

## CHAPTER 13

Body and Soul<sup>1</sup>

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There is no body without soul, no body that is not itself a form of soul.

(Sri Aurobindo, Satprem 1987, p.172)

The human heart can go to the lengths of God.  
 Dark and cold we may be, but this  
 Is no winter now. The frozen misery  
 Of centuries breaks, cracks, begins to move,  
 The thunder is the thunder of the foes,  
 The thaw, the flood, the upstart Spring.  
 Thank God our time is now when wrong  
 Comes up to face us everywhere,  
 Never to leave us till we take  
 The longest stride of soul man ever took.  
 Affairs are now soul size  
 The enterprise  
 Is exploration into God.  
 Where are you making for? It takes  
 So many thousand years to wake,  
 But will you wake for pity's sake?

(Christopher Fry, from *A Sleep of Prisoners* (1985), p.253)

<sup>1</sup> Revised version of a paper previously published in *American Journal of Dance Therapy* 14, 2, 1992, and presented as one of four keynote speeches at the 26th Annual American Dance Therapy Conference, *Shadow and light: Moving toward wholeness*, San Francisco, 1991.

## Introduction

Once long ago, when there was a great and terrible problem demanding resolution, a rabbi went to a certain place in the forest, lit a fire and prayed, and the problem was solved. Generations later, when another rabbi was faced with a very difficult task, he went to the same place in the forest and prayed, but he no longer could light the fire. Regardless, his wish was granted. Again, after hundreds of years, a rabbi went to the specific place in the forest because he and his people encountered a great problem. While there, he said: 'We can no longer light a fire, nor do we know the secret meditations belonging to the prayer, but we do know the place in the woods to which it all belongs – and that must be sufficient'; and sufficient it was. But when another rabbi many generations later was confronted with a great and difficult task, he simply sat down and said: 'We cannot light the fire, we cannot speak the prayers, we do not know the place, but we can tell the story of how it was done.' And that was sufficient, so the story goes (Scholem 1961, p.350).

The only thing which is left of the great mysteries is the 'tale.' Is this sufficient? Our current search for the mysteries, the depth of our longing, suggests that the story is not enough. Because of ego-consciousness, we cannot go back to that place in the forest, light that fire and say those prayers. How can we rediscover spirit if we don't know where to go, how to kindle the light, or what to say?

A recent spiritual leader in India, The Mother, speaks of the pioneering necessary to proceed: 'You don't know whether this or that experience is part of the way or not, you don't even know if you are progressing or not, because if you knew you were progressing, it would mean that you know the way – but there is no way! No one has ever been there!' (Satprem 1984, p.333).

A contemporary mystic, Satprem (1984), explains:

It was probably necessary to preach heaven to us, to draw us out of our initial evolutionary sclerosis – but this is only a first stage of evolution, which we have turned into an ultimate and rigid end. And now this end is turning against us. We have denied the Divinity in Matter, to confine it instead in our holy places, and now Matter is taking its revenge... As long as we tolerate this Imbalance, there is no hope for the earth... We need both the vigor of Matter and the fresh waters of the Spirit... We have lost the Password, such is the bottom line of our era. We have replaced true power with devices, and true wisdom with dogmas. (pp.371–372)

In search of the password, we gather repeatedly in our particular collectives, among our colleagues, in an effort to listen and to speak together about the evolution of our work, our efforts to better understand the evolution of our own consciousness within the different language systems of our study of human development.

In pursuit of this study, the development of each collective is a microcosm of the development of the human psyche, of the history of religions, of civilizations. We tenaciously adhere to the unfolding of the unconscious into consciousness. Satprem (1984) writes that 'Becoming conscious is the very meaning of evolution' (p.102) and that 'This physical life in this physical body therefore assumes special prominence among all our modes of existence, because it is here that we can become conscious – this is where the work takes place' (p.127). The Mother insists: 'Salvation is physical' (Satprem 1982, p.60). Satprem (1984) explains: 'The whole story of the ascent of consciousness is the story of an opening of the aperture, the passage from a linear and contradictory consciousness to a global consciousness' (p.208).

Another story comes to mind, also from the richness of the Hassidic tradition: Once there was a great force called the universe and it became too big and much too hot. When it exploded, the trillions of moments of light fell everywhere, each becoming the source for new life... a salmon, a violet, a baby dove or person, a stone, an alligator. So all of us, including the tomatoes and the giraffes, have within us at our cores, a little light, a divine spark, a piece of the great light energy that is called life (Buber 1958).

Satprem (1984) writes: 'the world and every atom in the world are divine' (p.281) and '...the external veneer of a person usually has nothing in common with that tiny vibrating reality' (p.72). A Buddhist scholar in Tokyo, Nukariya, speaks of our source similarly: '...when our inmost pure and godly wisdom... is fully awakened, we are able to understand that each one of us is identical in spirit, in being and in nature with universal life' (Suzuki 1949, p.10).

At the very center of our differences, this light which we could call spirit or soul, radiating within each tiny newborn, reflects our sameness. The Buddhist most responsible for bringing Zen to the Western world, D.T. Suzuki, speaks of this phenomenon: 'Each individual reality, besides being itself, reflects in it something of the universal, and at the same time it is itself because of other individuals' (Unno 1984, p.12). Within a lifetime, or within generations of lifetimes, this oneness of spirit among us is usually threatened as it comes into relationship with power and economics represented by the

structures of religion. Satprem (1984) tells us that the psychic being '...is appropriated by churches, countless churches, which put it into articles of faith and dogma' (p.94).

How did this happen? Gershom Scholem (1961) writes lucidly about the history of religion. Originally, nature was the scene of the individual's relationship to God. There was no abyss between men and women and their God. Then the 'break-through' of religion occurred and created an abyss. God's voice directed people with his laws and demands across the vast chasm. People's voices responded in prayer, in longing, in fear, in love. The infinite distance was created. But, as Satprem (1984) explains, 'Through this separation we have become conscious. We are still incompletely conscious: and we suffer, we suffer, we suffer from being separated – separated from others, separated from ourselves, separated from things and from everything because we are outside the one point where everything joins together' (p.174).

The individual is lost from a direct connection with his or her God. Scholem (1961) describes the effort then 'to transform the God whom it encounters in the peculiar religious consciousness of its own social environment from an object of dogmatic knowledge into a novel and living experience and intuition' (p.10). The human psyche inevitably demands to experience direct relationship with spirit, to know the sacred.

Grof (1985) calls it transpersonal, Wilber (1980) calls it the super-conscious, Otto (1923) calls it the numinous, the Huichols (Meyerhoff 1974) call it Tatawari. The rebirth of spirituality within the New Age culture suggests the growing hunger for direct experience of god. It reflects the longing for a new container for the soul, for a new god. The urgency of this longing is also apparent in the search, signaled by some as a lack of connectedness, an escape, confusion and illusion. Unquestionably, the desire is to return to the old unity, but on a new plane. It has been the mystic, within religious traditions, who has lived most closely in relationship to this quest.

