e.g., Handel's music), Gandhi's non-violent political struggle (Settle, 1995), or Einstein's thinking: ''every one who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the Universe'' (Einstein, n.d.). It may be presented in any worldly concern, including marital relationships (Mahoney, Pargament, Murray-Swank, & Murray-Swank, 2003). Therefore, spiritual intelligence may be articulated as representing a general factor of intelligence underlying any other factor of intelligence.

Spirituality, as seen in most of its theistic definitions, functions in the world but refers to a transcendence that is beyond the material realm and the identification with our own body (Miller, 1998). The spiritual intention, motivation, and practices that refer to the transcendence may lead to various physiological, bodily processes (Emmons, 2000; Zohar & Marshall, 2001). Goleman (2005), for example, describes a sophisticated study of the brain

activity of a Tibetan-Buddhist monk while meditating, which showed a unique ability to control this activity. The spiritual practice – meditation – led to a unique physiological process. But the spiritual process points far beyond its physiological manifestation and it may be valid also in those cases when there is no unique physiological manifestation of the spiritual. While certain spiritual experiences may cause unique physiological processes, the definition of spiritual intelligence cannot be reduced to ''nothing but'' biological processes.

As its basic conception clarifies, spiritual intelligence, as represented here, is part of a broad perception of intelligence, which includes domains other than the cognitive one alone. I am suggesting that spiritual intelligence represents a fundamental domain that underlies all other domains of human function. Thus understood, spiritual intelligence is a core ability connected to and manifested in values, motivation, intentions, emotions, and personality structure.

The Appearance of Spiritual Intelligence

In the following section, I will attempt to describe some attributes and factors related to spiritual intelligence. This description, which is not comprehensive and still requires further additions and syntheses, represents the ''ought,'' that is, the full potential indicated by the very concept of spiritual intelligence. It is important to remember that spiritual intelligence is also marked by a struggle against ''the dark side of the soul''; hence the following description points to the vision that shapes this struggle.

Theistic spiritual intelligence, as a core ability, is based on the recognition of God and faith in God. Faith is an indicative attribute of a theistic perception of God and the consequent world order, a basic factor in spiritual intelligence, which provides the ideology and worldview necessary for its arousal. As such, faith is an act that gives meaning to the spiritual experience (Crapps, 1995), apart from just belonging to an organization that declares its spiritual intention, such as a particular religion. When faith is not yet present, spiritual intelligence may appear as willingness and openness for such faith (Anonymous, 1991; Ronel, 2000). Based on this willingness, people may act as if they have faith; in other words, they may activate their spiritual intelligence even before faith in God awakens within.

According to Kalo (1989b), faith is gained by the grace of God. People become ready for God's grace when they endeavor, honestly and continuously, to live a virtuous life. ''Faith is a result of a pure mind; there is nothing as reliable as exemplary moral behavior to purify the mind'' (Kalo, 1989b, p. 110). Spiritual intelligence directs the choice to struggle for the purification of the mind, with a growing attempt to practice moral conduct. This may strengthen faith, by the grace of God, which, in turn, serves as the basis for growing spiritual intelligence. Such development is well known in the writings of spiritual authors from different backgrounds such as Thomas Kempis (2002), a Christian teacher, and the Ramhal (1978), a Jewish one. In the 12-step program, this process is represented as an initial willingness towards

spirituality that leads to growing faith and deeper willingness (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976; Anonymous, 1991). Several studies show the centrality of faith in God in the worldview transformation of members of 12-step self-help organizations aimed at recovery from different addictions (Humphreys & Kaskutas, 1995; Ronel & Humphreys, 1999–2000; Ronel & Libman, 2003). According to recovering members of these organizations, their ability to maintain recovery is strongly associated with the arousal of their faith in God. In other words, the awakening of spiritual intelligence nourishes their ability to recover.

Spiritual intelligence indicates a faith-based ability to experience the Sacred as the Supreme, an objective and absolute value (Otto, 1967). The recognition of the discrepancy between this holiness and worldly existence stimulates people's ability to humble themselves before God: ''Yielding [to God] is the master virtue, which produces control by the 'new self'. … A Christian view of self-control finds the self to be *inadequate* to win the struggle for virtue on its own'' (Worthington & Berry, 2005, p. 157). According to St. Ignatius (Puhl, 1951), ''every one must keep in mind that in all that concerns the spiritual life his progress will be in proportion to his surrender of self-love and of his own will and interests'' (p. 78). The struggle against selfishness and towards God requires a growing degree of humility (Puhl, 1951). Kalo (2000) tells us, ''The safe way for openness to God, the one and only, is humility'' (p. 64), and ''Humility is the avowed adversary of selfishness. Never is the selfish humble; never is the humble selfish. The way to attain humility is by uprooting selfishness, that is – knowing yourself as you are'' (p. 75). Therefore, humility can be understood as an attribute of spiritual intelligence, an ability shaped by faith that affects a person's intentions and motivation in the world. Humility, as an attribute of spiritual intelligence, directs those who possess it to considerations other than those of personal gain, hedonism, material profit, or self-power (John of the Cross, 1991). It stands in sharp contrast to the modern-day emphasis, at least in Western culture, on individuality and ''the culture of narcissism'' (Lasch, 1979). Hence, spiritual intelligence may take the form of an ability to humbly conform to spiritual principles rather than to the prevailing norms of the modern capitalist culture.

When people seek God and divine-like understanding, they may experience a growing ability to perceive the world and their place within it as meaningful constructs that may assist in their struggle. Everything that happens may be interpreted as a significant experience, essential to progress toward divine knowledge (Kalo, 2000; Otto, 1967). Therefore, spiritual intelligence represents the ability for integrative perception that sees the whole beyond its parts. This ability assists people on their spiritual path. It may help them perceive the world beyond selfish expectations and corresponding complaints (Kalo, 2000). Spiritual intelligence is characterized by the ability to see the best in seemingly painful circumstances, as well as to see the divine beyond the gains of the secular world. Alcoholics Anonymous and the 12-step self-help groups' daily practices of gratitude attempt to direct participants toward such a perception (Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992). In a phenomenological study of Narcotics

Anonymous members in Israel, gratitude was found to be a leading theme among many, to the point of even being grateful to their addiction and its consequent suffering, since they came to perceive it as a milestone in their spiritual progress (Ronel, 1993). The Hassidic story of Rabbi Zusia illustrates this view. Though he was known to have a troubled life, when asked how to follow the Biblical guidance to exalt one's own troubles in the world, he answered, "You must ask another person and not one like myself, whom evil has never caught" (Buber, 1979, p. 222).

With such a view, spiritual intelligence becomes an ability to regulate emotions. Usually, this ability is attributed to emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). However, when spiritual intelligence awakens as a general factor underlying other abilities, it also guides emotional intelligence. Spiritually based functions accelerate the ability for emotional regulation (Geula, 2004). Alphonse Ratisbonne (Carmelle, 1984), a former Jew who became a Catholic priest after a revelation he experienced in Rome in 1842, described this ability (p. 38): "I shall tell you my secret: I tell everything to the Blessed Virgin, I confide to her my troubles, my sorrows and my anxieties and then I let her do what she wants. How can you expect me to be sad? I know very well that in this way everything will be done according to God's will and therefore, for the best, so I rejoice in advance." Julian of Norwich (1997) followed a similar line: "And the fullness of joy is to behold God in everything that happens" (pp. 67–68). St. Augustine (2004) also provided a similar understanding when he openly described his struggle with lust, the decision to put this battle in God's hands, and the relief he felt afterwards.

