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Soul Migrations: Traumatic and Spiritual

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Abstract: Just as the human being comes apart at death, with the body dying and decaying while "the breath of life" persists, we suggest that a person comes apart in a similar way at other crucial junctures of life, such as moments of excruciating shame and delirious orgasmic experience, insurmountable trauma and ecstatic spiritual experience. The abused child, like shipwreck survivors in an overcrowded lifeboat, must sacrifice some aspects of the self in order to preserve others. The more overwhelming the assault, the more essential and closer to the core is that aspect that must be sacrificed. Inner resources such as innocence, trust, spontaneity, courage, and self-esteem were lost, stolen, or abandoned in those early traumatic moments, leaving an immense empty space. The psychic energy cast off through dissociation and splitting, the sacrificed aspects of self, do not simply disappear into thin air, but rather continues in split off form as a primitively organized alternative self. Retrieving these inner resources in age regression to those traumatic events reunites the sacrificial alternative self with the immanent embodied person, strengthening the fabric of the soul's energetic field.

What we are proposing here is a profound level of splitting in that what is split is neither consciousness nor ego nor self, but rather one's essential spiritual identity, what we are calling one's soul. A further distinction is drawn in relation to the concept of where that separate aspect of oneself is kept; that is, it is neither repressed into unconsciousness (vertical split), nor allowed to alternately come into conscious awareness (horizontal split). It is sent into hiding *from itself*, in the "witness protection program" for the soul.

Strength of character, resilience, determination, deep trust all come from *repair* of disruption in intimate relationship, *not* through eliminating any disruption. Likewise, the growth of the human being spiritually is achieved through the *repair* of the bond with his/her soul following disconnection (miscoordination).

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"Consciousness evolves when the self dissolves" (James Austin)

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"Only to the extent that we expose ourselves over and over to annihilation can that which is indestructible be found in us" (Pema Chodron, quoting a well-known Buddhist saying)

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What is the soul? Ego, Self, Soul, Spirit

In *Re-Visioning Psychology*, Hillman (1975) writes of "soul":

> By *soul* I mean, first of all, a perspective rather than a substance, a viewpoint toward things rather than a thing itself. This perspective is reflective . . .
>
> It is as if consciousness rests upon a self-sustaining and imagining substrate -- an inner place or deeper person or ongoing presence -- that is simply there even when all our subjectivity, ego, and consciousness go into eclipse. Soul appears as a factor independent of the events in which we are immersed. . . .
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> In another attempt upon the idea of *soul* . . . I had begun to use the term freely, usually interchangeably with *psyche* (from Greek) and *anima* (from Latin). Now I am adding three

> necessary modifications. First, soul refers to the *deepening* of events into experiences; second, the significance of soul makes possible, whether in love or in religious concern, derives from its special relation with death. And third, by soul I mean the imaginative possibility in our natures, the experiencing through reflective speculation, dream, image, fantasy -- that mode which recognizes all realities as primarily symbolic or metaphorical.

What is the soul? The soul is an integral part of every one of us, and yet few of us have ever tried to define what exactly we mean by *soul*. First, let me attempt to do so, keeping in mind Nietzsche's warning that great issues are like cold baths: one must get in and out of them as quickly as possible.

There is an obvious challenge to knowing the soul with the conscious everyday mind. "The soul has its own set of rules, which are not the same as those of life. Unlike the steady progress of history, for instance, the events of the soul are cyclic and repetitive. Familiar themes come round and round. The past is more important than the future. The living and the dead have equal roles. Emotions and the sense of meaning are paramount. Pleasures are deep, and pain can reach the very foundations of our existence. . . . The soul doesn't evolve or grow, it cycles and twists, repeats and reprises, echoing ancient themes common to all human beings. It is always circling home. Gnostic tales tell of the homesickness of the soul, its yearning for its own milieu, which is not this world of fact. Its odyssey is a drifting at sea, a floating toward home, not an evolution toward perfection" (Moore, internet).

Another obstacle to knowing the soul with the conscious mind is its dwelling is the realm of the invisible. The soul is an *absence* in the sense that Heidegger described in *Time and Being* (1972, pp. 13-17, as discussed by Abram, 1996). The past and future are absences which, by their very absence, make themselves felt in the present. These absences actually frame our experience of the present (what is not absent). The *beyond-the-horizon* is an absence that helps to define the journey, an unseen but vital realm. There are many invisible absences of what is *under-the-ground* as well: the other side of a tree, or of the moon, or of my body, the inside of the tree or moon or my body.

"For these would seem to be the two primary dimensions from whence things enter the open presence of the landscape, and into which they depart. Sensible phenomena are continually appearing out of, and continually vanishing into, these two very different realms of concealment or invisibility. One trajectory is a passage out toward, or inward from, a

vast openness. The other is a descent into, or a sprouting up from, a packed density" (Abram, 1996, p. 213-214).

The soul, too, is continually appearing out of and vanishing into concealment, either that of the higher realms and vast openness of the *beyond-the-horizon*, or the lower realms and packed density of the *under-the-ground*. In shamanic terms, when the soul fragment leaves the body, it might go to the Lower World or the Upper World. The Lower World represents access to helping spirits of power animals or healing plants, the elements or the earth itself. The Upper World represents access to one's ancestors or other people who have died, to teachers, Masters, guardian angels. These are the ways of immanence and of transcendence. The soul may also go to the Middle World, which represents a return to past times in the person's historical life, e.g., to a trauma in the bedroom at age six, or to speak to the spirit of someone in a coma or unconsciousness.

The language of locations should be understood to be metaphorical. The soul has not "gone" anywhere. What we refer to as the Lower World or the Higher Unconscious are realms within the greater reach of a human's capacity to experience, consciously or not. "We say that the sun is behind the clouds, but actually it is not the sun but the city from which we view it that is behind the clouds. . . . the sun is never behind the clouds" (Chögyam Trungpa, 2005, p. 49).

Assagioli (1971) recognized the unconscious as divided in a somewhat similar way: the Lower Unconscious, Middle Unconscious, and the Higher Unconscious. The Lower Unconscious is intimately connected with the Collective Unconscious, that vast storehouse of historical and potential experience. The Higher Unconscious, or Superconscious, is intimately connected with the realm of the Transpersonal Self. In both Lower and Higher Unconscious, Assagioli sees a "paradoxical union or integration and coexistence of the individual and of the universal" (1971, p. 260). The Middle Unconscious is personal and individual.

The individual's Lower Unconscious consists of all the psychologically damaging experiences of every developmental age, what Firman and Gila (1997) call the *primal wounds*. The Lower Unconscious also includes the collective lower unconscious, what Vaughan (1986) calls the *transpersonal shadow*. The Higher Unconscious consists of the transpersonal qualities, what Maslow (1968, 1971) calls *peak experiences*. A repression barrier operates to keep these identities out of awareness, separated from the whole Self, protecting the self-interests of the ego (the identity of the moment). Serving to repress the Lower Unconscious are

shame, fear, loneliness, unworthiness, pain, abandonment, and spiritual isolation. Serving to repress the Higher Unconscious are *transpersonal defenses* (Firman & Gila, 1997, p. 135), mainly the fear of letting go and trusting (surrender). Both Higher Unconscious defenses and Lower Unconscious defenses serve to maintain the split.

We agree with the observation, however, that "the more developed the lower unconscious, the more developed is its opposite - the higher unconscious" (Firman & Gila, 1997, p. 126). A wonderful illustration of this is a story told by Carl Jung (1996):

> I was once asked a philosophical question by a Hindu: "Does a man who loves God need more or fewer incarnations to reach his final salvation than a man who hates God?" Now, what would you answer? I gave it up, naturally. And he said, "A man who loves God will need seven incarnations to become perfect, and a man who hates God only needs three, because he certainly will think of him and cling to him very much more than the man who loves God." That, in a way, is true; hatred is a tremendous cement. . . . with us it would be fear and not hatred (pp. 5-6).

So people work toward and achieve personal growth by overcoming the barriers to the repressed Lower Unconscious (shame, fear, addictions, unworthiness), integrating aspects of it, and developing personal power. They are what Maslow (1971) called *nontranscending self-actualizers*. He described such people as "more essentially practical, realistic, mundane, capable, and secular people, living more in the here and now world . . . 'doers' rather than meditators or contemplators, effective and pragmatic rather than aesthetic, reality-testing and cognitive rather than emotional and experiencing" (p. 281). Assagioli called this *personal psychosynthesis*, the increasing ability to express a sense of unique, well-articulated individuality. A further step in that growth process is achieved by overcoming the barriers to the repressed Higher Unconscious (fear of letting go and surrendering) and embracing it, Assagioli's *transpersonal psychosynthesis* and Maslow's *transcending self-actualization.* This represents an increasing experience of higher, mystical, and spiritual states of consciousness.

Healing that split, which divided us into smaller, more constricted, more dissociated fractions of our real totality, is the process of integration, individuation, self-actualization, transformation. One integrates the subpersonalities into a harmonious multiplicity, retrieves and embraces the shadow, becomes more conscious. Disidentification, or non-attachment, with the limited ego states allows us to expand into both our lower

(shadow) and higher (transpersonal) aspects. Balance is important. Expanding into the lower but not the higher leads one to become psychologically healthy but not spiritually fulfilled (a nontranscending self-actualizer), and expanding into the higher but not the lower leads one to become a psychologically unhealthy spiritual seeker (the spiritual by-pass).

To complete the psychical tour, there exists also a Middle Unconscious, consisting of contents that are unconscious but not defensively repressed and therefore accessible in our normal functioning. Expanding this Middle Unconscious is to open ourselves to the conscious experience of who we really are, disidentifying with the limited range of identities and becoming mindfully aware of our truly expansive real Self. We might say that "ego rigidities" are dissolved in the encounter with the Self (Edinger, 1985).

We will observe and discover the ways in which the soul is created from, and longs to return to, *both* realms. We shall see that ancient wisdom holds creation to be a two-fold process involving explosive emergence outward from the packed density of darkest chaos, the Big-Bang, and an expansiveness out toward the vast openness of endless possibilities. Destruction, entropy, and defeat at the hands of trauma is the same journey in the opposite direction. The soul descends into the *under-the-ground* realm, becoming lost in despair and hopelessness, or it becomes distracted and lost in the *beyond-the-horizon* realm in spiritual bypass.

There is a wonderful paradoxical Talmudic saying, "Serve G-d both with your bad impulses and with your good impulses."

Creation and the Soul

The importance of understanding the creation story is that it is "the trail of crumbs left behind by Hansel and Gretel," the path to retrace when attempting to return to the source, to reconnect with the misplaced, lost, or stolen soul. "The consensus of Kabbalistic opinion regards the mystical way to God as a reversal of the process by which we have emanated from God. To know the stages of the creative process is also to know the stages of one's own return to the root of all existence (Scholem, 1941)" (Shoham, 1990, p. 35).

Related is the Kabbalistic concept of *tzimtzum* (contraction). In the beginning of time, God contracts himself, regresses within Himself, from a part of infinity in order to make a place for the world. This contraction of Divinity within itself dims God's immense radiance, so that it can be made

bearable within the temporal world and perceived by man. "This contraction of Divinity is reversed and God is released from His human bondage by the annihilation of the self. God and man are then united in infinity" (Shoham, 2000, p. 114).

One of the commonalities of the major streams of philosophy worldwide is the connection between soul and breath. "Hebrew shows *nephesh*, 'breath,' passing into all the meanings of 'life, soul, mind, animal,' while *ruach* and *neshamah* make the transition from 'breath' to 'spirit'; and to these the Arabic *nefs* and *ruh* correspond. The same is the history of Sanskrit *ātman* and *prāna*, of Greek *psychē* and *pneuma*, of Latin *animus*, *anima*, *spiritus*" (Eliade, 1977, p. 178).

The creation story in the Bible is instructive. *Nefesh* is the Hebrew word primarily translated into English as soul, although the ancient Hebrew mystical tradition identifies three levels of soul: *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah*. Genesis 2:7 describes the creation of human beings as occurring in two segments, taking dust from the earth already created to form it into a creature (a body), and then infusing the dust-formed body with the breath of life. The completed creature became a breathing nefesh, or living being. The nefesh is not one part of the person created and the body another part; rather, the soul is the totality of the person, his/her breadth and depth.

This twofold process of creation is recounted, not just for man but for the universe itself. Ancient Hebrew wisdom differentiates two successive creations, with the earlier one providing deeply buried treasures for intrepid explorers to find and mine. "Our sages tell us that before G-d created our world, He created an "earlier" state of existence -- the world of *Tohu* ('Chaos'). But this was a world of 'much light and scant vessels'; as a result, the vessels burst and the light escaped. G-d then created 'our' world -- the world of *Tikkun* ('Correction'), constructed with 'broad containers and scant light' that allow it to function and endure" (Tauber, internet). *Light* is the Kabbalistic term for an emanation of Divine energy; *containers* are the Divine forces that channel, define, and focus the light. A soul is a light, while a body is a vessel.

"There was a reason for this 'debacle.' G-d desired that our 'correct' world should be built upon the ruins of Tohu, so that we should delve beneath its surface to unearth the 'sparks of holiness' that are the residue of this primordial world, tap their potent potential, and, ultimately, integrate the two realities, capturing the immense light of Tohu in the broad vessels of Tikkun" (Tauber, internet).

" 'The breaking of the vessels' has scattered the particles of Divinity into the mires of spatiotemporal pollution. These sacred particles are the human souls. Consequently, the ultimate *tikkun* of both Divinity and man entails the return of these souls to their origin in God" (Shoham, 2000, p. 142).

It is useful to know this cosmic history, because it explains how the traumatic and the divine are inseparably connected.

Greek mythology, too, has creation of the universe spawned out of Chaos, the dark and formless Mother of All.

A similar distinction between light and container, or energy and consciousness, is explained in the ancient Hindu cosmic tale of Shakti and Shiva, with the masculine principle of consciousness (Shiva) requiring activation by the feminine principle of energy (Shakti).

Fordham, in refining Jung's concept of the Self, postulates a primary self that is empty of phenomena, nothing but potential. The primary self might be seen as analogous to the egg at the instant of fertilization (Urban, 1992). "Unlike the egg at the moment of fertilization but like the cosmic egg to which Fordham had earlier associated it (Fordham, 1957), the primary self is a mystical concept, referring to the 'nothing that is everything'" (Urban, 2005, p. 576).

Thomas Aquinas (1225?-1274) coined the term *embodied soul* or *animated body* to convey this conundrum. Authors of Old Testament books never use nefesh to speak of a soul leaving the body at death (Brotzman, 1988), and yet people do survive death (Isaiah 26:19). So, the human being does come apart at death, with the body dying and decaying while "the breath of life" persists. Death is a reversal of the creation of life, also involving two segments. We will suggest that perhaps a person comes apart in a similar way at other crucial junctures of life as well, such as insurmountable traumas and ecstatic spiritual experiences.

Burt (1960) identifies three primary categories of the meaning of nefesh as it is used throughout the Old Testament (754 times): the breath of life, or a living being; a psychological use; and an individual person. Since breath departs at death, breath or soul indicates life. Nefesh is "the inner, animating element of life" (Bemporad, 1987, p. 205). When we flee for our life from danger, the Old Testament says we are fleeing for our nefesh (Genesis 19:17), a connotation of the soul that we will return to in the discussion of response to trauma.

The second category of meaning relates to psychological functions: the nefesh can be impatient (Numbers 21:4), bitter (2 Kings 4:27), hateful (2

Samuel 5:8), or sad (Jonah 2:7); it can be linked with the heart (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) or with desire (Exodus 15:9).

The third category refers to an individual person, for example the individual in the Twenty-third Psalm ("Though *I* walk through the valley of the shadow of death, *I* will fear no evil" etc.). The human does not *have* a nefesh, the human *is* a nefesh and lives as a nefesh (Wolff, 1974).

Unlike the Old Testament, the modern conception of soul among Europeans and Americans tends to envision a deep inner world, a space within an individual, separate from the body, from the personality, from the mind, and detached from the community and from concerns of the world. The soul is the place where god-energy flows (Schwartz, 1999).

The New Testament was written primarily in Greek, and the word translated as soul is *psyche*.

The concept of soul for Jung was anima/animus, from the Latin word for soul (Drob, 1999; Hillman, 1975; Strauss, 1953).

A more complex and descriptive conception of soul is often represented in indigenous cultures. For example, the Tana Toraja tribe in a remote area of Indonesia has terminology for numerous connotations of the soul. The *sumanga'* is an animating force, the consciousness present in all living beings, "although a sudden fright may prompt it to flee or a malevolent entity may appropriate the sumanga' of others" (Adams, 1993). The soul has a bird-like quality, prone to flying off (Coville, 1988). We will return to this conception of soul in discussing soul flight as a response to trauma.

Torajans use the term *penaa* to refer to the soul of the living, an aspect closely resembling sumanga' but carrying a sense of connection to the social world not associated with sumanga'. "For Torajans, penaa is the vital breath, the heart, the essence of the living person. One's penaa responds to everyday social and physical experiences; it grows larger after a hearty meal and smaller after physical exertion, illness, or distress" (Adams, 1993).

As one approaches death, the soul begins to wander. When one dies, the vital breath departs, the penaa vanishes, and the soul takes on a different connotation, called the *bombo*, the soul of the soon-to-die or the dead. The bombo hovers near the body until the funeral rites, and then the best case is that it travels to Puya (the Land of the Souls). Some souls never travel on to Puya, and instead become stranded in the community where they died, condemned to wander the earth. That includes bombo whose funerals are not completed satisfactorily, those who are lepers or

who commit suicide, and those who died unjustly because they roam around seeking vengeance. Bombo (souls) of stillborn children or infants who died also wander aimlessly. Other souls that did not travel on to Puya may possess the living; these would include pregnant women who died in childbirth.

Finally, the soul that reaches Puya may ascend to the heavens and transform into a life force, becoming a deified soul, *deata*. A deata soul is available to descendents to provide support.

The concept of the bombo, or "homeless dead," is found in most primitive cultures (Lifton, 1967).

> Usually included among the homeless dead are the spirits (or ghosts) of the following: of those who died suddenly, through suicide or violence, while on a journey and far from home, through violating a taboo, lacking biological posterity, or in a specifically unfulfilled state (as in the case of young women between the time of betrothal and marriage); and also of the newly dead, and of those who have been denied proper rituals by their posterity. . . . Homeless dead are considered dangerous to the living, particularly to those who have directly survived them; they may cause them fright, bad fortune, various kinds of physical harm, or even suck their "life blood." They thus include the "wild souls" and "hungry ghosts" of East Asian tradition, as well as the "vampires" of Eastern Europe (Lifton, 1967, p. 492).

The soul chakra

Most people these days are familiar with the seven major chakras, or energy centers, running up the center of the body from the tailbone to the fontenelle at the top of the head. Esoteric wisdom holds that there is an additional chakra. An eighth energy center hovers above our heads, reaching up toward its source like a candle flame, sometimes flickering and sometimes radiant. The *soul chakra* connects us to all the energies in our environment, those seen and unseen, the natural elements as well as the spirits, ancestors, and angels. The disconnection with this soul chakra, what we call "soul loss," is recorded as a karmic flaw to be reenacted repeatedly until it is recognized and healed.

One way to envision the soul is as the *luminous energy field* that envelops and organizes the physical body, acting as buffer and filter. "This energy field has existed since the beginning of time, and it will endure throughout infinity, crafting new physical bodies lifetime after lifetime. It molds and shapes our body, and it predisposes us to meet the people we'll work with and marry, along with the crises and opportunities we'll encounter in our lives" (Villoldo, 2005, pp. 172-173). That luminosity is

dulled and torn by trauma and suffering, and is fluffed up and made thick and whole by emotional healing and spiritual practice.

This soul energy field holds the memories of the past, of the personal unconscious, the collective unconscious, and the karmic history. This memory carries with it the potential to know what our experiences were before development of the rational mind, before birth, before conception. The soul knows what I most yearn for, what I truly want more than anything else in this life. The soul also contains a blueprint or template for future development, which can be accessed and consulted for guidance regarding one's purpose in life. Thus, the soul carries within it the potential to know what we experience in deep sleep, in altered states of consciousness, and what we will experience after we die.

Separation from the soul, a sense of disconnection, a lack of "indwelling," leaves the individual with an immense empty place, although he/she seldom understands what that emptiness really is. The person has an insatiable hunger for being reunited with his soul, being made whole again. But that insatiable hunger almost always is experienced as a desire for something else: for a relationship, for numbing the pain, for excitement or other distractions from the pain, for material wealth and comfort, status and security, for a drink or a smoke or an orgasm, for more pleasure or less pain.

