Tapping the Source
Els Kikke

‘Tapping the Source’

‘Your true self in action’

Altamira-Becht · Haarlem

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Foreword

Els Kikke is an exceptional writer and an exceptional person. She is exceptional as a person because as a researcher she wants to find out how things ‘really’ are and does her research via personal experience, not as a clinical observer, but as a participant in life: She is exceptional as a writer because she is able to put the most profound aspects of life into everyday language.

This book is about life and survival, love and divinity; about truth and happiness. Words for great concepts that she talks about in a completely comprehensive and coherent way. Down to earth and everyday. If you read this book superficially you might think you know this all already and have understood the point. I have to disillusion you about that. There is a difference between knowing and knowing; that is, if you can understand this book with your intellect, it does not really mean that your heart, soul or body have taken it in. To achieve that it will be necessary to read and re-read it and, most important of all, to start working with it.

‘Work’ means ‘self-examination’ in this book. Although teachers can play a role, they cannot determine the course of your life. The good ones help you on your way by posing the appropriate questions. This book contains dozens of good questions which encourage introspection. How you see yourself is so much more important than how others see you. Nevertheless, looking for answers
together with someone else can also be very worthwhile. But it remains your personal quest; your way of taking control of your life.

No one can tell you where your path will lead, or what it will entail. Some people secretly hope for a flash of light, total clarity, the divine voice; an exceptional few do experience this, but I would not recommend waiting for it. For the majority of people it remains a question of searching, learning to walk, occasionally stumbling, falling or becoming distraught at losing the way. Sometimes you experience the most beautiful visions, only to discover they were but ‘fata morganas’. Sometimes you just sit by the roadside to catch your breath, or set off running only to end up exhausted. You could feel as if you have drifted far away and then suddenly realise that you have found your way home.

An extensive knowledge of (transpersonal) psychology, philosophy, spirituality, psycho-synthesis or holistic healing is not necessary to follow your path. Els Kikke has studied the classic approach to human development, as well as the modern and alternative ones. She has made a superb summary in which the work of A.H.Almaas, which has been a great inspiration to us both, rings clearly through the text.

This book has been written for people who are looking for their truth, who want to find the real meaning of their lives. Most people put their stakes on achieving happiness, which often leads to disappointment, since the picture they have of being happy is frequently one they have received from the outside world. For example; that you can only be happy if you have a relationship, a child, a house and a good job, time for sport and a full fridge. Of course these are not unimportant factors, but first you have to find out what is really important. Your ego’s desire is inexhaustible, and striving for happiness could very well become a never-ending story. The fact is, it seems that you first have to find your own truth, the answer to the question as to what your personal strength is, what your unique talents are, and where your essence lies. Once you have an idea of this, the priorities your ego has made often turn out to be less important than you thought.

I hope that many of those who have the word ‘coach’ printed on their business cards will read this book. By my estimation, in the past decades, thousands of ex-managers, trainers, personnel advisors, and unemployed actors have taken on the task of coaching people. They often have no training for this and, even worse, no experience of self-analysis. But they know what is best for others. No doubt there are those with natural talent and wisdom among them who can actively assist people, but there are also many other amateurs (i.e. enthusiasts) in whom I fail to find any form of depth. However, after working through this book they will certainly attain greater profundity.

In the worlds of business, government and non-profit organisations, not only has the phenomena ‘coaching’ become widespread in recent years, but also the theme of leadership. In this the longing for genuine leadership is of prime importance for many people. The longer one occupies a certain position, the more any distinction between the position and oneself becomes blurred. Leadership in an organisation and personal leadership become synonymous. This book forms an excellent guide for those who wish to work on the development of their personal leadership. Working on yourself, your relationship with your partner and friends is of vital importance, but your life becomes much more meaningful if you are also able to find expression for this in your work.

I wish you an exciting journey, and remember - you have more power within you than you think.

Wessel Ganzevoort

Professor, director and counsellor for organisations that put people first.
Introduction

Primal spirit

Our natural state of being is to be in motion, both spiritually and physically. This gives us a sense of freedom, independence and health. While nothing has to be done, all sorts of things spontaneously occur, because the primal force, or spirit, is in action; flowing, breathing through us. It is the creative power which pulsates, connects, crystallizes and is liberated again. It is a continuous and efficient process. It is the flow of water; lightening discharging itself; two lovers drawn to each other; the warmth that transforms ice into water; the light that creates visibility, that opens and manifests itself. It is pleasure, enthusiasm, fear, anger, grief. It is vitality, gentleness. It is our vital and creative power. This power is present in every action of mankind and animal, of plants and matter. It is passion which is expressed in dance, music, song, art, literature, architecture etc. It is our sexual drive. We would not be alive if this creative power had not been present in our ancestors. It is a movement of attraction and rejection, of charging and discharging, just like our breathing. The whole universe is permeated with it.

The strength to maintain and the strength to sustain

Primal force is manifested in a myriad of mutually exchangeable ways.

The female pole of the primal spirit manifests itself as strength to sustain – a fundament of love and everything which accompanies it, like warmth, tenderness, gentleness, respect, attention and devotion. The male pole manifests itself as strength to act, reflected in our intent and willpower, our daring, our ability to persevere, to undertake things.

Freeing ourselves

For centuries on end various traditions worldwide have provided ways of releasing primal power from spiritual and physical blockades. The diverse forms that have evolved within these traditions are discussed in chapters three and four. However, the basic principle is always that one has to be activated through an awareness of being and from there allow the strength to sustain and to act to become engaged.

How do we do that?

All kinds of processes are occurring within us when we read something. When we acknowledge what we are thinking and feeling at that moment, without being judgemental, the strength to sustain is present. It means that we accept reality for what it is. Our attitude towards ourselves, and therefore towards others, is free from prejudice or control; it is open and accepting. This is a channel through which the primal spirit can flow freely. When we manage to keep ourselves in this state, it means that the strength to act is operational and that we have discovered the Source in ourselves, from which only appropriate, worthwhile, action can follow. This is not navel-contemplation, but being present in what is happening in ourselves and in the world around us.

Fear and survival

The way in which we experience the fulfilment of our need for security and love in our earliest environment, determines the degree to which we are able to either give space to the primal force, or to curb its flow within us.
If we feel uncomfortable, we become immediately afraid. We try to block the primal spirit. We make ourselves small and hold our breath. Or we inflate ourselves and misuse the power. We have ideas about the way we should live and allow ourselves to be guided by these. We work ourselves into a frenzy and run ourselves into the ground if we fail to live up to these ideas. We have abandoned the natural flow and are employing a survival strategy which feels safe; after all, we adopted it when we were very young. It has developed into an automatic reflex to everything we experience as unpleasant.

Sooner or later, this will propel us into a spiritual or physical stalemate in our lives.

**Change without change**

A need for change arises. Then comes the moment in which we acknowledge, observe and fully experience ourselves in our actual situation, instead of having to change. If we approach our changing moods in the same way, even the deepest despair, the momentum will continue. If we suppress an emotion or block it, it will continue to whimper in the darkness and menace us. This inevitably leads to depression.

The more space it has, the more the primal spirit functions to our advantage and is able to set free flowing, efficient action. More space is created, more freedom, independence and activity.

Physically we are also able to create more space through breathing more deeply. Honestly, how often do we hold our breath?

**Kaleidoscope**

I invite you to let yourself be swept along by this book; to allow it to sink in, to feel and observe what happens in yourself as you immerse yourself in it. Do you hold your breath? Are you being judgemental? Do you become sceptical, angry, afraid or sad? Or do you relax and experience a sense of spaciousness, tranquillity and recognition? Then that is how it is and it does not need to change immediately.

Imagine yourself as a kaleidoscope which is made up of various characters. And then this structure is shaken up through this book. Something new comes spontaneously into being, another sensation, other thoughts which evoke a new process.

This book was written in a concentric way. With that I mean that I have circled round the basic theme, every time from a different angle, in another way, with other examples from differing lines of approach. It is also not necessary per se to read this book in the existing order. The numerous sub-titles give you an idea of the subject-matter of each chapter.

**Asking yourself questions**

Here and there at the end of each chapter you will find some questions. Write your answers down, preferably in a hard-bound notebook. In that way you will have an overview of the patterns in your life, and you will be actively engaged with alternative ways of coping with yourself. Then you might be able to restore the relationship with whom you really are.

The swing from control to acceptance can be made in a fraction of a second.

If we do not yet have an ‘awareness of now’ attitude to life, the urge to control will continually arise, resulting in fear, hope, expectation and a rejection of reality.
Authentic action

The primal spirit expresses itself in action, both physical and psychological. Chapter 9 covers primarily physical movement. Chapters 11 and 12 are more about dance, especially the dance of life. If we hear music and rhythm, that awakens a feeling in us that longs to be expressed. We want to move. The movement, accompanied by music, soon turns into a dance.

Throughout the book there are examples of physical and psychological action based on my personal experience and that of others, also from literature, other traditions and coaching sessions. Every example is about freeing the self from conditioning by simply being with what there is, and observing the resulting mental and physical activity, even if it is total despair. Whether it concerns men or women, partners, friends, business connections, parents, children – it is about the dynamics in ourselves and in relation to each other which either block the primal spirit, or let it in.

I have personally seen and experienced that we all are moving from surviving towards living, however often we backslide. It entails moving from a familiar world with its overly-recurrent patterns, to the world of freedom, space and spontaneous action – a world in which our thoughts serve us instead of controlling us. The impulse which precedes this action can sometimes be evoked by simple things, like a comment by someone, an experience, a sentence in a book, but it more usually results from some form of crisis, when there is no escape possible.

Experience has taught me that we can also create the conditions which facilitate our ability for action. We initiate this by doing nothing, just being, feeling and observing. Then we delve through layer after layer of our strategic defences to life and arrive at who we really are. That is the place where a new feeling about life originates that is nourished by the primal spirit. We start to act in our own unique way, with all our quintessential qualities.

Authentic action arises spontaneously, free-of-charge and superbly efficient from being in awareness. Giving ourselves over to it is by no means easy. Welcome to the human family.

Els Kikke

Chapter 1

What on earth are we up to?

Starting-point

“My name’s Adam, I live in Holland and have ‘worldwide’ printed on my business cards. Actually I would have preferred to put ‘cosmic-wide’ on them, since my thoughts travel throughout the universe. I follow whatever crosses my path. I am game for anything. I earn money like water and spend it just as quickly. I have already been bankrupt three times. It leaves me cold. What does interest me is how processes work. Whether they are cosmic, planetary, mondial, national, urban, familial, among friends or partners, in fact, any kind of process.

I am also interested in the processes that take place in myself and in others. I follow these closely and invariably have something to say about them, often referring to them in my lectures and
workshops. I can easily get carried away once I get started. Then I change the subject all at once which, although seemingly chaotic, is just the way I work. One inspired thought tumbles over the other. I love surfing on the waves of energy emitted from my audience. Presumably I am then acting as a kind of channel for cosmic energy. I have a good time, and everyone around me does too. I surrender myself to the flow.

**Charm and the father role**

I am also a charmer and often take on the father role. I like it when women fall for me because of that. On the other hand, I also appeal to their maternal instinct, by radiating something boyish. That intensifies my charm. But once they start tugging at me, they lose me immediately.

As regards men I lack the skills to hold my own, except for the father role. If things get too personal, it becomes impossible for me to sustain the contact. I beat a hasty retreat. And if something is not to my liking I am capable of flying off the handle and snapping fiercely at people. I can revel in their fear of me. It gives me a sense of power, and therefore of security. In fact, I am always on the alert. As long as I am in a role, I can manage. Those roles are my survival strategies. When I am in the father role, or using my charm, or boyishly flirting, or failing to carry out my retreat, I am afraid. Usually I have one of the above-mentioned strategies on hand and use it to keep people at what would seem to be a safe distance. Yes, of course, this is my response to my childhood, which was extremely unhappy. I was intensely religious at that time, and felt upheld by cosmic powers. My belief gave me the strength to go on living when I was young.

**Fear of intimacy**

For years I managed to function within a family, with a wife and children. I thought: “We’ll get old together”. My devotion to them made them happy. The position I held in the family gave me a sense of belonging. But there was one snag. I was not really there. I set the boundaries and they had to make the best of them. Occasionally someone would say: ‘It’s as if you’re not really here. What are you thinking?’ The more frequent the comments, the more desperate I became. ‘Just leave me alone’, I would think. It was especially my wife who started to get on my nerves. I began to hate her for delving into my depths.

My inclination to run away became stronger. I took to visiting other women, who would follow me blindly and adored me. But it failed to satisfy me and, in the end, them too. Sooner or later they began to complain. I cannot tolerate intimacy, except at a hormonal level, and yet, at the same time, I long for it. The easiest relationships for me are with women who are already with someone else.

**At the back of my mind**

I often feel used, abused, screwed, betrayed, fooled. My survivor’s instinct reacts to the signal ‘danger’ and protects me. I flee, fight or freeze as befits the situation. The function I fulfil for many people somehow meets my need for social contact. I can live with that.

As a person with needs, desires and a will, I have not arrived yet. I have started giving myself presents, to live in a way which helps me, instead of always helping others. I am beginning to release my attachment to eternal feelings of guilt towards my wife and children. It is gradually becoming easier for me to speak my mind. When the truth is allowed to surface, I can see their sighs of relief. This is something new.”

**Role-playing as mother and father**
“My name is Eva. Since our very first meeting I have been under Adam’s spell. From the moment he came to live with me and my children I found him a magical child who saw a mother in me. He treated my children as if they were a younger brother and sister. At the same time I experienced him as a father-figure. I had no qualms about it. I felt that we would one day become man and wife. We were both delighted to have finally found a loving mummy and daddy. At last we had the parent we had always longed for.

However, the sense of security that we imagined to have found with each other, gradually turned into something threatening. The loving mummy and daddy became wicked step-parents. I became afraid when he seemed lost in thought and began guessing what he was thinking about. When he retreated like an angry child whose ‘mummy’ was no longer unconditionally adoring, but instead asking probing questions, I had the feeling I was being reprimanded by a strict father-figure.

Pangs of jealousy hit me as I saw him carrying on with other women. I was frightened of losing him. Oh, how I hated being jealous. I considered it degrading, accusing myself of lack of trust. I tried not to be jealous, and above all, not to let him notice. He felt it without saying and took measures against it by becoming even more illusive. I began to keep tabs on his every move. When any aspect of his version of events diverged from what I knew, I felt some vindication in my feelings; It was not without reason that I had turned into this jealous, suspicious creature.

If only the other is happy...

Whenever Adam withdrew to lick his wounds, I always thought it was my fault. And then I felt guilty. I did everything in my power to change myself, to rid myself of jealousy and to stop bothering Adam with my interrogations. I lived increasingly more for him. If only he were happy, everything would be alright. Then I would be happy too.

I had lost myself and existed solely as his ‘rescuer’, and the rescuer of our mutual happiness. A similar process was taking place in him. We had become scared of each other and were both doing our best to ward off danger by doing our best to please each other. We had both missed the point, and each other, by living for each other without ourselves. We had become shadows of our true selves.

Only at the moments when our hormones took over, did we recognize one another as beings of flesh and blood. And when our minds were in top gear, and we made new discoveries, then we were a source of inspiration for each other. Beauty and the Beast. In mind and body we were closer to ourselves, and therefore once more visible to each other.

This went on for years. Emotionally we remained children who were expecting something of each other and, if unsatisfied, became angry, or mournful, quietly pining away. In this way we kept our feeling of dependency on each other and could not let go of each other. The more he tried to shake me off, the more I tried to bind him to me. The more independent I became, the more ways he would find to secure my constant availability. In this way we managed to keep a firm grip on ourselves and on each other.

Meanwhile we continued on our personal quests to discover ourselves, independent of one another.