Generally, the discussion of the spiritual refers to moral values and behavior. For example, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003), who studied the influence of spirituality on perceptions of unethical business activities among 162 employees, concluded that the degree of individual spirituality influences whether an individual perceives a questionable business practice as ethical or unethical. Rest (1994) introduced four components that pave the way to moral behavior: (a) moral sensitivity, which is the awareness that a certain situation or behavior has a moral value; (b) moral reasoning, which indicates the process of deciding which line of action is more justifiable; (c) moral motivation, which relates to the importance ascribed to moral values in comparison to other values; and (d) moral character, which involves psychological strength that determines the ability to display moral conduct regardless of interfering influences. Since spirituality refers to the value systems of the people involved, when spiritual intelligence is activated in the life of an individual, it may direct this person to fulfill these four components. In such cases, moral sensitivity is experienced as a component of a broader spiritual sensitivity, that is, the ability to distinguish between the spiritual and the secular, and between self-centeredness and God-centeredness (Kalo, 1999a; 2000). The corresponding moral reasoning indicates an ability to morally judge a situation beyond the personal, social, or ideological standpoint of the viewer (Fernhout & Boyd, 1985; Kohlberg, 1975). It is an ethic of supererogation that sees every situation in the eyes of love and

through an integrative and infinite perspective (Kohlberg, 1981). Likewise, when spiritual intelligence is at work, the motivation for moral conduct is experienced as integral to the spiritual quest, and attempting to lead a spiritual life shapes the ability to actually practice moral conduct (Kalo, 1999a). Therefore, although spiritual intelligence is not identical to morality, it serves as a basis for morality and moral decisions (Wolman, 2001).

To sum up, as an ability central to real-life issues, spiritual intelligence is manifest in interconnected attributes: faith, humility, gratitude, integrative ability, ability to regulate emotions, morality and moral conduct. The thread that runs through these attributes is the purification of the mind on the way towards God by detecting and attempting to remove thoughts, emotions, and actions of selfish sources (Kempis, 2002). As Kalo emphasizes (1989a), such purification will enable individuals to reveal their true nature, which lies underneath their selfish motives. As spiritual intelligence grows, this nature reveals itself by the individual's growing ability to love (agape), the loving of God, and the love for fellows (Julian of Norwich, 1997; Kalo, 2001; Sorokin, 1967; Underwood, 2002). ''Love is … your departure from all sensual pleasures for the sake of the object of love… Love is the most sublime, wonderful and pure thing… The one who loves is always happy'' (Kalo, 1989a, pp. 53–55). Spiritual intelligence may direct people towards this kind of love and enable them to choose its path (Welwood, 1985). Following a similar line of reasoning, Brazier (1993) assumes that loving is a basic human need. When the need to love is not fulfilled, people may deteriorate mentally. Consequently, many therapists consider the ability for interpersonal goodness – the wish and willingness for the benefits of others - as one of the most beneficial results of a successful therapy (Nicholas, 1994).

Jaeger (1998) describes her own struggle to put such goodness and love into practice in her life in an extremely unpleasant situation. When her small daughter was kidnapped, she felt an initial rage towards the kidnapper. But soon afterwards, she struggled against this emotion, with the view that such an emotion is destructive and by no means loving. She clearly described her tremendous struggle for self-purification in order to find love within, even love for the kidnapper as a human being. Finally, she reached the point of forgiveness and gained some calmness that stood beyond the real-life pain. Hence, one more attribute of spiritual intelligence can be added: namely, the willingness and ability for unconditional forgiveness (Aponte, 1998; Enright et al., 1994). In this perception, the wrongdoer becomes identical to oneself and therefore deserves forgiveness equal to oneself. Such an approach views anger and resentment as obstacles on one's path to God (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976; Anonymous, 1991). The ability to forgive is the ability to purify oneself from these obstacles, which enables love and getting close to seeing God in every person. As Gandhi asserted, ''Love is the only remedy for hate'' (Settel, 1995, p. 15), and ''The real love is to love them that hate you, to love your neighbor even though you distrust him'' (Settel, 1995, p. 41).

The Development of Spiritual Intelligence

A key issue in understanding spiritual intelligence concerns its awakening and development. More often than not, researchers regard most of its attributes as factors that develop through stages. For example, morality, an important attribute of spiritual intelligence, is usually studied and described as a quality that develops through certain levels and stages (e.g. Gilligan, 1993; Kohlberg, 1975; Rest, 1994). Forgiveness (Enright et al., 1991) and altruistic behavior (Krebs & Van Hesteren, 1994), both of which may stem from spiritual understanding and the ability to function accordingly, are also considered to follow certain stages of development. Even faith, a central attribute of spirituality and spiritual intelligence, is seen as a quality that develops (Fowler, 1981).

Closer examination of the different theories of human development reveals a striking resemblance in the processes that they describe. Considering the development of moral reasoning, for instance, there is a development process that goes from a self-centered view of morality, through social morality, and up to a principled one (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987), which may be developed even further, to the stage of the morality of love (Kohlberg, 1981). The lower stages in themselves are not yet a pure, principled morality, but serve as stages in the progress towards it. Actually, reasoning of the lower stages is not considered true ethical reasoning. When reasoning is of the highest order, it is ethical, whether it is based on the ethic of justice or that of caring and love (Fernhout & Boyd, 1985; Gilligan, 1993; Kohlberg & Ryncarz, 1990; Ronel, 1998). Since reasoning in the lower stages is self-centered or self-social-centered, and not yet other-oriented or God-oriented, it is not yet an attribute of spiritual intelligence as defined here. Only in the highest stage – other-oriented or God-oriented stage – can moral reasoning be considered an attribute of spiritual intelligence. The achievement of the highest stage indicates the existence of the spiritual ability to comprehend and to act accordingly.

The development of other attributes of spiritual intelligence usually follows the same line – from lower stages with selfish motivation, through a socially influenced motivation and up to the pure form of an attribute, whether it is forgiveness, faith, or altruistic behavior (Krebs & Van Hesteren, 1994). Therefore, spiritual intelligence, as understood here, indicates a kind of dichotomous process – it is either awakened or not. The development up to a certain stage is preparatory, although many individuals may never progress further. Beyond that point there is a new cognition that represents a pure attribute, such as moral reasoning, forgiveness, altruism, or faith. Only when these qualities reach that point can they be ascribed to spiritual intelligence.

During different life experiences, people may develop through the preliminary stages, but only at a certain point can they discern an awakened spiritual intelligence. Yet, this is only one part of the picture, since one may question the continuity of spiritual intelligence – is it always there, always awakened? How does its existence relate to the struggle between one's "dark side of the soul" and the yearning for God?

Since I discussed spiritual intelligence as the ability to struggle against human selfishness and towards God, it becomes clear that during that struggle people may adhere to spiritual intelligence in certain moments only. One may not use it all the time, although it still exists potentially. Support for this last claim can be found in some cognitive-developmental theories of moral reasoning. Rest (1986; 1994), for example, notices that the same person, at different times, might exercise different stages of moral reasoning. Hence, he measures moral reasoning as a proportion of principled reasoning (Rest, 1993). The more often one exercises a high stage of moral reasoning, the higher one's stage of moral reasoning is. Similarly, spiritual intelligence is built through the accumulation of separate experiences, that is, individuals increasingly experience an expanded commitment to engage in actual spiritual practices (Wink1 & Dillon, 2002). The more moments in which people identify with God-centered motives (Kalo, 1999a), the more frequently they use spiritual intelligence as their principal intelligence. Therefore, I suggest that "higher" in spiritual intelligence means experiencing it more often.

Spiritual Intelligence in Action

While writing this paper, I came across real-life examples of people who chose to struggle against their self-centeredness as a means in their search for God. During their struggles, the diverse features of spiritual intelligence were revealed. To conclude, I will describe an example of such a struggle that portrays spiritual intelligence in action.