### **Is there a relationship between mystical practice and the practice of Authentic Movement?**

#### *Authentic Movement*

Exploration of mystical practices reveals some similarities to the practice of Authentic Movement. Useful therapeutically, meditatively or within any creative process, the discipline of Authentic Movement is defined by the

relationship between a person moving and a person witnessing that movement. Inherent in being a person in the cultures of the West is the deep longing to be seen as we are by another. We want to be witnessed, without judgement, projection or interpretation. Ultimately, we want to witness, to see another (Adler 1987).

In this discipline movers work with eyes closed, slowly bringing their attention inward as their movement becomes highly specific to their own nature and history. Witnesses are invited to focus not only on what the mover is doing but on their own inner experience in the presence of the mover. As the witness owns projections, judgements and interpretations, the mover is increasingly free to risk honoring the deepening need to follow movement impulses which are born out of the unconscious. As the body finds form for the expression of what is at first formless material, personal consciousness evolves.

As movers hone their awareness of their developing internal witness and witnesses become aware of their internal mover, movers work within a circle of witnesses, which creates a deepening possibility for collective consciousness. The experience of the mover, the witness and the relationship between the two occurs on many levels, creating a complexity that spans the realms of the unconscious, consciousness and what Wilber (1980) calls the 'superconscious.'

In this chapter discussion of the discipline of Authentic Movement is a reflection of only one perspective on this way of working, which is currently being studied and practiced from many different and rich vantage points. The bare bones of this evolving form – the structure – is the common denominator. Content that emerges from the skeletal framework can be understood in many ways – ways that are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

There is a need now for a different way of describing what increasingly happens in the practice of Authentic Movement. We are learning that immersion in this practice means immersion in a developmental process in which personal history, as most clearly understood within psychological theory, slowly becomes integrated into the evolution of the psyche, taking its place within a larger self. There is more to us than, at best, highly developed, healthy ego structures. As we bring this developing ego consciousness toward the reawakening of the spirit, the discipline of Authentic Movement expands to include experiences that occur outside of personality and to include a language system within which to place these experiences.

### *Mystical practices*

Because of the vast number of mystical practices, it is important to limit this discussion of mysticism to traditions which appear to be most germane to our lives at this time: Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Shamanism, and a few voices from Hinduism because of the particular way in which these individuals in that ancient tradition speak to the great spiritual questions of this time.

There are four specific aspects of mystical practice which will be discussed: direct experience of one's god, the impossibility of describing it, its profound effect on the body and the emotions, and the evolution of such experience developmentally. The primary focus in this chapter, which is concerned with the relationship between Authentic Movement and mystical practice, will be on the mover because the mover initiates the process of Authentic Movement and is always at its center. The witness, as much as the mover, can find herself experiencing the numinous, but we must take one step at a time.

### DIRECT EXPERIENCE

In the texts of most religions mysticism can be described as one's experience of God and religion can be described as one's relationship to, or one's belief in, God. These two perspectives are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Gershom Scholem (1961) says that mysticism is a definite stage in the historical development of religion, a certain stage of religious consciousness which has always been incompatible with the other stages. The Christian mystic, Rufus Jones, writes that mysticism is 'religion in its most acute, intense, and living stage' (Scholem 1961, p.4).

A foremost authority on the phenomenon of shamanism, Mircea Eliade (1964), explains: '...it would be more correct to class shamanism among the mysticisms than with what is commonly called a religion' (p.8). A contemporary anthropologist who has made significant contribution to her field through her study of shamanism, Joan Halifax (1982), says that 'the shaman acquires direct knowledge from direct experience' (p.10). Richard Katz (1982) writes: 'The !Kung speak of the gods directly, not of their beliefs about the gods' (p.29).

The author of a classic text in Christian mysticism, Evelyn Underhill (1911), suggests that mystics are people who 'not merely have reasoned about the mystical experiences of others' (p.83) but instead are doers, not



thinkers, and each person ventures for himself. It is said of St Theresa: 'What others believed, she experienced in herself' (Merton 1968, p.26).

A priest and trappist monk who was an ardent student of Zen Buddhism, Thomas Merton (1968), writes: 'Personal experience thus seems to be the foundation of Buddhist philosophy...the chief characteristic of Zen is that it rejects...systematic elaborations in order to get back, as far as possible, to the pure unarticulated and unexplained ground of direct experience' (pp.36-37). Zen is direct experience. Merton (1968) continues: 'The whole aim of Zen is not to make foolproof statements about experience, but to come to direct grips with reality without the mediation of logical verbalizing' (p.37). D.T. Suzuki (1949) insists: 'Personal experience...is everything in Zen' (p.33).

A distinguished philosopher of religion, William James (1982), suggests that direct experience is '...something more like a sensation than an intellectual operation' (p.64). Sensation is what the body perceives. It can be experienced as perception of an image, of light, a sound or a kinesthetic sensation. In mystical experience sensation is perception through any or all of the five senses plus another sense which is nameless.

Direct experience can be of form or of no form. It can be the experience of nothingness. In mystical experience the power and richness of symbol often expands into the realm of emptiness. An ancient Jewish scholar, Rabbi Akiva, insists: 'Man must therefore dispense with the mental ideas, or image of God, and by transforming himself, experience Him' (Epstein 1988, p.36). The great and heretical Christian mystic, Eckhart (Merton 1968), discusses the mystical experience as non-symbolic, urging the destruction of the symbols of nature's nakedness.

For many mystics, stepping aside from the archetype of God, or moving through it, leads them into what they describe as direct experience of an energy field in which no form or boundary exists. Description of such a space can be found within many mystical practices.

#### DIRECT EXPERIENCE IS INDESCRIBABLE

Like the mystic, the individual who practices Authentic Movement is often challenged by what can be a very disturbing conflict. There is a knowing that says to contain the experience until it is complete, concomitant with a longing to share it. The longing is inextricably linked to the knowledge ahead of time, that it is impossible to describe.

For some, this longing seems to be in relationship to completing the experience, as if the verbal or visual description would bring it more clearly into consciousness. For others, describing it brings hope of being seen, understood or reducing the loneliness that such experiences inherently create. But, often, once this is attempted, the mystic reports a sense of self betrayal or an excruciating sense that what was once so vivid and profound has been reduced, limited and incorrectly described. 'He does not want it misunderstood or altered in any way in the act of revelation' (Larsen 1976, p.109).