Inner resources such as innocence, trust, spontaneity, courage, and self-esteem were lost, stolen, or abandoned in traumatic moments early in our personal history. Retrieving these inner resources in age regression to those traumatic events strengthens the fabric of the soul's energetic field. Retrieving the person's sense of connection to his/her soul itself revitalizes the entire energy system, bringing greater clarity in the awareness of one's own nature, the self-realization of ultimate answers to the question, "Who am I?" One's self-concept becomes less boundaried and more expansive, more interdependent, more divine.

Consciously connecting (or re-connecting) with the soul chakra allows us to "dream the world into being" (Villoldo, 2005, p. 183). It allows us to retrieve our natural gifts of intuition, creativity, and mindful consciousness, the capacity for self-observation and self-regulation of emotions. We can access the blueprint for development into the highest expression of ourselves, our optimal potential. It allows us to more clearly perceive the illusions we have accepted as truth, the "perpetual wandering" of *samsara* in Buddhist terms or possession by autonomous complexes in Jungian terms: the belief that I am alone, or that I am engulfed, that I am worthless,

or that I am surrounded by incompetents, that I am helpless and powerless, or that I am able to keep myself safe by controlling everything within my experience.

What are the secondary gains of keeping the soul separate?

> What's there to protect ourselves from when it comes to our freedom? Lots. Anxiety and self-doubt; fear of not succeeding, of not getting what we want; of failing to live up to our ambitions and ideals. Fear of looking deeply into ourselves. Afraid we might not have 'the right stuff.' It is always hard to own our own aspirations. The more noble and ambitious they are, the more dangerous they can feel, eliciting secret shame or guilt in ourselves or the fear of envy or ridicule from others.
>
> "Aspiring to awakening can awaken the deepest fear of all: discovering we do not exist in the way we think we do. . . . It makes us chronically restless and insecure. So we talk ourselves out of it; 'I can't do it;' 'I don't deserve it;' 'I'm tempting fate;' 'Others won't understand;' 'I'll end up alone' (Engler, 1999, p. 2).

Radical connectedness

We occupy a purposeful place, our "rightful place," in a tribe or community, in a location on the earth, in creation. The soul has a "rightful place" and exists in relationship with everything else. "The soul of each individual is part and parcel of the *anima mundi*, or world soul, along with everything in existence. The soul's essence is therefore connectedness; it thrives on relationship" (Simpkinson & Simpkinson, 1998, p. 156). When a human being experiences that connectedness with plant life and animals and the earth and weather, respectfully, then he/she sees the sacred in all things and the paramount value of each day, each moment. The soul is one's grand scheme of relationships: one "can never grasp it apart from other things, perhaps because it is like a reflection in a flowing mirror, or like the moon which mediates only borrowed light" (Hillman, 1975).

An example of this connectedness is the "bleeding of the Dreamtime into the here and now" as Abram (1996, p. 170) calls the experience of Native Australians' merging with their ancestors or other beings in nature during rituals. The personality accesses its connectedness with spirits, spirit powers, and soul. They call the great unconscious cosmic connectedness Dreamtime because it is to everyday here and now reality like our dream state is to our conscious awareness.

We propose that the inverse of this "bleeding through" can occur also, i.e., the state of consciousness of the visible, conscious and rational can bleed through to influence the Dreamtime, the unformed, chaotic realm that is home to the soul. When this occurs in the midst of terror and trauma, the influence creates disorganization in the connectedness, or "loss

of soul." When this occurs amidst spiritual practice, it creates surrender of separateness, beyond the oneness experience to that of 'zeroness', not *loss* of soul but rather *surrender* of soul.

Soul emergence: Expansion/ contraction of boundaries

The unconscious must be brought into consciousness, the "amnesic barriers must be dissolved and the fragmented parts integrated" (O'Reilly-Knapp, 1996). This is true in both the resolution and healing of trauma, and in one's spiritual growth and development.

"Jung said that soul moves at the weak point where the personality is thin, where things are not secure and stable. That's where soul has an entry" (Moore, 1998, p. 45).

The individual's personal boundaries and sense of containment fluctuate in time. Sometimes one's sense of self contracts; as the Torajans say, it grows smaller after physical exertion, illness, or distress. Constriction usually results from pain (physical, emotional, or psychic), shame, fear, anesthetic or other forms of unconsciousness. We refer to the Dark Night of the Soul when existential terror scares the soul out of the body. Some traumas are so overwhelmingly intrusive that a state of annihilative nonbeing or temporary oblivion caused by the withdrawal of soul becomes necessary. The individual's world contracts to formidable containers and scant light. When a child's boundaries are decimated by betrayal and violation, that invasiveness requires a defensive reaction of withdrawal if there is anywhere to hide, or abdication and annihilation if not.

Aroused through trauma or stark confrontation with one's mortality as it may be, the Dark Night of the Soul also presents a window of opportunity for quantum spiritual growth. "The dark night of the soul is a way of initiation, a process through which we surrender, deepen and cleanse the soul. It is a ceremony through which we die to all our illusions and enter into Life. Only when the sun is eclipsed can the unaided eye see the sun's corona. The dark night of the soul is the meeting with the Divine that calls for the relinquishing of the small, separate self" (Harvey, 2002, p.115).

Just as the sense of self contracts, so too at other times it expands; as the Torajans say, it grows larger after a hearty meal. It certainly grows from spiritual or mystical liberation. The mystical experience is one of a great opening of the heart to the vast emptiness, an expansion of boundaries to allow embrace of all that is, oneness. This awakening to the

Self is “an outcome of a consciously pursued deep individuation, which brings us nearer to the life of the soul and also nearer to the world than ever before” (Estes, 1998, p. 86). Through spiritual practice, one can develop the ability to consciously surrender any sense of individual self or ego, the act known in Hebrew as *klot hanefesh*, beyond an experience of oneness to a surrender of any individual identity, to ‘zeroness’.

“Soul emergence,” or the increasing connection to one’s soul, may be recognized by the development of presence, love, joy, peace, and empathy, and the diminishing of fear (Cortright, 1997, p. 136). It is often experienced as an opening, a deepening or a widening of one’s identity into a powerful, very substantial sense of presence. This sense of presence is felt as supportive, indeed being the very core of oneself, one’s essence. This “real” self both encompasses and vastly surpasses one’s outer, surface self, which by contrast is experienced as flimsy, insubstantial and almost empty. One’s identity is loosened from that limited surface self, and expanded to a non-ego identification with the vastness of creation which is experienced nonetheless as emanating from a spiritual source deep within. To feel grounded in the depths of one’s being becomes a source of psychological well-being and a source of strength in the face of life’s circumstances.

In some sense the soul is seated in the heart, and connecting with it opens one to an inner source of love and compassion. Connecting to soul is to connect to a source of inner joy and happiness that is intrinsic, independent of outer circumstances. This joy brings with it a deep sense of peace, and the reduction of fear and anxiety. By connecting to the depth of our own being, we feel an intuitive interconnectedness with all other beings and nature. There is a spontaneous empathy for others, an ability to grasp the experience of those around us more deeply. The emergence of connection with soul refines, purifies, and spiritually transforms one’s consciousness.

Another terminology for soul emergence is “the progression of a soul” in which “you can see the contracted soul expand” in the words of Becky Johnston, author of the screenplay of *Seven Years in Tibet* (Chollet, 1997).

One way of describing the progression or expansion of a soul is provided in the Kabbalah, the ancient esoteric Jewish mysticism, with the soul progressing (or not) through five stages: the nefesh, ruach, neshamah, chayyah, and yehidah. The nefesh is the lower or animal part of the soul. It links to instincts and bodily cravings. It is found in all humans, and enters the physical body at conception. It is the source of one’s physical and

psychological nature. The next two parts of the soul are slowly created over time; their development depends on the actions and beliefs of the individual. They are said to only fully exist in people awakened spiritually. The ruach is the middle soul. It contains the moral virtues and the ability to distinguish between good and evil. It equates to psyche or ego-personality. The neshamah is the higher soul, Higher Self or super-soul. This distinguishes man from all other life forms. It relates to the intellect, and allows man to enjoy and benefit from the afterlife. It allows one to have some awareness of the existence and presence of God. After death nefesh disintegrates, ruach is sent to an intermediate zone (hell) where it is submitted to purification and enters in "temporary paradise," while neshamah returns to the source where it enjoys "the kiss of the beloved." The chayyah is the part of the soul that allows one to have an awareness of the divine life force itself. And yehidah is the highest plane of the soul, in which one can achieve full union with God (Wikipedia.org).

Shamanic journey state

Many consider "an essential aspect of the shaman's ecstatic states to involve, at least on some occasions, an experience labeled as soul flight. Soul flight is an experience in which the shaman's soul or spirit, along with some sense of self, is thought to depart the body and travel to a spirit world" (Winkelman, 2000, p. 63).

The soul-flight and death-and-rebirth experiences that are characteristic of shamans occur naturally as out-of-body experiences, near-death or clinical death experiences, or astral projection experiences. Soul flight involves a view of self from the perspective of other, providing an altered state of consciousness and sense of transcendence. The shaman's soul has been freed from the body "to roam at will throughout the expanses of the upper, middle, and lower worlds" (Walsh, 1989). Another form of self-awareness referenced to the body, but apart from the body is the shamanic experience of death-and-rebirth (Winkelman, 2002). This shamanic development experience involves illness, suffering, and attacks by spirits, leading to the experience of death and dismemberment, followed by a reconstruction of the victim's body with the addition of spirit allies and powers. The death-and-rebirth experience, a natural response to overwhelming stress and intrapsychic conflicts (Walsh, 1990), is a breakdown of ego structures and a restructuring of ego and identity at higher levels of psychological integration.

In the context of shamanism, we see the same dynamics as described in western psychology: the soul dissociates from the body/personality in response to overwhelming stress and traumatic conflict, and then when a reunification occurs it can re-structure the person at a new, higher level of functioning. "Soul dissociation" may be described as an altered state of consciousness characterized by a sense of separation (or detachment) from aspects of everyday experience, be it the body (out-of-body experiences), the sense of self (depersonalization), or the external world (derealization). Such a state of consciousness is achieved voluntarily or involuntarily, through trauma or transcendence, within a context of shamanic or out-of-body (Shields, 1978), near-death (Moody, 1975) and astral projection (Green, 1968) experiences.

An important point is the proximity of traumatic or transcendent experience. Trauma can, although not necessarily, lead to a new, higher spiritual perspective and level of functioning.

Wolman (2001) has researched the nature of spirituality and devised the PsychoMatrix Spirituality Inventory (PSI) to assist people in assessing the focus and pattern of their spirituality. He suggests that seven factors, including trauma, together comprise the spectrum of spiritual experience and behavior:

- divinity, the sense of connection to a God figure or Divine Energy Source;
- mindfulness, an awareness of the interconnection of the mind and body, with an emphasis on practices that enhance that relationship;
- intellectuality, a cognitive and inquiring approach to spirituality, with a focus on understanding sacred texts;
- community, the quality of spirituality enacting connection to the community at large, e.g., in charity or politics;
- extrasensory perception, spiritual feelings and perceptions associated with nonrational ways of knowing, e.g., prophetic dreams and near-death experiences;
- childhood spirituality, a personal, historical association to spirituality through family tradition and activity; and
- trauma, a stimulus to spiritual awareness through experiencing physical or emotional illness or trauma to the self or a loved one.

As we continue this investigation, we will discover more precisely the nature of the interaction between trauma and spirituality.

The relationship between trauma and spiritual development (Connection, disruption, repair)

Evidence documents that the repaired bond becomes stronger than the original unbroken bond was. This is true in many fields, including orthopedics and human attachment.

One way of approaching the interconnectedness of positive and negative experiences, characteristics, and outcomes in people's lives is suggested by Lopez et al. (2003). The six dimensions they suggest are: weaknesses, unhealthy processes, and voids; strengths, healthy processes, and fulfillments. Fulfillments are the aspects of life that most people seek, such as meaningful work, love, and social connectedness. Voids are aspects of life that leave people feeling empty. The interconnectedness between these dimensions is complex: often the experience of void provides the motivation to pursue fulfillment, and contained within any weakness is a hidden, suppressed, or denied strength.

For example, one of the coping mechanisms of childhood sexual abuse involves keeping the secret by not reporting the abuse to non-offending caregivers. The majority of children do not disclose until adulthood (Lamb & Edgar-Smith, 1994), if at all (Sauzier, 1989), leading to social withdrawal, injured sense of self, and mistrust of others. Not surprisingly, a study of incest survivors' experience of eventual disclosure (Mize, Bentley, Helms, Ledbetter, & Neblett, 1995) found that feelings during or immediately following disclosure included relief, empowerment, and a sense of reconnection with others. Of course, increased sense of empowerment and connection with others are also usually factors which contribute to readiness to disclose. So the void of isolation and disconnection may motivate one toward the fulfillment of social connectedness. That connectedness, because it was inflicted in a perverted way, was itself a motivation to the original isolation and disconnection. How does one navigate out of voids into fulfillment, and indeed into arriving at a new, higher level of functioning?

Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan, head of the Sufi Order International, speaks of "the Divine perfection in each being that suffers from human limitation. You identify with the Divine in you but you are also aware of the limitations to that perfection. Another description that I find very, very meaningful talks about the aristocracy of the soul and the democracy of the ego - the greatest pride existing with the greatest humility at the same time. Instead of inflating into megalomania or deflating into an inferiority

complex, one needs to reconcile the irreconcilable, which is a great thing" (Khan, 1998, p. 336).

As psychotherapists, we have been sensitive to some people's tendency toward *spiritual bypass*, i.e., to avoid dealing with their dysfunctional issues by focusing exclusively on feel-good spiritual experience. Khan refers to the corollary process of *psychological bypass*, in which people overly focus on their past traumas and wounding, and use these past experiences as an excuse for not living life fully and becoming their optimal potential.

Reconciling the irreconcilable means tolerating the paradox of celebrating life joyfully in the midst of life's inevitable disappointments and tragedies. In Khan's words (1998, p. 334): "For a long time I used to think that one should be able to transform suffering into joy. Now, I believe that joy is in discovering that it is OK to suffer. One can be happy at the same time one is suffering! It's OK for there to be a wound. It's part of being human, to have little bits and pieces that are cracked. I play the cello. Some of the eighteenth-century cellos are very badly cracked, but they play more beautifully than the perfectly made modern ones." This is a poetic statement of what the clinical evidence documents, that repaired disconnection is stronger than the original bond, that the human capacity for resilience can trump any challenger given the right conditions.

"Posttraumatic growth is the experience of positive change that occurs as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life crises. It is manifested in a variety of ways, including an increased appreciation for life in general, more meaningful interpersonal relationships, an increased sense of personal strength, changed priorities, and a richer existential and spiritual life" (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004, p. 1). Many examples exist in all areas of human life, certainly in the medical field. Citing research with rape victims, Affleck et al. (1987) assert "Independently of sociodemographic characteristics and physicians' ratings of initial prognosis, patients who cited benefits from their misfortune 7 weeks after the first attack were less likely to have another attack and had lower levels of morbidity 8 years later" (p. 29).

The ancient Hebrew concept of *tikkun* applies. According to the cosmological myth, "The Shattering of the Vessels," God sent forth vessels bearing a primordial light at the beginning of time. Had these vessels arrived intact, the world would have remained in its prelapsarian condition, i.e., as it was before the Fall. But somehow--no one knows why--the vessels shattered and scattered their sparks throughout the world. It is the

symbolic equivalent of other cosmic catastrophes such as the expulsion from Eden. The second phase is called "Gathering the Sparks." Here the object is to collect the fallen sparks and raise them up. This is the very definition of the process of *tikkun*, of healing a world that has become unraveled. The process of raising up the scattered sparks involves ritual. Ultimately, when enough sparks have been gathered, the broken vessels will be restored. At the same time this process of transformation occurs within the individual as well. The myth is a healing one, focused on the processes of breaking apart and restoring to wholeness.

From a Jungian perspective, the shattering of the vessels might be identified in individual terms as the equivalent of a breakdown. It represents a breaking through of the unconscious at a time of psychic transition. On the collective level, the shattering of the vessels represents a time of upheaval. The gathering of the sparks represents the process of restoration both on the individual and collective levels - individuation. And we note that the developmental sequence of the myth requires the shattering to take place before the restoration can be achieved, indicating that the shattering is an essential, as well as inevitable, phase of this process.

In *A Farewell to Arms*, Ernest Hemingway wrote: "If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills." Resilience is more than enduring adversity; it entails growing in strength by surmounting life's challenges. The alternative is death – the psychic death of numb resignation, dissociation from the tortured angst of psychic defeat. There are many examples of people and the bonds between them becoming "strong at the broken places." For example, in orthopedics, we know that a bone is stronger at the place of its healing from a break than it was before the break (Farley, 1996).

In attachment theory we know that disrupted and repaired dyssynchrony is stronger than undisrupted synchrony. The child learns self-confidence and trust in others through the process of establishing attuned (mutually and intimately shared) experience, and subsequently having the experience repaired successfully when it is inevitably disrupted. The child develops healthy, secure attachment in this way, feels safe and contained sufficiently to explore the environment, and by owning the confidence and trust, can extrapolate them to the world as a whole. Confidence and trust have become the child's internal working model, or

fundamental belief system. Fosha (2003, p. 238) summarizes the vital importance of disrupted relatedness:

> These experiences can "crescendo higher and higher," leading to "peak experiences of resonance, exhilaration, awe and being on the same wavelength with the partner" (Beebe & Lachmann, 1994, p. 157), deepen relatedness and security of attachment (Fosha, 2000b, p. 63).
>
> The process of moment-to-moment mutual coordination and affect regulation is considered to be the fundamental mechanism by which attachment is established (Schore, 2000). Countless repetitions of the sequence of attunement, disruption, and repair lead to an affective competence, as the individual internalizes the affect-managing strategies of the dyad (Fosha, 2000b, 2001, 2002a). The experience of being able to repair the stress of disrupted relatedness (i.e., transform negative affects into positive affects and disconnection into reconnection), leads to the individual's confidence in his own abilities, and trust in the capacity of others to respond (Tronick, 1989). Success with efforts to repair dyadic disruptions leads to a certain emotional stick-to-itiveness in the face of adversity which is at the heart of *resilience* (Fonagy et al., 1994).
>
> Thus, the transformation that occurs as the result of the optimal dyadic regulation of affective states is twofold: (a) It leads to the establishment of increasingly secure attachment, which promotes optimal development and fosters maximal learning through the expansion of the range of exploration. (b) Furthermore, the maintenance of positive affective states associated with dyadic experiences of affective resonance has been shown to be crucial to optimal neurobiological development (Schore, 1996, p. 62). However, note that the amplification of the positive affects achieved is through the *repair* of disruption following miscoordination, and *not* through the exclusion of negative states. Disruption and its negative affects is as natural a phase of optimal functioning as is attunement. It is also as vitally important.

Strength of character, resilience, determination, deep trust all come from *repair* of disruption in intimate relationship, *not* through eliminating any disruption. Likewise, the growth of the human being spiritually is achieved through the *repair* of the bond with his/her soul following disconnection (miscoordination). "Trauma acts to increase spiritual development if that development is defined as an increase in the search for purpose and meaning" (Decker, 1993, p. 33).

Fluctuating soul connections: Attachment theory perspective

The connection between the soul and the person, and between the soul and the higher Source of Life, fluctuates in strength constantly, as all energy does. A model that is useful to speak about and understand the fluctuations in connection to the soul is attachment theory.

Attachment theory provides a rich context within which to map out and understand the complexity of connection, and disruption in that connection, between people in their primary relationships. We will use the

same context for mapping out and understanding the complexity of connection and disruption in that connection between people and their soul. We know that a basic protective defense against threat is disengagement and isolation, especially when the potential source of safety or nurturing is in fact the perpetrator of the painful experience, the source of the threat. We know that the defining factor in whether a traumatic experience is devastating or leads to "traumatic growth" is the ability to reconnect after a disruption or disengagement, to repair the disruption. The most consequential factor in relationships that last is the ability to reconnect emotionally after an argument (Gottman & Silver, 1999).