The example is that of a young orthodox Jewish family whose story was publicized several years ago on a highly rated Israeli television program. In the first of two episodes, it became known that these young people had bought a second-hand car with all of their savings (cars are relatively expensive in Israel). Unfortunately, after several months they discovered that it was a stolen car. So they searched for the legitimate owner and, to his astonishment, returned the car to him. They got nothing in return and could not afford to buy another car. A week later, on the same show, it was announced that the Israeli importer of that make of car had decided to give this couple a new car. While I was working on the initial stages of this paper, I decided to investigate this case further, and interviewed the young couple, while having their permission to publish their case (of course their anonymity is preserved, although they were ready to disclose their identity).

The husband described their inner struggle when their insurance agent informed them that the car was suspected as stolen. According to him, "the temptation was great and painful." Friends advised them to destroy the car, which was the only proof of its being stolen, and have the insurance company pay for it. They both felt that doing so was not right and would contradict their faith and way of life. Indeed, when they decided to return it, they felt an immediate relief. However, the police "were not cooperative at all" according to this man, and after several months the owner had still not been found. A new temptation arose: if they waited long enough, the police might return the

car to them, as no one had claimed it. However, the man felt that this was a spiritual experience, not a financial one. Although they were relatively poor and had lost all of their savings, "money was not the issue at all". His decision was: "If the police are corrupt and do not do their job, let's do it ourselves!" After several weeks of independent investigation, they found the legitimate owner of the car and gave it back to him, just before he received his theft insurance payment.

The owner offered to go on a TV show with the story. Initially they refused, with a wish to stay "out of the limelight," but on second thought they accepted his suggestion, "to warn other people against this kind of sophisticated thief." When they were offered a new car, they initially refused it. However, the importer convinced the couple that it was really an inexpensive form of advertising. In the week between the two shows, several people who had watched the first show offered the couple money. They rejected all of it, although they did not know then that they would get a new car. When one woman insisted and sent them some money, they donated it to charity in her name.

Although outside the scope of this article to recount all the details of the couple's experience or the interview conducted, this example serves to illustrate the struggle for practicing faith in everyday matters. Although this young couple was advised to make a distinction between faith, morality and "real life," they choose differently, that is, to manage life according their spiritual understanding and intelligence. Doing so illustrates the role of honesty, modesty, and humbleness as part of their spiritual intelligence, as well as the emotional empowerment that was gained by their faith that assisted them to reject social pressure and to feel confidence and relief.

Conclusion

Spiritual intelligence is a somewhat confusing, contradictory concept (Wolman, 2001). While intelligence refers to human abilities, within the limited human nature, spirituality refers to the infinite that stands beyond the human. Whereas the human ability to adapt to the world usually points to the parts, spirituality indicates the whole, the one. Intelligence lies within the domain of the psyche, while spiritual teaching refers to a different domain, that of the spirit.

I have attempted to resolve these apparent contradictions and to describe the theistic spiritual experience as representing a core ability that directs and influences one's overall life – spiritual intelligence. I see it as a first attempt to introduce spiritual intelligence as a core ability, a *general* factor that penetrates into and guides other abilities. An analysis of the nature of this ability is suggested here, taking into account known controversies about the study of intelligence. In view of these, it is asserted here that the general nature of spiritual intelligence can be manifested in any human realm, whether cognitive, emotional, moral, artistic, creational or other, and hence it differs from other

forms of intelligence that are limited by definition (Gardner, 1995). In addition, unlike the perception of intelligence as a cognitive ability alone (Gardner, 2000), a broader understanding of the concept of intelligence is suggested. As such, spiritual intelligence is more than a cognitive ability to comprehend the spiritual in any given field; rather, it is a distinct ability for spiritual comprehension in general. Such a broad ability cannot be reduced to distinct physiological processes, although certain spiritual practices and abilities can be manifested by exclusive physiological activities (Goleman, 2005).

Spiritual intelligence is, then, a unique ability to understand, feel, evaluate, create, and act beyond self-centered motives and towards a spiritual meaning. As my approach is theistic, spiritual intelligence represents here the ability to recognize theistic meaning in a given situation and to direct one's motivation from a self-centered one to one that represents the spiritual, theistic meaning. Its various attributes, as emphasized earlier, are expressed in any life domain. These include personal theistic faith as a basic motive in life; humility and gratitude as a personal approach; an integrative, spiritual understanding of any reality; the ability to regulate emotions; the ability to morally judge a situation and to act accordingly; and the ability for forgiveness and unselfish love. Increasingly, people may experience these and similar attributes in their lives. At moments when these attributes become central to the individual, as in the example described above, spiritual intelligence is in action.

The above description of spiritual intelligence is a pragmatic one; it may assist people in self-evaluation of their personal spiritual intelligence (Underwood, 2002) and consequently, since spiritual intelligence is developmental, people may practice its development at any stage. Kalo summarizes this process: ''to persevere on self-correction and not to let loose, free from fear, strong in hope, independent on the result'' (2000, p. 110). First, people may evaluate the attributes of spiritual intelligence that have to be strengthened in their lives. Subsequently, based on the perception of the developmental nature of spiritual intelligence, people may practice an increased proportion of spiritual intelligence in their lives, thus potentially increasing their spiritual intelligence. It is assumed here, following the experience gained in 12-Step interventions, whether in self-help or by professionals (Rehm, 1993; Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992; Ronel & Claridge, 1999), that the deliberate intensified practice of those attributes that direct one from self-centeredness and toward God-centeredness or other-centeredness can bring a personal spiritual transformation. It is also assumed – although further research is needed for confirmation – that an increase in the proportion of several attributes of spiritual intelligence in one's life may increase the proportion of other attributes as well, since the spiritual intelligence that lies beneath these attributes is a general, unified one.

Therapy or counseling may be useful in this developmental process of spiritual intelligence. Based on the concept of spiritual intelligence and the description of the various attributes, counseling may be seen as a process that assists one in recognizing and practicing spiritual intelligence in life. During counseling

people may be encouraged to engage in such a process, based on their willingness and intention. When individuals practice life as an agent for spiritual growth, they may achieve their full choice of human potential (Kass & Lenox, 2005; Pargament, 2007), which is an inspired aim of counseling.

The above conclusions about the possibility of self-evaluation and practice of spiritual intelligence and its development via counseling require further research. Such a study, based on experiential knowledge, could explore a wide range of expressions and additional attributes of spiritual intelligence, as well as subjective factors about its self-assessment and the conditions for its development during counseling.

Another issue yet to be explored is the social aspect of spiritual intelligence. The preliminary discussion of spiritual intelligence here focuses on the individual realm. What impact, if any, has spiritual intelligence on social order, community life, or culture? Kalo (1999b), for example, describes the horror of society and culture that turn their backs on the spiritual quest and that stress self-centeredness as a promising way of life. The culture of self-centeredness may lead to the "commoditization of human relationships," based on a wish for maximal gain and minimal loss. In contrast, the awakening of spiritual intelligence may lead to the humanization of relationships, including those that are initially defined as commercial. It is the awakening of a struggle towards the sanctification of relationships. The resulting social structure and what society should struggle towards are questions that demand further exploration.

Notes

[1] Editor's note: For further inquiry and a more expanded discussion the reader is referred to Noble K.D. (2001). *Riding the windhorse: Spiritual intelligence and the growth of self*. Creskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

[2] "Shlomo Kalo was born in 1928, in Sofia, Bulgaria. When he was 12 years old, he joined an anti-Fascist underground in Bulgaria. Aged 15, under Nazi occupation, he was imprisoned in a concentration camp… Aged 18, he won a prize in a poetry competition and went to Prague, where he studied medicine and worked as a journalist… The sharp turn his life which occurred in the first week of 1969, is reflected, among others, in his writings. More than 60 titles of his were published in Israel, some of which were translated into English, French, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Greek, Malayalam, Bulgarian, Portuguese, Korean and more." (Retrieved on June 14, 2008, from http://www.y-dat.co.il/bio.htm.)