Obsession

For years I struggled with my feelings for Adam. Gradually I began to see that they were obsessive. I was under the spell of his seductive talent and was suffering under his reserve. His yo-yo approach, attracting and repulsing me alternately, was driving me up the wall.
I knew men and women who didn’t play such complicated games and with whom I could easily start a relationship. I would then think: ‘Damn it, Adam. You’re not worth the effort.’ But in spite of everything of which I tried to convince myself, he remained wildly alluring, fascinating and mysterious to me. I was drawn to him like a magnet. I was mostly mad at myself, for still feeling like I did for him. It gave me a feeling of being imprisoned and dependent, which I tried to combat by adopting an independent and self-confident attitude.

Following a period of separation, when we came together again and everything seemed to have changed, he would, at a certain point, vanish as always, like the Flying Dutchman. I would immediately collapse into a broken heap and have great difficulty picking up the pieces. Time and again, even though it seemed obvious that I was harem wife number 1, to whom he would always return, I felt desolate. I am not the harem type. I longed for a comfortable relationship; that we would live close to each other, in a kind of safe nest; sometimes doing things together, without having to be on top of each other all the time, but without having sex with others.

It was impossible for me to accept this longing of mine, until I realised that there was nothing wrong with it at all. It was just not there. We were being held prisoners by conditioned reflexes formed in our insecure youth.

Instead of being critical of myself and him I allowed the idea to sink in that what I longed for was impossible between us. Then an enormous feeling of fear and desolation arose and made themselves master of me.”

A stranger

Suddenly I look at him in a new way, as if I had never set eyes on him before. He is like a stranger to me. All the possibilities I ever saw in him, and for us together, have melted away.

I gain new insight into our relationship: I was not just his mother and his daughter but also his husband, even though I was actually his wife and very feminine. And he was also my wife, as well as my father and my son, even though he is very masculine. I was ‘draufgänger’. I took all the initiative and organised everything; I had taken on the role of leadership and had the ability to get to the bottom of things. I sought the truth. I could not hold myself back, even though he pleaded with me to stop. He had lived for fifteen years in my home, been as caring as a mother and had done admirably well in adapting himself to our needs.

This insight brought me into balance. I was both husband as well as wife, parent as well as child to him, and he to me. That was really alright.

I had no objection to dancing the dance of life like that. Interaction with others was becoming an adventure. The potential was limitless; we could take on different roles, voluntarily. However, this was not to be. The mutual willingness was missing. It seemed as if an invisible hand was pulling the strings.

Repeating former patterns

I vanished from Adam’s life and heard nothing more from him. I began to think less and less about him and no longer felt drawn by the irresistible magnetism he held for me. My life had become lighter, freer. I began a fun relationship with another man. What was so fine about it all was that I had begun to really live, without thinking about the future, and without fear, in the now with whatever it brought.
However, it was not over with Adam. I met up with him six months later. He walked up to me and said he loved me and has missed me. He wanted to give it another chance, to do fun things together, travelling, eating out, spending money together. And making love. In one and the same breath he asked me to marry him. That had happened before, on the spur of the moment, and then he would chicken out later.

He took me tenderly in his arms and I was lost. The relationship I had with the other man paled in contrast.

And then the whole story began anew where it left off: I heard nothing more from Adam. When I finally contacted him three weeks later, he was cool and distant and, at the same time left me with some nasty remarks to digest.

All hell breaks loose

Then all hell broke loose. Fury, despair, fear, pain, and grief tumbled over each other inside me. I felt totally destitute. My world had been shattered. But what’s this? I had been through all this before, so very often. And I had always managed to pull myself together. I became frantic. I was assaulted by a whirlpool of calamity-scripts and fatalistic fantasies. I could no longer pretend to myself that I was a strong and independent woman. I felt pitifully alone. No one cared about me. I admitted to myself that I had no desire to live alone. It was so cosy to have someone lying next to me in bed. I wanted it to be like that every night. Every night that warm, safe nest. I felt frightened on my own. I missed the animal warmth at my side. I felt an intense loss. It felt like a gaping hole in my stomach and womb. My whole body was yearning for someone who was no longer there... And then, in a fraction of a second, a change took place. I breathed more deeply. I became quieter in myself. What felt like a gaping hole had now become a space filled with happiness.

No blame

Suddenly I had realised that if he was getting off scot-free, I was, too. No one could take away my love for him. I could feel it, without worrying about him, or about what he was up to. It no longer mattered. I surrendered. I felt physically liberated, as light as a feather. It was as if I had melted away and no longer existed, yet at the same time, was feeling completely in balance and fully present.

The dream had ended. That’s that. I still see Adam regularly and that helps me to keep realistic about things. Sometimes the old dream presents itself again. But if I go with it even for an instant, the balloon soon bursts. Then I recognize the old patterns between us, in which distance plays the key role, like in the following Dutch nursery rhyme:

There were two children of kings.
They could never reach each other.
The water was too deep.”

Circumambulation

“When I met up with Eva again, I was overjoyed to see her, and in giving vent to my feelings, I forgot to think of the consequences. She’s the woman of my life; my ‘femme inspiratrice’. And that was the only thing that mattered when I first saw her, the one who had been my anchor in life. It’s a shame I can’t have a normal relationship with her- nor, for that matter, with anyone else. But I’ve gradually learned to live with it and I’ve formed my own way of looking at our relationship. It’s like
having been together in a deep pit from which we laboriously managed to climb out, back to back. But as soon as we got to ground-level, I took to my heels.

I feel myself to be part of the universal spirit; and that will have to do. But I still find this difficult to communicate to Eva. I’m aware of the way I circle around things, and refuse to commit myself. I don’t want to hurt her or lose her completely. When I keep my distance she becomes hungry for me, and that’s a situation I like. She’s completely with me, and that gives me a sense of security, of room to play. It’s not easy to get used to her change of attitude. Sometimes I catch myself playing all kinds of tricks to entice her into my web again. And occasionally it works, and then ‘phew’, I badly need to take my distance. And I’m as quick as a flash to do that, either by vanishing without a word and making no further contact, or by ranting and raving about anything and everything and, when she reacts, at her. But anyway, I have her where I want her then.

Now I just go my own way and hope she does, too. Otherwise I’d start feeling guilty, which makes me feel that I should take care of her. I feel happiest when I know she’s safe and sound and doing really well for herself.”

What’s on the hard disk?

The degree to which our primary needs, for security, nourishment and love have been catered to in our early years, is deeply engraved on the ‘hard disk’ of our brains. It determines the degree to which we trust the primal spirit, and give it room. It also determines how we react to the exterior world; whether we are trusting, or fearful, towards whatever we encounter in our lives. When we are trusting, we automatically breathe in a natural rhythm. If our lives were fostered in harmony, we repeat that harmony. We surrender body and soul to the immense reservoir of cosmic intelligence and love. We truly live.

However, if security, nourishment and love were lacking in the first years of our lives, there will be a picture on our brain’s hard disk which makes us distrust that our primary needs will be fulfilled. We exchange our natural spontaneity for strategies with which we hope to get our needs met; we develop such a careful and indirect way of behaving that we hold our breath and our diaphragm becomes locked. And the diaphragm is the most essential muscle in the process of breathing; it inflates the lungs, so they can respond automatically by filling with air. If the diaphragm is locked, we will eventually only be able to breathe from our chest, or from our stomach. Then we will be living ‘upstairs’, mainly in our head, or below, in our pelvis. Sexuality becomes separated from the heart. Heart and genitals go their own ways. And our legs will often become insensitive automatons. We are no longer in our body. We just use it. We are busy surviving, instead of truly living. We try to control and channel life, while in reality it is an open adventure with no fixed destiny.

Precarious start

Adam and Eva were war babies. Adam was born during a bombardment. The medicine that his ailing mother had been prescribed made her milk indigestible. Breast-feeding gave him stomach ache, made him feel sick, vomit, and subsequently suffer pangs of hunger. His mother was scared stiff and desperate. Most nurses were busy tending to the wounded soldiers being brought to the hospital.

That was not the kind of start to engender much confidence in the outside world. Therefore Adam has always kept the satisfaction of his fundamental need for security and love in his own hands. He asks another for it, but repulses the slightest indication in that direction, unless there is adequate distance. Adam is repeating over and again the old ‘familiar’ situation via his conviction: ‘I have to do it alone, because I can’t trust anyone.’ In the end he transformed his basic needs into insatiable desire for riches, power and glory.
Of no importance

When Eva’s mother’s contractions first began, the doctor immediately gave her an injection to hasten the birth process. He wanted to concentrate on his own child’s birth, which was also imminent.

The situation repeated itself in another form. Just like when Eva was born, the secret work of her father in the resistance against the Nazi occupiers, and the overriding fear of her mother that something would happen to him, meant that no one paid much attention to her. This was the picture engraved on the hard disk in her brain. The accumulation of events in her life in which there was no time for her, became the scenario of her life. She had to continually make place for something or someone more important. As far as she knew, she was irrelevant. And she was unaware of how often she would actively take part in conjuring up the same scenario anew in her life.

In a hurry

So what was Eva’s survival strategy? To risk everything to make herself relevant. Exaggerated action which often backfired. The speed with which she was propelled from her mother’s womb, and through the birth channel formed an additional factor in her frequent sense of being rushed. That resulted in most of her actions overshooting their mark.

Finally she understood how the convictions she had formed in her early years had moulded her life: ‘No one pays any attention to me, and if there’s a chance of getting some attention, then I’d better be quick, or someone else will take over!’ Her relationship with Adam matched this scenario to perfection. To Adam she felt that she was irrelevant. She had been repeating the old familiar situation and fought like a madwoman to become relevant, at last.

The funny thing is that we always recreate the old situation and bend over backwards to get from this situation whatever we have missed. Success is not guaranteed to make us satisfied. We often mistrust it and tend to take distance from it, so it would seem as if we always end up where we began. Sad but true. It is familiar, and therefore safe. Home at last! And then the complete cycle can begin anew. Unless we become aware of it.

Adam and Eva are life-partners. The same dynamics can develop in any relationship – whether it is with a colleague or a friend, man to man or woman to woman.

Projective identification

It is often the case that certain images are projected on to us as children, and that we identify ourselves with that image. We try to become what we are thought to be, and even if it was a negative image we tend to identify with it.

Through identifying with a positive or negative image, you lose contact with your true self. And what do you gain? Not having to confront something more painful. For example, the lack of respect and love from someone important to you; the recognition that the other is more your enemy than your friend. Or not wanting to see that you’re the one taking the brunt of things someone else stubbornly refuses to acknowledge. Or preferring to remain the scapegoat.

Projective identification is one of the most persistent strategies used to prolong negative relationship with a partner. From both sides.

Verbal assault
Ludo responds with irritation in his voice when, for instance, his girlfriend Carolien has a different opinion to his, or if she is not quick enough to his liking. Then he will walk off while she is trying to explain. Ludo also accuses her regularly of having made him look a fool in the past. She is willing to look critically at herself, but his way of looking at things does not ring true, in her opinion. She begs Ludo to listen to her account of what transpired between them.

Ludo avoids this by making jokes about what she has said, or comments like: ‘I don’t know what you’re talking about. Why are you making such a fuss? Stop moaning. Bitch! Nag! It’s like watching a bad movie. If you don’t shut up, I’m gone!’ Or he withdraws and acts preoccupied.

Carolien becomes increasingly convinced that she has overlooked something and that she has to look more critically at herself. The more often he opens old wounds, the more desperate she feels.

Giving in

In the end she accepts his version of events and apologises about what happened. ‘It’s too late,’ he says and refuses to acknowledge her excuses. There is nothing more that can be done about it. Still he continues to fling accusations in her face. She cannot change the past, Carolien thinks, but she can try to do things better from now on. She does everything in her power to please him.

However, that only causes him to react even more grimly. She has identified herself completely with the image Ludo has conjured up, and made it a reality. The projective identification is complete. She has become a mere shadow of her former self and considers herself a nagging, worthless idiot. She no longer trusts her own perception, and regards Ludo’s ‘verbal abuse’ as perhaps warranted criticism.

Giving way

At the point of total despair, something begins to give way. She starts examining what she does wrong in his eyes, and asking the opinion of others. People close to her repeatedly insist that the problem is nothing to do with her, but entirely of his making. Gradually, with much resistance on her part, it sinks in. She still believes in what he says, but deep inside herself there is a voice which tells her: ‘Something’s not right.’ The moment she listens to this voice a picture appears before her eyes: She was four years old and was handing her father a birthday present. But her father was furious about something that had happened between him and his wife, and, with a cold and angry look, without uttering a word, he put down the gift, and walked off.

Then she felt guilty as well, and did everything possible to elevate her father’s mood. But he was too preoccupied to pay attention to his daughter. She now realises that this typical childhood incident was being constantly replayed in her life. A child who has learnt to express their feelings would certainly say something like: ‘Daddy, just take a look at the present I gave you!’ and would have gone on demanding until his father did take a look.

A glimmer of light

All of a sudden a glimmer of understanding begins to awaken in her. When Ludo once again accuses her of being hopeless it finally registers how much pain his words give her. She realises how she has been mistreating herself by giving herself into the hands of a man who she has mistakenly been treating as an adult. So then she shouts: ‘Stop that!’, as one does to a naughty child. Ludo looks surprised and even relieved. Carolien has learnt her lesson and no longer falls into the same trap. But into a different one.
Ludo, thrown back on himself, now starts to whine in a pitiful little voice about his terrible childhood and his lack of will to live. Carolien listens attentively and thinks she can help him; that she can repay him in this way. However, when it turns out that Ludo is another person when he is not around her, not at all pitiful and rather a show-off, she steps out of the vicious circle.

Now she is left in deep mourning to lick her wounds. Ludo’s anger is now directed at everything that is wrong in the world.

**Different realities**

The tragedy of this couple is that they live in different realities. Carolien is looking for communication, to get the facts straight, as she formerly tried with her parents. Ludo gave up the idea of mutual communication early in his life. He stuttered and was teased about this, without his parents doing anything to help. From the moment he stopped stuttering, he became aware of the power of words, and used them in every situation which diverged even slightly from the way he thought it should be.

Partners are the ideal targets for power games. Ludo is barely conscious of the fact that he is using Carolien as a receptacle for his own deep hurt. The more she suffers, the harder he becomes towards her, since she represents his own terrifying vulnerability and open wounds. His instant reaction is to quash them. He does the same as others did to him. If he is asked to take responsibility for his actions, he refuses point-blank. That would mean surrendering his power.

Of course, there are enough cases of women playing similar games to those of Adam and Ludo. Often women’s power games are more refined and less obvious. When Eva became scared of losing Adam, she began to manipulate him by setting traps for him, so she could control his movements. It is not a subject she has discussed in detail yet.

**Becoming your own parent**

Adam and Eva, as described earlier, were looking for security, attention and love in their relationship. So were Ludo and Carolien in theirs. Due to their negative convictions about themselves, others and life itself, they evoked the opposite. Now they will have to learn to give themselves what they need, to become their own loving parents. If your own parents were unable to function as an example, you often have quite a long way to go before becoming your own parent. As long as you have not reached that point, you will always remain a dissatisfied child hankering for security, attention and love. And because it is never enough in that way, you keep on searching and compensate with consuming, buying things and trying to change reality. But you are still actively resisting what there is now. With one foot in the pain of the past and the other in a future filled with hopes for happiness, you forget the potential of the present.

If you acknowledge what you are feeling at this moment, and look at it without judgement, you are giving yourself respect, attention and love. You will have reached your goal. Nothing is more important. You will be picking up the thread of your life at the point where things went wrong and you began to feel insecure. You will re-live your birth and childhood, but with yourself in the role as the ideal, loving parent. Then you will find your relations with the outside world go smoothly, in tune with whatever is happening at that moment. You will be vulnerable but flexible. You will no longer need to become hard or to brace yourself against events. You will not feel the need to strive for something or to find solutions. Things will simply happen. You just do what you do. Perhaps you will find that there is not so much to talk about anymore, but plenty to experience, to feel, to enjoy and to exchange.