Attachment theory identifies secure or insecure attachment between infant and caregiver. The insecure attachment can take the form of insecure-avoidant or insecure-ambivalent. When the attachment figure (caregiver) is both the perpetrator of trauma and the one sought out for comfort, the insecure attachment does not fit either category, and is labeled disorganized/disoriented or fearful. Infants classified as disorganized attachment usually exhibit role inversion with the parent by age six (Main & Cassidy, 1988). These children become controlling of the parent; either (1) *controlling-punitive*, harshly dictating to the parent ("Sit down! I said, sit down!" or "I told you what to do – now do it!"), or *controlling-caregiving*, being excessively solicitous ("Would you like to sit down and have me bring you something?").

Now let your imagination loose for a moment to consider just such an inverted relationship between an individual and his/her soul. Do some of us attempt to *make* spiritual growth happen by demanding, controlling, and punishing? Do some of us attempt to assuage our own fear of being abandoned by our "Higher Self" by bribing it into cooperation?

Let's look at the secure attachment of a person with his/her soul. Then we will explore the forms of insecure attachment. When a person develops an insecure-avoidant or insecure-ambivalent relationship with his/her soul, it manifests as preoccupation with other things. If the individual is sufficiently conflicted in the relationship, then role inversion with the (parental) soul will occur. Some may become *controlling-punitive*, harshly or rigidly dictating life choices to the soul; others become *controlling-caregiving*, being excessively solicitous and patronizing toward the soul, treating one's highest expression in the way some youngsters (mis)treat their elders.

Spiritual development, ego surrender and nonattachment

We might apply the principles derived from attachment theory in the interpersonal realm to the transpersonal realm. The transpersonal realm of the psyche may include history and prehistory including past life memories, the archetypes of our collective unconscious, animal identification, cosmically unitary experience, or paranormal experience such as communication with distant or deceased individuals. These experiences appear to be tapping sources of knowledge beyond those accepted conventionally, and to be an expansion of awareness beyond one's usual ego boundaries, which requires a certain ego detachment as well.

In discussing attachment and detachment with the ego, it is important to note the distinction between "dissolution" of the ego and "surrender" of the ego. If an individual's ego functioning is too weak to absorb and integrate unconscious archetypal material and primary transpersonal experiences, he/she is *overpowered* by them and may become psychotic. Here the ego has dissolved and been rendered non-operational. Alternatively, the ego can fracture into competing parts and also be rendered non-operational, or psychotic. Here the personality disintegrates into a plurality of autonomous complexes or subpersonalities which take the place of the ego. Conversely, the individual with sufficient ego strength *loosens identification* with the ego and gains access to the forces of the unconscious.

Another useful conceptualization is "ego-control" (Block & Block, 1980). People with high ego-control are rigid and inhibited, disposed to repress impulses and emotions, to feel anxious in new situations, and to reject unexpected information. Those who have weak ego-control are impulsive and distractible, and do not have the discipline to concentrate on one task for very long. The synthesis of these two polar extremes is not moderate ego-control, but rather "ego resiliency." Ego resiliency is the ability to respond flexibly but also persistently to challenges.

Jung envisioned "the transformation of personality through the blending and fusion of the noble with the base … of the conscious with the unconscious" (1966, p. 220). Before transformation can occur, the ego must be a unified, complete conscious state. That is accomplished through achieving security of attachment, incorporation of repressed unconscious material, successful completion of the developmental stages, and the unification of all the fragmented parts of a person's psyche. The possibility of movement into *transegoic* realms, of transcending the ego, was a basic

tenet of Jung's departure from the classical Freudian viewpoint. Jung observed a tendency at midlife or later for the ego to undergo a reversal of the "I-Thou" dualistic ego (an *enantiodromia*). He believed that this reversal is a natural part of the movement of life, "the first half of which is devoted to ego development and the second half of which is devoted to a return of the ego to its underlying source in the collective unconscious or objective psyche" (Washburn, 1995, p. 21). Jung asserted that the natural consequence of the ego's descent into the collective unconscious, where it is engulfed and annihilated, is a triumphant return, born anew, regenerated, transfigured (the hero's odyssey).

When the ego, this never-ending procession of momentary 'I's who believe in their own supremacy, recognizes that truth, the second phase of life can begin. However, the first phase must be completed or the second phase will not succeed. In other words, the ego of the seeker must be so strong and healthy that it disidentifies from the myriad of fragmented selves and surrenders itself to a higher purpose than its own self-promotion. It must be strong, well-tested, and secure in its abilities. A metaphor to describe this would be a newly formed clay sculpture. At first it requires a cast or braces to hold it in place while it is forming and solidifying. Only after being baked is it strong enough to stand on its own without support, i.e., to "let go." In the same way, only when our ego is solid are we prepared to move beyond the realm of "I am what I can do," to transcend the normal, to let go of the known and to venture into a wholly new level of self-exploration. Many people in therapy must first undergo a process of ego-strengthening before they are ready to expand their concept of themselves, to accept their shadow parts, and thus to loosen or stretch, or even begin to let go of, the ego's limited, idealized self-concept.

> The normal rhythm of human development, including spiritual development, involves regularly shedding our snakeskins of knowledge, attachments, and identity to make room for expansion into a larger perspective and identity. Wisdom treats the self as a shell, a costume, a transitional object, the vehicle but not the driver, a lease, not a purchase for eternity. The mystics and many sages encourage us to not merely defend our position and our self but to regularly and naturally clean house, sloughing off rigid identity (Hart, 2000, p. 159).

A prototype for the process of transformation into nonattachment in the second phase of life is the process of birth. Leaving behind the security and predictability (and the extreme limitations) of the womb again requires a monumentally trusting leap of faith. The fetus willingly surrenders itself to the unknown force that will carry it to a new infinitely expanded world.

Of course, it can also be done unconsciously, in fear or pain or rage. The difference between these choices sets in motion influences of vast proportions on the life to follow.

Another prototype for the process of transformation is the gradual growth of the infant and toddler from its identification with its mother or other caregiver into an autonomous individual. That process occurs over years and through the psychosocial developmental stages. Throughout the process, the underlying momentum is ego strengthening without going overboard into narcissism. It is nonattachment without going into the isolation and limitation aspects of detachment.

Adolescents often regressively revisit and "act out" the unresolved rapprochement crisis of year two. To develop identity and a sense of personal power, adolescents must experience secure connection and attachment with their parents *coupled with* healthy separation-individuation (Grotevant & Cooper, 1985; Josselson, 1988; Ryan & Lynch, 1989). Optimal development depends, then, on synthesizing the polar opposites of attachment and detachment, connection and separation. This becomes another prototype of transformation, of transcendence, and of the natural relationship we have with our own soul.

Loss and restoration in bereavement

An aspect of attachment theory that is particularly relevant to understanding the fluctuations in connection between personality (ego) and soul is the process of coping with bereavement.

There are two generic approaches to coping with the loss of a significant relationship: continuing versus relinquishing bonds. People adopt different coping styles according to their style of attachment, and the variety of ways of either continuing or relinquishing bonds differ according to their attachment style. We propose that individuals who are insecure in their interpersonal attachment style are most likely to experience soul loss or splitting.

When a person separates off an aspect of his soul as a defense to severe traumatization, does he/she react by *breaking* the bond, or *grasping* for it? What determines which one occurs?

Stroebe et al. (2005, p. 50) summarize loss and restoration, the two processes in coping with bereavement (depicted in Figure 1).

> Coping with loss orientation stressors has to do with processing the loss of the person him- or herself. This focus on the deceased person involves grief work, positive (e.g., relief at the

end of suffering) and negative (e.g., yearning and rumination) reappraisal of the meaning of the loss, and the effort to "relocate" the deceased in a world without his or her presence. It incorporates "separation distress" (the urge to cry and search for the lost person), which Bowlby (1980) identified as a major component of grief.

By contrast, restoration orientation has to do with the secondary stressors that come about as
an indirect consequence of the bereavement, for example, changing identity and role from "wife" to "widow" or mastering the skills (e.g., cooking and dealing with finances) that the bereaved had contributed to a marriage. The range of additional psychosocial changes or transitions that the person continually has to grapple with after a major loss has been well documented in the literature (e.g., Parkes, 1996). Restoration incorporates the rebuilding of shattered assumptions about the world and one's own place in it, just as loss orientation incorporates rebuilding of assumptions about the presence of the lost person in one's life (Janoff-Bulman & Berg, 1998).

Figure 1. The dual-process model of coping with bereavement (Stroebe et al., 2005, p. 51)

Now, we will reframe the discussion of loss and restoration, from loss of a personal relationship to loss of oneself, one's soul. Processing that loss involves grief work, both positive (e.g., relief at finding sanctuary) and negative (e.g., yearning and rumination), and an appraisal (almost certainly unconscious) of the meaning of the loss, and the new "location" of that part of oneself. It incorporates "separation distress," manifested most likely as depression, depersonalization, and derealization. Restoration has to do with the secondary stressors that come about as an indirect consequence of soul loss, for example, compensations required to accommodate the changing identity and the shattered assumptions about the world and one's own place in it. In essence, one either avoids acknowledging the loss and thus any need for grief, abandoning the soul to its hiding place, or one becomes preoccupied with the unconsciously experienced loss, abandoning the ego's place in the world.

Forms of unhealthy grief patterns are identified as chronic, absent/delayed or inhibited, and traumatic grief reactions. *Chronic grief* is characterized by the long-lasting presence of symptoms associated with intense grief (rumination, preoccupation with thoughts of what has been lost, and depressed mood) and the absence of apparent progress in coming to terms with the loss. In *absent or delayed or inhibited grief*, the person shows little or no sign of grieving, although he or she may do so at a later time. This person continues on with life as though nothing had happened, focusing exclusively on the tasks of restoration, avoiding loss orientation. Finally, *traumatic grief*, like posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), includes a difficulty in controlling anxiety and arousal and in keeping these emotions at a functional level. There is a chaotic fluctuation between highly intense and persistent periods of confrontation, on the one hand, and inability to confront, on the other.

So, chronic grief involves too much of a focus on loss; inhibited, delayed, or absent grief involves too little of a focus; and traumatic grief involves involuntary intrusion and avoidance. These grief patterns correspond to the three insecure styles of attachment: insecure-preoccupied, insecure-avoidant (dismissing), and disorganized. An *insecure-preoccupied* orientation is associated with uncontained emotionality, an inability to cope with abandonment-related feelings, a tendency to be clinging, and a lack of trust in the self. An *insecure–dismissing* orientation to relationships is associated with a lack of trust in others and counterdependence, a tendency to suppress and avoid abandonment-related emotions or any overt expression of emotions. Finally, *insecure-disorganized* individuals lack trust in both themselves and others, having been traumatized in ways that damage their ability to think and talk about abandonment-related losses and abuse coherently.

Mikulincer and Shaver (2003) concluded that similar patterns of attachment style-related coping would be used in dealing with many different kinds of stressful life events. Here we apply the generic patterns to traumatic soul loss.

The child whose attachment style is *preoccupied* and who utilizes dissociation and splitting as a defense for overwhelming trauma will focus on "what is missing – what might have been – what never can be." He/she will idealize the pre-trauma past and feel bitter resentment at its having been taken away. This child experiences deep loss of self-confidence, and a timidity about attempting to overcome the loss.

The child whose attachment style is *avoidant* and who splits off the soul as a defense for overwhelming trauma will focus on "doing what I have to do – getting on with it – I will deal with this on my own." He/she will dismiss or discount the value of what has been lost (peak experience, spirituality, or aesthetic expression) and inflate a positive self image.

The child whose attachment style is *disorganized* and who splits off the soul as a defense for overwhelming trauma will be highly anxious about what is missing, but fearfully avoidant about it. He/she will dismiss its value, and at the same time diminish his own. This resembles the intrusion-avoidance chaos of PTSD, with negative beliefs about what has been lost *and* about the self.

The hiding defenses: Forgetting (states of oblivion and absorption)

Complexes, splinter psyches, ego boundaries, repression, depersonalization, dissociation, splitting, split in the psyche-soma

At the time of a traumatic experience, and subsequently as a reaction to the trauma, common reactions include repression, depersonalization (Cardena & Spiegel, 1993), dissociation, splitting, fragmenting, and various death-related strategies (psychic numbing, decentering, psychic death, reversible symbolic death, soul murder). We now discuss the spectrum of "hiding defenses." The key to these soul defenses is that to the ego, the everyday consciousness, ignorance is bliss, or at least it is preferable to the harsh reality of the sequaelae of trauma. This ignorance is an *active not wanting to know*, a resistance to knowing, i.e., *ignoring* the truth. "Survivors of chronic trauma develop a strange but enduring attachment to states of *oblivion* and *absorption*" (Schwartz, 2000, p. 19). The various combinations of these two manipulations of one's awareness form the "hiding defenses," the means to accomplish active forgetting.

And always the behavior is (mostly unconsciously) centered around the terrible past. In the words of an incest survivor in treatment, "I'm stuck in my past. It is like a never ending past life" (Putnam, 2004, p. 237). Indeed, the abuse is not something that happened long ago; it is "still alive in her in the present" (Burton, 2004, p. 231).

Fragmentation of the self is a common, and highly functional, human experience, especially within the context of peak states and mystical spiritual experience (Feinberg, 2001, p. 84). For example, the experience of *jamais vu* (where the familiar appears strange) and *déjà vu* (where the strange appears familiar) are alterations in relatedness, and therefore in

identity. What has been ego-close becomes momentarily ego-distant, and vice versa (see page 35). Derealization and depersonalization accompany rarified mystical experiences as well as states of debilitating psychopathology.

One method of losing oneself as a defense to trauma, of hiding, is to introject another and identify oneself with that: becoming absorbed in not-me, allowing it to become a pseudo-me, and allowing me to send into oblivion the real (and unacceptable) me. An example of this is identification with the abuser. And here the aspect of self that is hiding is cowering in fear, not only of the external threats but also from the aspect of self that sent it into hiding. Confronted by the traumatized ego-self who demands to know "Why are you hiding here?", the soul answers "You would have killed me if I came out" (Woodman, 1993, p. 12).

Jung's conceptualization of complexes

"As a result of some psychic upheaval whole tracts of our being can plunge back into the unconscious and vanish from the surface for years and decades . . . disturbances caused by affects are known technically as phenomena of dissociation, and are indicative of a psychic split" (Jung, 1934, para. 286).

This phenomenon of fragmented identity can, then, result in what Jung referred to as complexes. Jung described such traumatic complexes as "autonomous splinter psyches," fragments which became split off. One of the complexes is the ego-complex, the center of the field of consciousness, the adaptive, conscious executive of the personality, the observing aspect. The personal unconscious is related specifically to this ego-complex. Other complexes are collections of ideas and images organized around one or more archetypes at the core of the complex and having a certain feeling tone and energy charge. Examples might include a father complex, mother complex, hero complex, child complex, the anima, the animus, etc. All the complexes together Jung called the collective unconscious, or objective psyche. In the altered state, the normally unconscious complexes begin to come into conscious awareness.

Here lies the incompatibility of some of those competing identities. One may be determined to "be good" and stay away from sweets, while another pops up and devours all the candy in the jar. Each is successively in control, and the secondary gain of the latter defeats the intentions of the former. Jung saw most people as identified almost entirely with certain acceptable aspects of themselves (the *persona*), having denied and

repressed the unacceptable aspects (the *shadow*). In fact, Jung refers to this identification with the persona as an instance of *possession* (Jung, 1959, p. 122). One identity, which he called a *complex*, hijacks the whole confederation of identities for a moment or two before another takes over. "Everyone knows that people have complexes," Jung wrote, but "what is not so well known … is that complexes can have us" (Jung, 1964, p. 161). So we find ourselves one day in a job we don't like in order to pay the mortgage on a home we resent. Who made the choice twenty years ago to live this way? Which complex hijacked you?

A particularly strong complex is the victim, which fights back when attempts are made to release it. An example is a woman who did some personal work on taking back her power only to find herself hours later flat on her back and helpless. It looked as if "the victim" complex was literally threatened by her healing attempts and proceeded to let her know who was in charge. She definitely appeared to be possessed by the victim.

Another example of this predicament is a couple who fall in love with each other at first sight, feeling an almost eerie sense of familiarity, and then gradually realize that they actually hate each other. The familiarity may come from marrying one's unhealthy parent, re-creating a nuclear family just like the original family of origin. Or the familiarity may come from marrying someone who personifies the repressed shadow part, who is overtly very outgoing and sociable but underneath is actually quite self-conscious, thus marrying that introverted part of himself. This relationship re-creates the internal conflict that is still waiting to be resolved.

In the Jungian perspective, not all complexes are pathological; only when complexes remain unconscious and operate autonomously do they create difficulties in daily life. Complexes become autonomous when they "dissociate" (split off), accumulating enough psychical energy and content to usurp the executive function of the ego and work against the overall good of the individual. Autonomous complexes are usually the result of unconscious response to traumatic childhood experiences, or unconscious ingrained patterns left over from interrupted and unfinished developmental milestones (premature weaning or toilet training, for example, or the imposition of an age-inappropriate gender stereotype). Traumatic experiences typically cause negative fixations or blind-spots, whereas interrupted developmental milestones cause fixation on the satisfiers of unmet needs and compulsive behavior (Washburn, 1995). The hallmark of these patterns, or autonomous complexes, is that they operate unconsciously; that is, the person is chronically dissociated. Only when the

dissociation is broken and the complex is brought to consciousness can the emotional charge be assimilated and the autonomous nature of the complex be dissolved. The split-off parts, having taken some of the ego's energy and become shadow aspects of the ego, need to be re-assimilated.

Ego boundaries – dissociation and repression

> Certain psychiatric disorders can be conceptualized as "state-change" disorders, in that a major pathophysiological component of the disorder comes from a dysregulation of the state transition process. Depression can be used as an example. Everyone becomes depressed periodically, but we typically cycle out of the depressed state spontaneously or with a little deliberate self-induced state manipulation (e.g., a shopping spree makes some individuals feel better). Depression only becomes a clinical condition when the person becomes "stuck" in the depressed state for a specified length of time--for example, a minimum of 2 weeks by DSM-III-R criteria (American Psychological Association, 1987) [sic - American Psychiatric Association, 1987]. It is the failure to switch out of this universally experienced state that defines it as a pathological condition. Other disorders, such as panic attacks, are characterized by precipitous shifts in state from normal states to pathological states without obvious cause. In some cases, such as "specific" phobic disorders or posttraumatic flashbacks, the precipitous shift in state of consciousness is triggered by an environmental stimulus (Putnam, 1994, p. 298).

The ego's connection with the soul fluctuates through the day, through various states, through various degrees of "being present." The transitions between these levels of connection are managed unconsciously, although just as a shopping spree can be used to manage the transition between states, we can use rituals, prayer and meditation, or environmental manipulation (sensory deprivation, aesthetic icons, music) to increase the sense of connection between the ego and the soul.

" 'Enlightenment' has been likened to an open hand. When you try to grasp it, you transform your open hand into a fist. The very attempt to possess it (the action mode) banishes the state because it is a function of the receptive mode" (Deikman, 1980, p. 267). So it is with the ego's connection with the soul: efforts to protect it, based on traumatic defense, utilize the action mode of consciousness, which tends to banish the connection.

Whatever the experience of an individual vis-à-vis "where I end and you begin," it varies significantly with altered states of consciousness, including hypnosis. Changes in ego boundary are easily accomplished in hypnosis (Brenman et al., 1947). For example, spatial and time orientation become plastic, allowing the phenomena of believable age regression or age progression. The "closed container" experience of self expands to

allow one to "be" the fetus that one was, or to experience "being" both the three-year-old and the adult providing comfort simultaneously (Blum, 1970; Laurence & Perry, 1981).

Dissociation and repression are means of modifying the ego boundaries by narrowing down the "perceived self" to eliminate any unwanted experiences. In this way the ego puts *out of sight* (and only wishfully *out of mind*) the unacceptable aspects of itself – the shadow parts. One of the conceptualizations of how this works is proposed by E. R. Hilgard (1977), called the neodissociation theory. Two levels of cognitive function are envisioned: an executive function, which plans and directs behavior and experiences self-awareness, and a monitoring function, which observes these operations and allows some of them to become conscious to the executive ego state but some to remain unconscious. The monitoring function, the "hidden observer," is normally capable of screening which data (internally generated or externally stimulated) to bring to the attention of the executive ego state. Thus the individual is utilizing dissociation through careful control of the boundaries between ego states. That dissociation can be for purposes of efficiency, since the human mind cannot simultaneously deal with all the internal and external stimuli. The dissociation can also be for purposes of defense against traumatic memories or threatening realizations.