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The Author

Natti Ronel, Ph.D., is Senior Lecturer at the department of Criminology, Bar Ilan University, Israel. He previously held position at Tel Aviv University, School of Social Work where he also served as the Researcher-in-Chief of the Interdisciplinary Center for Children and Youth Studies. A member of the World Society of Victimology, European Society of Criminology, the Israeli Society of Criminology (board member) and the Israeli Council for Criminology. He is a licensed clinical criminologist who holds a private

practice. He also leads continuous training and supervision courses for professionals who work with criminological and victimological populations. His various writings reflect both the clinical experience and the criminological studies. A special focus is on the spiritual aspect of criminology–its values and impact upon individuals and communities: spiritually based intervention and recovery, moral transformation, forgiveness and spiritual intelligence. Married happily with two grown children, he lives in Jaffa – a Jewish–Arabic part of Tel Aviv.

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THE EXPERIENCE OF SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE

Natti Ronel, Ph.D.
Ramat Gan, ISRAEL

ABSTRACT: This paper focuses on spirituality as part of a broad understanding of intelligence and the inquiry into human abilities. Based on a theistic approach, spiritual intelligence is perceived as an ability to understand the world and oneself through God-centeredness and to adapt one's life accordingly. It is a basic ability that shapes and directs all other abilities. Relying on the personal experience of known spiritual authors and lay people, several attributes of spiritual intelligence, such as faith, humility, gratitude, integrative ability, the ability to regulate emotions, morality and the ability for moral conduct, and the ability for forgiveness and love, are portrayed in a non-inclusive description. Spiritual intelligence is considered as developmental in nature, built through the accumulation of separate experiences, as manifestations of spiritual intelligence appear in an individual's life in an increasing manner. An illustrative example of spiritual intelligence in action is provided.

Key words: faith, God-centeredness, human abilities, morality, spiritual intelligence.

Introduction

The study of human potential, abilities, and performance is the center of interest of various disciplines such as religion, philosophy, and sociology. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, modern psychology has attempted to lead this study and provide what is considered a scientific measurement of human intelligence, based on empirical data (Nevo, 1997). However, one may argue that the choice of data and the methods of measurement mostly reflect the researcher's basic assumptions about the nature of human potential and abilities. Hence, the definition of intelligence and the scope and methods of its measurement have varied and multiplied in time.

In his widely published book, *Emotional Intelligence*, Goleman (1997) succeeded in bringing emotional intelligence – a concept previously presented by Salovey and Mayer (1989–90) – into the discourse of lay people, as a means of understanding real-life issues. Similarly, I will attempt to describe the relationship between intelligence, spiritual faith, and a spiritual way of life, as a real-life issue central to people and cultures all over the world.

The term "spirituality" covers a broad spectrum of meanings and many definitions. In the current paper, I have chosen to adhere to a theistic approach to spirituality, based on faith in God. Being aware that different people from different backgrounds and at different times understand God differently, I will

E-Mail: roneln@mail.biu.ac.il

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attempt here to address the common denominator within this variety, that is, the perception of God as sacred, transcendent, supreme, and ultimate. Within this framework, spirituality is understood as the quest for the sacred (Pargament, 2007), a concept that may address some aspects of the non-theistic approach to spirituality, such as Buddhist spirituality, as well (Goleman, 2005). Consequently, I will attempt to apply the notion of intelligence to the discussion of theistic spirituality by re-introducing "spiritual intelligence" (to be defined later) – a term previously described by Emmons (1999, 2000), as well as others (e.g., Halama & Strizenec, 2004; Noble, 2000) - and to analyze its contribution to the understanding of human potential, abilities, and performance.

My aim here is to present spirituality as a basic quality from which certain skills or capacities arise. As already mentioned, my emphasis is theistic, i.e., that I understand spirituality in relation to God, but without adherence to any religious specification of God. In a non-inclusive description I will portray various attributes of spiritual intelligence, such as faith, humility, gratitude, integrative ability, the ability to regulate emotions, morality and the ability for moral conduct, and the ability for forgiveness and love. I will show how these virtues construct distinct, applicable, and adaptive ability. I will then discuss the development of spiritual intelligence, basing my arguments on results from research on the development of domains that are connected to the spiritual such as moral development, faith development, and so forth. Before the conclusion, an example of the experience of spiritual intelligence will be presented.

What is the Nature of Intelligence?

Within psychology, there are several diverse, conflicting ways of understanding intelligence. A prominent controversy refers to the generality of intelligence – does intelligence represent a general, core ability, named *g* (Carroll, 1997), or is it an umbrella term for different, loosely related abilities that construct multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1995)? A second controversy refers to the level on which intelligence is based – is it a representation of a physiological function of the brain neurons that defines one's potential and abilities (Eysenck, 1994), or is it a function of complex cognitive mechanisms not reducible to the realm of biology (Anderson, 1992)? Another debate relates to the domain of intelligence: Is intelligence a mental, purely cognitive function (Cantor & Harlow, 1994; Gardner, 2000; Hunt, 1997), or is it connected to other human domains, such as emotional content (Mayer & Salovey, 1993; 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1989–90)?

The last controversy relevant here is whether values, beliefs, and attitudes play a role in defining and studying intelligence – is intelligence a morally neutral ability for processing information and its context (Gardner, 1999), or is it connected to personal virtues and moral conduct (Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1994; Sternberg & Kaufman, 1998)?

Apart from these controversies, there are also commonly held views about intelligence (Nevo, 1997; Sternberg & Kaufman, 1998); namely, that intelligence is related to a basic potential ability or abilities and to performance, and that it is connected to the acquisition and processing of knowledge. This basic ability or abilities guide people in adapting to and understanding the world.

The Study of Spiritual Intelligence

Previous Studies

Gardner (e.g., 1995) established the concept of multiple intelligences that represent distinctively different human abilities. Emmons' work (1999) took it further, to include the spiritual as a distinct intelligence. According to Emmons (2000), specific abilities and competencies construct spiritual intelligence and may guide adaptive problem solving. He offered five characteristics that may illustrate spiritual intelligence: (a) an ability for transcendence; (b) an aptitude for reaching spiritual states of consciousness; (c) penetration of the sacred into everyday performance; (d) service of the spiritual as a resource for problem solving; and (e) the capacity to be virtuous, internally and in behavior. In a qualitative study of the spirituality of nine adults, Noble (2000) confirms these five characteristics, but adds two more: (a) "the conscious recognition that physical reality is embedded within a larger, multidimensional reality with which we interact" (Noble, 2000, p. 3); and (b) the search for psychological health of oneself as well as of others.[1]

Responding to Emmons (2000), Mayer (2000) questions whether one might speak of spiritual intelligence or consciousness, while Gardner (2000) opposes the inclusion of the spiritual as an intelligence, pointing to the need to differentiate between intelligence as ability and its use in various domains, including the spiritual. At that time, Gardner included the spiritual function within a distinct existential intelligence, although he later admitted that the criteria for separate intelligences are judgmental rather than an algorithmic conclusion (Gardner, 2003). On the other hand, Halama and Strizenec (2004) argue that the spiritual and existential are separate intelligences, although they may overlap. Kwilecki (2000) agrees with Emmons that spirituality may represent a distinct mode of adaptation and claims that spirituality represents a different-than-secular understanding of values and aims in life.