In relation to this question, James Hillman writes in his commentary on Gopi Krishna's story of his kundalini experience: '...there is something in the nature of mystical experience that demands secrecy, as if the archetype behind the events which are in process needs a certain tension in order for it to be fulfilled. The alchemists envisioned this secrecy in their image of the closed vessel. In many fairy tales the hero or heroine is ordered not to say anything until the ordeal is over.' (Krishna 1971, p.131).

An articulate and distinguished shaman, Black Elk tells us: 'I saw more than I can tell and I understood more than I saw' (Neihardt 1979, p.43) and 'When the part of me that talks would try to make words for the meaning, it would be like fog and get away from me' (Larsen 1976, p.108). The Bible says: 'To attain to this spiritual wisdom, one must first be liberated from servile dependence on the wisdom of speech' (Cor. 1:17). Scholem (1961) writes: 'How is it possible to give lingual expression to mystical knowledge, which by its very nature is related to a sphere where speech and expression are excluded?' (p.14).

A woman who has made a remarkable contribution to the understanding of medieval woman's visionary literature, Elizabeth Petroff (1986), speaks of the illnesses of these women as a manifestation of a conflict related to writing about their experiences: 'They are fearful about what they expect to be negative responses to their writing' (p.42). Fear of response can drastically alter a description. Margery Kempe, one of the 14th century mystics discussed by Petroff (1986), said: '...I began to consider within myself how difficult and even impossible it would be to find thoughts and words capable of explaining these things to the human intellect without scandal' (p.43).

Merton (1968) says that Zen 'resists any temptation to be easily communicable' (p.46). He insists that one wishes 'to grasp the naked reality of experience' but 'grasps a form of words instead...' (p.37). A contemporary Buddhist scholar, Bancroft (1979), discusses this challenge: 'Words are

essential but...when we rely too much on words we begin to substitute a world of indirect knowledge – knowledge about – for the immediate intense impact of what is actually there before thoughts and words arise' (p.7).

An ancient Zen teacher and scholar, Ch'an Master Hui Hai (1972), writes: 'To comprehend (real) meanings, we should go beyond unsteady words: to awaken to the fundamental law, we should leap beyond writings' (p.123). Suzuki (1949) explains: '...the human tongue is not an adequate organ for expressing the deepest truths of Zen... They are to be experienced in the inmost soul...' (p.33).

The great poets know much about this dilemma. Ryokan (Unno 1984), a late 18th century Japanese poet, writes:

Looking at this scene, limitless emotions,  
But not one word. (p.7)

And the extraordinary Persian mystical poet, Rumi (Moyne and Barks 1984), expresses the impossibility of this task:

- In these pages many mysteries are hinted at.  
What if you come to understand one of them? (p.v)
- If I could wake completely, I would say without speaking  
Why I'm ashamed of using words. (p.41)
- Why can't we hear thought? (p.79)

#### MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE AND THE BODY

A universal and completely central part of mystical experience is its direct affect on the body, which is visibly altered. Transformation of consciousness means transformation of the body. The Mother (Satprem 1982) writes vividly about this: 'To transform, you need to go down into the body, and that's terrible... Otherwise nothing will ever change, it will remain the same.' She continues: '...I seek my way downward – that's what I can't find. The way I am seeking is always descending, descending – it's never going up, it's always descending, descending. Oh! I have no idea when it will be over' (p.60).

The Mother's contributions to this area of inquiry are dramatic as she worked entirely phenomenologically: '...One never really understands unless one understands with one's body' (Satprem 1984, p.240). 'I have had a unique experience. The supramental light entered my body directly, without going through the inner or higher planes of consciousness. It was the first time. It entered through the feet...' (Satprem 1982, p.163).

R. H. Blyth (1960) tells us that 'Zen means thinking with the body' (p.28). A great Jewish mystic, Abulafia, who was not unlike a Zen master, assigned each letter of the Hebrew alphabet to a corresponding body part. Focusing on a body part as an expression of a holy letter increased the aspirant's possibility of reaching God (Epstein 1988). What follows is a description of what can happen:

After much movement and concentration on the letters, the hair on your head will stand on end... your blood will begin to vibrate... and all your body will begin to tremble, and a shuddering will fall on all your limbs, and... you will feel an additional spirit within yourself... strengthening you, passing through your entire body... [like] fragrant oil, anointing you from head to foot. (p.84)

Stephen Katz (1983) writes:

The concrete meetings of mystic and beloved in Christian tradition, moreover, are almost always with the Christ whose physical body and wounds... are seen and felt by the Christian initiate. Indeed, this feeling of sharing in Christ's wounds is a striking feature of many Christian mystical occasions... Yearning to share in her Lord's Passion, [Lukardis of Oberweinar] prayed that [Christ's] experience of pain might always be present to her own experience. [The Lord said to her in response:] 'Place thy hands against My hands, and thy feet against My feet, and thy breast against My breast, and in such wise shall be so much helped by thee that My pain will be less.' And when the servant of God had done this she felt interiorly the most bitter pain of the wounds both in her hands and in her feet and in her breast... (pp.14–15)

A traditional healer in the !Kung tribe of the Kalahari Desert, Kinachau describes his dancing, in which a longing to unite with his god is actualized (Katz 1982): 'I felt num [the kundalini energy] in my stomach. I felt it rising. I felt it shiver and shiver... You breathe hard and fast, your heart is pounding. You run around because the "num" is shaking and agitating you violently' (p.84). 'Num grabs you and throws you up in the air' (p.89).

A witness to Kinachau's experience, Richard Katz (1982), describes what he saw:

Kinachau sits up... His look is glazed, and his body trembles spasmodically. He returns to dancing and, after three full turns around the circle, goes over to one of the peripheral "talking" fires and begins to heal. As he pulls the sickness from each person, Kinachau's whole body

shakes roughly and his legs tremble violently, the tendons sticking out. His jerking hands quiver rapidly over each person's chest... He shrieks out the characteristic deep howling sounds which express the pain involved in pulling out sickness. (p.65)

Often, the bodily experience for the mystic includes much physical pain. The medieval saints left vivid accounts of their pain. Hildegard of Bingen writes of her aching 'in the marrow of her bones and the veins of her flesh' (Petroff 1986, p.139). Hadewich similarly suffered: '...all my separate limbs threatened to break...all my separate veins were in travail' (Petroff 1986, p.194). St Elizabeth of Schonau (Petroff 1986) attempted to describe her experience of her body: 'after this vision, I remained exhausted with illness' (p.161); 'I remained in that state of violent bodily agitation' (p.162); 'with great physical suffering I came into ecstasy' (p.167). !Kung healers speak of the pain. Richard Katz (1982) describes it this way: 'Healers speak again and again of the searing pain...in the pit of the stomach. One healer said: "Num got into my stomach. It was hot and painful...like fire. I was surprised and I cried"'. (p.45)