In hypnotic trance, the normal distinction between executive and monitoring functions are loosened so that aspects of the self normally out of awareness may come into consciousness and may actually plan and direct experience. In other words, the usual dissociative ego boundary control comes under self-control. Dissociation can be structured to support the client's therapeutic experience during the uncovering work and the integrative work in psychotherapy. Brown and Fromm (1986, p. 177) identify three ways to utilize dissociation in hypnotherapy:

> (a) dissociating the experiencing and observing parts of the ego (Fromm, 1965a, 1965b), (b) eliciting a hidden observer (Hilgard, 1977), and (c) evoking a particular ego state (Edelstien, 1981; Watkins & Watkins, 1979).

Dissociating the experiencing ego from the observing ego is useful to diminish the painful feelings, emotional or physical, when an individual is unable to tolerate it. Eliciting the hidden observer can be useful in analgesia, for example, or in requesting information from an otherwise

unconscious internal source, such as in ideomotor signaling or in the Gestalt technique of giving a voice to a body part or a physical sensation.

The most frequently used form of controlling dissociation is to evoke a particular ego state that is dissociated from consciousness (Klemperer, 1965). Certain ego states have become dissociated as a defense, i.e., repressed, and others have simply become dissociated through withdrawal of energy, i.e., decathected. Accessing repressed ego states requires skill, tenacity, and safety; activating nonrepressed but decathected ego states, ironically, operates best with therapeutic "effortlessness." In other words, evoking a particular state, such as a fear response or an episodic memory, is successful in inverse relation to the effort required to engage it. The more one's hypnotically evoked experience "just happens" without cognitive effort, the more hypnotically vivid it is (Weitzenhoffer, 1980; Woody et al., 1992). This is very similar to the well-known phenomenon for athletes and performers that too much conscious attention to their performance actually results in a poorer outcome. Once a skill has been developed through considerable training and practice, the performance is rendered automatic, with implicit rather than explicit control. Similarly, "hypnosis can be understood as direct activation of the implicit memory system" (Spiegel, 1998, p. 234).

Repression

The defense of repression is effective as a protection in response to trauma up to a point; to repress one need only to block retrieval of a memory already fully registered and stored. However, repression does not suffice when the trauma exceeds a certain level of intrusiveness, at which point the more powerful defense of dissociation is required. Dissociation blocks or blurs the perceiving, registering and storing function itself. You may perceive the memory in one state and then fail to retrieve the memory until you are in that state again (state-dependent memory). When dissociation is insufficient to assure psychic survival of the trauma, the defense of splitting becomes necessary, sequestering certain experiences, impulses, or memories into a part of oneself that can be experienced as "outside me, not me." This allows the ego to simultaneously acknowledge *and* deny reality.

> "Following Hilgard (1977, p. 80) and Beahrs (1982), repression may be viewed as a lateral splitting-off of consciousness which interposes an amnesic barrier against the underlying incestuous experience; and dissociation may be viewed as establishing additional amnesia

> via a vertical splitting-off of consciousness as one part of the self distances from part-selves involved in the incest" (Miller, 1986, p. 26).

Depersonalization

Depersonalization is a dissociative disorder that usually includes elements of inauthenticity, self-negation, self-objectification, derealization, and body detachment. The *DSM–IV* (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) describes depersonalization in terms of an alteration in the perception or experience of the self so that one feels detached from, and as if one is an outside observer of, one's mental processes or body, feeling like one is in a dream. For example, the (de)person might talk about her experience as feeling like "I'm not alive, as though my body is an empty lifeless shell."

A useful concept here is that of "ego-closeness" and "ego-distance" (Schilder, 1965; Voth & Mayman, 1963). "Things or other persons can be relatively close to the inner core of the self's experience, or they can be quite removed. In this way, an object can be 'ego-close' or 'ego-distant' " (Feinberg, 2001, p. 30). For most of us, in consentual reality, it is easy to know that my arm or my beliefs are "ego-close," i.e., I am connected to them, they are intimately relevant to me, and they are a part of me. Your arm and your beliefs are not a part of me; they are "ego-distant" from me. I am attached to certain objects as well: my clothes, my car, my home, my books, and many other objects that have great personal relevance to me, I experience as "ego-close."

In the main, people who tend to be ego-close are more suggestible, more responsive to external stimuli, distractible, open, exhibitionistic, active socially, emotionally labile and impulsive, while people who tend to be ego-distant are more reflective, enjoy solitude, tend to be daydreamers, show initiative, are less open in their emotional responses, and may be withdrawn and shy (Voth & Mayman, 1963).

The traits associated with the ego-distant perspective can reflect a dissociative tendency. With pathology, one begins to become ego-distant from elements closer and closer to one's essence, to experience alienation. It is one thing to lose connection or attachment to one's car, or clothes; it is more serious to lose a sense of one's body or beliefs being a part of oneself; at the extreme, one loses that connection with one's very essence – soul loss.

These comments from individuals who experience depersonalization are telling: "I cannot feel my body, not truly numb, but it is as if I have

disappeared into myself, beyond my own flesh and blood…" and "Sometimes I literally wonder if I am already dead and existing as a ghost…it feels like my soul is trying to leave its shell and I am fighting with all my strength to hold it inside this body" (Depersonalization Community, internet).

Dissociation

Dissociation is "the escape when there is no escape" (Putnam, 1992, p. 104).

First we will address the underlying mechanisms of dissociation, namely, splitting (*alterations of consciousness*) and fragmentation (*compartmentalization*).

Dissociation, then, incorporates two elements (Cardena & Weiner, 2004): *compartmentalization* (the lack of integration of psychological processes that should ordinarily be accessible to conscious awareness) and *alterations of consciousness* (aspects of the individual or environment are experienced as unreal or experientially detached from the self, with reality testing remaining intact). Dissociation is a global term that can refer to a wide range of experiences, depending on what is being detached, what "compartment" it is being contained in, and the degree of memory access to the contents of that compartment. Cardena and Weiner (2004, p. 497) describe that range of experiences:

> Various psychological functions can be dissociated, including the sense of self and/or the environment (e.g., depersonalization), emotions (e.g., emotionally expressive behaviors without the associated subjective feeling), physical sensations and agency (e.g., conversion symptoms), memory (e.g., dissociative amnesia), and identity (e.g., dissociative identity disorder; Butler, Duran, Jasiukaitis, Koopman, & Spiegel, 1996; Cardena, 1997).

We are presenting the concept in this article that one can add to the list of what can be dissociated one's soul, or essence.

Dissociation can be utilized in a limited and temporary way to manage the pain of a traumatic event. However, to keep the dissociation from becoming more widespread and the fragmentation from becoming rigidified, the traumatized person needs to have someone capable of providing comfort and respite, even if it is only experienced as an "oasis" in the badlands of abuse. In the absence of such a resource, the child will not internalize adequate images of protection. "As a result, they lack a template for developing self-defense behaviors, and this deficit may underlie most if not all of the long-term effects of child abuse" (Thomas,

2005, p. 21). Rather than internalizing, or introjecting, a safe and protective caregiver, this child internalizes a harsh critic who challenges her very right to safety ("You don't deserve protection"). Thomas describes the resulting dynamic for this individual: "survivors who face boundary challenges simultaneously experience harsh criticism from an internal voice (e.g., 'You have no right to say no'). Thus, survivors feel under attack at the same time from an outside challenger and an inner critic. Unable to defend themselves on either front, they feel overwhelmed and dissociate" and ultimately "dissociation functions as a kind of defender of last resort when individuals lack effective models of protection" (p. 22).

Indeed, as Erskine (1993, p. 184) writes: ". . . the defense of dissociation results not only from traumatic experiences, but, equally, or even more importantly, from the lack of a protective and reparative relationship."

Holmes et al. (2005) have proposed a two-tiered definitional system of dissociation (divided into detachment and compartmentalization aspects). The first category, detachment related symptoms, encompasses depersonalization, derealization and similar phenomena such as out-of-body experiences. In each of these symptoms, the individual experiences an altered state of consciousness characterized by a sense of separation (or detachment) from aspects of everyday experience, be it their body (out-of-body experiences), their sense of self (depersonalization), or the external world (derealization). Examples are emotional numbing, intrusive images and flashbacks (Spiegel & Cardena, 1991).

The second category, compartmentalization related symptoms, incorporates dissociative amnesia and the neurological symptoms characteristic of the conversion disorders, such as conversion paralysis, sensory loss, seizures, gait disturbance and pseudo-hallucinations, as well as other instances of so-called "somatoform dissociation" (Nijenhuis et al., 1996), as well as possibly fugue and DID. Holmes et al. (2005) suggest that all compartmentalization phenomena are characterized by a deficit in the ability to deliberately control processes or actions that would normally be amenable to such control (Brown, 2002, 2004). One of the defining features of this phenomenon is that the compartmentalized processes continue to operate normally (apart from their inaccessibility to volitional control), and influence ongoing emotion, thought and action. One of the principle differences between detachment and compartmentalization phenomena is that normal functioning does not continue during periods of detachment (Allen et al., 1999).

Thus, traumatic amnesia could be the result of either a problem in laying down the memory at the time of the incident (due to detachment), or a problem in accessing and retrieving an existing memory into conscious awareness (due to compartmentalization). Soul loss might be seen as a combination of both processes: the disconnection occurred at the time of the overwhelming trauma due to detachment, and the part of oneself still connected, that remembers where and when the soul went into hiding, is itself unconscious.

Another form of dissociative state is peritraumatic dissociation (Spiegel & Cardena, 1991), in which people describe a similar relative absence of feelings as those with depersonalization disorder. However, the main difference between the two is that "such experiences are linked to highly stressful and traumatic events, rather than reflecting a more pervasive difficulty with emotion experience (e.g., Feinstein, 1989; Hillman, 1981; Madakasira & O'Brien, 1987; Noyes & Kletti, 1977; Sloan, 1988). For example, Noyes and Kletti (1977), in their survey of 101 survivors of life-threatening danger, found that 72% reported experiencing feelings of unreality and an altered sense of the passage of time during the life threat, 57% reported automatic movements, 56% reported a lack of emotion, 52% reported a sense of detachment, 35% reported a feeling of detachment from their bodies, and 30% reported experiences of derealization" (Dalgleish & Power, 2004, p. 815).

Cohen (1996) organizes dissociation into four essential exclusions: *not me* (signaling the development of separate parts); *not now* (characterizing incapacity to remain in or experience the present); *not then* (indicating disavowal of personal history); and *not ever* (identifying lack of hope, even of future orientation). This provides a graphic way of visualizing the process of denying my self, my essence past, present, and future. At the extreme, this describes a death experience, annihilation.

"At the core of a trauma is concealed an experience of death, a near-death experience" (Renggli, 2005, p. 307). We will return to this theme later in a discussion of *decentering*, *psychic death*, and *a failure of indwelling*, the catastrophic result of employing dissociation, splitting, and fragmentation for defense. However, for now we will examine this traumatic experience of death as it applies to dissociation. Renggli suggests that when the trauma is "experienced as too dangerous, too close to the original trauma, then the soul has a tendency to 'leave the body.' . . . In technical terms this is described as dissociation, as a 'split-off': the soul leaves the body" (2005, p. 308).

Dissociation can be likened to the animal reflex of Todstellreflex, or "feigning death." We know that animals in the wild react to threat with a fight or flight response until the danger has disappeared or been overcome. Once either fight or flight become useless, the response of last resort is to freeze, i.e., tonic immobility, or "playing possum." This "shock" has a high survival value, since the predator may abandon this prey as too easy a kill, or as already dead. If allowed to live, the prey animal will recover consciousness after a while, shake off the adrenalin and other stress hormones which initiated the fight or flight response, and go back to peaceful, if watchful, grazing.

What is the experience during that feigned death? In tonic immobility, the brain keeps on working, and the circulation is not shut down. What is turned off is conscious awareness: the miracle of dissociation.

"Stilling" is a behavior observed in infants who have frightened and/or frightening parents, the Type D children who develop disorganized/disoriented attachment style. The child becomes totally still, eyes glazed over, apparently frozen psychically and emotionally (Solomon & George, 1999). "What my patients tell me about their 'stilling' is not that their minds are blank, but rather, they have so many thoughts demanding attention, they become frozen from excess possibilities and an inability to decide which response makes the most sense, let alone appreciate any nuance" (Chefetz, 2004, p. 250). In other words, this is a shock response to overwhelm.

Dissociation can serve wide-ranging purposes; it can be, as we have seen, *survival-oriented* or alternatively it can be *spiritually useful*. Grosso (2004) discusses what he calls "supernormal dissociation" in three aspects: shamanic, prophetic, and mystical experience. Examples include shamanic journeying, psychedelic altered states, creative inspiration, somnambulism, and altered states of prophesy, channeling and mediumship. Some forms of meditation utilize a dissociative process to *de*focus on certain experiences and/or focus exclusively on others.

In repression, depersonalization, and dissociation, the child is faced with the dilemma of knowing the truth about her abuse, but being forced to "exile that knowledge" (Hollander, 2004, p. 212). When the wound is to the child's very core, the knowledge cannot be exiled without also losing some aspect of her own being. The abused child, like shipwreck survivors in an overcrowded lifeboat, must sacrifice some aspects of the self in order to preserve others. The more overwhelming the assault, the more essential and closer to the core is that aspect that must be sacrificed. The child finds

herself in the predicament of the lone hiker whose arm became trapped under a heavy boulder: his only hope of survival was to amputate his own arm with the only means available, a pocket knife. Call it "psychic dismemberment" (Schwartz, 2000, p. 420).

One approach to understanding this phenomenon is to study asomatognosia. "One of the most dramatic alterations of the self that the neurologist encounters in the course of clinical practice is the condition known as *asomatognosia*. Asomatognosia literally means, 'lack of recognition of the body.' The patient with asomatognosia not only does not recognize a part of the body; he or she may totally reject it" (Feinberg, 2001, p. 8). The individual afflicted with this condition has extensive brain damage caused by strokes, and cannot identify particular body parts as their own. Often the person considers his left hand or arm as belonging to the doctor or to someone else, even perhaps to a deceased spouse (Ullman, 1960). He/she may consider it "a piece of rusty machinery" or "dead wood" (Weinstein, 1991), and sometimes experience it as quite literally dead. Critchley (1974) reports on a patient who referred to his arm as "a piece of dead meat." This is often a metaphorical reference to having lost something dear. Feinberg (2001) relates one patient who described her arm as a Pet Rock, explaining that a Pet Rock, like her paralyzed arm, "lays there like a lump" and is "stupid." This patient went on to make the association between the Pet Rock and the stones that are traditionally left on a Jewish grave. What she had lost, buried, and attempted to memorialize was an essential part of herself. Feinberg concludes that "brain pathology can destroy the integrated self in any of us" (2001, p. 27). This particular brain pathology is "the interaction between a damaged right hemisphere and a relatively intact, but altered, left hemisphere" (p. 51). He goes on say,

> One of the interesting aspects of asomatognosia is that, despite the fragmentation of the self, these patients strive to maintain an integrated self and make sense of their experience. Indeed, to a large extent they succeed. The neglected left side and the misidentified left limb leave a hole, a gap, in the self, that must be filled. The patient may disavow the arm, but something is put in its place, something of personal significance (p. 29).

When the fragmentation of the self is caused by damage to the soul rather than to the brain, what similarities or differences exist? What does the child sacrifice at the time of overwhelming traumatic abuse? And how does that person attempt to maintain an integrated self and make sense of

their experience? What is the something of personal significance that is put in its place?

> The dependent child protects (or minimizes harm to) him/herself both in fantasy and reality by separating out any thoughts, feelings, and memories that might disrupt idealization of the adults (Shengold, 1989) or provoke inner conflict or trigger more abusive attacks. In other words, s/he must sacrifice aspects of the self associated with perception of the malevolence of the caretakers. Freyd (1996) calls this *betrayal blindness:* the abused child maintains the relationship on which s/he is dependent by blocking awareness of feelings or information that reveal(s) betrayal (Schwartz, 2000, p. 296).

In response to trauma, children "both know and don't know about their experience, in the same moment, and without conscious conflict or anxiety" (Chefetz, 2004, p. 246). How does this paradoxical state of affairs develop? In Deikman's (1977) words, "The central problem of understanding states of consciousness is understanding who or what experiences the state. Our theories evolve with *the center missing*; namely, the 'I' of consciousness, the Witnesser" (p. 230, italics added). Something vital is missing, and yet the individual is capable of continuing to function in its absence. What is missing? In Orwell's (1949) metaphorical novel *1984*, Big Brother's brainwasher O'Brien says to Winston Smith, the victim of his abuse, "You will be hollow. We will squeeze you empty, and then we shall fill you with ourselves" (p. 260).

The child first exiles from conscious awareness affect (numbing) and then knowledge (amnesia). Freyd (1994) provides a vivid analogy of the dissociative process, and how one might resort to numbing, and further to amnesia. Consider an individual who breaks a leg on a skiing accident while traveling with a companion. Experiencing tremendous pain, she will not want to move at all, and certainly not stand up and walk. Instead she will wait while her companion goes to get a rescue team. On the other hand, if she has a similar accident while traveling alone, she will block perception of the leg pain and get up and hobble to get the help she needs. While the woman in both cases wants to avoid feeling pain, only in the second case does she block the experience of pain. Applying this to traumatic child abuse, numbing becomes functional when there is no help readily available, i.e., when the primary caregiver upon whom the child is dependent is the source of the abuse. Thus betrayed, the child must rely on herself to survive, using dissociation and memory repression to ignore the pain of hobbling on her psychically broken leg.

Blocking information about the abuse, i.e., amnesia, is more likely to occur with these circumstances (Freyd, 1994, p. 322): "alternative realities

available (abuse in middle of night and 'normal' family interactions in day, allowing for a small set of consistent constructions of reality); isolation during abuse (lack of social validation for the experience, allowing for cognitively consistent internal denial); young age at onset of abuse (reality defined by adults, lack of integrative functions, plasticity of nervous system); alternative reality-defining statements by caregivers ('this didn't happen'); and/or the absence of any socially shared explicit discussion of the abusive events, causing a failure of information entry into the child's explicit autobiographical memory (Nelson, 1993)."

With persistent incidents of trauma, or flagrant enough betrayal, next to be exiled is the child's internal working model, or world view (beliefs). The phenomenon of "isolated subjectivity" (Chefetz, 2003) helps to explain this defense that approximates, but falls short of, splitting. Subjective experience consists primarily of affect, knowledge, and belief; exiling or isolating elements of these three components establishes the condition of isolated subjectivity. Chefetz (2004, p. 251) explains:

> How does isolated subjectivity make itself felt in a person? It would make sense to think that in the child's capacity to respond to either the frightened or frightening parent, "on the fly," there is a whole different way of being Ms. Hollander when she is with her father than when she is with her mother—a different subjective "set" would be present. To go further and even more to the point, there is a whole different way of being Ms. Hollander when she is with her father engaged in sexual play than when she is with him at the breakfast table. The shift in subjectivity required is much more glaring in the latter example, especially if the sexual play needs to be hidden from mother, is not acknowledged by father, and has not *really been felt to have happened* by daughter.
>
> Having multiple subjective "sets" is something we all experience, but in isolated subjectivity, the extent of the isolation leads to that set being experienced as "Not-me."

In children with disorganized attachment, "the very relationship with the caregiver, who is alternately experienced as frightened and frightening (Main, 1995), augments the child's fear response, fertilizing the soil in which dissociation and splitting of personality become the only viable strategies to prevent even more pervasive psychic disintegration in the face of danger. In response to the trauma of the holding environment breaking down, the behavior of the disorganized children is the psychic equivalent of the body's going into shock" (Fosha, 2000b, p. 44).

The child's dissociation provides a respite from directly experiencing the pain, terror, and helplessness. Yet, the psychic energy displaced takes on a life of its own. The personhood who sits staring out the window, or becomes entranced counting flowers on the wallpaper next to the bed, during a girl's sexual abuse is a person. She exists apart from the girl

identified with the body that has been violated. That fragment of a human being, isolated from others and frozen in time (i.e., arrested development), carries some of the essence, some of the soul, of the being she separated from. Davies and Frawley (1992) state emphatically: "We view dissociation . . . as a process which preserves and protects, in split off form, the entire internal object world of the abused child" (p. 8); and "We stress that this child is a fully developed, dissociated, rather primitively organized alternative self. We speak, in this regard, concretely, not metaphorically" (p. 16). The split off alternative self results from the dissociative defense.