Although spiritual intelligence is a relatively new concept, different authors view it entirely differently. Zohar & Marshall (2001), for example, reduce Gardner's multiple intelligences to represent three basic intelligences: intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. The spiritual is the core intelligence that describes the ability to solve problems that relate to values, vision, and meaning. According to these authors, creativity is a major aspect of spiritual intelligence, and spiritual processes are manifested in physiological ones. Halama and Strizenec (2004) review other diverse comments and views about spiritual intelligence. For example, Sinetar (2000), cited in Halama & Strizenec

(2004), understands spiritual intelligence as inspired thinking within the general context of creative talent. MacHovec (2002), cited in Halama & Strizenec (2004), emphasizes the broad cross-cultural context of spiritual intelligence and considers it as a general sign of personality, while Bowling (1999), in Halama & Strizenec (2004), defines spiritual intelligence as knowledge of the sacred. Vaughan (2002), however, argues that spiritual knowledge must be expressed in the world through wisdom, compassion, and action: "Integrating spiritual intelligence means living in accordance with one's core beliefs" (p. 31). On the same line, Kass and Lenox (2005) conclude that when individuals practice life as an agent for spiritual growth they achieve their full choice of human potential. The centrality of spiritual intelligence to individuals' lives is also expressed in the conception of Rogers and Dantley (2001), who view spiritual intelligence as the root of thinking, which precedes any accepted sets, structures, or categories of thinking. Wolman (2001) continues this notion, while emphasizing the manifestations of spirituality and spiritual intelligence in everyday activities and relationships. This perspective of spiritual intelligence as a lived experience is one that frames this article.

Approach of this Inquiry

Since its early days (e.g., James, 1984), the psychological study of both religion and spirituality has presented knowledge acquired through personal experience (Richards & Bergin, 1997; Slife, Hope, & Nebeker, 1999). Accordingly, this inquiry into spiritual intelligence is based mainly on different sources of experiential knowledge (Borkman, 1990), that is, knowledge acquired through personal experience of theistic spirituality. Different religions and spiritual traditions and different people understand the term "theistic spirituality," as well as the image of God, differently. Here, however, I attempt to avoid any theological discussion or metaphysical disagreement, and to target common meanings based on the diverse personal experiences of people who follow a spiritual way of life. The focus of my discussion is subjective personal experience, based on subjective personal definition and narrative. Consequently, while they are diverse, all the sources describe personal experiences. The first source is the personal accounts of famous spiritual leaders such as Gandhi (Settel, 1995), Julian of Norwich (1997), St. Ignatius (Puhl, 1951), John of the Cross (1991), St. Augustine (2004), and others. I attempted here to follow what I perceive as the common essence of these influential thinkers, i.e., the central role of the spirit in most if not any human experience. Therefore, their writing is reflected throughout the entire text. The second source is the teachings of a widely known contemporary spiritual master from Israel – Shlomo Kalo[2] (see, e.g., Kalo, 2005). Finally, I learned from the real-life experience of many individuals whose struggle for spirituality I have witnessed following 15 years of studying followers of different 12-step programs (Ronel & Humphreys, 1999–2000; Ronel & Libman, 2001), running ongoing experiential courses on professional implementation of the 12-step program, as well as working as a therapist in public and private settings (e.g., Ronel, 2008; Ronel & Claridge,

1999). The 12-step ideology stresses the personal understanding and experience of theistic spirituality, which is also expressed here.

Spiritual Intelligence in Practice

As already established, there are many different definitions of spirituality and how it is represented in one's life (Emmons, 1999; Richards & Bergin, 1997; Noble, 2000). From a theistic perspective, however, according to Kalo: "A spiritual purpose is – to expose spiritual thinking, spiritual feeling, spiritual will; to become entirely liberated from the secular, that is ….to be for God and for God only" (1993, p. 29). Accordingly, the spiritual action "is but the purification of your mind and the achievement of self-mastery on the way of awakening to see and to know yourself as an inseparable part of The Eternal. And this is gained by devotion to God and confidence in Him" (Kalo, 1999a, p. 80).

According to Kurtz & Ketcham (1992), "spirituality is, above all, a way of life" (p. 68). Theistic spirituality is a basic intention directed towards God and consists of an inner struggle (Ronel, 2000). Following Kalo's recurring theme (e.g., 1991), this struggle is characterized by an endeavor to purify one's mind. This view of spirituality acknowledges that there is a "dark side of the soul" and a conflict between the ego and the yearning for God (Kurtz, 1999). Human spiritual development is therefore a confrontation with one's "dark side" and an immense struggle to purify oneself from the other side, based on free will. In Kalo's (1999a) words, "One of the most important, independent spiritual acts that a sincere spiritual person should at all times, always, assiduously perform and never abandon in any circumstances, is the removal of non-spiritual elements from oneself, that is, to constantly and uncompromisingly depart from anything that has the odor of the ego" (p. 140). This view is also mirrored in Alcoholics Anonymous' 12-step approach, in which alcoholism is perceived as rooted in self-centeredness and recovery is attained while struggling for a higher power according to one's understanding of this power (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976; Kurtz, 1999; Miller & Kurtz, 1994). A similar line of thinking is found in St. Ignatius' spiritual exercises: "We call Spiritual Exercises every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all inordinate attachments, and, after their removal, of seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul" (Puhl, 1951, p. 1).

In the theistic approach, the spiritual struggle is based on spiritual knowledge related to God and the yearning for God. This knowledge leads one beyond the "darkness" of the ego and the everyday routine. Different people, in different circumstances, display different abilities to gain this knowledge. The ability to spiritually know, or the ability to yearn for such knowledge, produces the ability to choose and to adjust one's life accordingly. When the latter is activated, any other abilities of the individual are put in the service of the spiritual, which is the main struggle in life. Step 11 of AA states this clearly: "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1965, p. 96).

What I have discerned here that may define spiritual intelligence is a fundamental and general ability that may present itself in any domain of life. Spiritual intelligence is an experience-based ability to understand the world and ourselves through God-centeredness: an ability to long for, to realize and to know God, to recognize and to choose the way towards God in all circumstances, as well as to detect self-centeredness and the manifestations of the ego in various situations, and to adapt the life accordingly.

From this proposed definition of spiritual intelligence, it can be inferred that the higher a person's ability to perceive and understand through God-centeredness, the less he or she is influenced by self-centeredness and ego. As Miller (2005) stated, ''there is a higher standard, an ideal, an intended nature for human beings that exists apart from context and human thought'' (p. 17). Spiritual intelligence may assist one to see things as they are, free from self-distortions (Vaughan, 2002). The essential similarities among the theistic spiritual teachings of different people at different times and places (see, e.g., Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992) support this claim. The following description of the attributes of spiritual intelligence, based on different spiritual sources, also exemplifies these similarities.

The Nature of Spiritual Intelligence: A theistic perspective

Different people experience multiple ways of realizing and knowing God, as well as various ways of struggling against their self-centeredness. However, the ability to adapt these apparently different ways to the spiritual quest is a fundamental one. ''Spirituality permeates to the very core of our human be-in, affecting the way we perceive the world around us, the way we feel about the world, and the choices we make based on our perceptions and sensations'' (Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992, p. 68). Similarly, Pargament asserts: ''When people sanctify, they look at life through a sacred lens'' (2007, p. 35). The spiritual core ability may present itself in any ability that a person possesses. Spiritual intelligence may be presented within the entire person (Miller & Delaney, 2005), in any human function or domain, whether it is philosophy (e.g., Augustine, 2004), music (e.g., Handel's music), Gandhi's non-violent political struggle (Settle, 1995), or Einstein's thinking: ''every one who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the Universe'' (Einstein, n.d.). It may be presented in any worldly concern, including marital relationships (Mahoney, Pargament, Murray-Swank, & Murray-Swank, 2003). Therefore, spiritual intelligence may be articulated as representing a general factor of intelligence underlying any other factor of intelligence.

Spirituality, as seen in most of its theistic definitions, functions in the world but refers to a transcendence that is beyond the material realm and the identification with our own body (Miller, 1998). The spiritual intention, motivation, and practices that refer to the transcendence may lead to various physiological, bodily processes (Emmons, 2000; Zohar & Marshall, 2001). Goleman (2005), for example, describes a sophisticated study of the brain

activity of a Tibetan-Buddhist monk while meditating, which showed a unique ability to control this activity. The spiritual practice – meditation – led to a unique physiological process. But the spiritual process points far beyond its physiological manifestation and it may be valid also in those cases when there is no unique physiological manifestation of the spiritual. While certain spiritual experiences may cause unique physiological processes, the definition of spiritual intelligence cannot be reduced to ''nothing but'' biological processes.