Underhill (1911) explains that psycho-physical disturbances are often the result of mystical experiences: 'The nervous and vascular systems rebel against a way of life, they don't adjust' (p.60). St Theresa said that the power of her movement was lost and her breathing and circulation were diminished. For some, it is impossible to speak or to open their eyes (Underhill 1911). Another medieval saint, Blessed Angela of Foligno, writes: 'I didn't remember to eat. And I wished that it were not necessary to eat' (Petroff 1986, p.259). In his autobiography, Gopi Krishna (1971) writes:

Aversion from food is a common feature when the rising of the kundalini is sudden (p.195). I had not to eat for pleasure or the mechanical satisfaction of hunger, but to regulate the intake of food with such precision as not to cause the least strain on my oversensitive and over-stimulated nervous system. (p.86)

The Buddhist nun, Seng-Kuo, from Ceylon, 'would go into Samadhi for whole nights on end, her spirit remaining continuously in Buddha-lands. At such time her body was like a withered tree, and people of shallow comprehension suspected that she was dead' (Conze *et al.* 1990, p.292). James Hillman writes in his commentary on Gopi Krishna's initiation: 'Again and again we shall come to passages in the text which emphasize the

enormous physical cost of the experience. It is important to realize...that transformation...is exhausting' (Krishna 1971, p.97).

There are times, in the mystic's journey, when physical death becomes a real possibility. Epstein (1988) explains in her insightful book about the great text of Jewish mysticism, the *Kabbalah*: 'For this was the moment when the soul so longed to escape the body that it could inadvertently result in the disciple's death' (p.97). Krishna (1971) writes: 'I felt instinctively that a life and death struggle was going on inside me in which I, the owner of the body, was entirely powerless to take part, forced to lie quietly and watch as a spectator the weird drama unfold in my own flesh' (p.152). A !Kung healer has this to say about death: 'As we enter kia, we fear death. We fear we may die and not come back' (Katz 1982, p.45).

It is interesting to note what the Buddhists say about the challenge of death. Suzuki (1962) writes: 'Eternity, for Zen, is not a posthumous state of affairs. To live in eternity is to tap the infinity of the moment... No one is prepared to take that last step until he has first exhausted all his other resources, and finally stands emptied of all contrivances for meeting life. Only then will the need for reality drive him to the final abandoning of his self. The practice and discipline of Zen is to bring one to this point... The great Death is also the Great Awakening' (p.xvi).

At this time in the Western world, in response to our deepening need for authentic spiritual experience, all we can do is to return to our physical selves. Individuals practicing Authentic Movement can have experiences in their bodies that are not unlike those just described by mystics. What follows are examples of movers' attempts to write about direct experiences of the numinous in the practice of Authentic Movement. These experiences all occurred for individuals after many years of personal therapy followed by several years of Authentic Movement practice.

A man named Allan periodically encounters a specific energy field that moves from inside his body up and out. He says:

I feel the pushing up from my torso and diaphragm. It's as if a strong life force is pushing up from within me and my body has to follow... Once out, a large golden ball emerges from my body - I carry it around the room in both hands, arms outstretched...I am very large...

For a period of a year I repeatedly witnessed Elena, who was watching her own hands being cut off. After unsuccessfully searching for an explanation within her personal history and personality, she finally accepted this



experience, surrendering to its fullness, its lack of emotionality, its specific kinesthetic demands. We subsequently learned that in the earliest form of Jewish mysticism, called Throne Mysticism, the mystic began his descent to the Merkabah, 'the visionary journey of the soul to heaven [by having to stand upright] without hands and feet' (Scholem 1961, p.52).

Michelle wrote this in her journal after moving in the studio:

I was being pulled to a standing position. I felt as though every cell in my body was being mobilized into an upward motion. My face was lifted up toward the sky light; my arms began to move in an upward fully extended gesture which I held for a very long time...perfectly still, perfectly light. Then my body began to shake and tremble as I released or was released from the experience. I felt as though I was being moved by something more than the 'little' me or ego 'me.'

Another woman, Lauren, wrote in her journal after moving:

I lie still and become more still. In fact, I am so still the word doesn't work anymore, because I come to an experience where there is much activity, but only on a deep kinesthetic level. I am empty, with no density inside, and no density around me, surrounded by nothing, yet incredibly awake and sort of becoming like sound with no form.

Satprem (1984) writes about this: '...beyond a certain level of consciousness, it is no longer ideas that one sees and tries to translate – one hears... When the consciousness of the seeker is clear, he can hear the sound distinctively; and it is a seeing sound...' (p.224).

Jody describes the experience of light after pulling her limbs slowly in toward her torso: 'I see and feel an explosion from the base of my spine – a white ball diffusing into white light. It is gentle and slow. A "boom," but quiet, in slow motion. It fills my entire back and literally jars me, giving me a jolt'.

Mystical texts are replete with reference to light. Hildegard of Bingen writes: '...that a fiery light of the greatest brilliance coming from the opened heavens, poured into all my brain and kindled in my heart and my breast a flame' (Petroff 1986, p.151).

The following example is of an experience of image within a transcendent state – which is different from fantasy or active imagination. A vision occurs within a mystical state and, therefore, is made of light, or what has been described as electrical energy. In a transcendent state, as Underhill (1911) explains, the self embodies the image or vision.

Anna wrote this vision in her journal after lying unusually still for a long period of time, feeling very tired and weighted:

Feminine white hands caress the stones in a circle. I come down from the sky onto the pole in the middle. I spin. Roots grow from my feet. Branches reach from my arms from my mouth. My third eye grows a branch which is holding a rabbit who sits on top of the full green tree.

For a period of six months, Julie spoke simply and shyly, after moving, about a kinesthetic experience, the sensation of falling into nowhere. She wrote in her journal:

This is not an easy task, this surrender to such a life threatening situation, but it brings a release...when I just endlessly fall THROUGH DARK AND EMPTY NOTHING... If I surrender and fall more deeply into the material, I must let go of meaning, of attachment to any semblance of things, which once anchored my life, even my physical being.

#### MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE AND THE EMOTIONS

As the body transforms, so does the self. The experience of the self, internally, in relationship to others and to the natural world, is altered. The personalities of some mystics are much more visible in their writing about this than others. For example, the lives of medieval Christian visionaries are more available, more explicitly portrayed in biography and autobiography, than the lives of Jewish mystics, who seemed to experience more 'personal reticence' (Scholem 1961, p.16). In this context it is also interesting to note that there is strikingly little recorded biographical material concerning Jewish women who were mystics. Scholem (1961) tells us that Kabbalism is historically and metaphysically masculine. It was made for and by men.