Splitting

The defense of splitting is, on one level, so common as to be practically universal for human beings. Winnicott (1958) coined the terms "real self" and "false self" for the parts that result from "normal" socialization of young children by society. However unconscious this process of "splitting of the self" is for most people, the parts continue as contiguous, co-existing, and co-conscious. Sometimes the rejected part of oneself, that is to say *what happened* to a child that required her to split off the part that it happened to, is just too horrific. There is no place *within* to put that experience. When the split off part is rejected as too unacceptable, the unwanted side is cut off as if it is "a kind of gangrenous appendage," and this "mental amputation costs the child fullness of character, mental energy, and considerable memory; the sick, or bad, or night side remains intact though hidden – as though the child had to drag around a rotten, half-severed limb" (Terr, 1994, p. 127).

In the face of trauma so intrusive that dissociation or splitting is not sufficient as a defense, one may combine splitting with displacement, or combine splitting with dissociation. Displacement involves redirecting overwhelming feelings or impulses from a potentially dangerous person to one who is less emotionally charged. For example, it is common among five-year-olds who create imaginary playmates. Combining splitting with displacement involves investing one aspect of the split self with an emotional role that the child would otherwise not be able to tolerate. A sexually traumatized child might separate off part of herself to represent the "disgusting and dirty" part as an imaginary companion to blame and revile, or she might displace that split off part onto a "bad" doll. Combining dissociation along with splitting involves temporarily

abandoning parts of oneself and seeking refuge in only one aspect of the personality.

All the defenses, and combinations of defense, that we have been exploring are reactions to the pain of a traumatic experience. The more intrusive the assault, the more likely that the child identified with the abuse and/or with the abuser. The part of oneself represented by this identification (introjection) is, of course, repulsive. With the advent of repulsion there begins a longing to transcend the sense of self. This longing provides the impetus for healing the wound, returning to a state of wholeness, and it is the beginning of building a framework for spiritual fulfillment. First one recognizes the self-limitation of abandoning parts of oneself and hiding them away from the light of day. One longs to transcend this limited and tangled sense of self, to pull together the disparate parts. Then the parallel spiritual process becomes more and more obvious: one longs to *let go* of the superfluous parts, to loosen attachment to the false identifications, and to surrender to a transcendent self. How vibrant is the paradox of the subtle shift that separates abandoning oneself vs. letting go of oneself. Death and rebirth is only painful when we identify with what is dying.

The concept of splitting originated with Janet, Breuer, and Freud, who spoke of "splitting of consciousness" and "splitting of the ego" as forms of dissociation. Freud understood the phenomenon of splitting of consciousness to be a means of escaping from an intolerable mental condition by allowing alternating states of dual consciousness (Breuer & Freud, 1955). Splitting of the ego he described as the ego effecting a cleavage or division of itself in order to contain two coexisting, mutually contradictory psychical configurations (Freud, 1955).

Kohut (1971) distinguished between "vertical splitting" and "horizontal splitting." He used the term vertical splitting to designate essentially the same process as Freud meant by splitting of the ego, i.e., keeping separate otherwise incompatible psychological attitudes in order to allow their conscious coexistence. By horizontal splitting, Kohut meant a repression barrier, the process of repressing into unconsciousness any grandiose self-representations, leading to diminished self-esteem and depression. Vertical splitting utilizes denial, while horizontal splitting utilizes repression. Ferenczi (1933a, pp. 38-42) refers to vertical splits as "fragmentation." An example of vertical ego splits is given by Shengold (1989, p. 98):

> These vertical ego splits are often denoted by the patient's switching from the first to the second or third person; this also involves defensive generalization. An example: "I felt very excited about the size of his penis. I said to myself, 'You are not interested in that. Only homosexuals are interested in penis size. They get excited by other men's penises. One sometimes has thoughts like that, but they go away'." In the course of his last four sentences, the patient's "I" also went away.

Akhtar and Byrne (1983) focus on the attribute of splitting that even though two selves occur simultaneously, they do not affect each other. They suggest the following to be clinical manifestations of splitting: inability to experience ambivalence (black-or-white absolutist thinking), impaired decision-making (second-thoughts, obsessive doubting, regrets), oscillation of self-esteem (contradictory beliefs about oneself that remain separate and not assimilated into a realistic self-appraisal), ego-syntonic impulsivity (self-sabotaging behaviors that result in no anxiety or guilt), and intensification of affects (anger is felt only as rage, frustration leads to murderous or suicidal impulses).

Winnicott (1958) expanded the concept to a splitting of the "self" so that a false self is available to deal with external reality while the true self withdraws inwardly.

A basic question arises regarding any specific case of splitting: is the splitting defensive, or is it based on a developmental arrest? Where it arises from an arrested development of basic ego functions, i.e., the infant's need to separate gratifying and frustrating experiences into alternating awarenesses, it may be referred to as "primitive splitting" (Volkan, 1976).

What we are proposing here is a level of splitting that is qualitatively different from those discussed previously, in that what is split is neither consciousness nor ego nor self, but rather one's essential spiritual identity, what we are calling one's soul. A further distinction is drawn in relation to the concept of where that separate aspect of oneself is kept; that is, it is neither repressed into unconsciousness (vertical split), nor allowed to alternately come into conscious awareness (horizontal split). It is sent into hiding *from itself.*

> The existence of the complicated split mental representations of self and parents does not automatically make for pathology. That depends on how the splits are used. The crucial questions are whether the contradictory mental representations can be integrated if necessary, and whether they can be brought together and taken apart again so that they can be worked with in a flow of thought and feeling. If not, they must exist for most or all of the time frozen and isolated, beyond criticism and modification, as with the soul-murdered (Shengold, 1989, pp. 280-281).

"Defense mechanisms are for the mind what the immune system is for the body" (Vaillant, 1993, p. 11), and what we call the *witness protection program* is for the soul.

As we have discussed previously (Hartman & Zimberoff, 2004b), ultimately we assist the client in retrieving lost, i.e., disconnected, parts of his/her soul. It is no more of a theoretical or methodological stretch for the client to retrieve her disconnected soul than it is for her to retrieve lost trust or innocence.

We have discovered during the course of doing trauma work that traumatized individuals often have a splitting or fragmentation of the soul. Just as the personality can split off when trauma occurs, so too does the soul. It appears that pieces of the soul may split off or fragment (Modi, 1997) during different experiences. If the trauma is extreme enough, the entire soul may actually separate from the body. This fragmentation produces an individual who seems disconnected, dissociated and spaced out. There are many terms in our language that indicate this condition, such as referring to someone as "a lost soul," or "a space cadet."

Jung discusses the development of theories of neurosis and the relationship between psychotherapeutic treatment and man's spiritual suffering. He felt that neurosis must be understood as the suffering of a soul that has not yet discovered its meaning.

Jung refers to the diminution of the personality known in primitive psychology as "loss of soul" (1959, p. 119). He states that we label the similar experience in our civilized culture as an "abaissement du niveau mental," and describes it as "a slackening of the tensity of consciousness, which might be compared to a low barometric reading, presaging bad weather. The tonus has given way, and this is felt subjectively as listlessness, moroseness, and depression" (p. 119). The condition can go so far that the individual parts of the personality become independent and thus escape from the control of the conscious mind, a phenomena known as hysterical loss of function. The condition results from physical and mental fatigue, bodily illness, violent emotions, traumatic shock (p. 120), and dissociation and suppression of consciousness (p. 281).

We strengthen and consolidate the soul by retrieving any fragments that were separated at moments of trauma or unbearable pain (in this life or past lives). Jung said his task was the "cure of souls" (1961, p. 124). This surpasses the healing of pathology and aims at the fulfillment of individual wholeness. Within that Jungian context, we have learned from shamanic sources how to retrieve and integrate the "lost soul."

We say metaphorically that the person, or aspects of the person, were *lost* when what we mean is that they were *disconnected from*. In reality, however, these parts of the child have more literally been withdrawn inward for protection and safety. Within us all there exists a "sacred zone of safety," "an ultimate zone of safe retreat" (Eigen, 1973) that we can move away from threats of impingement from the outside world as needed. It is the "silent self" that Winnicott (1965a) speaks of, a true, silent, inviolable self. The disconnection occurs for traumatized children because the person is eventually forced to make a terrible choice. Either she becomes schizoid, detached and depersonalized, withdrawn and contracted into this zone of safe retreat deep within, disconnected from others, or she sacrifices connection with the self in retreat, in order to maintain connection with others. Either choice leaves the child paralyzed with psychic deadness and a loss of meaning, alienated, estranged, facing the annihilation of identity with aliveness (Eigen, 1992). The true self is protected in its zone of safe retreat, but it is shell-shocked, made into an object (Spiegel, 1997), unreal even to herself.

Laub (1995) observes, "The loss of the capacity to be a witness to oneself . . . is perhaps the true meaning of annihilation, for when one's history is abolished one's identity ceases to exist as well" (p. 67).

Incidentally, there is a gender difference in making that terrible choice. In general, female responses to stress are to "tend and befriend," whereas male responses are to "fight or flight" (Taylor et al., 2000). Traumatized girls tend to sacrifice themselves in return for the connection with others that is so vitally important. Traumatized boys tend to prefer avoidance and emotional distance, sacrificing the connection with others in return for the illusion of autonomy.

The concept of a "zone of safe retreat" provides an intrapsychic context for retrieval, whether retrieval of attributes, or ego states, or of the soul. We are, perhaps, retrieving "lost" aspects of the self from that place deep within where they were originally put for safekeeping, placed in the witness protection program.

Detachment or Loss of soul

How does the process of soul loss occur? What factors determine whether trauma leads to soul disconnection, and the extent of that disconnection?

"What hits in the moment of confronting trauma is ultimately nothing we can name. Literally nothing. Nor some speculative category in a

philosophical system, but a life-sucking void that takes our breath away" (Egendorf, 1995, p. 20). The life being sucked away is the child's essence, her soul. When the threat is so intrusive and annihilative that the central self must be abandoned rather than temporarily vacated, then the connection with one's soul is jeopardized. This is the fateful moment when in the face of extreme danger we flee "for our nefesh," when the soul's bird-like quality prompts it to fly off.

We know from current trauma research that the more invasive the abuse, the more betrayal involved in the child/abuser relationship, and the more violent the threat to life, the more likely it becomes that the child withdraws cognitively as well as emotionally. There exists a "dose" relationship between severity of exposure to trauma and acute dissociation (Koopman et al.,1996).

Adults who were abused as children tend to have poor boundaries. They learned to ignore or override their intuitive sense of intrusion, be it physical, emotional, or energetic (psychic). They often are clueless when someone acts inappropriately with them, or are too timid to confront the other person. When a girl is sexually abused while the perpetrator is saying, "This is how someone shows you their love," it is not surprising that she may grow up to attract and tolerate abusive men as lovers. "Those who have been abused are commonly split off from their intuition. They have learned over the years to tune out messages from their inner selves. These messages were at the time too painful" (Whitehead, 1994, p. 9).

A split occurs when a child learns to discount his/her own perceptions, to act contrary to feelings, to tolerate self-annihilation (disappearance into the void), "as if some instinctual energy had been extinguished" (Shengold, 1989, p. 18).

Such a split results in resistance, i.e., beliefs and habits developed to ensure that certain positive life experiences never happen, because pleasure was dangerous. Resistance is called a "nourishment barrier" in Ron Kurtz's Hakomi modality (Whitehead, 1994, p. 14). It is a special type of boundary whose function is to defend against the experience of a basic need, e.g., trust in authority, intimacy with safety, a sense of personal power or agency in one's life, a sense of belonging and personal worth. This adult experienced as a child not just frustration of her basic needs but betrayal of the satisfaction of these needs by caregivers. Her need for personal worth and intimacy with safety was met with derogatory judgments like, "You are worthless. You are a dirty little whore" during episodes of incest. Her need for a sense of personal power or agency in her life was met with

incessant promises for rewards that never materialized in return for age-inappropriate responsibilities. No wonder as an adult she avoids situations in which her need is obvious, or situations that evoke that unacceptable experience for her. She automatically keeps her relationship with her husband emotionally superficial because she unconsciously expects betrayal. Eventually she not only gives up any hope of satisfying the need, but the need itself becomes blocked to her awareness. Tragically, she arranges her life so that nourishment is never within reach, nor within the realm of possibility.

The defense against the terrible pain of violation is more important than healthy or nourishing experience, more important than anything. The person's true spirit, true self, soul "is banished to an unfelt realm. It becomes a Spirit in Exile" (Eisman, 1989, p. 13). That is to say, the person's spirit or soul - her spontaneity, will, passion, integrity, life force – gets repressed into unconsciousness, into the "spiritual unconscious," a concept of Viktor Frankl's which we will investigate soon. To survive, the soul must accept the felt sense of a divided self by redefining itself as wounded and abandoning its true identity, and finally to banish the part divided (itself) for its own good. "Depending on the degree of trauma, the spirit may be only a little in exile, with most of it still guiding the person; or it may leak out only a tiny bit under extraordinary circumstances" (Eisman, 1989, p. 13).

Another conceptualization of this process is Whitfield's (1993) discussion of the authentic self "going into hiding" deep within the unconscious part of one's psyche, leaving the false self to try to run the person's life. This process of the real self going into hiding creates a great confusion of identity ("Will the real me please stand up"), which contributes to even more dissonance, dissociation (separation), and isolation of the components of our inner life, which ordinarily should be integrated (Whitfield, 1995). Whitfield identifies those components of our inner life to be: beliefs, thoughts, feelings, decisions, choices, experiences; our wants and needs; intuitions, and unconscious experiences, such as fantasies, dreams, and repetition compulsions, as well as our memories.

Healing the person's self-sabotaging habitual patterns comes through helping her to gradually risk crossing the nourishment barrier to discover that she can do so safely. She learns to be aware of her needs and wants, to acknowledge them openly, to ask for them to be met, and to allow someone to do so.

Where is the hiding place deep within the unconscious part of the psyche (Whitfield, 1993), the unfelt realm to which the true spirit is banished (Eisman, 1989), the place of "internal exile" (Metzner, 1985, p. 44), the "self-enclosing psychic 'womb' " to which an essential part of oneself has been protectively withdrawn (Mathew, 2005, p. 387)? I suggest that a very useful conceptualization is Viktor Frankl's "spiritual unconscious." Frankl proposed including the spiritual into psychology, and in particular including it into depth psychology, that is, into the psychology of the unconscious. "Freud saw only unconscious instinctuality, as represented in what he called the id; to him the unconscious was first and foremost a reservoir of repressed instinctuality. However, the spiritual may also be unconscious" (Frankl, 1997, p. 31). What is the difference between the spiritual and the instinctual unconscious? There are two fundamentally distinct regions within the total structure of the human being: one is *existence*, essentially spiritual, and the other is *facticity*, physiological as well as psychological. Human beings are always centered around an existential, personal, spiritual core, encompassed by peripheral layers of the psychophysical aspects of life.

And so Frankl extends the meaning of depth psychology beyond the depth of man's instincts and into the depth of his spirit. "However, the spirit is unconscious not only where it originates, that is, in its depth, but also in its height. In fact, that which has to decide whether something is to be conscious or unconscious is itself unconscious. Just consider the fact that there is something in the sleeping man that decides whether or not he should continue sleeping" (Frankl, 1997, p. 37).

The place of internal exile, the hiding place deep within the unconscious part of the psyche, is a spiritual realm that offers respite from pain and threat through repressive coping (Bonanno, 2004). Some individuals tend to avoid the unpleasant thoughts, emotions, and memories associated with stressful situations through emotional dissociation. These people do not overtly experience distress when confronted with traumatic triggers, yet their bodies register distress; in other words, the reaction is unconscious. That reaction is maladaptive and is associated with long-term health debilitation.

Depending on the degree of trauma, the spirit may be only a little in exile or it may have withdrawn into a full-fledged witness protection program. In the former case, the repressive coping is primarily dealing with threat on the instinctual level, through repression to the instinctual unconscious. In the latter case, the repressive coping is primarily dealing

with threat on the spiritual level, through repression to the spiritual unconscious. Healing, resolving the trauma, requires the individual to "build a bridge to herself" (Schwartz, 2000, p. 426).

The mechanism for creating the split, the chasm of disconnection between conscious and unconscious experience is observable in brain wave patterns. A person's unconscious experience, both personal and collective, both traumatic and spiritual, is accessed by that person when their brain is generating *theta* brain waves. In order for the unconscious experience to be carried back into consciousness, the person must have a bridging *alpha* brain wave pattern, bringing access to the memory of the unconscious experience back to the *beta* brain wave everyday conscious mind (Wise, 2002). The hypnotic age regression process offers access to being in the subconscious state (theta) while retaining a link (alpha) to the conscious mind (beta).

Split in the Psyche-soma - Insufficient containment

A basic building block of the individual's way of being over one's lifespan is the ability to be alone (a sense of comfortable openness or emptiness) vs. the fear of being alone (sense of isolation, desolation and exile). The self defends against threat and intrusion first by banding together with supportive others. When such others are not available, the self defends by withdrawing from others, developing the capacity to be alone without fear, without feeling unprotected and empty. As a last resort in facing intrusive threat, when one's own resources are inadequate to protect and defend, the self withdraws finally from its own essence (soul). First collaboration with others, then abandonment of others, and finally abandonment of self. The soul has the capacity to embrace openness or emptiness at its most optimal. The soul is connected to the self at the pleasure of the self, so it can be "sent away into hiding" by the self as an extreme defense. The psyche here has been rejected and exiled not by a healthy protective authority, but by a false self ashamed of the real self, a pretender to the throne. The psyche has failed to indwell in the body.

The capacity to be alone develops first through successfully and securely being alone *in the presence of the mother*, solitude free from withdrawal. This is what Winnicott calls *ego-relatedness* (Clancier & Kalmanovitch, 1987) or *unintegration*. "Able to become unintegrated, to flounder, to be in a state in which there is no orientation, to be able to exist for a time without being either a reactor to an external impingement or an active person with a direction of interest or movement" (Winnicott, *The*

Capacity to be Alone, 1958, quoted in Clancier & Kalmanovitch, 1987, p. 25).

Where is the space inside the self that the soul is either exiled to or placed in witness protection?

"The concept of space, of space inside the self, cannot come about unless the containing functions have been introjected" (Bick, 1968, quoted in Clancier & Kalmanovitch, 1987, p. 27). Pathology arises when a dysfunctional containing function has been introjected. For example, if the parent(s)' containing ability is intrusively smothering, the child will introject that, and there will be no internal space, no "personal environment" as Winnicott calls it. This person is so unboundaried that he/she is vulnerable to domination, or "colonization," a term used by Peter Fonagy. If the parent(s)' containing ability is neglectful or abandoning, the child will introject that, and will be self-harming. In order to have an internal space to hide (or exile) the soul in, one must first have passed the milestone of "creating a personal environment."

> Internalized paradigms of domination lend all too well with the same cultural or familial authority that blames dissociative survivors and denies their reality. The insidious and ironic result is that the cumulative trauma of child sexual abuse and torture makes victims into the best perpetrators against themselves and powerful collaborators in their own torment and captivity even when they begin to take some steps out of the domination systems. In the first half of treatment, and sometimes even later, advances toward autonomy and differentiation may be met with an internal backlash as though the perpetrators in patients' heads (and sometimes the ones in their lives as well) are tugging on their leashes lest the survivors think themselves actually free. Eventually, when the illusion of power and control is broken and the truth revealed, a deeper level of psychic pain must be processed in an extended and difficult mourning (Ross, 1997). Unbearable grief emerges as the granite layers of self-hatred and shame erode. Owning this level of suffering without the anesthesia of dissociative armor is perhaps the most highly integrative (and challenging) phase in the psychotherapy of severely dissociative patients. The compounded shame of the dissociative trauma survivor leads to psychic imprisonment and sense of exile from humanity because it is based on multiple interlocking and overlapping sources (Schwartz, 2000, p. 33).

Healthy establishment and development of a self requires that a child have a sufficient "holding environment" to experience ego-relatedness, a primitive form of I-Thou. "A continuity of life then results that becomes in the end a sense of existing, a sense of self, leading ultimately to autonomy" (Clancier & Kalmanovitch, 1987, p. 29). The healthy child can use secure relationships to "at times disintegrate, depersonalize and even for a moment abandon the almost fundamental urge to exist and to feel existent" (Clancier & Kalmanovitch, 1987, p. 30). This experience facilitates indwelling.