**Adventure**
Once your basic trust has been restored, encountering life’s adventures ceases to be a problem. And what is necessary for this adventure? Just to accept reality as it comes, in yourself and in your surroundings.

Are you doing that? Or do you wake up in the morning, full of plans and judgements about others. And thinking up long lists of things you have to do? Do your thoughts take over? Do you realize what you’re doing? You could try observing what is going on in your mind. And what effect that has on you physically. Perhaps you can feel the tension in your neck. In fact, there is probably tension overall in your body. A dull head? You might dash for the coffee-maker. And pick up the newspaper, a cigarette? Oh no! First fresh orange juice – that’s healthy. And finally, you might decide to go jogging a bit; you can just about make that but then have to drive fast to get to work on time. Possibly it will dawn on you sometime that your horse is running behind its cart.

Or do you lie in bed working yourself up about the fact that you have got nothing done for days? Is there so much to do that you feel up against a brick wall? Or do you turn over and oversleep for hours? Have you given up on yourself? Have you decided that since nothing works out it is pointless to go on? Has living become too much of an effort? Are you having to drag yourself along?

In just being aware of your state of being and the source of your thought-processes, you are already well on your way.

Do you want to change things? That might lead you into the flywheel of: ‘It’s no good; it has to change’. It will soon become clear that this does not work either.

To become your own loving parent, you first need to look carefully at what is going on in yourself at the moment, and also to be aware of accompanying physical sensations – awareness of what you are doing, thinking or not doing, -what you feel in your body. Give yourself love and attention. That will generate a totally new movement in you, motivating you into action. And that action will be more efficient and natural than before.

A new sense of living

Living is primarily a question of ‘being’, and not of ‘doing’. Allowing things to unfold, to experience them in an open state of mind, without making them happen. Our true selves are then able to gradually emerge. We get into gear and undertake all kinds of things. But not because we have to. Vitality, spontaneity, sensitivity, openness and a sense of adventure – I like to call them our ‘inner children’ – come to life and our hearts open. Our whole attitude towards life changes, and our desire to make our daily creative process successful is aroused. A spirited success.

Whenever we feel sad, frightened, angry, wild, happy or enthusiastic we are also confronted with our inner children who have a totally autonomous way of expressing primal spirit. It is through them we breathe and live fully with all our potential and desires. We ensure the safety of our inner children by closely following their every change of mood.

Adult and child

We have become the adult as well as the child. Our horizons have expanded. Order has been brought to the chaos within. That means that we become increasingly aware of moments when we are motivated by fear or tactics to avoid it. We sense when we are unstable, instead of being spontaneous and authentic. We also become gradually more aware of moments when we interpret, suppress, exaggerate or overlook the importance of our reality. We want to acknowledge what is there, to feel at home in reality. Peace of mind is restored. The obstacles which continue to disturb
the peace, gradually evaporate because they are no longer needed. The improvement in the way we
deal with things efficiently and effectively will be obvious to all, while we have the feeling that
everything is solved automatically.

In essence we are capable of finding our way like the source of a river which automatically finds a
channel for itself as it flows.

**Mystical connection**

We are able to live consciously when we learn to trust in reality as it is, and to connect with it. If the
action which ensues fails to overly frighten us, we can perhaps learn to accept it and observe it.
Perhaps we would even dare to experience it and not to block the action. To feel the fear fully is the
greatest challenge. Once we have made the first step we begin to free ourselves from our survival
strategies. We begin to get an idea of what life is all about. It begins to look more like a dance than
any thing else. Sometimes we dance alone, then again with someone else. Once in a while dance-
partners follow, one after the other, and then everyone dances together. Sometimes it is a hellish
dance which seems interminable, and then a heavenly ballet. Everyone has his personal dance in
life, and every phase its own dances.

Even if we are not whole, but badly split, wholeness remains imprinted in our spirits and our
bodies, together with our innate longing for wholeness. The primal force is operational in our tender
hearts and savage passions. This is referred to as the ‘wedding’ or the ‘marriage’ in medieval
mysticism and later by Jung. He called it the *mysterium coniunctionis*. We *are*, and, at the same
time, we are in action. Now the sole thing for us to do is to enjoy the healing quality of our
emotional bonds and the fruit they bring forth.

**Self-examination**

At the end of each chapter I invite you – you could also see it as a challenge – to write down your
answers to several questions in a hard-backed exercise book. The aim is to discover who you really
are and to bring your true self into action.

An alternative way of making this voyage of discovery is to get someone who is willing to listen to
you to ask you the questions.

Please approach these questions as a tool to help you get to know yourself better and to release the
primal spirit, and not as something to get you confused.

The last question at the end of each chapter is an invitation to take twenty deep breaths and then to
pause and think about what is happening… in your body, in your mind and in your emotions. What
you experience will not always be something spectacular. It is often just slight shift of mood, which
you would not even notice if you had continued to live in an unconscious way.

Above all, try not to form judgements like ‘good’ or ‘bad’, but just put into words what you are
feeling, what you are experiencing physically and what you are thinking.

**Parential influence**

In the previous chapter I have discussed becoming your own parent i.e. *re-parenting*. Perhaps it
would be a good idea for you to read that part again.
What did your parents/guardians mean to you?

What comes to mind when you think about them?

What kind of behaviour of theirs, in relation to you, have you adopted?

What comes to mind when you think about them? How do you react? What do you do?

How does it effect you and those close to you?

How do you feel then?

Can you accept the way you feel?

Do you look at it closely?

Or do you try to get rid of it?

How do you react towards your parents/guardians?

What do you do differently to your parents/guardians, in relation to yourself and to others? Which events come to mind?

How much do these events and your thoughts about them influence your present life? (Think here of situations or words to which you still react violently.)

Fear

When was the last time you felt scared?

What happened?

What did you do?

Did you follow what was happening in you, or did you try to ignore it?

What was the sequence of your feelings/observations/thoughts?

If you tried to ignore it, how did you do that?

Think back to your very first memory of fear.

Can you see any similarity between your first experience of fear, how you reacted then and how you react nowadays?

Do you recognize the way that you then reacted as a reflex pattern that you still have?

How do your fears influence your relationship with yourself and the outside world?

What does your life look like when you feel secure?
Insecurity

When did you last feel insecure and lacking in self-confidence?

Who was there? What was said, done or omitted?

What made you feel insecure?

What were your thoughts and subsequent feelings about it

What did you do?

Do you dare to let yourself feel insecure?

What does it look like?

What colour is it?

Where do you physically feel it?

Can you see the connection between insecurity and fear?

Self-confidence

Try to recall a situation in which you felt extremely self-confident. Describe that situation.

What did you feel?

How did the surroundings seem to you??

What did you think about the others present?

What happened?

Did you lose that self-confidence again? If so, why?

Do you recognize this as something which happens often?

Spontaneous changes of mood

How do you block your expression of spontaneity, playfulness, authenticity, enthusiasm, creativity, grief, fear, anger (your inner children)? Give examples.

In what kind of circumstances are you spontaneous, playful, authentic, enthusiastic, creative, sad, fearful or angry?

How do you express them?

What is the effect?
**Seduction**

Do you seduce people?

When and how do you do it?

Can you remember seducing someone who still regularly enters your thoughts?

Why do you still think about it?

What happened?

Then what did you do?

How did the other(s) react?

How did it feel?

Can you recall your feelings at the time? Describe them.

Are those feelings familiar ones? At what other moments have you had them?

**Daring to be vulnerable**

Do you dare to show yourself as open and vulnerable?

If so, what was it like?

What was the result?

**Exasperation**

Are there people in your life who you find especially irritating or exasperating?

Why do you feel like that about them?

What do you feel then?

How do you handle that?

What do you do? Do you look at your feelings, walk off or do you freeze?

Have you felt a similar feeling about someone else?

What does this tell you about yourself?

**Breathe**

Now breathe deeply twenty times. Inflating your stomach when you inhale.
What do you feel physically and where in your body precisely?

How do you feel?

What are you thinking?

Chapter 2

Is my instinct still functioning – or am I pulling the wool over my eyes?

Creators of our lives

We are the creators of our lives. We create our lives, the world, and are continually moulding our evolution. Are we doing this by following a creative impulse from within which surfaces unexpectedly and playfully? Or is it our conditioning, our formula to ward off fear, which has the upper hand? If this is the case, then we are afraid of the wholeness of the primal spirit, in us and around us. Therefore we create an alternative reality. Great courage is needed to acknowledge the way in which we have created our lives and to recognize the role played in them by age-old feelings of guilt, shame and unworthiness.

Even more courage is necessary to say ‘Yes’ to our dignity as living beings and to our uninhibited vulnerability. A favourite statement of mine from the Bible is: ‘Thou shalt not enter the kingdom of god except as children.’ An unconditioned child has faith in life. He follows everything that moves, including changes of mood. Each moment is a new ‘birth’. He shows us how to trust and become a trustworthy central figure in our environment; how we can get our instinct to work for us, instead of against us and those close to us.

The child in us, however deeply hidden, is always present. It feels like the first harbinger of spring, while it is still the depths of winter.

Harbinger of Spring

I already heard you calling

On a winter’s day

I could smell your tentative perfume
And feel your sparkling presence
Now you’re here
Fragile and translucent,
Like the child within,
You live in me,
Growing towards the light
Towards the jubilation
Of Summer.
I want to show you
just as you are
And enjoy you
As you are;
My Spring.
You fought so bravely
Through my winter,
To become born.
You’re so vulnerable
And full of life.
As translucent and tenuous
As Spring
I stand on tiptoe,
And reach for the Sun.
Sunlight streams
Through the top of my head
And finger tips
To within
And reaches my heart,
Which opens
Like a flower.
Spring is inside me,
Shimmering with Love
Of Life.
My Heart and the Sun
Melt together
And my body
Welcomes the warmth…
I feel the nurturing earth
Beneath my feet.
I am growing.
I am a link
Between heaven and earth.
Slanting rays of sunlight
Shine into people’s homes.
Spring is coming
To make us burst open
With her softly
penetrating song.
Too much for some.
Too hard to feel
So vulnerable,
Threatened by
Independence,
To open like a flower.
But dear Spring,
Your courage
Inspires us all.
You rise out of darkness,
Never failing to appear.
Storms cannot stop you,
You’re nurtured by the Sun
And Earth
You blossom and flourish
You’re true spirit itself
Since you dare
To show
Your fragility.

Inner marriage
Distorted and misshapen instinctive energy is responsible for multiple wars, outbreaks of violence and discrepancy in standards of living on our planet. The disappearance of matriarchal societies mirrors this. Their culture was based on the sub-conscious, with vulnerability and surrender having an important role. Without these matriarchal cultures, the male and female elements are out of balance. The natural spontaneity of the uninhibited child has been dammed.

It would seem as if the time is now ripe to engage our inner leadership capacity in bringing the male and female in balance. To consummate the inner marriage. To become mother and father to our inner children. To create a safe environment by surrendering to just ‘being’, and the forthcoming action.

Passion, decisiveness and creativity
The primal power of the universe manifests itself in us as human beings through passion, decisiveness and creativity. It activates our willingness to take part in the adventure of life. How do we deal with it? Do we dare to surrender ourselves to the creative force? Or are we scared to take risks?

What kind of role does adventure play in our lives? Do we dare to talk openly about it? Or are we too scared? Playing safe? Isn’t it time to get better acquainted with the unpolished primal spirit in ourselves, and to experience the diversity of its manifestations, and to observe them?

If our mental world is attempting to secure, instead of to serve, this power, it could well burst out in a rather crude or blunt manner. Such moments are scary, and could give rise to conflicts or accidents. If the pure primal spirit is unable to find a way out, illness or violence result. On the other
hand, if our mental world is cooperative, an interdependence comes into being which reaps succulent fruit, as well as enlivening our lives.

We will only be able to clearly perceive the primal spirit’s transformative power when we have established a strong enough basis in ourselves, through daring to experience and to look closely at whatever we encounter in ourselves. Then enough space is created to feel and use it in all innocence. We have then surrendered ourselves to the eternal motion of the universe and will feel part of the perpetuum mobile once more. Then we can enter the ultimate dance of life and let our passion, decisiveness and creativity have free rein.

**Instinct**

The way in which Adam and Eva respond to one other, as described previously, illustrates how instinct can curb the vital flow and be used to sustain a survival strategy which had once been called into being out of necessity. And how they continue to use it, even though it has not been needed for a long time. In some ways instinct has a limited intelligence. It avails itself of a primal force which is always available in the universe. As soon as a warning signal appears, they jump into action.

In other words, instinct forms a vital response to specific internal and external stimuli, which keep us alive. To what degree this is genetic or assimilated is currently the object of research. From our earliest moments our instinct is active in every cell of our being. It ensures that everything necessary to survive is present. It is our inherent guardian. It not only takes care of our personal preservation, but also that of the species as a whole. It has a primary influence on the way we behave.

**Preservation of ourselves and the species**

A baby knows instinctively where to find his mother’s nipple and the mother produces and provides her milk without having to learn how. If you are hungry and you see food, your mouth immediately begins to water. If you are threatened and you flee, fight or freeze, you are instinctively enacting an appropriate scenario for self-preservation. If you feel physically drawn to someone, your sexual instinct for the preservation of the species is at work in regulating your hormonal response.

The fact that the instinct for the preservation of the species is connected to pleasure, is evidence of a deeply inherent cosmic wisdom. In some tribes the women show their teeth to invite the men to participate in this pleasure, in others the women show their backsides or their breasts or parade themselves in mini-skirts. The more primitive the tribe, the more the men take the initiative in the art of seduction, as in the animal world. Basically it all comes down to the same: The instinct for preservation of the species is operational.

The desire to become mother or father and to nurture is also motivated by the instinct for preservation of the species. A parent who abandons their children, through either breaking the contact with them or just ignoring them, has suppressed that instinct. There is a price to pay for such action. Hormonal dysfunction and problems with the prostate and testicles can be the psychosomatic result. That does not mean that all hormonal dysfunctions and prostate or testicle problems necessarily stem from an underdeveloped parental instinct.

**Perversion**

Instinct is quite often suppressed, but also repulsed and perverted. Many religions reject the sexual instinct. Freud, as pioneer in the field of the human soul, understood the danger of such attitudes. His contemporary, Wilhelm Reich, brought to light the repressive effect totalitarian regimes could
have on the instinct. The natural instinct for preservation of the species can turn into the perversion of exterminating other races in order to protect one’s own.

Gradually we are becoming more aware of this sickly neurotic mechanism in society, as the result of repressing instinctive fear for, or perversion of, our will to preserve ourselves and our species.

**On the loose and defiant**

When you allow yourself to become dependent on other people or circumstances for security /comfort and blame others for any discomfort, then you’re being taken for a ride. You are making yourself dependent on others and are not standing on your own feet. That leads to fear and loss of self-confidence. That being the case, an alarm bell rings in your head. Your instinct for self-preservation responds to the signal and prepares your whole system for adopting a survival strategy: fighting, fleeing, freezing or lusting. To make the alliteration complete we should call it ‘fighting, fleeing, freezing or flaming’…

The best option will be unerringly selected by your instinct. You fight, flee, freeze or flame like a trapped animal, while it is only a question of a certain sensitivity you developed as a child being touched on. You react automatically to something which was menacing in your youth, but is hardly that now. Your instinct is again the brainless drive which picks up the warning signal, and reacts efficiently, but without thinking. It does its duty the moment the alarm goes off: Let’s go! Preserve your species or: Defy it! Preserve your self.

This is a fundamental survival mechanism that reacts to an impulse instigated by our brains.