The phenomenon of resistance and its relationship to surrender regarding mystical experience is repeatedly discussed in many traditions. Underhill (1911) tells us that the mystic 'goes because he [or she] must...without hope or reward' surrendering '...self and all things' – into 'the annihilation of selfhood' (p.83). Eliade (1964) describes 'the resistance to "divine election" as mankind's ambivalent attitude toward the sacred' (p.109). He tells us that the 'shaman struggles for a long time with unknown forces before he finally cries: "Now the way is open"' (p.294). It is unusual for the human psyche to do just this without struggle, conflict, terror, despair and a feeling of helplessness. Richard Katz (1982) describes resistance to *kia* among the !Kung:

The aspiring healers try to regulate their condition. When they feel *kia* coming on, they involuntarily draw back from and at times actively resist this transition to an altered state. Others help them to overcome this resistance and to strike a dynamic balance between the oncoming intensity of *kia* and their fear of it... The num must be hot enough to evoke *kia* but not so hot that it provokes debilitating fear... the correct amount is critical. (p.47)

Scholem (1961) describes the Jewish men who were mystics: 'They glory in objective description and are deeply averse to letting their own personalities intrude into the picture... It is though they were hampered by a sense of shame' (p.16). Petroff (1986) writes of the Christian medieval visionaries: 'Descriptions of physical pain and weakness associated with ecstatic states, accompanied by statements of shame or embarrassment are frequent...' (p.41).

Petroff (1986) discusses Hildegard of Bingen's writing as:

typical of most women visionaries in its mingling of self-confidence and humility. [...] For in the marrow of her bones and in the veins of her flesh she was aching, having her mind and judgement bound, so that no security dwelt in her and she judged herself culpable in all things. [...] She has been protected from pride and vainglory by these feelings of fear and grief. (p.139)

Underhill (1911) describes the fear as not only of the inner experiences themselves but of deceiving themselves and others in their struggle to believe that what is happening to them is real. This is not at all an unrealistic fear. Epstein (1988) mentions that 'the Jewish sages have always therefore warned that it is impossible for the average person to have a real prophetic dream without a considerable admixture of worthless information' (p.143). Petroff (1979) also discusses the great difficulty for the Christian mystics to 'distinguish between one's own mind and the true information' (p.51). She explains how the initiate can't yet see her own new forming self and instead sees herself as less significant than others see her. Guyon, a Christian mystic, writes of his feelings of doubt: 'I could not perceive of any good thing I had done in my whole life' (Underhill 1911, p.38).

Petroff (1986) describes the great effort made by the Beguine visionaries 'to be in the world but not of it' (p.207). This conflict caused tremendous pain for mystics in many traditions. Underhill (1911) describes St Theresa's awesome struggle with this split: 'At times she persuaded herself that she

could enjoy both [worlds] which ended mostly in complete enjoyment of neither' (p.214).

Underhill (1911) writes of other excruciating emotional conflicts which mystics suffer. She discusses their feelings of deprivation and inadequacy. Visitors are often experienced as torture. They see a tiny detail of imperfection in themselves and inflate it. They have a 'wild desire to see god, to die. They can't touch earth and they can't get to heaven' (Underhill 1911, p.386).

Eliade (1964) discusses the ascetic practice for shamans as an annihilation of secular personality. He writes of the silence and depression that often follow ecstatic states. Hillman discusses this in his commentary on Gopi Krishna's experiences:

The alternation of his states of consciousness throughout the years, especially the loss of heavenly joy time and again, is also described by the alchemists. They said the stone must be coagulated and dissolved again and again. The more it alternated between these opposites the more valuable it became. This lesson is hard to learn, for after every peak experience one wants to 'hold it', and after each valley experience one feels guilty, lost, and humiliated. (Krishna 1971, p.237)

The impact of such dramatic change in the body and the emotions challenges the mental health of an individual. Eliade (1958) discusses this: "Possessed" by the Gods or spirits, the novice is in danger of completely losing his psychomental balance' (p.68).

The Kabbalists were not unaware of the danger of insanity, especially when the mystic was compelled to confront the demonic beings (Epstein 1988). Participatory visions, for the medieval Christian mystics, were the most dangerous in terms of their sanity. Sometimes, 'the visionary so fully identifies with the archetypal experience of grief that she is incapable of observing her vision or reflecting on what she has seen until the vision is over' (Petroff 1979, p.60). When the conscious mind fuses with the image, psychosis is possible.

Because of the great stress on the body and psyche, some initiates become psychotic, some die. A crucial factor in this regard is the clarity of ego consciousness and the strength of the boundary between such consciousness and the experience of the numinous. There is, of course, little written about those who, for whatever reason, do not find themselves able to survive this complex journey. We most often read about those who manage to return to tell the story. Those initiates somehow learn a way to balance surrender and



will, form and formlessness, body and spirit. In such a process they manage to stay in touch with the daily life just enough. It is said of St Catherine: 'When she was needed, she always came to herself' (Underhill 1911, p.248).

In the practice of Authentic Movement, when individuals are experiencing various aspects of a mystical journey, the emotional effect is evident. So much of what has just been discussed is familiar in the speaking and the writing of movers and witnesses: shyness, shame, fear, insecurity, a sense of deprivation, confusion, fear of psychosis, fear of death, as well as bliss, rapture, ecstasy.

Many struggle with physical symptoms that do not fit tidily into Western medical phenomena and fall haphazardly into what is broadly referred to as New Age diseases. Many doubt the experiences of the numinous, working hard to find explanation within personality theory. Others resist the intensity of the energy for excellent reasons. Feeling a great inability to describe these experiences, they suffer from frustration, fear of being misunderstood and fear of being judged as inflated, and, finally, deflate the experiences in order to remain safe.

In the practice of Authentic Movement we are learning how to distinguish mystical experiences from unresolved personal history, how to safely help regulate their intensity, how to receive and integrate such material into developing consciousness. In doing so we are learning how to witness the organic evolution of these energies into new form.

#### MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY

Mystical experience, like the unfolding of personality, can occur developmentally. In many mystical traditions there are stages through which the initiate evolves. These stages provide an understanding, an order, a way of containing the whole. However, many experiences of the superconscious do not occur within a tidy developmental framework. These isolated occurrences can be related to any of the specific stages, can occur from the same energy source, can be exactly like those experiences that happen sequentially, but simply are not recognizably experienced within a developmental spectrum.

Halifax (1982) describes the stages in the shamanic tradition, from death to rebirth to return:

The deepest structures within the psyche are found in the themes of descent to the Realm of Death, confrontations with demonic forces, dismemberment, trial by fire, communion with the world of spirits and

creatures, assimilation of the elemental forces, ascension via the World Tree and/or the Cosmic Bird, realization of a solar identity, and return to the Middle World, the world of human affairs. (p.7)

Underhill (1911) lists the five stages that the Christian mystic experiences: awakening, purgation, illumination, mystic death and union. As mentioned earlier, in *Throne Mysticism* the early Jewish mystics passed through 'heavenly halls or palaces' in a journey called 'descent to the Merkabah.' There are seven gates of entry, which finally lead to the 'perception of His appearance on the throne' (Scholem 1961, p.44). It can be different for many Zen Buddhists because the appearance of symbols do not necessarily contribute to their journey. Yet there is a path clearly described by the ancient Zen masters which aspirants follow.