A split in the psyche-soma occurs when the child is unable to have a healthy, safe, and contained experience of disintegration and depersonalization, a sense of existing, a sense of self. That can happen, for example, when the caregiver(s) communicate deep shame about the child, when he/she feels guilty, frightened, impatient, or desperate. Examples would be the child who is being incested, or the child who has some physical defect unacceptable to the mother, or the child who is the product of a rape who constantly reminds the mother of her humiliation. The child then naturally introjects his caregiver's intense negativity and accepts it as the truth about him. He rejects identifying with his body, and with his "real self" (personalization), and instead identifies with a fabricated "false self" (depersonalization). The psyche has failed to indwell in the body, or has been rejected and exiled.

"The first ego organization comes from the experiencing of threats of annihilation which do not lead to annihilation and from which, repeatedly, there is *recovery*. Out of such experiences, confidence in recovery begins to be something which leads to an ego and to an ego capacity for coping with frustration" (Clancier & Kalmanovitch, 1987, p. 51).

When those threats of annihilation do lead to annihilation, the child is confronted with "primitive agonies" (Clancier & Kalmanovitch, 1987, p. 52) and the defenses are disintegration, failure of indwelling, and depersonalization: a psyche-soma split. The split stands in defiance of a sense of continuity of being, a sense of existing, a sense of self.

Paradoxical defenses "occur when *continuity of being* is faulty. They then present themselves as a solution of continuity and are aimed at preserving the true self from annihilation or from the *primitive agonies* that threaten it" (Roussillon, 1978, quoted in Clancier & Kalmanovitch, 1987, p. 93). They are the paradox of guilt, the paradox of the fear of breakdown, and paradoxical suicide. Guilt is hiding that of which I am ashamed in order to preserve it. The fear of breakdown (annihilation) is a memory of what has not yet happened. Paradoxical suicide is a suicide perpetrated in order to avoid being killed, in order to remain in the world of the living: "you can't kill what's already dead."

"The original experience of primitive agony cannot get into the past tense unless the ego can first gather it into its own present time and experience omnipotent control now" (Clancier & Kalmanovitch, 1987, p. 53).

The worst thing that can happen to a baby is, not a deficient facilitating environment, but rather a tantalizing one (Clancier & Kalmanovitch, 1987,

p. 53). When the threat to the self is also the source of nurturing, even the most primitive defenses are unsuccessful. The ambivalence created about one's life is a misdirected attempt to send the body to nonexistence which has already happened long ago to the psyche.

Dawna Markova (1994) drew attention to the state of being stuck and isolated that follows such ambivalence:

> Milton Erickson believed that people who are traumatized get stuck in one frame of reference, in one way of thinking about the world, themselves, and their difficulties. It is that "stuckness" that imprisons us, because it knocks us out of connection with our bodies and sense. We feel as if we have lost the spirit from our lives (p. 35).

Death-related strategies

Psychic numbing, decentering, psychic death, reversible symbolic death, soul murder

Psychic numbing

The traumatized child defends with dissociation, splitting, and fragmentation. When the trauma is overwhelming, these defenses are insufficient, and the child begins a more severe "disappearing act": reducing her experience of being alive. "It is clinically important to recognize forms of disappearance other than dissociation and repression" (Eigen, 1996, pg. 43), disappearances deeper than annihilation.

Let's call the entry level tactic psychic numbing. "Psychic numbing occurs when horrors are extreme, long-standing, variable, and repeated - in other words, when a state of horror becomes predictable" (Terr, 1990, p. 80).

Psychic numbing is the same process that occurs at a human's death, as he/she blocks off the pain and emotion of relationship to this world. Tragically, the traumatized child begins severing these ties at a time that should be the very prime of life. She numbs her participation in life.

> Being psychologically overwhelmed, the sensation of being "reduced to nothing," is such a hideous feeling that the victim seeks never to experience that sensation again. Fear of further fear, as a matter of fact, keeps victims from trying to escape even when their chances seem good (Terr, 1990, p. 37).

Decentering and psychic death

Through dissociation, splitting, and fragmentation, a person can create unconscious structures of the self. One example of this is described by Modell (1996) as the "decentering of the self," a state in which individuals

become estranged from their affective core and lose contact with an authentic private self. It is what Laing (1960) called "alienation" from the self, and what Winnicott called a "failure of indwelling." They feel that life is meaningless, empty, and futile. As Marion Woodman says, "We fear a black void at the center of our lives, buried deep somewhere inside us. . . the emptiness of the soul" (1993, p. 11). The defense of decentering of the self is employed to protect the private self against intrusion from the outside, but it may ultimately be turned inward and directed at the self. "In closing oneself off from others, one may inadvertently close oneself off from oneself. . . . Total dissociation from the deep structures of the self is an unparalleled psychic catastrophe, since one loses contact with the core of the self, which is the generator of meaning" (Modell, 1996, p. 150).

Splitting involves a loss of agency, walling off parts that then act as alien presences. Decentering involves a loss of meaning, resulting in a sense of profound emptiness. Modell (1996, pp. 175-176) describes the process of splitting, and then of decentering:

> There are two characteristic pathologies of the self that can disrupt its homeostasis: splitting and decentering. Both conditions can be viewed as a deformation of the self in the service of defense. Traumatic interactions with caretakers are internalized so that the self may become its own persecutor. To preserve the cohesion of the self, these alien aspects of the self are repressed. . . . In the decentering of the self, the generation of private meaning is disturbed in a somewhat different fashion. The private self has an affective core which needs to be protected from unempathic intrusions. This 'protector' self is the same as Winnicott's 'false self.' Here, the means used to protect the private self from intrusion by others--a certain falseness, inauthenticity, and noncommunication of affects--are recreated within the self. One becomes estranged from one's affective core and is as false and inauthentic within oneself as one is with others.

Winnicott (1974) observed that complete disconnection from this psychosomatic core of the self is experienced as *psychic death*. "If one is psychically dead, the affective core of the self is experienced as a 'black hole', as if one's self has psychically imploded. In some cases such individuals are not suicidal for the reason that they simply do not care whether they are alive or dead -- nothing matters" (Modell, 1999, p. 186). The analogy of a black hole is profound, because the influence of psychic death is overwhelming in the person's life, just as the gravitational pull of a black hole in space is. The very essence of the individual's life is sucked out of him by something not directly observable and wholly unknown to him.

Conversely, it is the centering of affects within the self that leads to a sense of psychic aliveness. R. D. Laing (1960) spoke of affective centering

as that which enables the individual to feel real and alive, to feel that he or she is an entity with continuity in time and existence in space. Centering of the self is facilitated through maternal attunement and containment. According to Bion's (1970) theory of the container and the contained, the mother enables her infant to "digest" anxiety because she contains and then, in a sense, metabolizes it for the child, returning the anxiety to the child in a less toxic form, very much as a mother bird will predigest her baby's food. If this process succeeds, the child can then safely claim the feelings as mine, originating in its own private self.

The defenses are desperately attempting to avoid contact with the 'black hole' at the core of the self (descent). And ultimately the self-healing mechanism of the individual knows that resolution will only be possible through facing, even jumping into, that black hole (ascent). The shadows of defense call mockingly, yet seductively, "How does it feel on the eve of becoming everything you have fought against all your life?" (Woodman, 1993, p. 15). These two urges, death and life, mortido and libido, achieve an unbalanced stasis in all of us. The former leads to greater degrees of division, splitting and fragmentation: the fall from grace. The latter leads to greater integration: as Teilhard de Chardin said, "everything that ascends, converges."

Reversible symbolic death

The proximity of one's soul fluctuates with the nearness of death at the hands of evil. The defenses of psychic numbing and psychic death are an attempt to allow the victim to avoid total annihilation.

Watson (1974, p. 91) speaks about this combination of life and death found in death-feigning and death-like defensive states:

> Robert Lifton in his story of *hibakusha* (those who survived the Hiroshima bomb), reports widespread psychic numbing and suggests that in order to avoid losing their senses altogether, the survivors undergo 'a reversible form of symbolic death in order to avoid a permanent physical or psychic death' (Lifton, 1971). Survivors of concentration camps, medieval plagues and natural disasters all behave as though they had been stunned or dazed. This numbness or anaesthesia is so characteristic of the post-disaster syndrome that it must have survival value. By closing themselves off from forces invading their environment, organisms do manage to avoid damage and destruction, but there has to be some awareness as well. In Nazi camps inmates trained themselves not to recognise or respond to the vicious killings taking place around them, but they also practised an exquisite alertness to signals from the environment which enabled them to prepare for the next series of blows (Niederland, 1964). This combination of life and death, of hidden sensitivity in an individual apparently dead, is basic to all behaviour involving death-feigning and death-like states. It is a biological condition and an essential part of the economy of survival.

Soul murder

"One cannot rest in a dead mind. . . . arrested in a kind of narcotic electrocution (Eigen, 1996, p. 48).

Soul murder is a dramatic term for "the deliberate attempt to eradicate or compromise the separate identity of another person. The victims of soul murder remain in large part possessed by another, their souls in bondage" (Shengold, 1989, p. 2). The playwright Strindberg used the term soul murder to mean taking away a person's reason for living. Ibsen used the term referring to a mysterious sin for which there is no forgiveness, that of killing the instinct for love of life in a human soul.

Shengold (1999, p. 288), referring to soul murder patients as "people who have suffered so in the concentration camps of childhood," says they tend to a destructive compulsion to repeat their traumatic past, to murderous rage, and to a terrible double bind between feeling dependent for rescue on abusive yet indispensable parents and wanting to kill them.

It is tragic when one human being abuses another to the extent of soul murder. But we can also murder our own soul, when one aspect of personality becomes threatening to another. Too often we give in to one or another of these competing factions prematurely, and contract to a point where some kind of soul murder takes place (Eigen, 2004a). "To have blood may be more frightening than not having blood. In the former, one risks trauma all over again, in the latter one is protected by hopelessness, one already is dead. . . . Winnicott speaks of breakdown that can not be experienced because one can not be there to experience it" (Eigen, 2004b).

Lifton (1979) suggested that trauma survivors, forced to relinquish certain types of behavior, may experience a "symbolic death and psychoformative disintegration." Vaughan (1985) acknowledges that when cherished yet limiting beliefs must be transcended, the individual may experience "ego death" and the fearful clutching that may accompany it. She suggests that the negative experience of that death may be ameliorated through the awareness that what has "died" is not simply discarded but becomes incorporated into the new expanded sense of self. If the traumatized individual's identity is based largely on his/her interaction with the world, an existential stance of isolation, then the losses inherent in trauma may be overwhelming. If the traumatized individual's identity is based also on something transcendent to himself and the world, a stance of spiritual connectedness, then the losses inherent in trauma may become psychical building blocks of transformation.

Herein lies a key to understanding the distinction between posttraumatic devastation and posttraumatic growth.

The healing process must ultimately bring one to the deepest wounds, the threat of annihilation and death, and through confronting them to deep acceptance. “When patients are ready, healing dialogues can lead them through the confrontations with death, symbolic death, threatened death, near death, intentional evil, or capricious destructiveness to accept what is given and what is taken away” (Schwartz, 2000, p. 448).

Indwelling and levels of traumatization

“Difficulties with embodiment following trauma seem to disrupt the development of cohesive identity and body integrity (Armsworth, 1992) and the management of ego states” (Attias & Goodwin, 1999, p. 139).

Brown (1990) emphasizes “embodied soul,” and Winnicott (1945, 1965b) emphasizes embodiment, or “indwelling,” as a core constituent of cohesive selfhood. In his view, infants only become integrated and personalized, or “called into existence,” as they come to experience linkages between self and body and body functions. That indwelling provides a limiting membrane between “what is me versus what is not me,” a psychic structure providing containment. Stolorow and Atwood (1992) emphasize that the failure to achieve indwelling results in extreme states of disconnection of mind and body, leaving individuals vulnerable to states of depersonalization, mind-body disintegration or disidentification with the body. Healing such a deep wounding requires “soul retrieval” efforts.

Two levels of trauma (the archetypal and the personal) have been conceptualized by Urban (2003) as wounding to the self and wounding to the ego, or sense of self.

> Trauma involves a wound to both the self and the sense of self, and both must be addressed in treatment. The wound to the ego means the sense of oneself is susceptible to unbearably low esteem, and to omnipotence that can mask not only helplessness but also humiliation . . . Helping the patient manage feelings of shame is essential to further development. The wound to the self, in contrast to the sense of self, is an impairment of reintegration, resulting in part of the self being split off from the personality, affecting further deintegration and therefore impeding the individuation process (p. 187).

The levels of trauma are reflected in the degree of disconnection from oneself, from one’s identity. That is, in being forced to reevaluate my beliefs about myself in relation to the world, my worldview, how deeply

within does the necessary renunciation go? “The psyche’s normal reaction to a traumatic experience is to withdraw from the scene of injury. *If withdrawal is not possible, then a part of the self must be withdrawn*, and for this to happen the otherwise integrated ego must split into fragments and dissociate. . . . a violent affair – apparently an active attack by one part of the psyche on other parts” (Kalsched, 1996, pp. 12-13, emphasis added). Thus, when the wounding is at the level of ego, of the sense of oneself, the pain requires me to split off part of my identity, the part that is unacceptable to my conscious self-image, and send it “into internal exile” (Metzner, 1985, p. 44).

When the wounding is at the level of self itself, the disconnection is at the level of the soul (i.e., spiritual). Kalsched (1996) refers to fragmentation at the soul level as *archetypal defense*. This level of estrangement leads to a feeling of disembodiment: a lack of indwelling (Winnicott, 1989).

Another way to conceptualize this process is offered by Ferenczi (1933b). He suggests that when a young child is traumatized, the child splits, with one part regressing back to the place of innocence prior to the traumatic experience, and one part progressing, i.e., growing up too fast. The progressed part then caretakes and defends the regressed part, but also persecutes it due to an identification with the aggressor.

This identification with the abusive caregiver creates great confusion for the child, of course, as well as perplexing self-sabotaging behavior. Self-hating victims lose sight of their own external oppression, identify with their abusers consciously or not, and split off their inevitable aggression *and* their self-valuation (Schwartz, 2000, p. 413). At a deep level, the abuser has rendered the *person* of the child victim into a *thing* (Nachmani, 1997, p. 204), and the compliant and confused child, emulating the abuser, perpetuates this diabolical aspect of her own grooming by experiencing herself as a thing. The “soul murder” has been achieved.

The child has been forced to make a terrible choice: sacrifice a vital part of herself in order to salvage the remainder. It is the choice presented to the young hiker whose arm became lodged under immoveable boulders. Alone, he could either severe his own arm, freeing his body to escape certain death, or succumb to that death. “Whenever chronic brutalization and betrayal have been part of an individual’s early life, psychic dismemberment” (Schwartz, 2000, p. 420) becomes an acceptable option. “They will also resist all efforts to support their relinquishing attachment

and intrapsychic bonds with their childhood caretakers/perpetrators, as annihilation-panic (often articulated directly as fear of falling apart) surfaces with the destabilizing of their elaborately constructed identities and the dreaded rupture of their dissociative barriers" (Schwartz, 2000, pp. 421-422).

We want to distinguish between traumatic dissociation and the "soul-loss" of traumatic shock. A helpful aid to understanding that difference is an analogy of dissociation as slipping away from the triggering experience into dream sleep. It is creating a distraction to get caught up in, an escape that allows another, dreamlike, experience to replace the threatening one: "I have abandoned *you*."

In contrast, shock would be analogous to slipping into dreamless sleep, recognizing that there is no escape, nowhere to go to escape. It is thus not escape into an alternate reality but rather into the annihilative nonbeing of the withdrawal of one's soul: temporary oblivion: "I have abandoned *myself*."

"The child is left in a chronic state of disembodiment or embodiment in a damaged, not-whole, fragmented, unhealed body. The terror, isolation and unimaginable loneliness of this condition produce the Type I and Type II dissociative responses" (Attias & Goodwin, 1999, p. 227).

Research (Medina et al., 2001) documents clearly that there are two distinct sets of PTSD symptoms. Individuals with *Type I* stressor trauma (*trauma*) exhibit exaggerated reactivity (such as startle reflex) when confronted with stressors, while individuals with *Type II* stressor trauma (*shock*) exhibit suppressed or diminished reactivity. For example, rape survivors classified as highly dissociated exhibit suppression of autonomic physiological response. Medina et al. (2001) also suggest that an individual who experienced exposure to trauma over an extended period of time, as opposed to a discrete event, is likely to develop the Type II symptoms. "Perhaps Type II stressors, which are chronic and perceived to be inescapable, more frequently elicit coping responses of dissociation, and thus PTSD arising from Type II stressors is more likely to be related to suppression of physiological reactivity" (p. 166).

It has become clear to most clinicians as well as most researchers over that past ten years that there are degrees of wounding in traumatization, some being more pervasive and complicated than others. Distinguishing between Type I and Type II dissociative responses is one attempt to do so. Another is the distinction between *trauma* and *complex trauma*, or PTSD and Complex PTSD (CPTSD). Complex trauma refers to trauma that

occurs repeatedly and cumulatively, usually over a period of time and within specific intimate relationships which violate the human bond and sever the vital human connection (Courtois, 2004). The victim of complex traumatization, generally acknowledged to be any form of domestic violence or attachment trauma, is entrapped and conditioned by the perpetrator whom the victim relies on for safety and protection. Small children enact the violence surrounding them in their repetitive fantasy and play. Adolescents and young adults reenact the insidious violence from their histories as well, not symbolically but in actuality, "because they were unable to think about the events and process them, they simply repeated them, often with the hope of mastery" (Bragin, 2005, p. 300). She notes that this attempt at mastery is sometimes referred to as *identification with the aggressor*.

> Clinicians were discovering that these complex conditions were extremely difficult to treat and varied according to the age and stage at which the trauma occurred, the relationship to the perpetrator of the trauma, the complexity of the trauma itself and the victim's role and role grooming (if any), the duration and objective seriousness of the trauma, and the support received at the time, at the point of disclosure and discovery, and later (Courtois, 2004, p. 413).

The individual whose traumatic wounding is complex presents a unique treatment need: the pace and intensity of any cathartic intervention must be "calibrated so as not to overwhelm. It must match the client's capacity" (Courtois, 2004, p. 421). In fact, such interventions may be counterproductive (harmful) "if applied too early in the treatment process without attention to safety and the ability to regulate strong affect (Chu, 1998; Ford, 1999; Ford & Kidd, 1998)" (Courtois, 2004, p. 415).

Development of the concept of complex trauma follows two previous attempts to differentiate these levels of traumatization. The first was suggested by Root (1992) as what she termed "insidious traumatization." Here she referred to constant daily experiences of "subthreshold traumatic stressors" which provide constant reminders of the precariousness of one's safety. Examples of insidious traumatization include the institutionalized threats toward disabled people, people in racial or sexual orientation minorities, or children living in abusive families.

Freyd (1996) proposed a construct she called "betrayal trauma" to describe trauma arising from childhood sexual abuse and similar violations of person and of human attachment bonding. Freyd and her collaborators noted that betrayal traumas are more likely to lead to the development of

dissociative coping strategies in victims and survivors, including extensive posttraumatic amnesia for the betrayal, emotional numbing, and relational distress, rather than the more familiar posttraumatic symptoms of intrusive symptoms or autonomic hyperarousal. An example is the betrayal trauma of a parent or caregiver who abdicates the responsibility of protecting the child. Liotti (2004, p. 475) describes the devastation of such a betrayal:

> That is, the memory of an attachment figure who fails to protect the child from the abuse perpetrated by another member of the family may be more painful than the memory of the abuse per se. The dissociative power of this subtle type of trauma, betrayal from a not otherwise maltreating attachment figure, is readily explained by attachment theory. Forced by the inborn propensity to preserve the attachment relationship and trust the caregiver, when a parent denies the very existence of the abuse perpetrated by another member of the family (or by a person outside the family), the abused child may collude with the parent's denial and dissociate the traumatic memory (Bowlby, 1988; Freyd, 1997).

The term complex trauma is currently used to incorporate the betrayal and insidious traumas (Brown, 2004), and manifests as impaired trust and difficulty tolerating both distance and closeness.

We are focusing here on the distinction of the level of traumatization rather than on the causes of that difference. However, a great deal of research has been done to clarify the causes of those differences. For incest and childhood sexual abuse, Somer and Szwarcberg (2001, p. 335) summarize what the level of traumatization and the ensuing psychological damage have been attributed to:

> early onset of the abuse (Zivney, Nash, & Hulsey, 1988), its duration (Elliot & Briere, 1992; Herman & Schatzow, 1987), the age difference between victim and abuser (Finkelhor, 1987), the number of perpetrators (Peters, 1988), the intrusive level of the abuse (Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis, & Smith, 1989), and the number of different types of abuse (Briere & Runtz, 1989; Henschel, Briere, Magallanes, & Smiljanich, 1990; Elliot & Edwards, 1991).