The instinct for the preservation of the species functions in human beings as well as in animals and plants. Plants which are on the point of dying, are capable of blooming exquisitely, producing manifold seeds. In crisis situations both humans and animals have a strong drive to mate. And just before his neck breaks, a hanged man will get a deep orgasm.

That the instinct for the preservation of the species is already present at an early age is apparent in the sexual feelings young children express in tense situations. I clearly recall a game I made up when I was still small and was walking along the street with my mother. I dawdled behind and would watch my mother disappear in the crowd. I found that scary and felt at such moments something comparable to an orgasm. Finally I would try to catch her attention, hoping that she would look behind her. If she did not respond and had vanished, I would run as fast as I could in the direction I last saw her.

Any such example is not about the natural life-giving sexual flow.

**Power versus domination**

Domination and control stem from fear and insecurity. True power comes from the courage to be open and vulnerable and having confidence in the outcome. By being open and vulnerable you are receptive and adaptable. That makes you invulnerable, since you do not break but instead yield to the flow. And that allows you to stand on your own two feet and accept responsibility for your personal welfare. Well, it does take getting used to, but it eventually leads to a sense of power and also exhibits true power when you go ahead and try. The power is free to all. And we can be confident that our instinct will warn us when danger threatens.

It happens all too often that we go out of our way to compensate a lack of confidence by manipulating and controlling in our relationships with others. Numerous variations come to mind, including that of the underdog. In fact, it is an admission of weakness to try to eliminate a lack of
confidence with power games. This is strategy dictated by fear. In this way, superiority, domination and triumphing over others is often confused with power, while it is just a way of allaying fears, and therefore a sign of weakness.

**Bid for power**

A true bid for power occurs when you show yourself as vulnerable and as open as a child, accepting reality as it is. This entails living your truth, in relation to yourself and others. The truth always makes the best excuse. Once the truth comes out, everyone breathes a sigh of relief. Then the primal spirit is in good company and can work for you, with you and through you and it colours everything you do and say, and enfeebles any artificial or incorrect behaviour.

Imagine that we become aware of our power games and, at a certain moment, refrain from playing them anymore. Imagine that we no longer control or manipulate other people and circumstances, and that the things we tend to blame on others, we accept as our own responsibility. It then becomes clear that we are capable of bearing responsibility for ourselves, and for others.

Asking for help is just another aspect of accepting responsibility for ourselves, on condition that we recognize that our demands cannot always be met.

**Taking care of No.1**

*If you don’t say what you want, you probably won’t get it!*

*If you don’t say what you need, most likely it won’t be met.*

*If you take care of everyone else and ignore yourself, you will become a duty-bound automaton instead of a living being of flesh and blood.*

*If you have bitten off too much to chew because you don’t dare to say ‘No’, others won’t be worried, since they’ll think you like it that way.*

*You might well feel left out in the cold, feel furious, or deeply grieved about this. That, I’m afraid, is your mistake. You chose to be left out in the cold. Others are just mirroring your choice.*

*I am not talking about doing things for others which give you pleasure. In that case, giving and receiving are part of one and the same fulfilling flow. You receive through giving and give through receiving.*

**Death of the ego**

There is a point in everyone’s lives that they perceive a glimmer of light. At such moments you are in contact with the primal spirit, the Source, that inexhaustible power which will still be around even after your existing life-form has passed away.

Do you have the courage to quit your present form, to die that death and, for all you know, vanish into nothingness?

*What is dying other than standing naked in the wind and melting into the sun?* (Kahlil Gibran)

Do you have the courage to encounter your deepest self by letting go of whatever you have always clung to? Ideals, dreams, ambitions, relationships, the musts, the must-nots, control, domination, judgements, criticism, plans, in short everything including the devil and his mother. These make up
our conditioning which obstructs our creative drive to such an extent that our instinct turns against us. That’s when we are taken for a ride. And to let that go is terrifying. It feels literally like dying (also known as the death of the ego), because, after all, we are letting go of a survival strategy which has served to keep us alive. In that sense we should be grateful to our strategies but, at the same time, recognize that their effect is now contra-productive.

**Passion, mission, creation**

It is now possible to actively engage our instinct for the preservation of ourselves and the species. This can now join in the flow of life and is no longer needed to counter supposed threats. We can now follow our heart, our passion, and let this turn into a mission that we can personally cultivate to a creation that bears fruit. This gives us a feeling of wealth and fulfilment which resonates, leading us automatically into a positive spiral of action. We go on a spree, happily, without messing things up. We *are*. Life breathes through us and we go with the flow. We create our life and no longer suffocate it in its own power.

**Taking wealth for granted**

I know several men and women who are not yet forty, are not burnt-out, and already have so much money that they no longer need to work and can still live in great style. They earned it all themselves. Are they just lucky? Are they more talented or ambitious than others? Not really. And do they still feel rich when they have arrived? Well no!

What I notice about these people is that earning money is in itself a game. In other words, they do not let the primal power stagnate by forcing themselves to do things, but give it free range by playing like children. Therefore they make flawless decisions, based on certain knowledge, which is there immediately, before they have time to think and without discussion. They make decisions in a playful way, light-heartedly, as a matter of course and with apparent recklessness. Business is done in a spontaneous, natural and open-minded way. What I noticed particularly was the ease with which it occurs. It seems to work automatically. They only do what they want to do. For the most part these are people who can make instant decisions, who sometimes decide not to decide because the choice is too limited. They are certainly not reckless, but rather fearless. They are not bothered about risks; they are fully in the flow of life, at least in that field. The playful child is operational in them and that evokes a stream of creativity. They trust their instinct and do not program it in any way.

This playing gave them a feeling of prosperity but things often went wrong afterwards. Money is not the goal, the product of our creativity, that can make us happy. It is just a pleasant side effect..

We were all born with the talent to feel prosperous. We get that feeling when we are spontaneous, uninhibited, and at ease in the abundance of the creative flow of life. However, this innate talent lies all too often hidden under patterns. The significance of patterns is their inability to allow spontaneous and carefree action. They are premeditated, planned in order to achieve something. Not that planning and forethought are always bad. They can also play their part in the natural flow and then there is nothing amiss. But if they are instigated by our ‘personality’, which is playing safe and is always set on achieving something, the results are never that positive. Our personality swings back and forth between fear and craving.

**Prosperity and happiness**

It is therefore not money or a result which leads to true happiness, even though they can make us feel happy for a while. It is in acting out your true nature, being completely yourself, creatively active from the source; this is what makes you truly happy. Otherwise what happens to people when
they have realised their ambitions and lack incentive to continue? Can they now relax and
gracefully enjoy their accumulated wealth? More often than not, they cannot. Because they have
lost something. If riches are the sole basis for your existence, it will not be long before things begin
to rankle. It says in the Bible: It is harder for a rich man to pass though the gates of Heaven than for
a camel to pass through the eye of a needle’. The eye of the needle originally represented the gates
of Jerusalem. This was so narrow that a fully laden camel could only enter with difficulty. Later it
became a proverbial saying, indicating how difficult it is to be rich and happy at the same time.

**Poor?**

If you are poor you could kid yourself that your unhappiness is due to lack of money, and strive to
get more, which gives some purpose to your life. You could also make things worse by grabbing
and grasping everything within reach. Your efforts fill your days. If, on the other hand, someone
who has ‘arrived’ starts looking for something to do again, to fill their empty existence, they often
lack their former natural spontaneity. They have the desire to move on; to change things. And when
anyone is preoccupied in this way, their whole body tenses. Nothing dramatic, just little actions like
bracing oneself can cause a tension that stalls one’s breath. Minute actions like this are part of a
chain of instinctive reactions to warnings that action (fighting) should be undertaken. Perhaps this
way of filling one’s days could satisfy some people. You could even become old like this,
especially when no crisis arises.

Our consumer society with its legal and insurance systems reflects this kind of marginal existence.
It has no relation to the natural flow of life, in which you give free rein to your abilities and get into
action spontaneously and efficiently. This is what results in a feeling of both prosperity and bliss,
whatever the circumstances.

**Self-examination**

In what kind of situations do you sense that your instinct is active?

What are your defence mechanisms in threatening situations (when you feel uncomfortable)? Give
examples.

Do you fight, flee or freeze? Does it depend on the circumstances which of the three you grasp?

When was it a fitting response? When not?

How does it effect your relationship with yourself – and those around you?

Do you recognize the phenomenon of sexual titillation in a situation that feels threatening? If so,
what was your reaction?

When, where and how have you tried to exercise control over a situation? What kind of feeling did
that give you?

When do you experience your full potential – and how does that feel?

When do you feel guilty – and why? Is it always in similar circumstances and towards the same
individual(s) or type of person (people)? How does it affect you? What do you do, or not do,
because of it?

When and in what kind of situations do you feel embarrassed? What effect does that have on you?
What do you do, or not do, because of it?
When do you act spontaneously and decisively without thinking about it? How do you feel at such moments? And when you plan everything beforehand, do you take safety precautions? Why?

‘Money means………………… to me’. Fill this in.

Using whatever you have filled in and replace the word ‘money’ with ‘power’. So: ‘Power means………………… to me’.

What do you deduce from this?

Do you dare to surrender to the flow of life and allow the death of your personality? Have you ever experienced this? When? What did you feel?

Now breathe deeply twenty times. What do you feel in your body? In your emotions? What are you thinking?

Now make direct contact with what you are experiencing, without trying to finds words for it.

Chapter 3

Motivated action

Throughout history, in every region of the world, people have been inspired to find their way back to the universal source of primal spirit, the core of our being. Their actions and insights have been recorded in various ancient religious or philosophical teachings and these have been illuminated anew by quantum mechanics.

In some parts of the world, or during certain periods, people seemed to have lost contact with their essential being. The only alternative seemed to form strategies, in an effort to allay their fears. However, in other regions and in other periods there have been many who took the path back to the source, and found it.

The Essenes, Christian mystics, Knights of the Grail, Native Americans, and certain Hindu, Buddhist and Tantric groups, took the path back to the universal source of primal spirit, back to the core of their being, with open minds and attitudes.

Tantra and Kundalini

Tantric philosophy was developed in India, Tibet and China around 650 BC. Out of this grew a sexual-religious culture. Tantra is based on tantric texts which prescribe a certain attitude to life. This is primarily about achieving oneness with each other and with the universe as a whole; to experience all, with all, via sexual intercourse. A mystical experience of communing with the divine, via ecstatic sensual pleasure, engendering wholeness and fulfilment.
‘Tantra’ is also a way of life, expressed in philosophy, psychology, art, dance, music, science, religion and healing, as well as in daily life. A life based on Tantra does not imply a promiscuous lifestyle. It means having a deep respect for life. We show this by maintaining a creative spirit and an open mind, unconstrained by convention. An essential aspect of the attitude prescribed is the constant readiness to examine oneself.

The body as temple

Our bodies, as part of the universal whole, are perceived as temples. All the elements necessary for self-realization are contained in them. Self-regularization and self-healing play an important role. Primal spirit, which is called ‘Kundalini’, is regarded as the ‘Lake of the Divine’, as well as of the Destructive. Kundalini is symbolised by a curled-up snake sojourning in the area of the pelvis in both men and women. As the Kundalini rises, it gives one a sensation like a liquid stream, sometimes ice-cold, at other times, boiling hot. Through it, our whole being opens, becomes enlightened and liberated.

People who feel frightened by being, cut off the power-flow. In doing so, they are cutting themselves off from the source. In our culture, in which brain activity is considered the most important, the flow is almost always blocked. Tibetan tantric teachings discuss, not only surrendering to the sexual union, but also surrendering to death, as part of life. Both paths lead in the same direction, that is, towards oneness with the universal source of life.

Guides on the journey home

Old paths are cleared and new paths are discovered.

The longing for unification with the universal source of primal power has also been an inspiration in art. In turn, certain works of art form a source of inspiration for those who are on their way ‘home’. Science, too, especially quantum physics, can be exciting to the inquiring mind. The multi-dimensional proportions and the limitless possibilities of the universe lead us to make ‘quantum leaps’. Recognition of the interactive connection between dimensions and potential, that is, the ‘implicit order’, bestows a new impulse for living. Everything that helps the enthusiastic traveller to register and to overcome his day-to-day worries, his suffering and his conditioning, will bring him closer to achieving his goal.

After a period of the Rational dominating our perception of the universe, mystical artistic expression has begun to take over once again. Ancient methods and techniques, metaphors, symbols and fairy-tales, are being reinstated. These can all function as guides on our way back to the source.

Birth, death and transcendence

Transpersonal psychology is based on the mental legacies of Carl Gustav Jung and Otto Rank. Stanislav Grof and Ken Wilbur were the most important pioneers in its further development. The method Grof created, holotropy, (i.e., moving towards wholeness), is of great help in the journey back to wholeness, via deep and intense breathing.

Transpersonal psychology is a modern variation on an age-old theme; our yearning to be reunited with the universal source of life. According to Grof, we experience death and rebirth in everything we go through. In his opinion, this is linked to the birth trauma, the life-and–death struggle we have all gone through. During the process of self-analysis, we experience and acknowledge, in increasing intensity, all kinds of phenomena related to our birth. The greater our courage in daring to give ourselves over to this process of dying and being re-born, the greater the contact we will achieve with a transpersonal reality that transcends our ‘personality’. 
In referring to ‘personality’ or ‘character’, I am referring to our strategic attitude to life, which is controlling and ‘playing safe’. It is our conditioning, which developed when we were very young. Once we have re-established contact with the unconditioned curiosity we had as children, it will be easier for us to find the courage to enter multi-dimensional areas of consciousness, and to experience them in depth. A timeless infinity, full of new, unknown potential. Spiritual birth! Returning to the universal source of primal power.

**Paradise**

In prehistoric times native peoples perceived the world as a living organism, a united whole, of which everything and everyone was part. It was called ‘mysticism of nature’. Is *paradise* a metaphor for this? Has civilisation in that sense become anti-naturalisation?

Adam and Eve ate the fruits of the knowledge of good and evil. Is this symbolic for the development of mankind’s power of discernment, which has led to duality, to separation and to isolation?

Is it a challenge to our self-reflective, individualistic consciousness, to have to first experience separation and isolation in depth, to subsequently be able to reach a self-reflective consciousness which mirrors our interconnection?

Are we in a position to transform the limited vision of our dualistic perspective?

Is it going to be possible for us to experience once more the full potential of the primal spirit in everyone and everything that exists?

**Pre- or trans-personal experience**

Ken Wilber makes a clear distinction between the pre-personal and trans-personal. Pre-personal experiences are considered as regressions in one’s sense of security within the universe, comparable to a regression into a childlike phase, while trans-personal experiences open the doors of our perception and show us new dimensions that we had never before imagined to exist. Wilbur sees pre-personal experience as a backslide into the primordial soup of the universe, like a baby experiences the source in the womb, and at it’s mother’s breast, or a fish experiences its pond. That is, without consciousness. Transpersonal experience, on the other hand, occurs in full conscious awareness of everyone and everything as One, at the source of primal spirit.

I have felt what it is to go under and lose myself during a pre-personal experience. In the warmth and safety of a bed shared with my beloved, it suddenly switched into a trans-personal experience with the deep orgasm I had after our very erotic love-making. First I had to calm myself, and dare to surrender myself and trust. Once I had done that, I sank into the depths. When I regained consciousness, I felt light, free and in love, as if I had stepped out of a cocoon and now had all the space to live life to the full.

**Psychedelic drugs**

Taking psychedelic drugs, or using certain breathing techniques, can result in so-called psychedelic experiences. It is one of the ways to make an inner journey to new horizons in one’s consciousness.

The hallmark of such a trip is that one enters new realms of sensory perception. One transcends all existing knowledge, one’s sense of dimensions of time, space and personal identity. Since the sixties it has become more common for people to undergo transpersonal experiences, to transcend the normal boundaries of their perception, in this way. In the ‘Teachings of Don Juan’, the writer,
Carlos Casteneda takes peyote, the Mexican hallucinogenic cactus, which gives him all kinds of visions. Don Juan guides him through them, so that the visions result in profound insight.