Within these basic and developmental stages of transformative experience there is meaning and complexity in each stage that, again, is similar among the different traditions. What follows is a brief discussion of three of these stages: descent, union and return.

#### *Descent*

A distinguished Buddhist priest and philosopher, Yoshinori (1983), writes: 'In the mystical traditions of all times and places, conversion is said to begin with self-purification, with a catharsis of soul' (p.16). Eliade (1958) writes of the descent that the shamanic initiate is required to make in which he or she inevitably 'encounters' monsters (p.62).

Petroff (1979) explains that the first step for Christian visionaries is almost always a direct encounter with evil. Theresa of Avila writes of her experience: 'I saw in his hand a long spear of gold and at the iron's point there seemed to be a little fire. He appeared to me to be thrusting it at times into my heart and to pierce my very entrails...' (Underhill 1911, p.292).

In each tradition these early stages, with or without visions depicting such experience, describe the initiate's experience of loss of his or her physical body through fire, torture, being devoured or dismembered. Death of the self as one has known it inevitably precedes rebirth.

#### *Union*

The arrival in the Upper Realm often includes a meeting with God. Enoch writes of his encounter in the Old Testament: 'And there I saw One, who had a head of days, and His head was white like wool' (Epstein 1988, p.50). Union with God is experienced in a myriad of ways. Scholem (1961)

explains that in the ecstatic state, the mystic is his own Messiah. For many Kabbalists, union includes letters and words (Scholem 1961): '...every spoken word consists of sacred letters, and the combination, separation, and reunion of letters reveal profound mysteries...and unravel...the secret of the relation of all languages to the holy tongue... In this supreme state, man and Torah become one' (p.135). The great Christian mystic, Eckhart, writes about union:

In my breaking-through...I transcend all creatures and am neither God nor creature: I am that I was and I shall remain now and forever. Then I receive an impulse which carries me above all angels. In this impulse I conceive such passing riches that I am not content with God as being God, as being all his godly works, for in this breaking-through I find that God and I are both the same... (Merton 1968, p.114)

A renowned Buddhist scholar, Blofeld (1972), describes it this way: 'Reality will flash upon us, the whole universe of phenomena will be seen as it really is...' (p.31). The great and recent spiritual leader in India, Sri Aurobindo, writes: 'Thou art He... Such is the Truth that the ancient Mysteries taught and the later religions forgot' (Satprem 1984, p.170). In the *Taittiriya Upanishad* it is found: 'The Spirit who is here in man and the spirit who is there in the sun, lo, it is One Spirit and there is no other' (Satprem 1984, p.171). Regardless of the framework within which this union occurs, in each tradition it is undeniably positive, more than worth the great suffering that precedes it. The initiate becomes whole, one with the universe.

In the practice of Authentic Movement the unitive stage is reflected on three different levels. With a very practiced mover, union can occur between the moving self and the internal witness. One no longer sees oneself lifting one's arm, it simply lifts. This can look like pre-egoic experience, to use Ken Wilber's framework, but, in fact, it is trans-egoic (Wilber 1980). Experience in the unconscious state can look like experience in the superconscious state. The difference is that in the unconscious state the presence of ego is not yet established and, in the superconscious state, the fully formed ego has been transcended.

Second, union can occur between the witness and the mover when both are simultaneously without self-consciousness and without the experienced density of personality. They are each completely clear and separate beings, and yet united. This can look like merging but, instead, it is union. Gopi Krishna (1971) writes of this when speaking of man's relationship to his god, though it is interesting to wonder about its application here: 'The seer and

the seen – reduced to an inexpressible sizeless void which no mind can conceive...or any language describe' (p.208).

In Zen this unity is discussed in relationship to the subject and the object becoming one. A contemporary Buddhist scholar, Masao Abe (1983), discusses this phenomenon. Perhaps mover and witness could be substituted for subject and object: 'So long as the field of self-consciousness, i.e., the field of separation between subject and object, is not broken-through, and so long as a transference from that standpoint does not occur, a real self-presentation of reality cannot come about' (Abe 1983, p.9).

Third a mover can experience union with his god. Any, or all, of these experiences can look like work in the unconscious, rather than superconscious, but the difference is that ego-consciousness has been expanded toward the numinous. These experiences can only occur safely after healthy ego structures are developed.

#### *Return*

After the exhausting and impeccably demanding journey of the initiate, after the torment and the terror, the light and the ecstasy, the bone-aching and the emptiness, inevitably, the one who has travelled returns home again. Campbell (1956) explains the task of return:

The hero may have to be brought back from his supernatural adventure by assistance from without. That is to say, the world may have to come and get him... After such utter bliss, why would the human psyche choose to leave it and return to the embodied state of humanity? A choice is necessarily made, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. (p.207)

Perhaps the return has become even more difficult in the Western world because there is rarely a container or community which believes in, honors and correctly receives the initiate. Campbell (1956) continues:

How render back into light-world language the speech-defying pronouncements of the dark?... How communicate to people who insist on the exclusive evidence of their senses the message of the all-generating void? ... The first problem of the returning hero is to accept as real, after an experience of the soul-satisfying vision of fulfillment, the passing joys and sorrow, banalities and noisy obscenities of life. Why re-enter such a world? Why attempt to make plausible, or even interesting, to men and women consumed with passion, the experience of transcendental bliss? (p.218)

The process of return just described essentially has two aspects: the internal experience of the one who has been transformed – the impeccable struggle toward clarity, balance, and integration of the new energy now active within the person – and the equally impeccable task of bringing that embodied energy into clear and correct relationship with the collective. Coming back is not enough. Coming back brings an unwritten, unstated, often unwanted responsibility in relationship to the community.

What follows is an example of work in an Authentic Movement experience, which illustrates an aspect of the phenomenon of return. Hilary writes:

I witnessed for hours without moving until I felt I would explode. I had to walk out of doors, up the hill to a clearing. Once there I felt I was witnessed by God. I was completely contained by everything around me. When I returned to the studio I looked at my witness and knew that I had been seen. I sat down and felt the presence of God come inside through my womb. It felt like a divine child.

She then began to move inconspicuously with other movers, dancing, crying, laughing, engaging completely in the fullness of the movement that was occurring among them. This experience was reminiscent to me, as a witness, of the tenth of the series of the ox-herding pictures. Bancroft (1979) discusses these pictures, which depict the development of Zen life: 'In the tenth and last picture, he returns to the world, a free man, doing whatever he does with the whole of himself because there is nothing to gain' (p.96).