As its basic conception clarifies, spiritual intelligence, as represented here, is part of a broad perception of intelligence, which includes domains other than the cognitive one alone. I am suggesting that spiritual intelligence represents a fundamental domain that underlies all other domains of human function. Thus understood, spiritual intelligence is a core ability connected to and manifested in values, motivation, intentions, emotions, and personality structure.

The Appearance of Spiritual Intelligence

In the following section, I will attempt to describe some attributes and factors related to spiritual intelligence. This description, which is not comprehensive and still requires further additions and syntheses, represents the ''ought,'' that is, the full potential indicated by the very concept of spiritual intelligence. It is important to remember that spiritual intelligence is also marked by a struggle against ''the dark side of the soul''; hence the following description points to the vision that shapes this struggle.

Theistic spiritual intelligence, as a core ability, is based on the recognition of God and faith in God. Faith is an indicative attribute of a theistic perception of God and the consequent world order, a basic factor in spiritual intelligence, which provides the ideology and worldview necessary for its arousal. As such, faith is an act that gives meaning to the spiritual experience (Crapps, 1995), apart from just belonging to an organization that declares its spiritual intention, such as a particular religion. When faith is not yet present, spiritual intelligence may appear as willingness and openness for such faith (Anonymous, 1991; Ronel, 2000). Based on this willingness, people may act as if they have faith; in other words, they may activate their spiritual intelligence even before faith in God awakens within.

According to Kalo (1989b), faith is gained by the grace of God. People become ready for God's grace when they endeavor, honestly and continuously, to live a virtuous life. ''Faith is a result of a pure mind; there is nothing as reliable as exemplary moral behavior to purify the mind'' (Kalo, 1989b, p. 110). Spiritual intelligence directs the choice to struggle for the purification of the mind, with a growing attempt to practice moral conduct. This may strengthen faith, by the grace of God, which, in turn, serves as the basis for growing spiritual intelligence. Such development is well known in the writings of spiritual authors from different backgrounds such as Thomas Kempis (2002), a Christian teacher, and the Ramhal (1978), a Jewish one. In the 12-step program, this process is represented as an initial willingness towards

spirituality that leads to growing faith and deeper willingness (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976; Anonymous, 1991). Several studies show the centrality of faith in God in the worldview transformation of members of 12-step self-help organizations aimed at recovery from different addictions (Humphreys & Kaskutas, 1995; Ronel & Humphreys, 1999–2000; Ronel & Libman, 2003). According to recovering members of these organizations, their ability to maintain recovery is strongly associated with the arousal of their faith in God. In other words, the awakening of spiritual intelligence nourishes their ability to recover.

Spiritual intelligence indicates a faith-based ability to experience the Sacred as the Supreme, an objective and absolute value (Otto, 1967). The recognition of the discrepancy between this holiness and worldly existence stimulates people's ability to humble themselves before God: ''Yielding [to God] is the master virtue, which produces control by the 'new self'. … A Christian view of self-control finds the self to be *inadequate* to win the struggle for virtue on its own'' (Worthington & Berry, 2005, p. 157). According to St. Ignatius (Puhl, 1951), ''every one must keep in mind that in all that concerns the spiritual life his progress will be in proportion to his surrender of self-love and of his own will and interests'' (p. 78). The struggle against selfishness and towards God requires a growing degree of humility (Puhl, 1951). Kalo (2000) tells us, ''The safe way for openness to God, the one and only, is humility'' (p. 64), and ''Humility is the avowed adversary of selfishness. Never is the selfish humble; never is the humble selfish. The way to attain humility is by uprooting selfishness, that is – knowing yourself as you are'' (p. 75). Therefore, humility can be understood as an attribute of spiritual intelligence, an ability shaped by faith that affects a person's intentions and motivation in the world. Humility, as an attribute of spiritual intelligence, directs those who possess it to considerations other than those of personal gain, hedonism, material profit, or self-power (John of the Cross, 1991). It stands in sharp contrast to the modern-day emphasis, at least in Western culture, on individuality and ''the culture of narcissism'' (Lasch, 1979). Hence, spiritual intelligence may take the form of an ability to humbly conform to spiritual principles rather than to the prevailing norms of the modern capitalist culture.

When people seek God and divine-like understanding, they may experience a growing ability to perceive the world and their place within it as meaningful constructs that may assist in their struggle. Everything that happens may be interpreted as a significant experience, essential to progress toward divine knowledge (Kalo, 2000; Otto, 1967). Therefore, spiritual intelligence represents the ability for integrative perception that sees the whole beyond its parts. This ability assists people on their spiritual path. It may help them perceive the world beyond selfish expectations and corresponding complaints (Kalo, 2000). Spiritual intelligence is characterized by the ability to see the best in seemingly painful circumstances, as well as to see the divine beyond the gains of the secular world. Alcoholics Anonymous and the 12-step self-help groups' daily practices of gratitude attempt to direct participants toward such a perception (Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992). In a phenomenological study of Narcotics

Anonymous members in Israel, gratitude was found to be a leading theme among many, to the point of even being grateful to their addiction and its consequent suffering, since they came to perceive it as a milestone in their spiritual progress (Ronel, 1993). The Hassidic story of Rabbi Zusia illustrates this view. Though he was known to have a troubled life, when asked how to follow the Biblical guidance to exalt one's own troubles in the world, he answered, "You must ask another person and not one like myself, whom evil has never caught" (Buber, 1979, p. 222).

With such a view, spiritual intelligence becomes an ability to regulate emotions. Usually, this ability is attributed to emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). However, when spiritual intelligence awakens as a general factor underlying other abilities, it also guides emotional intelligence. Spiritually based functions accelerate the ability for emotional regulation (Geula, 2004). Alphonse Ratisbonne (Carmelle, 1984), a former Jew who became a Catholic priest after a revelation he experienced in Rome in 1842, described this ability (p. 38): "I shall tell you my secret: I tell everything to the Blessed Virgin, I confide to her my troubles, my sorrows and my anxieties and then I let her do what she wants. How can you expect me to be sad? I know very well that in this way everything will be done according to God's will and therefore, for the best, so I rejoice in advance." Julian of Norwich (1997) followed a similar line: "And the fullness of joy is to behold God in everything that happens" (pp. 67–68). St. Augustine (2004) also provided a similar understanding when he openly described his struggle with lust, the decision to put this battle in God's hands, and the relief he felt afterwards.

Generally, the discussion of the spiritual refers to moral values and behavior. For example, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003), who studied the influence of spirituality on perceptions of unethical business activities among 162 employees, concluded that the degree of individual spirituality influences whether an individual perceives a questionable business practice as ethical or unethical. Rest (1994) introduced four components that pave the way to moral behavior: (a) moral sensitivity, which is the awareness that a certain situation or behavior has a moral value; (b) moral reasoning, which indicates the process of deciding which line of action is more justifiable; (c) moral motivation, which relates to the importance ascribed to moral values in comparison to other values; and (d) moral character, which involves psychological strength that determines the ability to display moral conduct regardless of interfering influences. Since spirituality refers to the value systems of the people involved, when spiritual intelligence is activated in the life of an individual, it may direct this person to fulfill these four components. In such cases, moral sensitivity is experienced as a component of a broader spiritual sensitivity, that is, the ability to distinguish between the spiritual and the secular, and between self-centeredness and God-centeredness (Kalo, 1999a; 2000). The corresponding moral reasoning indicates an ability to morally judge a situation beyond the personal, social, or ideological standpoint of the viewer (Fernhout & Boyd, 1985; Kohlberg, 1975). It is an ethic of supererogation that sees every situation in the eyes of love and

through an integrative and infinite perspective (Kohlberg, 1981). Likewise, when spiritual intelligence is at work, the motivation for moral conduct is experienced as integral to the spiritual quest, and attempting to lead a spiritual life shapes the ability to actually practice moral conduct (Kalo, 1999a). Therefore, although spiritual intelligence is not identical to morality, it serves as a basis for morality and moral decisions (Wolman, 2001).