After I had taken XTC, and experienced a sense of intense physical vitality, freedom and lack of inhibition, I wanted to find out more. But I did not want to have to keep on taking drugs. I looked for alternatives. Some forms of breathing and body work offered another way of expanding my consciousness and giving my body the space.

**Fortune-hunter or truth-seeker**

The effect of LSD, mescaline, psilocybine, and DMT is similar to the effect of certain breathing techniques. The only difference depends on your attitude towards the result, whether you approach it as a fortune-hunter, or a truth-seeker. To the fortune-hunter it is a means to step out of his habitual reality. He will be running the risk of becoming addicted to the new situation, and to the medium that brought him there. He is making himself dependent on the medium. That will lead to regression and limitation, rather than expansion. This kind of experience is more like a pre-personal one. In contrast, the truth-seeker is bent on expanding his consciousness, so that he can relate to reality from a broader perspective. He wants to use the experience to integrate it into his life. Instead of fleeing from reality, he wants to assimilate it. He is also more likely to experiment with other ways, without the use of drugs.

**Near-death experience**

A near-death experience can also be a transpersonal experience. The cardiologist Dr. Michael Saborn describes various near-death experiences. In many cases, a person who has just escaped death, and has factually been dead for a moment, sees, at the end of a long, dark tunnel, a brilliant light, revealing an incredibly beautiful world. After having such an experience, a person’s life changes course. He or she would seem to have understood the meaning of surrendering to life, to have no fear of death anymore, and to express an unwaveringly stand-point over the existence of life after death.

Saborn outrightly rejects certain assumptions that are generally accepted in the medical world. He suggests that a part of our consciousness has the ability to observe our body from a position outside the human organism. It is from this position that people experience the interconnection of everything and everyone as self-evident. They are able to give themselves over to being, and in that state they experience primal spirit. And this is the corresponding element between the various experiences described earlier.

To what degree this becomes a platform in someone’s life, depends on the extent to which he remains receptive to primal spirit. It is only too easy for the old, familiar, strategic attitudes to life to take over again, once a certain image on the hard disk of the brain is touched upon, and the alarm signal goes off. Then we are immediately cast into confusion again with our survival mechanisms.

**Inner diamond**

Together with Ken Wilbur and others, the Koeweiti Hameed Ali, alias A.H.Almaas, who has lived in the USA since his seventeenth year, has also made a valuable contribution to research into transpersonal psychology. He calls his vision the ‘Diamond Approach’. It signifies a method which implements the qualities of a diamond. One of these qualities is that a diamond can cut through hard metals, without damage to itself.

With the brilliance of a diamond, and a similar precision and focus, we are able to cut through the layers of our personality or character, and come into contact with those aspects of ourselves he calls
our ‘essence’ or ‘true nature’. Essence is the direct experience of being. According to him, everyone has something that at first feels like a gnawing need which has to be satisfied from the outside. But in fact, this is the fervour necessary to unveil our true nature. It begins to glow like a piece of coal, brought to life by the breath of our sincere desire to discover the truth. It catches light and its warmth encourages us to explore our inner world.

Almaas’ vision, methods of approach and books provide a synthesis of developments in this field over the past centuries, in the East, as well as in the West.

**Orgone-energy**

Wilhelm Reich (1897–1959), psychotherapist and scientist, and a student of Sigmund Freud, discovered some essential universal truths in his research. For instance, the term ‘armour’, for chronically hardened muscles, is his. He further developed the ideas of Freud, and came to the conclusion that not only the mind, but also the body, which stores one’s attitude to life, should be included in therapy or analysis. He became increasingly convinced that the two could not be separated. Therefore work with breathing and physical movement began, which made an impact on both Grof and Almaas. Through this, the universal primal spirit can be freed from its armour, so that one can get used to the flow in one’s body once more. Reich called this primal power ‘Orgone-Energy’.

**Orgasmic reflex**

Release of energy, without embarrassment or inhibition, occurs simultaneously with an involuntary, specific reaction of the body, which Reich called the ‘orgasmic reflex’. The head bends back, and the pelvis forward. This is not exclusively relevant to sexual orgasms, but includes every kind of energy discharge. Laughing and crying are also forms of discharging energy. Usually this reflex is experienced as liberating. It is a fundamental form of physical expression.

An orgasmic reflex occurs spontaneously whenever one surrenders oneself to something, without trying to keep control. It is a discharge of energy and therefore an outgoing movement. The greater one’s ability to surrender, the stronger the discharge and the orgasmic reflex. Whether it is an expression of grief, or anger, or laughter, a sexual orgasm or vomiting, exhaling, or any other kind of outgoing action; if the energy is discharged, the orgasmic reflex will occur. Sometimes the energy is discharged like an explosion. Sometimes it is discharged as a gentle flow. In both cases the discharge could be a total one, and therefore that of the reflex would be, too.

In principle, every breath taken is accompanied by a slight movement of the head and pelvis. It happens automatically. We have this reflex in common with the most primitive forms of life.

**Genital man**

Reich speaks only of a sexual orgasm if both spirit and body have surrendered totally to the experience and that it is not restricted to the genitals. Through it the body is sensed as a whole. We experience the source of being. And, after this total discharge, comes a state of heavenly bliss. The heart overflows with love. Love transcends the personal. Once again we are connected to the universal source of life. Via the orgasm we can reconnect with primal spirit and the essential qualities of being, such as love, gentleness, kindness, trust, joy, clarity of mind and peace.

Reich calls someone who surrenders themselves like this the ‘genital man’. The inclusion of sexuality as part of Reich’s multi-discipline research, and the connection he sees between the heart and the genitals, corresponds to a large extent with tantric philosophy.
Eva, Wilhelm Reich’s daughter

Eva Reich, the daughter of Wilhelm Reich, once stayed at my house, (see an article on Reichweb), and we had long talks together. I am a great admirer of her father, and I agreed with her ideas, which are an elaboration on those of her father. While she was visiting, she gave me a few of her rebirthing sessions. Via deeper and more rapid breathing I came to relive the moment of my birth. I had already gone through other rebirthing sessions, using different methods, including the holotropics of Stanislav Grof. Usually I would feel claustrophobic after only a short while.

The same thing happened in Eva’s session. Then she got me to curl up like a foetus, at the same time calling on me as an adult to closely observe what was happening. She started talking about my everyday life and asked if I came across the same sensation then as well, and in what kind of situations. I was instantly back in the here and now, looking at my life objectively. Then she told me to breathe deeply and more intensely, and buried me under a pile of cushions. She laid down on top of these, making all kinds of movements. I felt such a great pressure on me, it was as if I was being crushed, Then an acute ringing in my ears began. I felt as if I was being ejected at an amazing speed, into space. I felt totally lost. Again her voice: ‘Do you recognise this in your life?’ Of course I did! She proposed that I should surrender, and release my tension. I felt it was up to me now, to make a choice, and that I was free to make it at that very moment. My breathing changed automatically, becoming rhythmic and harmonious.

Afterwards she gave me a very gentle, loving massage, her ‘baby massage’, as she called it. It awakened a longing in me that, until that moment, had always been suppressed. Gentleness began to play a greater role in my life. Up to then I had only felt it in contact with my own children. My approach to sexuality changed. Heart and genitals became an inseparable whole.

Perhaps it is interesting to recount something about the young Eva’s afternoon-tea visits, together with mother and father Reich, at Sigmund Freud’s home. Freud had a secret cupboard. When the cupboard was opened, a life-size witch with blazing eyes appeared. The figurine’s function was to keep any mischief from entering the house. It was an ancient custom in the region where Freud lived. Eva and her brother had discovered the cupboard and they would find it hugely exciting to surreptitiously open it each time they visited.

Bio-energetics, core-energetics, pathwork

The person who most fully concretized Reich’s work is one of his former students, John Pierrakos. Reich’s insight into the way people tense their bodies and armour themselves from out their specific character formations, was elaborated on by Pierrakos and Lowen (another of Reich’s students) during the 21 years they worked together. They developed new techniques to free blocked emotion. Their joint efforts led to the development of Bio-Energetics.

Pierrakos has moved on from there. His aim has been to combine bio-energetic bodywork with the transpersonal, spiritual, holistic vision of New Age ideas. He changed the name bio-energetics to Core-Energetics. Core, as meaning the source, divinity, higher self, in an open relationship to universal primal spirit, the life force itself, is a concept Reich had used earlier. The goal is to free this core, which lies buried under what he calls the ‘lower self’ and the ‘mask’ (survival strategies).

Characterology, which stems from Reich’s studies of character and body armour, and which was further elaborated by Pierrakos and Lowen, is still used. Pierrakos wanted to unite the three aspects of mankind – body, mind and spirit, discussed respectively by Reich, Freud and Jung – in a holistic perspective. He succeeded, with the help of his future wife Eva Broch, who regularly entered a
mediumistic trance in which she communicated with someone she called the ‘guide’. She gave 258 lectures in this way. Until her death in 1979, Eva was co-leader of the spiritual-psychotherapeutic commune ‘The Path’ she had set up with John. Subsequently it became the ‘Centre for the Living Force’. It is based on the information channelled by Eva in her lectures.

**Either it works, or it doesn’t work at all**

Either it works, or it doesn’t work at all. That is entirely up to the person who is seeking. A spiritual community can be a source of inspiration for further development but sometimes it looks more like a community for the wounded. Then it is not so much about following a communal spiritual path, but more to do with discovering and comforting one another, to share pain and sorrow. Of course, it can also be both.

Some people follow a spiritual path as if they are under obligation to, or in anticipation of receiving something from, some higher authority. In fact they are projecting their mother and/or father on to the spiritual path they are following, on to those leading them on this path, and on to the literature they consult about it. They are not standing on their own feet. And the result? If they come to realisation, they could very well begin to look critically at themselves and not want to continue. And then? They avoid what is there, and want to change it.

If this rings a bell, then I would advise you to look closely at what is going on in yourself and to follow the process. To acknowledge that you see the organization of the spiritual path as an authority. Next, acknowledge that you are critical and judgemental. That you want to stop. It may well be that you now fall into a new trap. For instance, you force yourself to try to put things right. You refuse to accept your perception of the spiritual path you are on as an authority from which you expect something, and which expects something of you, but you are critical towards it.

On the other hand, you can be sure that if you follow this process with loving attention, you will be creating a fertile breeding-ground for spontaneous transformation. Pay attention to everything you are feeling and thinking. It is an adventure!

You can also be confident that you will find the path best suited to you. It is your own life-lessons which are working for you. Everything you experience offers an opportunity to consciously acknowledge, and to observe, yourself. One thing is sure; you are in your own company, day in day out, and you are in the best position to watch yourself. That does not mean indulging in ‘navel-contemplation’, nor in analysing, but in consciously looking, feeling and experiencing, without judgement, and without obligation to do something. You then become your own loving parent, who provides the substrate for your life-flow. This allows you to be yourself, in the moment, with the help of whatever, or whoever is around. You develop, and flow out into the world.

**It works**

Time and again, I notice how something is activated in rigid patterns, once they have been given enough space to be recognized, acknowledged, and observed. This is the prerequisite for change. Again, change is not something you do, but which occurs automatically once the conditions necessary have been created. It happens spontaneously. If survival strategies are recognized and closely watched, enough space is created for all the manifestations of primal spirit, and then it can help us.

It does not seem to make much difference, whatever we undertake or whatever happens. What certainly does make a difference, is whether we are fully present with our awareness. We can do therapies of all kinds and descriptions without getting even close to experiencing essential being,
and then, while jogging in the park, it suddenly comes to us. Clear perception of the present takes over from nebulous automatic thoughts, feelings and actions.

The way back to the source, to that free and independent being who creates his life from the full potential of universal primal power, is a mystical path. It is the path to reunification with that from which we once separated. It is the path we all follow, sometimes via thousands of detours. All along the path there are guides, identification marks, beacons and signposts, several of which are mentioned above. The source rises in the core of our being, to flow on via our individual expression. And then we begin to acknowledge what we always missed, what led to that vague, gnawing desire for an indistinct something we had been looking for outside ourselves.

We are on our way home to our true selves.

Self-examination

How is the quality of your life at the moment, in relation to love, relationships, sex life, work, creativity and free time?

What is your attitude towards it? Are you critical? Does something need to be done? Do you have set conditions for your life? What are they? What are you missing in the present circumstances and how does it affect your actions?

In answering these questions, what do you feel physically?

Describe a few of your sexual experiences, including the orgasm and your state afterwards.

Do you recognize the orgasmic reflex, as described by Reich, in non-sexual situations?

What do you experience and what happens when you block the orgasmic reflex?

Have you ever experienced ‘losing yourself’ as a pleasant sensation?

Describe the experience.

Have you ever experienced ‘losing yourself’ as an unpleasant sensation?

Describe the experience.

Have you ever experienced a state of expanded consciousness?

Describe the experience.

Spiritual path

What does following a spiritual path mean to you? Are you following such a path? Are you doing it from a lack of autonomy - from the need for an authority outside yourself? To belong somewhere? Is it more a wounded fraternity? To what extent do you experience it as ‘parents’ who tell you what you must or must not do? Do you follow every direction to the letter, or do you consider what you are handed as providing an opportunity for new experience, and to get to know more about yourself?

What are you experiencing at this moment? Try not to give an opinion, such as good or bad, but describe what is happening in you (feelings, thoughts, physical sensations).
How is your breathing at present?

Now breathe deeply twenty times. What do you experience in your body? What do you feel? What are you thinking?

Chapter 4

Our deepest vital centre has many names

Nature Mysticism

To heal means to make whole. Science today, as well as ancient spiritual teachings, reminds us that everything in the universe is subject to constant change and, while everything is connected, every living thing is, in itself, a complete entity. At birth we are whole and the blueprint of this is present in our nature. And, consciously or unconsciously, we all want to re-enter this state.

Most traditional societies are aware of the interrelatedness of everything that exists. In their eyes, people, animals, and plants are instinctive, holistic beings which together form a whole, and that are constantly interacting with all other natural phenomena. Life is lived by collective principles in service of this interaction.

The spark that is our true self, comes from the stars and will return to the stars. The earth is our mother who gave us our physical form. At the end of our earth-walk we return to her. Our spirit comes from the wind, like our breath. Our words are our breath and therefore sacred.

Jamie Sams, The Sacred Path

In La pensée sauvage Lévi-Strauss calls this the participation mystique.

This sense of oneness with the universe seems to be the answer to our need to feel whole and fulfilled.

Regression or transcendence?

In his book Eye to Eye Ken Wilber defines the above-mentioned differentiation between unconscious pre-personal experience and conscious trans-personal experience of oneness with the whole. The latter represents our conscious reunion with the core of our being, in relation to primal spirit. It is there that we transcend our ego-based awareness, to a more expansive consciousness.

Wilbur sees pre-personal experience as a regression into an unconscious primal stadium, as in the womb. We can feel consumed and overwhelmed by it, which may feel threatening. To allay our
fears we maintain our strategies and, mainly in traditional societies, ritual states of trance are invoked.

It remains to be seen whether nature mysticism, as here described, should be considered as an unconscious pre-personal experience. Personally I think that it represents a higher state of consciousness, as Indian and Siberian shamanism bears witness.

**Spirit, the peaceful fountain of our soul**

'Spirit', the 'peaceful fountain of our soul', the 'most profound depths of our being', and 'our transpersonal witness' are all ways of describing the 'core' which Ken Wilbur discusses in *The Great Chain of Being*. He calls the place 'where the soul passes into a non-dualistic state of radical intuition and supreme identity', spirit. He considers the spirit to be the 'highest possible order', the 'peak of all spheres', 'progression further than all what is'. He adds to this: 'This is a domain that cannot be integrated into any other domain and therefore retains its radical transcendent nature.' On the other hand, he states: 'Spirit is omni-present, all-embracing, since it is the design of all possible designs, the condition of all conditions and the being of all beings, and therefore it is the basis or essence of all spheres'.