In the practice of Authentic Movement some movers encounter mystical experiences which either happen outside of a developmental framework or do not appear to be sequentially related. Others have mystical experiences which seem to evolve developmentally. We are now witnessing several movers who have spontaneously begun a descent in which there seems to be an inherent order. Their experiences reflect work at various places on the spiral toward wholeness. What follows is material from the journal of one mover, Rebecca, in which she describes different stages in the development of her mystical journey:

I come to the killing fields. The sea of endless white where I come to die away the features of my reality. I tremble; I do not come willingly. I know the stakes are high. It is really a matter of one death or another... I trick myself in murderous ways. I let the ripe time rot in inertia or procrastination... This is another letting go. Hanging on to illusion is a

different and I believe more terrible death than letting go; but this letting go is a descent into unknown pain, perhaps memory. I can only guess how painful by the measure of my own resistance to this action.

I begin by sitting, feeling too much, feeling sick and aching. Rest. Empty. By Maria I am comforted. I want the drum... I go to Audrey's drum and sit for a long time: I lay my head on the drum; I scratch the drum. I listen. Carefully. Many sounds in the collective. I must go back to the burning fire. I go. I sit. I extend my spine. I fall into the direct heat. I burn and burn. There is a shift from red to white. I am white in the fire. Pure hot in the burning. Time is called.

She ends the week-end with this entry in her journal:

Search hard to find the gift, until  
Your fingertips are shred to bone and  
your eyes are water-hollowed stone.

Suffer, until breath itself no longer  
visits freely, but hardly fills the  
spongy billows, sucked in narrowly  
in service of pain's hard thrust.

Beat, the empty, bloodless chambers  
of your heart. Burn, until faith  
and surrender are the last dim  
embers on earth.

A year later, after repeated experience of death, she wrote the following poem in her journal about new life:

Moving to this new place, now so white  
with stillness and emptiness  
alive in every molecule. Inside  
I am the beating wings of  
one hundred birds with  
winter  
coming on.

I begin to suspect that I am in an initiation process that has little to do with psychology... getting these contents into the psychological realm is, in fact, dangerous to me. When I clear away the dross of my psychology, not deny it, but let it run its own inevitable course, then there is this particular circle in which I am being and becoming conscious. I'm



in an ancient and external place. Nature teaches me. I dwell with such immense energy that is ordered in mystery. It is all so vibrant, tender, and fierce.

### The practice of Authentic Movement

It is important at this point to look more closely at the form of Authentic Movement itself and some of the other aspects of it that are similar to mystical practice. The constant external container in Authentic Movement is the relationship between the mover and the witness (Adler 1987). We begin with dyads which allow movers and witnesses an intimate and safe container out of which trust and clarity can develop. The evolving relationship between the two is reflected in the writing of Santiveva, an eighth century poet and mystic, when he describes the 'practice of contemplative identification with other beings. This he calls either meditation on the "sameness of self and others" or the "transference of self and others"... Whoever wishes to quickly rescue himself and another, should practice the supreme mystery: the exchanging of Self and other' (Gimmello 1983, p.69). The Mahayana Gampo-pa writes:

Spiritual friends are like a guide when we travel in unknown territory, an escort when we pass through dangerous regions and a ferry-man when we cross a great river... When we go there without an escort, there is the danger of losing our body, life, or property; but when we have a strong escort we reach the desired place without loss. (Gimmello 1983, p.81)

The mover, in the presence of her witness, works with her eyes closed. The Bal Shem Tov told his disciples '...when you wish to yoke yourself to the higher world, it is best to worship with your eyes closed' (Epstein 1988, p.118). St John of the Cross said: 'If a man wishes to be sure of the road he treads on, he must close his eyes and walk in the dark' (Ross 1960, p.243). In Authentic Movement practice eyes are closed for similar reasons, to enhance connection with one's inner life. Usually, inner life includes, even if it is unconscious, an awareness of the numinous.

With eyes closed, the mover's task is to wait and to listen, to trust in the possibility of 'being moved', instead of moving, as Mary Whitehouse (1963) so beautifully explained. Listening means concentrating. Concentration is the central force of all mystical practices. Satprem (1984) tells us that 'any concentration releases a subtle heat' (p.281) and that in concentrating the

expanding consciousness 'may silently and quietly focus on the desired object and become this object' (p.116).

There is constant talk in the studio about seeing. The mover strives to see herself more and more clearly via her internal witness. The witness struggles with the developing capacity to see herself as she learns how to see her mover. And seeing her mover means owning her own projections, judgements and interpretations so that she can bring a clear presence to her mover. Clear presence means seeing what is actually there. Satprem (1984) says: 'If we are powerless, it is because we do not see. Seeing, seeing wholly, necessarily means having power' (p.270); 'In inner silence, consciousness sees' (p.116).

Castaneda insists that we 'learn to see' (Larsen, 1976 p.183) and Satprem (1984) reminds us:

If our mirror is not clean, we can never see the true reality of things and people, because we find everywhere the reflection of our own desires or fears, the echo of our own turmoil... In order to see, it is obvious that we have to stop being in the middle of the picture. Therefore, the seeker will discriminate between the things that tend to blur his vision and those that clarify it; such essentially will be his 'morality'. (p.71)

Suzuki (1980) writes: 'There must be actual seeing on the physical plane, and over and through this seeing there must be another sort of seeing... It is not that something different is seen but that one sees differently' (p.36). Merton (1968) describes Zen in an uncannily similar way in which we are trying to describe moving and witnessing:

The monk is 'trying to understand' when in fact he ought to try to *look*. The apparently mysterious and cryptic sayings of Zen became much simpler when we see them in the whole context of Buddhist 'mindfulness' or awareness, which in its most elementary form consists in that 'bare attention', which simply *sees* what is right there and does not add any comment, any interpretation, any judgement, any conclusion. It just *sees*. (pp.52-53)

The trouble is that as long as you are given to distinguishing, judging, categorizing and classifying – or even contemplating – you are superimposing something else on the pure mirror. You are filtering the light through a system as if convinced that this will improve the light. (p.7)

In the practice of Authentic Movement the mover's internal witness has developed in relationship to a gradual internalization of her external witness.



Originally, the external witness held consciousness so that she, the mover, could open to the unconscious. Now her internal witness holds consciousness for her as she finds more space to open to other sources of energy.

In the Rig Veda there is a striking statement about the internal witness: 'Two birds beautiful of wing, friends and comrades, cling to a common tree, and one eats the sweet fruit, the other regards him and eats not' (Satprem 1984, p.44). Sri Aurobindo describes it this way: 'All developed mental men...at certain times and for certain purpose...separate the two parts of the mind, the active part, which is a factory of thoughts and the quiet, masterful part which is at once a Witness and a Will' (Satprem 1984, p.49).