To sum up, as an ability central to real-life issues, spiritual intelligence is manifest in interconnected attributes: faith, humility, gratitude, integrative ability, ability to regulate emotions, morality and moral conduct. The thread that runs through these attributes is the purification of the mind on the way towards God by detecting and attempting to remove thoughts, emotions, and actions of selfish sources (Kempis, 2002). As Kalo emphasizes (1989a), such purification will enable individuals to reveal their true nature, which lies underneath their selfish motives. As spiritual intelligence grows, this nature reveals itself by the individual's growing ability to love (agape), the loving of God, and the love for fellows (Julian of Norwich, 1997; Kalo, 2001; Sorokin, 1967; Underwood, 2002). ''Love is … your departure from all sensual pleasures for the sake of the object of love… Love is the most sublime, wonderful and pure thing… The one who loves is always happy'' (Kalo, 1989a, pp. 53–55). Spiritual intelligence may direct people towards this kind of love and enable them to choose its path (Welwood, 1985). Following a similar line of reasoning, Brazier (1993) assumes that loving is a basic human need. When the need to love is not fulfilled, people may deteriorate mentally. Consequently, many therapists consider the ability for interpersonal goodness – the wish and willingness for the benefits of others - as one of the most beneficial results of a successful therapy (Nicholas, 1994).

Jaeger (1998) describes her own struggle to put such goodness and love into practice in her life in an extremely unpleasant situation. When her small daughter was kidnapped, she felt an initial rage towards the kidnapper. But soon afterwards, she struggled against this emotion, with the view that such an emotion is destructive and by no means loving. She clearly described her tremendous struggle for self-purification in order to find love within, even love for the kidnapper as a human being. Finally, she reached the point of forgiveness and gained some calmness that stood beyond the real-life pain. Hence, one more attribute of spiritual intelligence can be added: namely, the willingness and ability for unconditional forgiveness (Aponte, 1998; Enright et al., 1994). In this perception, the wrongdoer becomes identical to oneself and therefore deserves forgiveness equal to oneself. Such an approach views anger and resentment as obstacles on one's path to God (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976; Anonymous, 1991). The ability to forgive is the ability to purify oneself from these obstacles, which enables love and getting close to seeing God in every person. As Gandhi asserted, ''Love is the only remedy for hate'' (Settel, 1995, p. 15), and ''The real love is to love them that hate you, to love your neighbor even though you distrust him'' (Settel, 1995, p. 41).

The Development of Spiritual Intelligence

A key issue in understanding spiritual intelligence concerns its awakening and development. More often than not, researchers regard most of its attributes as factors that develop through stages. For example, morality, an important attribute of spiritual intelligence, is usually studied and described as a quality that develops through certain levels and stages (e.g. Gilligan, 1993; Kohlberg, 1975; Rest, 1994). Forgiveness (Enright et al., 1991) and altruistic behavior (Krebs & Van Hesteren, 1994), both of which may stem from spiritual understanding and the ability to function accordingly, are also considered to follow certain stages of development. Even faith, a central attribute of spirituality and spiritual intelligence, is seen as a quality that develops (Fowler, 1981).

Closer examination of the different theories of human development reveals a striking resemblance in the processes that they describe. Considering the development of moral reasoning, for instance, there is a development process that goes from a self-centered view of morality, through social morality, and up to a principled one (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987), which may be developed even further, to the stage of the morality of love (Kohlberg, 1981). The lower stages in themselves are not yet a pure, principled morality, but serve as stages in the progress towards it. Actually, reasoning of the lower stages is not considered true ethical reasoning. When reasoning is of the highest order, it is ethical, whether it is based on the ethic of justice or that of caring and love (Fernhout & Boyd, 1985; Gilligan, 1993; Kohlberg & Ryncarz, 1990; Ronel, 1998). Since reasoning in the lower stages is self-centered or self-social-centered, and not yet other-oriented or God-oriented, it is not yet an attribute of spiritual intelligence as defined here. Only in the highest stage – other-oriented or God-oriented stage – can moral reasoning be considered an attribute of spiritual intelligence. The achievement of the highest stage indicates the existence of the spiritual ability to comprehend and to act accordingly.

The development of other attributes of spiritual intelligence usually follows the same line – from lower stages with selfish motivation, through a socially influenced motivation and up to the pure form of an attribute, whether it is forgiveness, faith, or altruistic behavior (Krebs & Van Hesteren, 1994). Therefore, spiritual intelligence, as understood here, indicates a kind of dichotomous process – it is either awakened or not. The development up to a certain stage is preparatory, although many individuals may never progress further. Beyond that point there is a new cognition that represents a pure attribute, such as moral reasoning, forgiveness, altruism, or faith. Only when these qualities reach that point can they be ascribed to spiritual intelligence.

During different life experiences, people may develop through the preliminary stages, but only at a certain point can they discern an awakened spiritual intelligence. Yet, this is only one part of the picture, since one may question the continuity of spiritual intelligence – is it always there, always awakened? How does its existence relate to the struggle between one's "dark side of the soul" and the yearning for God?

Since I discussed spiritual intelligence as the ability to struggle against human selfishness and towards God, it becomes clear that during that struggle people may adhere to spiritual intelligence in certain moments only. One may not use it all the time, although it still exists potentially. Support for this last claim can be found in some cognitive-developmental theories of moral reasoning. Rest (1986; 1994), for example, notices that the same person, at different times, might exercise different stages of moral reasoning. Hence, he measures moral reasoning as a proportion of principled reasoning (Rest, 1993). The more often one exercises a high stage of moral reasoning, the higher one's stage of moral reasoning is. Similarly, spiritual intelligence is built through the accumulation of separate experiences, that is, individuals increasingly experience an expanded commitment to engage in actual spiritual practices (Wink1 & Dillon, 2002). The more moments in which people identify with God-centered motives (Kalo, 1999a), the more frequently they use spiritual intelligence as their principal intelligence. Therefore, I suggest that "higher" in spiritual intelligence means experiencing it more often.

Spiritual Intelligence in Action

While writing this paper, I came across real-life examples of people who chose to struggle against their self-centeredness as a means in their search for God. During their struggles, the diverse features of spiritual intelligence were revealed. To conclude, I will describe an example of such a struggle that portrays spiritual intelligence in action.

The example is that of a young orthodox Jewish family whose story was publicized several years ago on a highly rated Israeli television program. In the first of two episodes, it became known that these young people had bought a second-hand car with all of their savings (cars are relatively expensive in Israel). Unfortunately, after several months they discovered that it was a stolen car. So they searched for the legitimate owner and, to his astonishment, returned the car to him. They got nothing in return and could not afford to buy another car. A week later, on the same show, it was announced that the Israeli importer of that make of car had decided to give this couple a new car. While I was working on the initial stages of this paper, I decided to investigate this case further, and interviewed the young couple, while having their permission to publish their case (of course their anonymity is preserved, although they were ready to disclose their identity).

The husband described their inner struggle when their insurance agent informed them that the car was suspected as stolen. According to him, "the temptation was great and painful." Friends advised them to destroy the car, which was the only proof of its being stolen, and have the insurance company pay for it. They both felt that doing so was not right and would contradict their faith and way of life. Indeed, when they decided to return it, they felt an immediate relief. However, the police "were not cooperative at all" according to this man, and after several months the owner had still not been found. A new temptation arose: if they waited long enough, the police might return the

car to them, as no one had claimed it. However, the man felt that this was a spiritual experience, not a financial one. Although they were relatively poor and had lost all of their savings, "money was not the issue at all". His decision was: "If the police are corrupt and do not do their job, let's do it ourselves!" After several weeks of independent investigation, they found the legitimate owner of the car and gave it back to him, just before he received his theft insurance payment.