Libido, mortido, and self-preservation

In general throughout life there are three primary drives: libido, mortido, and self-preservation (Hartman & Zimberoff, 2005). The libido drive is toward existence, satisfaction, passion, life, and growth. The mortido drive is toward non-existence, oblivion, dreamless sleep, death. The self-preservative drive is toward security, absolutes, certainties, the known and knowable. The relative balance between libido and mortido, existence and non-existence, determines the activity of self-preservation.

Libido is an energy of attraction and openness to life and growth, leading to increasing differentiation, variety, complexity, and organization.

Libidinal energy draws other elements closer; it is integrative and tends to bind elements together into more complex entities. It activates the principle of Eros, characteristically moving *toward* something else. It is similar to centripetal force, expanding outward with boundless excitement.

Mortido is an energy of withdrawal, disintegration, and resistance to life and growth leading to regression, dissolution, arrest. Mortidinal energy is disintegrative and tends to separate complex entities into simpler elements, pushing other elements away. It activates the principle of Thanatos, characteristically moving *away from* something else. It is similar to centrifugal force, drawing into the dense energetic quicksand of a black hole.

These ten observations help to describe the relationship between these two forces within the human experience (Hartman & Zimberoff, 2004a):

1. Passion is a truce between libido and mortido.
2. Hope is a mitigating agent in the often hostile conflict between libido and mortido.
3. Creativity results from the tension between libido and mortido.
4. The origin of shame lies in ascendance of destructive forms of mortido.
5. Aggression is an attempt to forcefully resolve the conflict between libido and mortido.
6. Intrapsychic conflict among different parts of the personality provide the battleground between libido and mortido.
7. Repression belies a quest for oblivion, i.e., mortido.
8. Ambivalence is *stalemate* between libido and mortido.
9. Avoidance is *denial* of libido and mortido.
10. Control is d*efiance* of libido and mortido.

Complexity and entropy

One of the principles of evolution is: "Harmony is usually achieved by evolutionary changes involving an increase in an organism's complexity, that is, an increase in both differentiation and integration" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, p. 156).

> *Differentiation* refers to the degree to which a system (i.e., an organ such as the brain, or an individual, a family, a corporation, a culture, or humanity as a whole) is composed of parts that differ in structure or function from one another. *Integration* refers to the extent to which the different parts communicate and enhance one another's goals. A system that is more differentiated and integrated than another is said to be more *complex*.

> For example, a person is differentiated to the extent that he or she has many different interests, abilities, and goals; he or she is integrated in proportion to the harmony that exists between various goals, and between thought, feelings, and action. A person who is only differentiated might be a genius but is likely to suffer from inner conflicts. One who is only integrated might experience inner peace, but is not likely to make a contribution to culture. Similarly a differentiated family is one in which parents and children are allowed to express their distinct individuality; an integrated family is one in which the members are connected by ties of care and mutual support. A family that is only differentiated will be chaotic, and one that is only integrated will be smothering. Complexity, at any level of analysis, involves the optimal development of both differentiation and integration (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, p. 156-157).

An individual can make pathological choices, entering the self-destructive decrease of complexity that is called entropy. In our work we call it *resistance to life*, or *loss of soul*. When the person's relationship with her soul becomes differentiated and not integrated, inner conflicts and confusion are sure to follow. This is a frequent result of early trauma.

Jung refers to the diminution of the personality known in primitive psychology as 'loss of soul' (1959, p. 119). He states that we label the similar experience in our civilized culture as an *abaissement du niveau mental*, and describes it as "a slackening of the tensity of consciousness, which might be compared to a low barometric reading, presaging bad weather. The tonus has given way, and this is felt subjectively as listlessness, moroseness, and depression" (p. 119). The condition can go so far that the individual parts of the personality become independent and thus escape from the control of the conscious mind, a phenomena known as hysterical loss of function. The condition results from physical and mental fatigue, bodily illness, violent emotions, traumatic shock (p. 120), and dissociation and suppression of consciousness (p. 281). We have learned from shamanic sources how to retrieve and integrate the "lost soul."

> The opposite of complexity at the level of psychological development is a form of *psychic entropy.* This concept describes disorder within human consciousness that leads to impaired functioning. Psychic entropy manifests itself by an inability to use energy effectively, either because of ignorance or because of conflicting emotions—such as fear, rage, depression, or simply lack of motivation.
>
> Usually it takes psychic energy from outside the individual—encouragement, support, teaching—to reduce entropy and restore the order in consciousness necessary for complex functioning.
>
> To avoid psychic entropy from taking over consciousness, to maintain the gains our ancestors have made, while increasing psychic complexity for the use of our descendants, it is necessary to take part in activities that are themselves differentiated and integrated (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, p. 170-171).

Csikszentmihalyi suggests that the most common cause of entropy in consciousness is the preoccupation with concerns about the self, worries about how we look or whether others like us or not, in other words, self-consciousness (1993, p. 185). Sufferers of depersonalization and derealization describe an inability to experience their own lives while stuck in chronic self-observation, feeling that identity is disappearing, or has already vanished (Depersonalization Community, internet).

When we are deeply involved in what we are doing, absorbed in activity, we experience a loss of self-consciousness, which may be considered self-transcendence. It is a state of tapping into the mystical experience (non-ego experience) of oneness, of radical connectedness. Csikszentmihalyi describes such a transcending person as one who harmoniously combines opposite tendencies: "he or she is original yet systematic, independent yet responsible, bold yet disciplined, intuitive yet rational" (1993, p. 238).

Fordham (1985) used the term 'the ultimate' for this state: "I take it to represent a state in which there is no past and no future, though it is present like a point which has position but no magnitude. It has no desires, no memory, no thoughts, no images but out of it by transformation all of these can deintegrate. There is no consciousness so no unconscious - it is a pregnant absence" (Fordham, 1985, p. 33).

Absorption, as we have seen, is one of the basic ingredients of the hiding defenses, along with forgetting and oblivion. But absorption is also a spiritual mechanism, a means of self-transcendence. Becoming absorbed in something greater than oneself is to become one with it, losing the sense of self as separate and isolated. The individual's intention may be the determining factor: is his surrender to absorption motivated by (running away from) fear and hatred, or by (running toward) desire and longing. In the one case, absorption is the need to grasp at lost straws and not let go for fear that if one did there would be nothing left to cling to, while in the other case it is a willingness to let go of grasping the limited sense of self I have identified with.

Even within the "running toward" motivation, there are two levels of spiritual commitment. The first is the desire for connection with God on the level of the ego, yearning for oneness, for union with God, based on feelings of self *as an individual*. One is still *entranced* (the work of Eros) or *bewildered* (in the Tibetan Buddhist terminology of Chögyam Trungpa) with all that he has created and identified with, and are afraid to let go of. The deeper desire is for connection with God on the level of soul, returning

to one's created existence and subordinating one's will *and identity* to God's. For the latter individual, it is "not a question of oneness but rather a question of zeroness" (Chögyam Trungpa, 2005, p. 41); or "Consciousness evolves when the self dissolves" (Austin, 2000, p. 209).

This distinction lays bare the paradox of the soul's seeming migration closer and further away from the person. As a traumatic defense, the individual builds protection through hiding. The structures built to provide cover, or camouflage, for the retreat of the soul become more and more reinforced (e.g., complexes, repressed energies, diffused identities, split-off or fragmented parts). "Since the whole structure of ego is so well fortified against attack, an external invasion is not going to destroy the ego at all. In fact, it is going to reinforce the whole structure because the ego is being given more material with which to work" (Chögyam Trungpa, 2005, p. 47).

It seems counter-intuitive that the traumatized child's *ego* is stronger than a child who is secure. However, her *ego-grasping* is what is stronger, which keeps her further removed from felt connection with her soul. Trauma reinforces ego structure; not, of course, self-esteem, but instead defense mechanisms, defenses which the ego comes to identify as self. Chögyam Trungpa relates that "at a certain stage the defense mechanisms you have set up become more powerful than you are. They become overwhelming. Then, when you become used to the overwhelming quality of the defense mechanisms, when, for a moment, they are absent, you feel very insecure" (2005, p. 109). The grasping ego, more powerful than you, cannot conceive of letting go its grasp.

Engler's (1999) meditation teacher told him, "Your mind has a mind of its own."

Reversing this process of fortifying the ego against attack must be accomplished, not through external intervention, but rather through internal infiltration inside this fortress of defense. It requires unlearning, reverse learning, or undoing. And that is the subject we will now turn our attention to, the undoing process of spiritual growth, of reconnection with the soul. We shall see that the descent must precede the ascent, and that ascent itself requires darkness. "Darkness for St. John is a symbol of ascent toward union with Divinity by shutting off the temporal world. In like manner, dark divine intelligence is the wisdom of unknowing and unreason of nonbeing" (Shoham, 2000, p. 80).

In the words of Washburn (1990, p. 13):

> self-transcendence or salvation is achieved by a reunion of the self with its ground. The "sinful" or falsely autonomous self must undergo a "conversion" and, then, a reconciliation with its spiritual source. The "fallen" self must quit its self-defeating self-assertion and submit itself to the higher power it has denied, reestablishing thereby a connection that is vital to the self's integrity and well-being. This reconnection redeems the self and leads to a higher wholeness in which the self, fully developed and self-responsible, is a faithful instrument of its ground. The self is in this way "justified," "saved," "wedded," or otherwise rendered right in its relationship with its source. The broken essential relationship is restored on a higher plane.

Soul retrieval, soul recovery

Descent of conscious connection with the soul

The person's connection with his/her soul fluctuates depending on many factors. Examples of experiences that tend to weaken that connection are:

1. pain (physical, emotional, psychic)
2. general anesthetic
3. anger, rage, hatred, violence
4. sudden unconsciousness from accidental or violent means
5. extreme fear (scaring the soul out of the body)
6. existential doubt (Dark Night of the Soul)
7. at moments of indulging addictions or choosing self-sabotaging behavior
8. experience of inability to forgive oneself or others
9. shame
10. the terrifying abandonment of attempted abortion or being given up for adoption
11. death

When the soul fragment leaves the body, it might go to the Lower World, the Upper World, or the Middle World (Ingerman, 1991). Dissociation is a sign of "mild" soul loss; coma is a sign of soul loss so severe that the body is left essentially uninhabited, and total soul disconnection occurs at death. The Middle World represents a return to past times in the person's historical life, e.g., to a trauma in the bedroom at age six, or to speak to the spirit of someone in a coma or unconsciousness. The Lower World represents access to helping spirits of power animals or healing plants, the elements or the earth itself. The Upper World represents access to one's ancestors or other people who have died, to teachers, Masters, guardian angels.

Remember Assagioli's (1971) division of the unconscious into the Lower Unconscious, Middle Unconscious, and the Higher Unconscious. The Lower Unconscious is intimately connected with the Collective Unconscious, that vast storehouse of historical and potential experience. The Higher Unconscious, or Superconscious, is intimately connected with the realm of the Transpersonal Self. The Middle Unconscious is personal and individual.

Entering the alternate reality of these three Worlds requires transforming the experience of time from linear to cyclical. Rather than time "marching forward," it constantly circles around to complete one perspective and incorporate that into a new beginning, just like the phases of the moon, the ocean tides, or the cycle of planting, harvesting, and the dormancy of regeneration.

Journeying requires transforming the experience of self from the limited separateness of ego-identification to that of vast open radical connectedness.

Journeying requires experiencing the dissolution of barriers between dimensions. Material or consciousness can disappear from this everyday dimension into another. Conversely, they can appear here emerging from another dimension. "Invisible" energies become knowable. We may be immune to the laws of nature, the effects of the elements, the limitations of time and space.

The three worlds are represented in Greek mythology by the three brothers Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades. They waged war against their father Cronos, a hated tyrant, defeated him and cast him into Tartarus, a place as far beneath the earth as heaven is above earth. Having overthrown Cronos, the three divided the world: Zeus was allotted dominion of the sky, Poseidon was awarded dominion over the sea, and Hades was allotted dominion of the Underworld. Zeus, the supreme god of the Upper World, surpasses all others in spirit, wisdom, and justice, and wields a thunderbolt as his weapon. Hades, god of the Lower World, rules over the dead and possesses a helmet that renders the wearer invisible. Zeus and Hades are ever-present in our lives, the Upper World prevailing upon good men by persuasion and intimidating the evil by punishment, the Lower World influencing unconsciously, invisibly.

Regarding the Lower World, or underworld, Hillman (1975, p. 205) suggests that the underworld meaning in things is "their deeper obscurities."

> Dreams are important to the soul—not for the messages the ego takes from them, not for the recovered memories or the revelations; what does seem to matter to the soul is the nightly encounter with a plurality of shades in an underworld, as if dreams prepared for death, the freeing of the soul from its identity with the ego and the waking state. It has often been said that in dreams **the soul "wanders,"** which means not literal walking through the world, but leaving the confines of the ego's concerns (Hillman, 1975, p. 33, emphasis added).

> To be human is to be soul-focused, which in turn is death-focused. Or, to put it the other way: to be death-focused is to be soul-focused. This is because Hades' realm refers to the archetypal perspective that is wholly psychological, where the considerations of human life—the emotions, organic needs, social connections of humanistic psychology—no longer apply. In Hades' realm *psyche* alone exists; all other standpoints are dissolved.
>
> Greek mythology shows the wholly psychological perspective of Hades . . . as if the Hades perspective is concerned only with soul, with what happens "after life," that is, the reflections and images and shadowy afterthoughts lying apart from and below life. Death here is the point of view "beyond" and "below" life's concerns, and has been deliteralized from medical death and theological eschatology about heaven and hell. Death in the soul is not lived forward in time and put off into an "afterlife"; it is concurrent with daily life as Hades is side by side with his brother Zeus (Hillman, 1975, p. 207).

The Lower World is the realm of Jung's collective unconscious, the layer of the psyche inhabited by the universal forms he called archetypes. Another experience related to the underworld, also universal, is the mystical sense of oneness and unity with all that is. Jung calls it "the transcendent at-one-ment" which connects an individual with the one universal Mind. "Does [this] mean that the Mind is 'nothing but' our mind? Or that our mind is the Mind? Assuredly it is the latter" (Jung, 1978, p. 126). In the same book, *Psychology and the East*, Jung concludes, "The soul is assuredly not small, but the radiant Godhead itself" (p. 63). Human consciousness is "the invisible, intangible manifestation of the soul" (p. 63), and our purpose is to bring into consciousness the contents that press upward from the unconscious, to "kindle a light in the darkness of mere being" (1968, p. 326).

Larry Dossey (1989) discusses the aversion some people have to the idea of our souls being unlimited and infinitely interconnected with all that is, referring to their objections as "spiritual agoraphobia" (p. 9), i.e., a deep-seated fear of vast open expanses of consciousness. That vastness is referred to in the Zen tradition as an "emptiness of mind." In the Jewish tradition, the Ba'al Shem Tov, founder of the Hasidic movement, called it the "Divine Nothingness" or "the Naught," which "brings new life to this world" (Schatz, 1978). Pema Chodron quotes a well-known Buddhist

saying: "Only to the extent that we expose ourselves over and over to annihilation can that which is indestructible be found in us."

We have charted the traumatic descent. Now we will study the process of ascent, i.e., posttraumatic growth. The steps in a soul retrieval procedure, as we have learned to practice it, can be generalized to the trauma recovery process. Steps in the soul retrieval process:

1. *Open sacred space*. Incorporating soul retrieval into psychotherapy requires a humble embrace of the spiritual foundation for all healing work.
2. *Work with the guardians* at the threshold of entering the land of the unknown, accept their gift of purifying and strengthening you for the journey. Those gifts in a therapeutic process are often to face one's deep shame, terror, hatred, and despair.
3. *Journey to find the lost part*. In the words of the *I Ching*: "It furthers one to cross the great waters." Every treasure is won at the expense of a pilgrimage, and this is certainly true in emotional healing and trauma resolution.
4. *Clean off any residue of trauma, disease, or confusion*. We are reclaiming disconnected parts of ourselves that were lost, abandoned, amputated, stolen or murdered. It is vital that we cleanse these "prodigal son" parts of ourselves so that they are as fresh and pure as they were at the time of separation.
5. *Reconnect* with it somatically, emotionally, intellectually. The resolution of traumatic memories requires re-experiencing it in a fuller way than was possible in the original overwhelmed and dissociated state. Just so, reincorporating lost parts requires expanding the experience in the dimensions of emotion, soma, insight, and cognition.
6. *Welcome it back and cherish it*. The returning part is arrested in its development at the immature age of the original trauma. We must truly welcome back that which we have grieved over and longed for (albeit unconsciously) ever since.
7. *Work with the guardians* at the threshold of returning from the land of the unknown, expressing gratitude; overcoming the fear, shame or guilt of owning your aspirations and claiming your full potential; overcoming the seductiveness of sloth, complacency, and self-satisfaction; overcoming the fear of envy or ridicule from others.

8. *Close sacred space.* Every effective ritual requires careful containment, and that means demarking the boundaries around the ritual, both opening and closing the container.
9. *Grow up the self* that has expanded to encompass the newly returned part(s). This is the continuing work in psychotherapy following a soul retrieval.
10. *Fulfill your calling here in the land of the known*, the land of consentual reality. The hero's journey always ends with the hero serving the community, sharing the hard-won treasure with others, and pursuing the highest expression of his/her destiny.

In summary, in trauma, the person's experience descends to the Lower World through the hiding defenses of forgetting and oblivion, or to the Middle World through absorption in personal tragedy. The descent goes (1) from "abandoning you" to "abandoning myself;" (2) to a greater degree of autonomy in complexes, to a decreased level of integration; and (3) to a less boundaried, more differentiated concept of self.

In spiritual development, the person's experience descends to the underworld to participate in the mystical sense of oneness and unity, Jung's "transcendent function" or "daemon," that vast storehouse of potential experience, "the ultimate participation, which is nonbeing, death" (Shoham, 2000, p. 108). In spiritual development, descent goes (1) to "transcending myself;" (2) to an increased level of integration; and (3) to a less boundaried, less differentiated concept of self.

Migrations of the soul in spiritual development

Assagioli speaks about the "existential crisis" that often precedes a spiritual awakening. "Spiritual development is a long and arduous journey, an adventure through strange lands full of surprises, joy and beauty, difficulties and even dangers. It involves the awakening of potentialities hitherto dormant, the raising of consciousness to new realms, a drastic transmutation of the 'normal' elements of the personality, and a functioning along a new inner dimension" (1986, p. 21). In the words of St. John of the Cross (1959), the return of the soul to God requires a dark night of the soul, including both a *dark night of the senses* (a dying to the world) and a *dark night of the spirit* (a dying to ego, i.e., separate self). What is the connection between the difficulties and dangers, the dark night, and the ascent to new realms?

The Kabbalah teaches that every descent is for the purpose of an ascent. Indeed, there is no ascent without a *prior* descent. Ken Wilber (1998, p. 164) concludes that "profound regression *must* occur in all spiritual development."

The tendency to descent, to involvement, even entrancement, with the earthly and the tendency to ascent, to transcendence, can be experienced metaphorically as femininity and masculinity, complementary energies operating in all of us. "The feminine principle is experienced as an attraction to matter, to the concrete, to the tangible stuff of the Earth. The masculine principle is an attraction to the rarefied realms of spirit" (Woodman, 1993, p. 11).

Descent of the soul to this earthly plane is to bring into consciousness the contents that press upward from the unconscious, to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being. "For the soul had to descend from its source, from the most lofty of spiritual heights, to the nethermost level, in order to garb itself in a body whose life-force . . . is as distant as possible from G-d" (Wineberg, 1988, p. 668).

Thus the soul descends to bring repair to despair, necessary to make possible its ascension. "Despite yourself, even against your will, you must live (*tikkun*), and despite yourself you must die (*klot hanefesh*)." Despite yourself you must live means that despite your craving for return to union with God in *klot hanefesh,* seeking even at the cost of self-extinction to become attached to God, you must nevertheless remain alive in this body, to keep it alive, for the purpose of drawing down the higher life-force from above. Despite yourself you must die means that to fulfill the soul's purpose in this life, one must transcend the self, ceasing to exist in order to merge with the divine. In the words of the Christian mystic St. Teresa of Avila (trans. 1980), one must be "very annihilated."

The desire for connection with God can be *ratzo* (on the level of *Tohu*), yearning for union with God as an individual, based on feelings of self. The deeper desire is *shov* (on the level of *Tikkun*), returning to one's created existence and subordinating one's will and identity to God's.