In his book *No Boundaries*, Ken Wilbur calls the core, the 'peaceful fountain of the soul'. This is located in the most profound depths of our being and cannot be disturbed. It is the 'transcendent self', our 'transpersonal witness', one with everything it witnesses. Further than time and space, within the core, lies an intuitive understanding of immortality.

**Essence**

The deep vital centre of our being; the pure nucleus within us that is linked to the primal power available in the universe through our breath; that is unhindered by any form; that is our true nature, our 'essence', as A.H. Almaas calls it. The core is radiant, a source of beauty, goodness and wisdom, with an all-encompassing potential for love and creation. It is a conduit for many manifestations. It is always present. We cannot lose it. We can only lose contact with it. Once contact has been reinstated, an immediate influence will be felt on our health and vitality. Then we will enjoy clarity of mind and profound insight. We will feel love, peace, consideration, forgiveness and fulfilment. We are then ready to realize our true selves and to experience a multi-dimensional reality.

**Whereabouts in our body?**

Sometimes this vital centre is physically felt in our heart or pelvis. Wilhelm Reich located it in the whole region of the heart and pelvis. In Oriental cultures it is mainly judged to be in the pelvis area and in western Christian societies in the heart. Where it is felt is largely dependent on an individual openness. Ultimately it is the direct experience of being that counts; experience of the flow of primal spirit from above to below, and from below to above, just like in a tree. It could also manifest as a pulsating in and out motion.

**The core of our being**

‘The core of our being, the depths of our heart,’ are the words of Teresa of Avila, a fifteenth-century Spanish mystic, in *The Inner Citadel*. Her mystical experiences took her deeper and deeper into herself, to the core of her being, where she discovered God.

Wilhelm Reich also uses the term ‘core’, in his books *Character Analysis* and *The function of the Orgasm*, to describe the inner centre of life, where primal spirit is present in its full potential. He calls the core ‘a psychic reality that stretches far outside the boundaries of our conscious mind’,
and the primal power which nourishes it, ‘orgone-energy’. In his view children are born in open contact with this core. During the process of growing-up a child hides this core behind physical and psychological armour to protect himself against what Reich calls the ‘emotional plague’, that is: the lack of love in the world. To restore our connection to the core and to realise our primal spirit is our life’s work. Reich believed in restoring contact with the source through conscious deep breathing and removing the body’s armour via exercise.

Steven de Batselier, one of the pioneers in prenatal therapy, noticed that the psyche of a foetus is aware of his cosmic origins. ‘In reliving our own origins, we can experience the birth of consciousness in all humanity.’

Since our true nature is whole, full, complete and joyful, we are continually in pursuit of it. If we had never known perfection, or if it was not our natural state, we would have no inkling of its existence. The process of reconnecting ourselves with the whole, or of restoring this wholeness and relinquishing our fragmentation, our rigidity and isolation, is motivated by our true nature. It is continuously in motion and cannot be stopped, although it can be obstructed. Unfortunately, we often find ourselves captive in a struggle to prove our individuality.

**Higher Self**

As I mentioned earlier, John Pierrakos and his wife Eva, the daughter of the German writer Jakob Wasserman, were actively involved in the development of ‘Core-Energetics’. After having worked with Alexander Lowen for twenty years and having together developed Bio-Energetics, Pierrakos wanted to work on a more spiritual therapy, in combination with physical exercise. This work focuses on the liberation of the Core, also referred to as the ‘Higher Self’ by John and Eva – liberation from the psychological and physical armour that separates us from the core of our being. Primal spirit is present in our ‘Higher Self’ in its pure, timeless essence, as divine and universal energy.

In her lecture entitled ‘Higher Self, Lower Self and Mask’, Eva Pierrakos speaks, as medium for ‘The Guide’, about the higher self as the most refined and radiant of astral bodies, and as having the highest resonance frequency. The greater the spiritual development, the higher the resonance frequency.

Roberto Assagioli, the founder of psychosynthesis, also called the core the Higher Self, and defined it as a universal state, in and beyond time, in and beyond personal experience. He considers the higher self as our link to what he calls the ‘All’. In passing through personal experience, on an inner journey, and coming across diverse parts of the sub-personalities in himself, the traveller is in state to reconnect with this All.

**Primal Self**

Carl Gustav Jung used the word ‘self’ to define the core. He described it as the organising and unity-bringing centre of the entire psyche, the stamp of objective identity, the superior psychic authority, the inner empirical divinity, the ‘imago dei’. It encompasses both the conscious and the subconscious psyche. Jung alleges that we shall never know what this ‘self’ really is. He assumes that this self is present before the development of the personality. The personality veils it. According to him, a process of individuation develops during the inner journey through which this self resurfaces.

On the basis of ethnographic and mythological material, Eric Neumann has named the core ‘the Primordial Self’. The core exists in specific forms, the so-called ‘mandalas’ which symbolise the primordial state. They usually consist of a circle, a cross, a square or another four-cornered symbol.
containing a central point, the core. The *uroburos*, the snake who has his own tail in his jaws, is another image of the primal state. And what is this primal state? It is a state which is present in, and around us. It is our core, with around it all kinds of protective mechanisms, survival strategies or other ways of allaying our fears.

**God**

The most familiar term for the core, is ‘God’. Christian mystics perceive God within their own context of light, love, forgiveness, intelligence and expanded awareness. God often manifests Himself spontaneously in someone through divine revelation.

Saint John of the Cross said that God is in the soul and that this is something completely different to the image mankind has of God. This is above sensual perception.

The German mystic Eckhart compares God to a silent desert, without distinction, without a father, without a son, without Holy Spirit, a place where a spark of the soul is at peace. Both Jacob Boehme and Saint Paul describe God as the ‘void that is free of all things’.

The concept of an inner god in Christian mysticism is beautifully described by the seventeenth-century Dutch poet, Jan Luyken. After first having had an image of God as a distant being, living far above the moon and stars, he had a sudden revelation of a God who was not far away at all, but instead ‘the nature of his own nature’. Here follows his brilliant poem ‘The Soul Observes the Proximity of God’:

*I melted into God, my Love,*

*Together we became One Spirit;*

*A heavenly union of flesh and blood,*

*The Essence of God’s heart.*

*Wholeness, totality, unity of opposites, the generative nucleus, the navel of the world, the axle of the universe, the creative moment when God and man meet, the point at which transpersonal energies stream into one’s personal life, the eternal antithesis to time-bound changeability, the inalienable, the inorganic in paradoxical union with the organic, protective structures which are able to create order from chaos, the transformation of energy, the elixir of life, the central source of vitality, the source of our being which, in simple terminology, is referred to as God.*

Edward Edinger, *Ego and Archetype.*

**The omega point**

‘Spirit-matter’, the ‘cosmic law’, the ‘personal universal’, the deepest intrinsic self, the ‘centre of all centres’, ‘love’, and ‘omega’, are the concepts used by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, to define the core. He mainly concentrated on what he called ‘spirit-matter’, (‘Weltstof’, ‘Geist-Materie’), which harbours the longing to become manifest through our personality, assuming that we preserve the ‘cosmic law’ in ourselves. He also calls this the ‘personal universal’, our deepest intrinsic self having the creative powers of love. Due to the concentration of spirit-matter as the nucleus of the personal, God is manifested, God, who is spirit and the ‘centre of all centres’. The nucleus from which everything rises and descends. The end result is love. He calls this the ‘Omega Point’, revealed to us in sexuality, relationships and in cosmic processes. Everyone represents a cosmic nucleus of specific nature that transmits waves to the physical body.
Atman, Brahman

'Atman' (the Self), and ‘Brahman’, are words for the same concept, coming from the Indian Ayur Veda, a holistic medical practise, dating back to 2000 BC. In the Ayur Veda, (which means study of life), mankind is perceived as a micro-cosmos, and the universe as a macro-cosmos. Both are manifestations of the same reality, Brahman. Those manifestations which can be seen by man consist of six elements. The sixth element is Atman, the Self, the equivalent in mankind to Brahman in the universe.

In the Bhagavad Gita, which contains the quintessence of Vedic wisdom, recorded about 900 BC, Brahman says:

_I am in all, and all is in me..._

_I am the living spirit of all that lives_

_I am the original seed of all that is..._

_I am the strength of the strong..._

_I am sexuality..._

_I am the essence of all essences..._

_I live as a super-soul in the hearts of all..._

Total Awareness

The frequently-quoted Tibetan sage Milarepa calls this ‘Total Awareness’.

‘It is a joy to realise that every consciousness is inextricably connected to ‘Total Awareness’. That fundamental reality is not judgemental. That, in the infinite knowledge of a reality that transcends thought, no cymaric distinction exists. There are no theories, there is no birth, no death, no transition, no change.‘

(Inner) Path

‘Tao’, the ‘Inner Path’, the ‘Absolute’, the ‘All’, are the terms used by the Chinese philosophers Lao Tse, (about 604 BC), and Tsjwang Tse, (370-300 BC), for the core of our being. This path was seen as the gateway to the absolute, while it is, at the same time, the current situation as it is within us, and not somewhere else. Therefore the path there and the circumstances are inextricably interwoven. There is no dualism in Tao. It is infinite and unnameable. From it spring statements that appear paradoxical, such as: Tao is the ‘boundlessness of the bounded’, and, ‘the bounds of the boundlessness’. Tao gives fullness and emptiness, but is neither of them. Tao encompasses everything. I am on my way to ‘the Absolute’, to the ‘All’, while I am already there. Tao also means ‘expressing’, ‘speaking’.

In the Gospel according to St. John, it says: ‘In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, and then spoke the Incarnate Word: ‘I am the Way.’
The manner in which the word ‘way’ is used, is comparable to the Good Red Road of the Native American Indians. If you arrive on this road, you are in contact with the Great Mystery, that is in every single being in existence.

**Self-examination**

What does the core, the source, mean to you?

Do you have personal experience of it?

Since when? Influenced by what?

Were you brought up to believe in a religion? What kind of influence does that have on your experience of the source?

Which of the approaches described above appeals most to you?

Now breathe deeply twenty times. What do you feel physically? What are your feelings? What are your thoughts?

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**Chapter 5**

**The Meaning of our Lives**

The ways in which we look for meaning in our lives are as diverse as the individuals living on this planet in the past, and at present. Together they have developed culture, that is, people have organised their lives. And their culture has been continuously interpreted, integrated and altered throughout the ages. Due to their ability to reflect, human beings can give meaning to their lives.

Setting out to discover the meaning of one’s life is an adventure most people are unaware of, but an unconscious impulse exists in us, stimulating us to undertake the great voyage of discovery that manifests in a myriad of guises.

**Narcissism**

If someone experiences a lack of security as a child, he will be quicker to find life meaningless than someone who has enjoyed a trusted environment in their youth. He will lack a sense of identity and, if he does have one, it will easily disintegrate, become incomplete, deformed, unrealistic, or vanish totally. A person like this is over-sensitive and easily hurt.

The degree to which one’s basic needs have been satisfied, determines to what extent one is able to feel compassion and love, for oneself, and for others. Someone who has been left out in the cold as a child may become a dependent and childlike adult. Due to him feeling insulted or hurt, he may
regularly fall prey to intense outbursts of rage or grief. Except for these explosions of emotion, such an individual is usually quite a loner, robot-like in his emotions, without much zest for life. He lacks initiative, and is mostly reactive. He feels lost and disoriented, as if there is no ground under his feet, or even as if he does not exist at all. He lives in a void where he does not encounter himself. Whatever he does, has no meaning for him. He also feels overtly self-conscious. Whatever happens in the outside world, or whatever he personally experiences or achieves, nothing helps to restore his inner sense of self-esteem. He continues to see everything as empty, meaningless and futile.

It requires all his strength to keep a grip on himself, to feel something resembling stability. To that end he is constantly hungry for recognition from the outside world, without it helping in the least to improve his self-esteem.

Someone like this could achieve great success, through one or other of his talents. However, he will experience it as though it has nothing to do with him. The appreciation he receives may well result in an exaggerated sense of self, that would function as a façade to hide his inner poverty and lack of self-esteem. His underlying sense of worthlessness remains unchanged. Therefore his need to be seen, appreciated and admired, only increases. It turns into an insatiable longing, leading only to greater dependence on receiving admiration. Any form of criticism is rejected. He sees it as humiliating, belittling and treacherous. His heart remains empty and unfulfilled, making him insatiable.

**Borderline character**

When a person has almost no sense of identity, their character is described as ‘borderline’. Someone like this not only lacks a sense of self, but also of boundaries. He cannot install them, and has no idea about those of other people, but is constantly preoccupied with them. When it seems as if he is toning respect for others, it is probably just the reflection of his fear of contact.

Unfortunately, there is almost no one in our western society today without some (slight) form of narcissism.

**Meaninglessness**

We often look outside of ourselves for meaning to our lives; God, angels, the all-embracing love from above, yonder. Intellectually, we look for it in scientific and philosophical speculation. But emotionally, we tend to expect others to give our lives meaning. From a materialistic standpoint, the acquisition of food and possessions would seem to be the way. Of course, this does not imply that these things cannot give us pleasure. On the contrary, they can be an important factor in the current of life, but if we become dependent on them, our sense of meaning in our lives can come to hang in the balance. If those around us leave us, we will feel lost and let down. Our lives have no meaning anymore. Then it becomes clear how little real contact we had with ourselves and others.

**Who am I?**

We fall into a vacuum and are no longer certain who we are. We have a feeling of listlessness or become restless. We cannot go forward anymore, nor backward, only downward. Loss of contact with ourselves, with our surroundings and with the meaning of life, goes hand in hand with a feeling of deep malaise. At the bottom of this lies an existential fear. Some will try to push this aside by projecting their dissatisfaction on to others, accusing them and blaming them for everything. In psychology this is called ‘shifting’. Others will suffer panic attacks, or become aggressive or fall into the role of victim. Yet another freezes. There are all kinds of strategies like this to allay fears. When someone’s frustration and despair develop into an existential crisis, in
their struggle with the meaning of life and their sense of identity, strategies will no longer work for them. All trust in their self-worth and initiative disappears, leaving them feeling as if there is nothing worth living, fighting or hoping for. And then what?

Everything solid in life collapses. Nothing is the same anymore. Everything has changed. This is the point at which death and rebirth pay a call. The more intense the crisis, the reader we are to surrender ourselves and in Buddhist terminology, to die the ‘little death’. And then things get moving again. It often happens that precisely in a crisis like this, the meaning of life appears, out of the blue. It is there for the taking, whereas before it seemed not to exist.

**Crucifixion and resurrection**

Reich was crucified because of his passion and conviction. He wrote copiously and was persecuted in various countries. For the most part his books were burnt. In the United States, his last refuge, he died in prison. The vision of Reich was far ahead of his time. The fear evoked by his ideas was countered by rejecting them and eliminating the messenger himself. But all the same, Reich has been resurrected, by way of the numerous movements which have arisen, based on his ideas. In his book *The Murderer of Christ*, Reich portrays Christ as the symbol of life, vitality and warmth. Every new-born child represents the Christ-principle, before he becomes blocked by his upbringing.

In that sense everyone experiences a kind of crucifixion. In fact one can resurrect oneself, through re-establishing one’s contact with the vital current and with *being*. If there is no resistance, no attempt to flee or change the situation, desperation and suffering can become the birth-canal to a new way of life. Almost no one allows his emotions to be, just as they are. One tries to suppress even the most intense desperation or fear. Yet happiness is part of the same flow. Through feeling the pain, our inherent sense of joy is laid bare. In that sense, happiness is a by-product and not something to be chased after. If you do chase after happiness, you will surely lose your way.