The owner offered to go on a TV show with the story. Initially they refused, with a wish to stay "out of the limelight," but on second thought they accepted his suggestion, "to warn other people against this kind of sophisticated thief." When they were offered a new car, they initially refused it. However, the importer convinced the couple that it was really an inexpensive form of advertising. In the week between the two shows, several people who had watched the first show offered the couple money. They rejected all of it, although they did not know then that they would get a new car. When one woman insisted and sent them some money, they donated it to charity in her name.

Although outside the scope of this article to recount all the details of the couple's experience or the interview conducted, this example serves to illustrate the struggle for practicing faith in everyday matters. Although this young couple was advised to make a distinction between faith, morality and "real life," they choose differently, that is, to manage life according their spiritual understanding and intelligence. Doing so illustrates the role of honesty, modesty, and humbleness as part of their spiritual intelligence, as well as the emotional empowerment that was gained by their faith that assisted them to reject social pressure and to feel confidence and relief.

Conclusion

Spiritual intelligence is a somewhat confusing, contradictory concept (Wolman, 2001). While intelligence refers to human abilities, within the limited human nature, spirituality refers to the infinite that stands beyond the human. Whereas the human ability to adapt to the world usually points to the parts, spirituality indicates the whole, the one. Intelligence lies within the domain of the psyche, while spiritual teaching refers to a different domain, that of the spirit.

I have attempted to resolve these apparent contradictions and to describe the theistic spiritual experience as representing a core ability that directs and influences one's overall life – spiritual intelligence. I see it as a first attempt to introduce spiritual intelligence as a core ability, a *general* factor that penetrates into and guides other abilities. An analysis of the nature of this ability is suggested here, taking into account known controversies about the study of intelligence. In view of these, it is asserted here that the general nature of spiritual intelligence can be manifested in any human realm, whether cognitive, emotional, moral, artistic, creational or other, and hence it differs from other

forms of intelligence that are limited by definition (Gardner, 1995). In addition, unlike the perception of intelligence as a cognitive ability alone (Gardner, 2000), a broader understanding of the concept of intelligence is suggested. As such, spiritual intelligence is more than a cognitive ability to comprehend the spiritual in any given field; rather, it is a distinct ability for spiritual comprehension in general. Such a broad ability cannot be reduced to distinct physiological processes, although certain spiritual practices and abilities can be manifested by exclusive physiological activities (Goleman, 2005).

Spiritual intelligence is, then, a unique ability to understand, feel, evaluate, create, and act beyond self-centered motives and towards a spiritual meaning. As my approach is theistic, spiritual intelligence represents here the ability to recognize theistic meaning in a given situation and to direct one's motivation from a self-centered one to one that represents the spiritual, theistic meaning. Its various attributes, as emphasized earlier, are expressed in any life domain. These include personal theistic faith as a basic motive in life; humility and gratitude as a personal approach; an integrative, spiritual understanding of any reality; the ability to regulate emotions; the ability to morally judge a situation and to act accordingly; and the ability for forgiveness and unselfish love. Increasingly, people may experience these and similar attributes in their lives. At moments when these attributes become central to the individual, as in the example described above, spiritual intelligence is in action.

The above description of spiritual intelligence is a pragmatic one; it may assist people in self-evaluation of their personal spiritual intelligence (Underwood, 2002) and consequently, since spiritual intelligence is developmental, people may practice its development at any stage. Kalo summarizes this process: ''to persevere on self-correction and not to let loose, free from fear, strong in hope, independent on the result'' (2000, p. 110). First, people may evaluate the attributes of spiritual intelligence that have to be strengthened in their lives. Subsequently, based on the perception of the developmental nature of spiritual intelligence, people may practice an increased proportion of spiritual intelligence in their lives, thus potentially increasing their spiritual intelligence. It is assumed here, following the experience gained in 12-Step interventions, whether in self-help or by professionals (Rehm, 1993; Kurtz & Ketcham, 1992; Ronel & Claridge, 1999), that the deliberate intensified practice of those attributes that direct one from self-centeredness and toward God-centeredness or other-centeredness can bring a personal spiritual transformation. It is also assumed – although further research is needed for confirmation – that an increase in the proportion of several attributes of spiritual intelligence in one's life may increase the proportion of other attributes as well, since the spiritual intelligence that lies beneath these attributes is a general, unified one.

Therapy or counseling may be useful in this developmental process of spiritual intelligence. Based on the concept of spiritual intelligence and the description of the various attributes, counseling may be seen as a process that assists one in recognizing and practicing spiritual intelligence in life. During counseling

people may be encouraged to engage in such a process, based on their willingness and intention. When individuals practice life as an agent for spiritual growth, they may achieve their full choice of human potential (Kass & Lenox, 2005; Pargament, 2007), which is an inspired aim of counseling.

The above conclusions about the possibility of self-evaluation and practice of spiritual intelligence and its development via counseling require further research. Such a study, based on experiential knowledge, could explore a wide range of expressions and additional attributes of spiritual intelligence, as well as subjective factors about its self-assessment and the conditions for its development during counseling.

Another issue yet to be explored is the social aspect of spiritual intelligence. The preliminary discussion of spiritual intelligence here focuses on the individual realm. What impact, if any, has spiritual intelligence on social order, community life, or culture? Kalo (1999b), for example, describes the horror of society and culture that turn their backs on the spiritual quest and that stress self-centeredness as a promising way of life. The culture of self-centeredness may lead to the "commoditization of human relationships," based on a wish for maximal gain and minimal loss. In contrast, the awakening of spiritual intelligence may lead to the humanization of relationships, including those that are initially defined as commercial. It is the awakening of a struggle towards the sanctification of relationships. The resulting social structure and what society should struggle towards are questions that demand further exploration.

Notes

[1] Editor's note: For further inquiry and a more expanded discussion the reader is referred to Noble K.D. (2001). *Riding the windhorse: Spiritual intelligence and the growth of self*. Creskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

[2] "Shlomo Kalo was born in 1928, in Sofia, Bulgaria. When he was 12 years old, he joined an anti-Fascist underground in Bulgaria. Aged 15, under Nazi occupation, he was imprisoned in a concentration camp… Aged 18, he won a prize in a poetry competition and went to Prague, where he studied medicine and worked as a journalist… The sharp turn his life which occurred in the first week of 1969, is reflected, among others, in his writings. More than 60 titles of his were published in Israel, some of which were translated into English, French, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Greek, Malayalam, Bulgarian, Portuguese, Korean and more." (Retrieved on June 14, 2008, from http://www.y-dat.co.il/bio.htm.)

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The Author

Natti Ronel, Ph.D., is Senior Lecturer at the department of Criminology, Bar Ilan University, Israel. He previously held position at Tel Aviv University, School of Social Work where he also served as the Researcher-in-Chief of the Interdisciplinary Center for Children and Youth Studies. A member of the World Society of Victimology, European Society of Criminology, the Israeli Society of Criminology (board member) and the Israeli Council for Criminology. He is a licensed clinical criminologist who holds a private

practice. He also leads continuous training and supervision courses for professionals who work with criminological and victimological populations. His various writings reflect both the clinical experience and the criminological studies. A special focus is on the spiritual aspect of criminology–its values and impact upon individuals and communities: spiritually based intervention and recovery, moral transformation, forgiveness and spiritual intelligence. Married happily with two grown children, he lives in Jaffa – a Jewish–Arabic part of Tel Aviv.

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