Perhaps the internal witness progressively evolves into the clear self as unconditional loving presence becomes manifest. As mentioned before, many mystics believe that God is the clear self. In the Tao Te Ching there is an exquisite description of what the expanding and developing internal witness might be:

The Tao flows everywhere,  
Creating,  
Inspecting, remaining silent and unknown,  
It rejects nothing,  
Possesses nothing,  
Encourages but does not dominate.  
Being quiet,  
Uncritical,  
Nonpossessive,  
It does not sign its name,  
It is hardly recognized by anyone,  
It is too small to see.

After several years of dyad and triad work, the mover enters the witness circle with an increased ability to concentrate, less density from unresolved personality issues and an increasingly clear internal witness. Because of the strengthening of internal witnessing by the movers, the collective of external witnesses gradually shifts from a more personal responsibility of holding consciousness for an individual mover toward the freedom to see from a broader perspective. The circle of witnesses begins to participate in a collective consciousness which can include what Wilber (1980) calls 'super-consciousness.' In this format witnesses often see a collective myth, a ritual,

or simply feel in the presence of an energy larger than one individual can hold.

Also within the witness circle, there appears to be a gradual and subtle shift for movers. Often, the movement is less emotional, with less interference from the negative aspects of internalized parents, unresolved trauma and current conflict. Sometimes, a specific gateway into the numinous is experienced within the exact same movement pattern that held the most significant childhood trauma. For example, I witnessed a woman, over a period of two years, explore and finally fully re-live trauma that occurred specifically in a crib in her infancy. After such work had been integrated 'enough,' the exact movement pattern that once had elicited infant trauma suddenly elicited what she called transpersonal experience when she moved within a witness circle.

The circle is an ancient, archetypal form which appears in rituals, celebrations and ceremonies in which the sacred is honored or expressed. The shamans bring their visions back to the circle of their people, where they are enacted and/or danced by the community. The Hasids dance their dances of joy and praise in circles. The !Kung surround their dancers, who invite the num energy to rise for healing purposes, with a circle of people who sing in support of the process. Satprem (1984) agrees with the bodhisattvas that '...no individual transformation is possible without some degree of collective transformation' (p.348).

Ritual often spontaneously occurs in Authentic Movement circles, within an individual's work and within the collective. Spontaneous ritual occurs frequently for Alice. As her witness, I experience myself in the presence of high order and ancient form. She describes it this way:

I have often found myself embodying, enacting very particular, specific movement gestures, specifically directed by some unknown certainty within me. Often I don't understand why I feel compelled, beckoned to do what I do. Many times when I have completed the movement sequences I return to my place in the circle, open my eyes, and realize I have been in another place/realm, another zone of awareness.

In any ritual impeccability becomes a critical element. Any movement of an individual or a group becomes increasingly specific, precise, as the inherent order reveals itself. Precision is an essential element in transformative experience. Hillman (Krishna 1971) writes: 'The psyche has an affinity for precision; witness the details in children's stories, primitive rituals and primitive languages, and the exactitude with which we go about anything

that is important' (p.97). Impeccability within the occurrence of any mystical experience appears to be essential for the survival of the individual, for the survival of the collective, for the completion of the process.

Eliade (1958) writes of 'man's profound need for initiation, for regeneration, for participation in the life of the spirit' (p.134). In our longing to rediscover the mysteries, to participate in ritual, it is extremely important not to impose acts that do not organically evolve out of the experience itself. Because of the gift and the burden of ego consciousness, we can be informed and even nourished by rituals from other cultures, but we must patiently continue to listen for our own expression embodied of collective consciousness. How will we begin again to find the place, light the fire, say the words or dance the dance? As Satprem (1984) says: '...all we want is our own little river flowing into the Infinite' (p.2).

## Conclusion

After the above discussion of some of the similarities between mystical practice and the practice of Authentic Movement, it is necessary before closing to briefly discuss some of the differences. The major difference is that unlike mystical practice, Authentic Movement is a practice which has not evolved out of or in relationship to a religious belief system. Instead, it evolved originally out of the art of dance. Mary Whitehouse, Joan Chodorow, myself and many individuals who participate in the development of this form came to it originally as dancers. People come to the form to learn how to listen to their bodies and, in the process, some are guided from within toward experiences beyond ego consciousness.

In the practice of Authentic Movement there is no church, synagogue, dojo or temple representing a holy place where participants meet. There is no priest, rabbi or lama. There is no god whom individuals endeavor to find. There is no teacher who guides the individuals in relationship to religious texts or belief systems. Without a master, without a bible, often without any former direct experience of a god, the mover projects her clear self onto the witness until she is ready to own it. As this ownership is integrated, the individual moves toward wholeness until, at times, she becomes one with what Underhill (1911) calls her 'indwelling Deity.'

Unlike the mystic whose experiences have, in the past, tended to evolve out of specific religious symbols, teachings and collectives, in Authentic Movement practice we are evolving into a collective in which the conscious

individual is full member. In doing so we find our only external guide to be the form itself, which is free of any symbols, doctrines or promises.

The discipline of Authentic Movement offers a safe container in which individual and collective experience can become transformed, perhaps because of the evolution of the clear self. Again, Satprem (1984) offers guidance:

We do not seek to 'pass' on to a better existence but to transform this one. (p.243)

Everything seems to be happening up above, but what is happening here? ... We need a truth that involves also the body and the earth. (p.238)

First, we must work in our individual body, without seeking any escape, since this body is the very place where consciousness connects with Matter; and secondly, we must strive to discover the principle of consciousness that will have the power to transform Matter. (p.185)

We are here imprisoned in Matter... There are not a hundred ways of getting out of it, in fact there are only two; one is to fall asleep...and the other is to die. Sri Aurobindo's experience provides a third possibility, which allows us to get out without actually getting out, and which reverses the course of man's spiritual evolution, since the goal is no longer only above or outside, but right inside. (pp.261-262)

We need a way to be opened that is still blocked, not a religion to be founded. (p.289)

To transform, we must descend into the body: 'The more we descend, the higher the consciousness we need, the stronger the light' (Satprem 1984, p.260). Sri Aurobindo, the Mother and Satprem write voluminously about this process of light descending into matter, thereby transforming it, resulting in 'enstasy,' which is ecstasy in the body (Satprem 1984, p.198). They speak of 'luminous vibrations' (Satprem 1984, p.205). 'The day we learn to apply this Vibration...to our own matter, we will have the practical secret' (Satprem 1984, p.284). Satprem (1984) reminds us of what we all must know but somehow forget: 'One discovers only oneself, there is nothing else to discover' (p.216).



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