**The cross as the symbol of life**

Just as the birth-process has been used as a metaphor for radical reorientation throughout the ages, the cross forms a symbol for the worldly relationship between mankind and the divine. At the centre of the cross - the point where the horizontal line crosses the vertical - lies the invitation to wholeness. By avoiding this point, and by giving a wide berth to hardship, we are crucifying ourselves, leaving ourselves suspended, over and over again. But if we go through the pain, we experience our resurrection. That does not mean playing the role of the victim, on the contrary. In the dark night of the soul we feel disoriented, as if we could break apart at any moment, dissolve, explode or die. If we dare to go through with, and accept this, we will witness the demise of our controlling mind. Only then can the full potential of our being be realized. We are our own midwives – or genealogists - directing this birth-process, and can then become loving, attentive parents to ourselves. We can feel how our bodies form a cross if we stretch our arms out to the side. This time not a cross on which we die, but one which symbolises life itself. It generates a feeling of expansion. Now we can connect with the world from our true centre and that is frequently a different experience than ever before, when we were governed by conditioned reflexes that we developed in response to our early environment, after we had been brought into the world by our flesh and blood mother. Now the whole universe is our womb. And that constitutes a transpersonal experience. It is also an experience that brings us into contact with the collective contents of the conscious perception of all humanity.

**Suppressed memory**
“Everything around me becomes dark. First a bluish darkness, which changes into pitch black. My head feels as if it has been squeezed into a narrow space. It could burst at any moment. It feels imprisoned. What is in my head to make it feel so over-full? It feels like barbed wire. I panic. There is someone I trust at my side. Luckily I can tell them what I am experiencing. I am invited to go further into my feelings. The barbed wire begins to constrict itself, becoming a menacing ball. I suffocate in it. I pass out. In the background I feel a kernel in my head. It feels like the core of all evil. It can destroy everything. It is simultaneously light and darkness. Nothing helps against it. It is the full force of destruction. It explodes. The process of evolution passes before my mind’s eye. I can’t stand it. I panic. I pray for help.

Within a fraction of a second my head quietens. My nose is completely blocked and I smell something nasty. I sit still, my hands folded in my lap. Everything appears to have come to a standstill. I come round. Suddenly the image of myself, holding my father’s hand, surfaces. It was towards the end of the war and we were on our way to the hospital to have my tonsils taken out. Something dramatic was taking place in the sky above. At the entrance to the hospital there was a lot of barbed wire. We had hardly entered before I was given a dose of anaesthesia. Overcome with panic, I cried: ‘I’m dying!’ Then I lost consciousness.”

That must have been a traumatic experience for a child.

**Not even a couple of minutes**

“I realise how I have been running in circles the past years. I often had a stuffy head and was kept awake at night by mulling over things in my head, and sometimes by attacks of panic. There was clearly something I was refusing to feel. When it surfaced, I would immediately stop it by thinking of other things, to engage my thoughts elsewhere: ‘Am I carrying some deadly disease?’ I would straightaway feel ill. Or: ‘No, our DNA is under Sirius’ influence, that’s what I’m feeling.’ My astrological chart would be brought out. Maybe another aura-reading? Or a visit to the doctor?’

When I finally become aware of the chatter in my head and go back to the panic-attack, emotions and thoughts tumble over each other. At times I feel sexually aroused. A longing in my midriff. Then I feel hungry. An empty stomach. Then an over-full head. Followed by space and peace and images from the past. Barbed-wire barricades, soldiers. Oh yes, if I walked past a field with rusty barbed wire, or entered a hospital, or was even in the close proximity of one, or if I got a sniff of a typical hospital smell, I would feel uneasy.

I halted the process there. I did not dare go further. But now, finally, I have done it.

And how long did it take to get to the bottom of these feelings? Not even two minutes. What a relief! I feel as if I have cleared a minefield.”

**Beating about the bush**

Without accepting oneself and accepting the situation you are in at present, you lose something of your sense of self-esteem. It then becomes almost impossible to enter ‘the dark night of the soul’ and to observe without being judgemental. It is even more difficult to perceive certain painful situations as lessons in your life.

Society provides little support for us to deal with ourselves in this way. In today’s society one’s reputation depends more on success and prestige. We are brought up to judge by these standards, and we measure our self-worth on these scales. Deep inside ourselves we know that something is wrong with them. To confront difficult feelings is not something we do easily. Occasionally one talks about them, which is not as straightforward as it might seem. It can become a way of avoiding facing up to our feelings. Many people take another kind of escape route, by building-up an image
of themselves, either underrating ourselves or the opposite. They are beating about the bush, pretending there is nothing amiss. If they underrate themselves, they can begin to feel worthless, or a victim. The illusion seems less painful than reality. If they overrate themselves, they are prey to a different illusion with which they try to circumvent the feelings evoked by reality. The more they do this, the more they alienate themselves from reality and become shadows of themselves. This kind of process devours so much energy that they become empty and burnt-out.

Just take a minute to work out how this affects you personally.

**Spiritual initiation**

The core of our being, our essential selves, our vital centre, is the source of our existence and connects us to the universe as a whole. It is open, vulnerable, loving, joyful, unconditioned and indestructible. It is not preoccupied. It is just there, and does not question who or what it is. Its influence, however submerged, always remains tangible, in, for example, a basic trust that most people feel when they are in a clinch.

This core, this vital centre in us, is veiled, concealed behind and underneath our personality, or character. This tries to protect us from our fear (of death) through adopting all sorts of survival strategies, like projection on to others and personified images of god.

Nevertheless, the longing persists; to reunite with the core of our being and from there to continue to live our lives. Sooner or later this longing will make us turn inwards and set alight the spark which leads us to examine ourselves, to take responsibility, and which helps us find the way back. Playing the victim-role will become irrelevant. Conquering, power and manipulation will no longer be of such importance, either.

The spark can ignite and in a flash manifest itself. That can occur instantly, as if we were hit by lightening. We then feel our connection to our core and primal power. Strategies and physical and mental tautness which conceal it, disappear for a moment. We come into contact with our true selves. You could call it a spiritual initiation that sets in motion a process which can no longer be checked.

**Victorious downfall**

Hammarskjöld, the Secretary-General of the United Nations from 1953, died in an aeroplane crash in 1961. During his life he was a mystic. The following passage is from his notebook:

‘One day I said ‘yes’ to something or someone, I let myself fall into that ‘yes’, I gave up any resistance. I had surrendered. Since that moment I am convinced that life has meaning, and that my life, in all humility, has a purpose. Since that moment I know what it means not to look back, or to worry about the coming day. Following Ariadne’s thread through the labyrinth of life, I came to the time and the place in which I realised that this path led to a victory which is a downfall, and to a downfall which is victorious.’

**Flash**

It is analogous to a flash of lightening in a thunderstorm. An enormous tension hangs in the air. The discharge takes place through friction. In a fraction of a second a huge amount of energy is released, together with a flash of light and the potential destruction of everything that is. In the same way our lives can be set under glaring light, and all the old patterns we have built-up, can be recognized, but also destroyed. The ‘flash’ throws new light on our lives. The primal spirit which is imprisoned in our lifestyle, is liberated. This experience can be compared to Hegel’s ‘dialectic shifting’. He
describes it as a qualitative leap which occurs at the moment in which a point of satiation is reached and suddenly a new form evolves. As, for instance, water becomes ice or steam when subjected to extreme changes of temperature, or a community changes into a seething mass when overtaken by revolutionary fervour.

**Mystical experience**

The directness of a child can instigate this kind of dramatic change in perception.

One day Saint Augustine was walking along the beach, pondering over the mystery of the Holy Trinity. He passed a little boy who was walking back and forth between the sea and the beach with a shell in his hand. Time and again he filled the shell with seawater and poured it into a hole in the sand. Augustine asked him: ‘Young man, what are you doing?’ The boy replied: ‘I’m putting the sea into this hole.’ When Augustine replied: ‘That’s impossible.’, the boy said: ‘You can’t have the Holy Trinity in your head either.’ This brought about a revolution in Augustine. It felt as if he had been propelled into a mystical experience.

**Modern physics and mysticism**

The scientists who have created modern physics, like Heisenberg, Schroedinger, Einstein, De Broglie, Jeans, Planck, Pauli and Eddington, unanimously declare that it is impossible for physics to provide insight into the spiritual significance of the universe. Physics is based on mathematics, a construction using symbols. The universe is charted via this medium. Spiritual significance is inspired more by mystical experience, in which the universe is experienced and understood directly, without the aid of a medium, formulated concepts, or abstractions. The above-mentioned scientists are almost all mystics. There are clear similarities between their way of looking at the world, and that of mystics.

Physicists are therefore able to put the meaning of life into words, as for example, David Bohm, the physicist and philosopher, has done. To him the universe is a vast ocean of energy in which tiny flakes of matter are drifting. These flakes emanate from energy and dissolve in it again, too. Matter is therefore temporal, but energy is not. David Bohm considers each individual as a three-dimensional form which has developed in a multi-dimensional reality. This multi-dimensional reality is always present, before birth, as well as in the course of our lives, and after death. It is a reality which we can experience, but not prove.

Bohm described this reality as an indissoluble totality that is continuously in motion, and of which we are ALWAYS a part, either as a form, or as energy. Each individual will, consciously or not, experience this indissoluble relationship with the whole in a unique way. Bohm stressed the importance of the energy, rather than the form. This energy is what determines the eternal, undivided whole which temporarily manifests itself as matter. Therefore it is potentially omnipresent. It can make a tiny seed swell into a gigantesque form. A newborn child, a tree and a flower are all forms of materialized energy that is subject to the energy from which they originated. They live and grow through it, reach maturity, flower and then relinquish their form in death. They live on in the energy and in the products that stem from them, in the seeds they have produced.

This process of energy materializing, to subsequently pass into formless energy again, is a cyclic life-dance, between our potential and the potential of the infinite universe.

**Primordial effectiveness**
Free will means that we do with love whatever the cosmic point of view requires. Carl Gustav Jung

Sometimes there comes a moment in which we sense our developing consciousness transcending the limitations of the personal sphere and taking on responsibility for the greater whole. Our consciousness expands and we feel a deep commitment to life. Instead of this greater responsibility becoming a heavier burden to us, it gives us a sense of freedom, love and fulfilment. From deep inside we come into effective action which bears fruit. Ways of co-operating with others develop on a win-win basis. Fundamental trust is restored and encourages action that is helpful to others as well as to ourselves. New structures are created and old ones broken down. Living with new possibilities provides extra awareness, which gives rise to new information. Our lives become increasingly enjoyable and dynamic when backed by universal primal power. Its reflection transforms the idea of profit-directed thinking. We give ourselves over to the primordial adequateness of ‘being’. The spring surfaces and starts to flow. The flow finds its channel automatically. And our lives gain meaning and we feel fulfilled.

**Self-examination**

What gives your life meaning?

Who are you? How do you see your identity? Who and what are you without this identity?

Examine what you project on to others. Where are you avoiding taking responsibility for yourself and placing it on the outside world?

What do you really want from life?

With whom do you want to share this?

Where do you want this?

Where, when and how do you mostly enjoy yourself?

Do you frequently think you are enjoying yourself while, in fact, you aren’t?

Do you regularly feel obliged to enjoy something?

Are you enjoying yourself now?

Which thoughts are limiting your enjoyment?

Where are they coming from?

What do you keep on doing against your will and in which situations?

Why do you do this?

Have you ever had a flash of insight?

Breathe deeply twenty times. What do you feel physically? And emotionally? What are your thoughts?
Clearing up

Primal Spirit

The primal spirit of the universe is our elixir of life. It is; it flows and pulsates through us and around us, via our breath. It is the power behind the growth and blossoming of trees and flowers. It is the power which makes the moon influence the tides. It is the power flowing through every interaction. Everything in existence is saturated with it. Every action is fed by it. It manifests itself in passion, decisiveness and creativity, and as enthusiasm in undertaking the ‘adventure’ of life. It is also pure love with all its derivatives, such as tenderness, warmth and kindness. And what are we going to do with it? Are we going to think about it and try to channel it, or are we going to follow its momentum? Will we dare to take risks, or want to play it safe? What part does adventure have in our lives?

Raw primal power has nothing to do with being rough and ready. Sometimes, when it is suppressed or curtailed, it comes out in a blunt, brash way, contaminating us and the atmosphere around us. Then it makes us afraid, and causes conflict, violence and adversity. Then it is like a drowning man, clutching at every straw, unpredictable in its moves. Suppressed primal power explodes, using every available channel to discharge, via emotional or sexual outbursts, or via heart attacks and cancerous tumours which overcome us. It becomes too much in too small a space. What once provided nourishment and pleasure, now brings destruction in its wake.

As we know by now, an attentive, loving attitude towards what is happening in ourselves, gives us the space to experience and examine the ways in which we try to curb and suppress the primal spirit, and to look at the kinds of clandestine routes it takes to discharge itself with the resulting effect this has on us. By recognizing and acknowledging how we curb primal power, and what this does to us, we change. Although we still drawn to old patterns, our new-born behaviour has such positive effects that we increasingly incline towards it. In this way we clear up the rubble which was obstructing the primal spirit’s flow and give it the space to freely give, in all its purity, the energy to surmount our fears and our defensive patterns. As a consequence, we regain contact with our true nature and its ensuing flow.

Chatter in our heads

Chatter in our heads retards the flow of primal spirit. We spend years subjected to fixed ideas about who we and others are, or should be, and about what should be done. The constant chatter in our heads is often more active and louder than the actual words we exchange with others. It is coloured by our earliest relationships to those close to us. The people who nurtured us when we were little, saw- but often refused to see- us in our pure form. They created their own image of us, which perhaps would have no relevance at all to reality. And then, in order to feel safe with them, we began to confirm the false image they had of us.

Conflicting loyalties
That could mean that we took on responsibility at an early age, trying to be loyal to different family members, which would sometimes lead to a conflict of loyalties. This would have been confusing then and could still be confusing now.

If one parent you loved demanded that you take sides against the other parent whom you loved just as much, or who gave you the greatest sense of security, you would have been hopelessly caught in the middle. One thing is sure, whenever you have had to take sides later in life, you would have felt the same anxiety as then.

**Fighting for love**

A lack of love in childhood, and its replacement, for instance, with a sense of duty, will also make a child feel insecure. What happens in one’s early years continues to play a role in one’s further life. In this case, instead of an open and adventurous attitude towards life, a strategy would be developed, to try to make up for the lack of love. Sooner or later the painful realization emerges that this can never work out. There are endless variations of conditioning which imply saying farewell to primal spirit.

One example is to put others’ needs first, hoping to get the same back, then feeling bad when nothing is returned, becoming angry and upset, longing for love, warmth and understanding from the outside world, which fail to arrive. Even if they are there, they are not recognized as such, or they give rise to mistrust, or even fear. Certainly what can be felt is a general sense of uneasiness.

Everything we have gone through, the intentions we had, or what we should have done, haunts our thoughts continuously. We have become used to it. It has become a habit. We fail to acknowledge that it is impeding real contact, not to mention intimacy, with ourselves or those close to us. We live and communicate in a fashion, but not as our true selves. No real communication is possible, just nonsense talk which continues to chatter on in our heads.

To live as your true self implies bringing your real qualities into action whenever necessary. They could include curiosity, concentration, clarity of thought and compassion. They may be elicited by your experiences, such as when you feel an intense emotion welling up, out of proportion to the incident that provoked it, as is your response.