Ascent of conscious connection with the soul

The following hierarchy, represented in Figure 2, is suggested as a parallel process to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Hartman & Zimberoff, 2005). The first, dreamless sleep, represents the ground from which the soul begins its ascent in the form of libido or kundalini rising. It is not only

the origin from which consciousness emerges, it continues to provide a daily respite in which it may again repose.

A force of cosmic proportions must surely intervene in the dreamless sleep state to awaken the consciousness into dream sleep state or into waking state. What force initiates existence from the depths of non-existence, brings forth something from the (pregnant) open emptiness of potential? It is the energy of life itself, the source of life's quickening, and we call it alternatively libido, shakti, neshama, prana, or holy spirit. A physiological analogy is the onset of the embryo's heartbeat. As the embryo's first observable activity, at about three weeks, the heartbeat "initially originates within the heart itself . . . it is not a response to an external stimulus" (Bremner, 1994, p. 25). In the sacred moment of transition from non-existence to *un*consciousness, the force of *mortido* toward oblivion surrenders to the force of *libido*. Eros enchants. The deep sleep state is, in a sense, the home of the Self, to which we all must return nightly. It is the Void from which arises dream sleep state.

The second, dream state, provides a direct connection with our ancestral heritage, the collective unconscious. Again we are afforded a daily infusion of reconnection, as well as the necessary deintegration "unlearning" that occurs in dream sleep. An important function of dream (REM) sleep is to remove certain undesirable patterns in networks of cells in the cerebral cortex (Crick & Mitchison, 1983). This active process is the opposite of learning, it is un-learning or reverse learning.

Our third stage is ego self. The transitional space between dream state and ego state is disintegration. To enter dreams requires us to fragment consciousness, to expand our normal ego boundaries, to split into parts. Emerging from dream state into ego state requires just the opposite function: contracting ego boundaries and merging the parts.

Existential self is our fourth stage. It is a time of integration and self-actualization. The transitional space between ego and existential selves is deintegration, in which unlearning must occur to allow for learning on a new level. Here one unlearns the lessons that were so hard-won in the previous state: reversing the drive toward separation into an embrace of community. Actually, the unlearning of deintegration occurs in *every* transitional space. The question is what needs to be unlearned in order to move forward? Or alternatively, what has been dysfunctionally unlearned that is inhibiting forward movement?

Transpersonal self, our fifth stage, begins the discovery of the Divine Self. Here one begins to open up to transcending all that has come before.

And the transitional space that opens one up is unintegration, in which the personality dips into formlessness for rest, tasting the state of unity which beckons us to move ahead into conscious non-existence, egolessness. "The Greeks saw sleep and death as twin brothers, so that sleep brings recurring rejuvenation in the mornings, but the real prize is Thanatos: complete loss of separate identity. For Freud, Eros is in constant conflict with Thanatos; for us, Eros (unification) *is* Thanatos" (Shoham, 2000, p. 15).

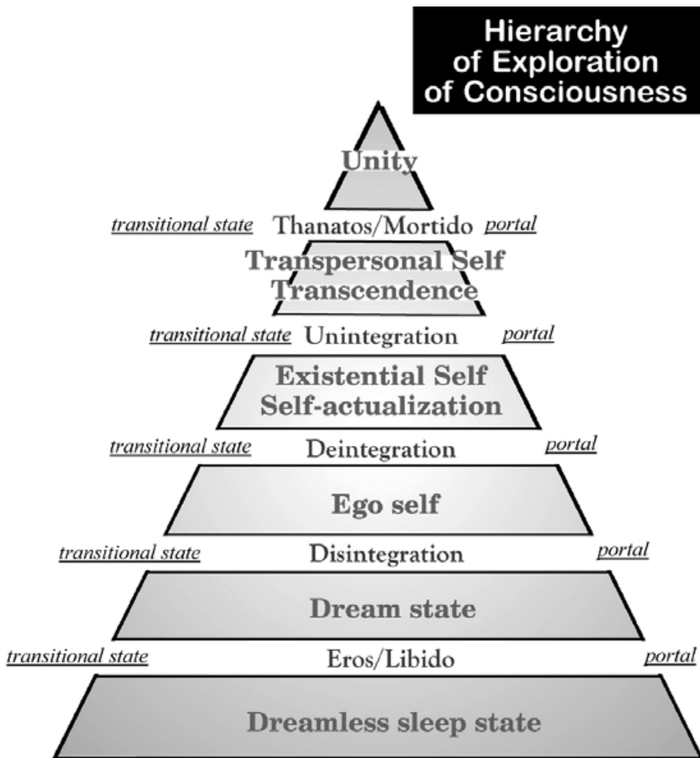

Figure 2. Ascent of Conscious Soul Connection

The following two charts summarize the descent of the soul (the separation of psyche and soma, the increasing disconnection with one's very essence), and its subsequent ascent (retrieval and integration). This process occurs on two parallel tracks: one (Table 1) is the experience of trauma and the resilience to rebound and grow from it; the other (Table 2) is the experience of spiritual yearning and the plasticity to heal the soul.

Both tracks involve descent and ascent. Each descent is movement deeper into density and defense, doubled and redoubled darkness; and each ascent is the unlearning and removal of patterns that obstruct the light.

Soul Connection

Traumatic response

Descent (defense)	**Ascent** (healing)
Unawareness	Mindfulness
Dissociation	Using anchors to stay present
Resistance to parts	Self-acceptance
Disavow/ renounce parts	Reclaim parts
"internal exile" or "Spirit in Exile"	Reclaim identity
Ego split from central self	Reconnection
Soul splits and goes into exile	Soul reconnects
Lack of indwelling	Soul retrieval
Depersonalization	Personalization
Loss of identity	Clarify identity
Escape into annihilation: "witness protection program"	Creating safety

Spiritual response

Descent (*yeridah,* Mortido)	**Ascent** (*aliyah*, Libido)
Klot hanefesh	*tikkun olam*, repair
Soul splits and goes into exile	Soul reconnects
Mystical union zeroness experience	Journey into the realm "Beyond the Pargod" (the veil of illusion that separates spirit from matter); shamanic soul flight

The journey of descent and subsequent ascent, of building on the challenge of trauma to thrive, can perhaps culminate in what we call *serenity*. Boyd-Wilson et al. (2004) worked to identify the components of serenity, and found these: Faith, Humility, and Gladness. "These qualities are found in people who tend to feel loving and connected meaningfully to the world, who are notably resilient, and who have a profound overall sense of trust. Serene people also tend to take things one day at a time, and have a good sense of how they fit into the scheme of things, neither inflating nor minimizing their role, but actively changing things for the better where they can and accepting situations where they are unable to change them. Serenity in this sense involves enthusiasm for life rather than simply a feeling of calm" (p. 35).

"Serenity is viewed as a learned, positive emotion of innerpeace that can be sustained. It is a spiritual concept that decreases perceived stress and improves physical and emotional health. . . . The experience of serenity is related to development of the higher self. Four levels of serenity are a safe, wise, beneficent, and universal self" (Roberts & Whall, 1996, p. 359).

Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist teacher, provided a clear reminder about the importance of taking care of ourselves. Dawna Markova (1994, p. 86) reported what he said during a retreat: "He told us how important it is to notice what he called "the un-toothache" -- those moments when we are not in pain or danger -- to drink them in deeply, down to the parched places in our histories."

Optimal spiritual development: What the baby needs from the parent is what the ego needs from the soul

We know from the research in the attachment theory field what the baby needs from the parent to develop a sense of security and a healthy identity. We use this as an analogy for what the ego/personality needs from the soul to develop optimally. We use the formulation of the child's needs set out in Hartman & Zimberoff (2005, pp. 69-75), and expand them to incorporate what the ego needs from the soul.

(1) ***the ability to relax and trust (environment is safe and unobtrusive)***. "Relaxation for an infant means not feeling a need to integrate, the mother's ego-supportive function being taken for granted" (Winnicott, 1965a, p. 61). When the baby is allowed to experience such deep security, he/she is free to explore unrestricted, internally as well as externally. The child experiences the "capacity to be" (as opposed to being able only to do). Consciously experiencing the connection and containment of one's soul, the ego experiences security and thrives.

(2) ***a balance of attachment and exploration***. Both the avoidant and the resistant patterns of insecure infants suppress exploratory play.

Lieberman and Pawl (1988) observed three major patterns of behavior in seriously disturbed anxiously attached infants. Each is an adaptive solution to the double-bind predicament faced by the severely disturbed infant, i.e., the parent's simultaneous indispensability and unavailability. The first is *recklessness and accident proneness*. The child's exploration is unbounded by appropriately attentive caregiving, and therefore unsafe.

The second pattern observed was the opposite, namely, *inhibition of exploration*. These children hesitate to approach, touch or manipulate objects in their environment; withdraw from unfamiliar people; are often immobile in unfamiliar situations, regardless of the presence of the mother; and show decided constriction of affect. Their mothers encourage the dependency, and withdraw or become punitive when the child moves toward exploration (and by extension, autonomy).

The third group of seriously disturbed children show *precocious competence*, reversing normal child-parent roles in order to give care to the parent. These "parentified" children cannot rely on the attachment figure as primary protector and caregiver, so they learn to mimic the parental role.

Ideally, the child balances attachment (freedom from fear of abandonment) with detachment (freedom from fear of engulfment), resulting in liberation from the subjugation to either (the freedom to explore the external and internal worlds). In the same way, it is easy to recall individuals whose ego has exhibited spiritual *recklessness and accident proneness*, spiritual *inhibition of exploration*, or a *precocious competence* in relation with one's higher self, one's soul. How many of us feel compelled to attempt to usurp the rightful place of that highest aspect of ourselves, believing that the ego (denying its obvious limitations) is capable of piloting the ship.

(3) ***the security to explore states of consciousness***. The mother's function, at the highest level, is to create an environment for her baby in which it is safe to be nobody. She does this by leaving the child alone without abandoning him. Winnicott considered it vital in healthy development for the child to be allowed periods of time in unstructured states of being that he called "going-on-being" (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983). "The mother's nondemanding presence makes the experience of formlessness and comfortable solitude possible, and this capacity becomes a central feature in the development of a stable and personal self" (p. 193). In a state free of anxiety, each person is content to be alone without being withdrawn. Each person, totally secure in the availability of the other, has no need for active contact. There is no sense of aloneness, nor of intrusion. Each individual is momentarily undefended and at peace, secure to explore formlessness or chaos or nothingness. Once learned interpersonally, the same ultimate level of acceptance applies intrapsychically, i.e., between ego states.

Such security leads to the freedom to live with an attitude of commitment to the path without attachment to the outcome. Herein lies the precursor to balance between *tikkun olam* and *tikkun ha nefesh*, between descent and ascent.

(4) ***the ability to acknowledge and tolerate both positive and negative emotions toward the same person or object***. One of the most basic developmental milestones in emotional development, in the preschool period, is the ability to acknowledge and tolerate both positive and negative emotions toward the same person or object. Maintaining a libidinal attachment even while experiencing frustration, requiring the synthesis of positive and negative affects and memories, is a requirement for the development of healthy relationship to oneself, others, spirit (or God).

(5) ***object impermanence.*** The infant treats absent objects as if they were destroyed or impermanent, and between the ages of 3 to 6 the child begins to develop the capacity to distinguish displaced from destroyed objects. The impermanence concept plays an important role in many aspects of human experience, including children's conceptions of death and security (Greenberg, 1996). It is what allows one to come to peace with "spiritual agoraphobia," the deep-seated fear of vast open expanses of consciousness, "emptiness of mind," and to annihilation experience.

(6) ***noetic knowing.*** Spiritual advancement is based on a particular form of processing knowledge. Rather than academic, intellectual, or rational approach, it is usually experienced as a direct apprehension of knowledge and understanding accompanying a transcendent experience. One suddenly *knows* something intuitively that until that moment was unknown. The child who is encouraged to do so within a securely attached environment develops a trust in his/her own ability to know things in this way. Other children learn to question their ability to know reality through the confusing inconsistent signals they get from preoccupied or overly-intrusive caregivers. The soul knows, and in its less defended moments the ego knows that the soul knows.

(7) ***transliminality***. This is the tendency for psychological material (imagery, ideation, affect, and perception) to cross thresholds into or out of consciousness with ease. There is a clear developmental antecedent to

adult transliminality: childhood trauma. Survivors of childhood abuse score significantly higher than others on these aspects of transliminality: the altered state of cosmic enlightenment, fantasy proneness, special wisdom, sensing an evil presence, absorption in nature or art, a transformative state of consciousness, mystical experience, hyperesthesia, and the sense of gaining or losing energy. "Childhood trauma seems predictive of the broad domain of transliminality" (Thalbourne & Crawley, 2003, p. 692).

Remember that with a high level of transliminality, the individual opens to unity, noetic experience, transcendence of space and time, the sense of sacredness, bliss, paradoxicality, and ineffability. Here we see one of the mechanisms through which trauma (descent) contributes to spiritual advancement (ascent).

(8) ***reaction to obstacles***. A fundamental difference between individuals who thrive and develop toward optimal expression of humanity and those who do not is the way in which that individual reacts to obstacles in their path. Children develop a relationship with their environment very early; some experience obstacles to fulfillment of their desires as a personal affront, becoming frustrated and angry. This child may well have encountered an unwelcoming womb at conception, and a barren or rejecting uterine wall at implantation. The prototype was already established within days of the new life: "I will always meet obstacles and I must overpower them to survive."

Another child recognizes obstacles as simply part of the terrain of the environment without taking them personally. They are guardians at the threshold of new experience, there to test, strengthen, and empower the would-be hero on his/her journey of growth.

(9) ***experience of oneness, and of zeroness***. Transitional experiences also provide a bridge between the relational dimensions of the self and the structured aspects of the self (Chirban, 2000). That is, the individual approaches the threshold in relationships that provide enough security to proceed alone across the threshold, which in turn strengthens the individual to expand the sphere of relationships. Developmentally, individuals who engage in unitary experiences in the present, have had the luxury of a secure holding environment which catalyzes their *capacity* throughout their development. The capacity for a oneness experience with an other is central to the healthy evolution of the self. In order to achieve oneness

experience, one must have had developmentally necessary oneness experiences to develop a cohesive self.

(10) ***containment***. Containment is a fundamental requirement for healthy mental processes, especially exploratory ones. The concept of containment implies the ability to experience what is happening in oneself and in the other with accepting awareness, and being able to tolerate one's direct experience without becoming defensive or acting to discharge the tension (Rand, 1996). Containment is a way of providing secure support and honoring the other's boundaries. Winnicott (1965b) proposed the necessity of a positive and encouraging "holding environment" to provide a sense of containment for a child, enabling the child to form a sense of security in being held. He observed that, uncontained, the child's experience can only be described as "going to pieces; falling forever" (Winnicott, 1965b).

Bion's (1970) containment model emphasized that it is through the mother's capacity for reverie that her infant experiences containment. A mother incapable of reverie fails to contain the infant's experience, leaving the child unprotected from immersion in a meaningless, powerless, omnipresent terror, a nameless dread of cosmic proportions particular to both the perpetrator and the victim of violence. "In the individual psychopathologies of violent people and of victims, it is likely that the mother reverie was not present or was defective" (Twemlow, 2000).

It is precisely that capacity for reverie and entrancement, for "mindlessness", that fuels the ascent. Reverie comes in many forms: daydream, prayer, meditation, aesthetic fascination, deep synchrony with another person, animal or plant life, or love-making.

The importance of containing boundaries is evident—the clay of the pitcher, the walls of the house, the frame of analysis. The 'void within' can be a potential space (Winnicott, 1971) for inspiration and thought, and by opening 'doors and windows' in the perimeters of our psychic boundaries, we can think about the process of reverie as one which allows the soul to travel between thought and prayer, beyond our known selves, to experience the 'what is not' (Mathew, 2005, p. 383).

Here again we find the interface between early trauma and optimal development. The infant whose mother is incapable of reverie and who fails to contain the infant's experience may, in her desperate and determined search for containment, open up to possibilities beyond what her mother could provide (if she could provide it). That is, the

'posttraumatic growth' potential for this infant, frustrated in obtaining adequate connection with mother, may be to establish connection within realms beyond the personal. "Turning away from the personal strengthens connection with the archetypal" (Mathew, 2005, p. 386). This connection, the numinous, mystical, spiritual connection, is what ultimately allows those whom the world breaks to afterward become strong at the broken places. This is the force of cosmic proportions capable of awakening the consciousness; initiating existence from the depths of non-existence; reversing the escape into annihilation and the depths of traumatic descent, and instigating a return from the exile of the witness protection program. This is the power of reverie, to bring forth something of great value from the (pregnant) open emptiness of potential.

(11) ***self-reflection***. An individual must be capable, indeed, must devote attention to and practice self-reflection in order to progress in transformation of consciousness. It is a building block for mindfulness and for exploration of states of consciousness. Hillman (1975) speaks of the *soul* as a perspective, a viewpoint, that is reflective, that mediates events. "Between us and events, between the doer and the deed, there is a reflective moment," and in this middle ground resides the soul. Effective psychotherapy contributes to such self-reflection within the safety and encouragement of a healthy intimate relationship.

(12) ***God as a secure base for exploration***. For many, God or other forms of spiritual connection serves as a secure base from which to explore not only the physical world, but the transcendental domains of the psychic, mystic, and cosmic realms. Kaufman (1981, p. 67), a theologian, states, "The idea of God is the idea of an absolutely adequate attachment-figure. . . . God is thought of as a protective and caring parent who is always reliable and always available to its children when they are in need."

People whose parental attachments were disrupted by separation or loss in childhood are less likely to turn to God as an attachment figure (Kirkpatrick, 1999). In research by Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1992), participants with a secure attachment to God perceived God as more loving, less controlling and less distant than those with insecure attachment. Those with an avoidant attachment to God were most inclined towards agnosticism (indifference) while individuals with an anxious/ambivalent attachment to God reported the highest incidence of speaking in tongues as well as the greatest proportion of atheists and

individuals describing themselves as anti-religious (ambivalent between these two extremes of being demonstratively religious or atheistic).

Substitute *soul* for *God* in the above paragraphs and you have clarified the healthy relationship between ego and soul. The ego able to trust his/her soul enough to be protected and cared for is not so distrustful as to usurp that role, becoming *precociously competent*. The ego that is not too busy avoiding its soul is not indifferent to the relationship and the benefits that vulnerability provides. The ego that is not preoccupied with *everything but* its soul connection is capable of clear choice and commitment spiritually.

The mechanism for the integration of descent and ascent, of libido and mortido, of *tohu* and *tikkun*, is the human heart. Bishop Kallistos Ware, a theologian within the Greek Orthodox church, writes:

> The heart is open below to the abyss of the unconscious. It is open above to the abyss of Divine glory. The heart is the point of meeting between body and soul, between soul and spirit, between human freedom and Divine grace, between the comprehensible and the incomprehensible, between the created and the uncreated. It is the absolute center (1997, p. 1).

The eighteenth century Hasidic Jewish wise man, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, explained that the statement of the Sages that “G-d desired an abode in the lower realms” refers to our physical world. This is the lowest of worlds in terms of the degree of revelation of the divine creative power: it is hidden in this world as it is in no other world. G-d desired precisely this world, pervaded as it is with “doubled and redoubled darkness,” as His “abode”, where His presence would ultimately be revealed to a greater degree than it is revealed in the higher worlds (Wineberg, 1988, p. 483).

> If purity and holiness were scattered in all directions by some cosmic catastrophe (e.g., the kabbalistic “breaking of the vessels”), some of these fragments of sacred goodness have been stranded in dirt, impurities, and squalor. One has to descend and dive into the mud to collect these shining gems. One has to wallow in profanity and sin in order to retrieve the holy particles that have been lost therein. Only then, when these stranded particles are reembraced by the primeval source of holiness, will the Messiah come (Shoham, 2000, pp. 10-11).

The Chinese hexagram Chung Fu is a profoundly simple symbol of the state we are discussing, the state of serenity, of optimal spiritual development, of integrating the two realities of the ‘broad containers and scant light’ (descent) with that of ‘much light and scant vessels’ (ascent).

We capture the immense light of Tohu in the broad vessels of Tikkun in a state of serene open-hearted receptivity.

I Ching Hexagram 61 – Inner Truth

Open-hearted receptivity. "The hexagram consists of firm lines above and below, while it is open in the center. This indicates a heart free of prejudices and therefore open to truth."

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