**Rejection**

Imagine someone saying ‘No’ to your invitation to come for a meal, and feeling repulsed. You try not to show it, but as a consequence you become cool and reserved. What is happening here? ‘No’, is not necessarily a rejection. Someone says ‘no’ for the simple reason that he or she is unable, or too tired, and not a priori because he rejects you. If you feel rejected by a no like this, then you are not reacting as an adult, but as the child who, for example, was made to feel left out at school. Perhaps you were ashamed of your unpopularity, trying to push it aside, or pretending that it left you cold. Bracing yourself, opting out, stiffening, building a wall around yourself; you continue to react in the same way every time you feel embarrassed. If you are unaware of this, every ‘no’ you hear, throughout your further life, will bring these automatic, and uncontrolled, reflexes into action. By exploring this, you stand a good chance of understanding why your eyes glaze over and how you obstinately stick your nose in the air to hide your shame. How arrogant that looks! In fact, you are the one with the attitude who is rejecting the situation and other people. And you are doing this to protect yourself against welling emotion and your efforts are back-firing. It becomes increasingly painful. You are caught in a negative spiral in which you are continually building up more defence-mechanisms.
It may feel like being in a rut, unable to escape. Perhaps then the memory will surface: of being at school, feeling excluded. And then you might feel compassion for that child in you who felt left out and so ashamed. This is where things start to change. Tears, grief and compassion from your tender heart for that little girl who lives on within you. You might, of course, try to bottle it up again but this is not recommended; it could make you ill.

**Betrayal**

If we reach the point when something changes in our familiar mental chatter, it is not yet time to shout ‘Hallelujah!’ We may feel lost for a while. We could lose our foothold, falling into a pit where we feel ourselves sinking, instead of experiencing the space and peace through which primal spirit can freely flow. We have lost our inner company- our ‘parents’. The strange thing is we think we have lost ourselves. We cannot fill the void quickly enough- with anything and everything. That constitutes a gross betrayal of ourselves. We are forgetting ourselves, deserting our true selves! We are restraining the primal power which, like a cornered rat, will act unpredictably. The chatter in our heads begins anew, driving us up the wall.

**What’s the matter?**

Anita, 39 years old, is only too aware of how fortunate she is. She has a good relationship, two little children and a ‘fun’ part-time job. But one problem remains:

‘I don’t get it. Everything’s fine in my life, isn’t it? But almost every night I wake up and it’s as if a motor starts up. I can’t stop my thoughts. It’s not as if I’m thinking about irritating things. It just reels on super-fast. Everything and nothing, all mixed up. Extremely associative. At first I had no idea of what was spooking around in my head.

I lie there, getting worked up because I can’t sleep, and that means I can forget about going to sleep entirely.

Sleeping has become a project nowadays. It makes me nervous. I’m afraid to go to bed. I’ve tried everything. Counting sheep; up to a hundred, and then back. That helped a couple of times. A lot of other things as well. I try everything. No TV in the evenings; no computer after 7 pm; warm milk with Vata tea; relaxation. Melatonine; Tryptophane. But they all only work a couple of times. I’m constantly trying to find new ways to override my brain activity.

What I can’t do is to breathe deeply more than a couple of times. Then my thoughts take over again and I forget my breathing. And actually, at such times, I can’t believe that deep breathing would help. My thoughts hold me captive, and they run away with me. I can’t keep a grip on them. Now I’m taking sleeping-pills. That isn’t the answer either. Actually I’m against using them. But I don’t see any other way for the moment.’

**Cosmic intelligence**

How can she change this? By simply not trying to change anything. Letting it be. And not identifying herself with it, either. Recognizing that brain activity- that mental noise, those uncontrolled thoughts- is a source of information that you can accept, experience and examine, instead of turning it into a problem that you have to solve. Nothing needs to be any different than it already is. Things happen and change. Let them happen. You do not have to make sure that they take place or change.

A cosmic intelligence exists, infinitely greater than your thoughts. This is an aspect of primal power you can trust and allow to work for you. Take a break. Watch your thoughts pass by like a flock of
birds. Follow them in their flight and release any resentment of them being there. They look quite good, actually, don’t they? Why shouldn’t you like them? What would your life look like if it didn’t need any changes? Once you accept the activity of your brain, and let your thoughts fly by in a flock, you will no longer see yourself as a prisoner of those thoughts.

Agoraphobia

When the chatter ceases, there is space, the ideal place in which to rediscover ourselves. Unfortunately we do not always see this place as salutary, but more as a void, a bottomless pit in which we lose our identity. It can become so extreme that we feel afraid whenever we physically enter a large empty space; at sea, on a large town square, a quiet place or a tidy house. However bad it was, we miss what was familiar to us. Perhaps you can recollect such a situation, in which change has taken place. For example, after many years of working hard, you suddenly have nothing to do all day. Or if a relationship has come to an end, or the children have left home. Or a someone you loved has died. Or when you suddenly achieve what you have been striving for in your life.

To Anita happiness consists of an unknown space which used to be brimming with problems. The sense of fear this empty space evokes in her cannot touch her in the daytime, but at night it overcomes her all the more. Well, at least now she has something new to worry about!

May I be happy?

Sometimes being happy seems to be all wrong. There is so much suffering in the world. It just does not seem right to be happy. What have you done to deserve it? Or you undermine your happiness with the thought that it will not last; that you will get your share of suffering before long, too. And then you start to feel afraid.

It is a well-known phenomena that space created by the ending of a trusted or familiar, situation, will be replaced, rather than experienced for what it is. And the activity which stems from immediate compensation differs greatly from the kind arising from direct experience. Now the greatest challenge is to dare to enter this void and to face the fear involved and fully feel it, acknowledging it without reservations.

Starter-motor

To acknowledge and experience the fear, without reservations, is absolutely not the same as letting ourselves be carried away by it, to lose ourselves in it or feeling victimized. No. We just face up to the reality of the situation. We do not try to change anything. We accept, and allow ourselves to fully experience our emotional reality as it is in this moment of time, observing and examining it closely. And this is the ‘starter-motor’ for action. Our potential gets a chance. Our potential, which is a multi-dimensional, constantly expanding, inner domain of qualities and experiences.

The more aware we become, the more our awareness grows. The more independent we become in making decisions, the more guidance we receive from our circumstances, and the greater the help we can offer others, making us feel fulfilled instead of fearful. Illusions and ideas about reality yield to personal experience. Our contact with those around us becomes more authentic, more intimate.

Once we have made this step, we never want to lose the sensation, even though we regularly get drawn back into old behaviour patterns, and sadly enough let ourselves fall back into our old conditioning. When that happens, all hell breaks loose again in our minds. Well, that is as it is. No use being judgemental about it. We just stand still and look at what is going on. To experience what is happening within ourselves, in relation to both our thoughts and emotions, and to observe it objectively, is, after all, what motivates change.
Victim or new élan?

Felix is 56 years old. Having undergone a severe crisis he has reached the state of ‘just being’ through which he learnt to be his own loving, attentive parent. This gave him a nourishing basis to be able to feel what he feels and to think what he thinks. And then things start to change. His life takes a new direction. “I have been a rather unhappy person for a long time. When I was a small child there was a lack of love because my mother was completely taken up by her business. My father left her. I started to work hard, too, and received all kinds of diplomas. After two unhappy marriages I was left destitute. I had put everything on my second wife’s name, and she took advantage of the situation.

Most of my married life was spent just working. Both my wives and my children lived well on what I earned. Personally, I was not much use to them, of course. I haven’t seen my children for eight years now, my mother for three and my sister for five years. They won’t miss me. I landed in a bad burn-out; went back to work too soon. That was the beginning of the end. It felt as if there was no reason to go on living.

During one of my sleepless nights, while I lay staring at the ceiling, my thoughts stopped milling around and in their place came an unmistakable sensation of pain. I could no longer resist it. I gave up. It surged through my whole body. I felt as if I was sinking, and let myself go under. I didn’t resist. I thought I was dying.”

Hankering

“...And then, all of a sudden, the pain changed into a different sort of pain, more a hankering for a warm embrace, to be taken into someone’s arms. I felt myself to be small and vulnerable. I heard myself groaning. My longing felt like a prison, which I couldn’t escape without outside help. I felt powerless.” I realized that I have always contrived to avoid this sensation. I usually found some way of venting my feelings. By visiting prostitutes, for example, or by working such long hours that I collapsed. I smoked like a chimney and drank heavily. There had always been something ominous looming in the background.

Now I could let myself be that little boy whose parents were not there for him. I realized what a lack of warmth and affection I had suffered in my childhood. My mother did love me, for sure. But she was totally preoccupied with her work. She was struggling to keep her head above water. I can’t blame her. All the same, it’s the reason I’ve always been searching for warmth and attention from others, expecting them to give what I wasn’t giving. I went on working, just like my mother before me. In a flash I see the scenario of my whole life before me.

Cleared space

An intense longing overcame me. It brought, however, a feeling more like joy than grief. I couldn’t pin it down. I had an uncontrollable urge to move. I danced to music from the radio, which I hadn’t switched off for days. I let the music guide me. I felt a bit crazy. But I didn’t care. I felt free. From that moment on I began to get into contact with deeper needs in myself than eating, drinking, sex, alcohol and sleeping. I realized that I was the one who could bring about change. That I didn’t have to remain the victim of my parents’ behaviour. A world opened for me that I had never thought existed.

I have recently met a couple of people with whom I had completely different conversations than ever before in my life. I have contacted something in myself which I never imagined existed. At this very moment I’m aware of how nice the spring sunshine feels on my skin. It makes me feel cared-
for. It moves me. Funny, isn’t it, for such an old guy? I feel neat and tidy inside myself, as if something messy has gone.”

**True needs**

In my opinion it cannot be repeated often enough that it is absolutely not a question of taking the initiative to rid yourself of something or to change it. Neither do we have free rein to give expression to everything that comes up in us, or to get bogged-down in indolence. If we start identifying with the process, or allow our lives to be determined by it, we are putting ourselves in the position of an unguided missile, or the spineless victim for whose suffering we frequently blame others. There is no doubt it is all about awareness. Our awareness changes through it, becoming awareness of *being*. We see our strategies and old patterns of behaviour, to give ourselves the illusion of security, with increasing clarity, and acknowledge our true needs. We also realize the way in which we have based or interpreted our needs on what has been forced on us. For example, to interpret the need to be free as the need for a vacation, incited by TV commercials, or to interpret the need for relaxation as the need for a drink, or the need for transformation as the need for a change of partners.

**From survival to living seems dead scary**

Our true needs are related with the deep desire to live as we really are, and to follow our own truth. To live like spring water which wells to the surface and then spills over into the best possible channels. Going with the flow of our lives is a natural, effective movement which does not question where it is going. It *is* and it is active, a natural creative process leading to results; product and creation follow.

It is almost too simple to grasp, all too easy to overlook. This is often the only obstacle to discovering it, leading us to fall back unconsciously into old behavioural patterns. It evokes resistance in our understanding, too. After all, we are not used to unconditionally ‘being’. We are used to ‘doing’. That is our survival strategy. Just being seems like doing nothing, being lazy. That is why simply ‘being’ evokes so much resistance. We refuse to accept that from just being, every true action begins. Freeing ourselves from our conditioned behaviour, our fear of doing nothing, feels like dying. Put simply: Life feels like death, is dead scary. And survival feels safe.

**Automatic pilot**

Before you realize you are back on the automatic pilot system and you are your old familiar self once more, that self who allays their fears by maintaining control over everything and manipulating or by being obsequious or trying to impress others (*image management*). There are so many possible manifestations: wanting to be right, worrying instead of taking care of things, being opinionated, criticising instead of just observing, staring into nothingness, turning in circles again; or not eating or drinking healthily. Once again you could feel guilty and still continue to do all the dirty work or make sure that others feel guilty so that they will fill your emptiness for you; or feeling ashamed of your vulnerability and longings, trying to conceal them. Then there is someone who manipulates to get their way, who expects others to do what he wants and becomes angry if this fails, or someone who never feels good enough and tries everything to be accepted. The addictive worrier, the fixer, the victim, the procrastinator, the rescuer, the executioner, the ‘just act a bit normal, won’t you’ type, and so on.

Before you realize it you will have worn yourself out again through your strategic attitude to life, since it is often necessary to ‘die a thousand-and-one deaths’ just in order to live.

**Who am I?**
If we live as who we think we are, or as who we should be, we can never live as the unique embodiment of ‘being’, with all its attributes and we will never achieve those things which are of essential importance to us. As, for example, when we interpret our needs, instead of feeling them straightaway. Interpretation of our needs often occurs through the veil of fear, insecurity and its derivatives, like greed. Who is doing the interpreting at such times? Whose voices are we identifying as our own?

The inner voices which allay our fears and insecurities give priority to the need for safety and make us pro-active and goal-oriented to cover ourselves. We have many obligations but few liberties. Deadlines threaten us constantly. We can get so worked-up about everything that we cannot do anything anymore. And then we find ourselves lazy. How cruel and lacking in compassion this is, and how far we have wandered away from our true selves.

**Sub-personalities**

In this way our personality, which is made up of all sorts of sub-personalities, has become an invocation to allay our fears. Sub-personalities, like a manipulator, a critic, a pusher and a pleaser, have become part of us, to protect us from supposed danger. They whisper techniques to avoid alleged danger. Sometimes they represent our parents, and then at other times, our reaction towards them, but never our true selves, even though we often identify with these sub-personalities. One day with the inner pusher, the next with the critic and then with the hurt child within. We think that is who we are in that moment. But one minute it is a parent-figure who wields power over us, and the next it is his victim, the subordinate child. In this kind of identification-process, we are actively trying to get something we have been denied. We want things to be different than they are, and will do anything to change them.

Therefore life poses a threat to our sub-personalities. They constantly think about all the risks we are taking, and how to restrict them to the minimum. And they think about everything we are missing out on, and should have, and how we could manage to get it. They are so busy with this that our development into maturity and self-reliance becomes hindered. Every time we make a step forwards they will do everything possible to quickly make us forget it. And there we are, one person, acting as a strict parent or a hurt, persecuted little child who gets the short end of the stick from time to time. Who we really are is no longer visible. And it is not to throw doubt on the usefulness of these sub-personalities, but rather on our identification with them. These put us on the wrong track. When we are behind the steering-wheel on a motorway it is essential that we have our controlling selves foremost and that our playful child does not have the upper hand.

The point is that our true selves are able to mobilize, resulting in us making clearer choices in life. Then we are no longer in thrall to our sub-personalities. Our lives are our own.

**Whose victim?**

Paul, 27 years old, a designer, comes from a rather conservative family. He sleeps with men and feels guilty about this with his family. That has repercussions on his sexuality, and he also suffers from lack of concentration. There is a distraught look in his eyes, and he is rather shaky on his legs. His feet and knees are ice-cold, bluish in colour. They look as if the life has been drained from them. He talks quickly and without hesitation; it is the only way he can ventilate his stored energy.

The chatter in Paul’s head is primarily being manipulated by an extremely dominant sub-personality, his inner perfectionist, who makes impossible demands on him. His inner critic then bombards Paul with cutting remarks like: ‘You idiot, you’re a useless good-for-nothing.’ In his mind he often hears people from his early years saying things like this.
Paul is in a rut. He sleeps badly and suffers nervous breakdowns. He lives on tranquillizers. He often identifies with the victim who constantly reiterates: ‘I can’t. I can’t anymore. I’ve had it. I’m losing it.’ His creativity has dried up. And then his partner takes off. Suddenly he hears a voice telling him: ‘Give it up, man. You’re just turning in circles. You’ve tried all there is.’ There is no way out.

He breaks down completely. A shrill angst takes over. Teeth chattering, he suddenly bursts into tears. The sound of a small child crying. It says: ‘I’m so frightened.’

Home at last

All of a sudden an old wise man stands up within him, saying: ‘Unless you become as little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.’ He understands it as: ‘Pay more attention to your inner child.’ The strict parental voices become quieter for a while afterwards. He feels how the child in him could bring back his creativity.

After a period of trial and error, of pain and grief, a sudden new vitality and zest took over which drove the inner voices even further away, loosening their grip on him. When he was unable to see a way out, this was his escape. He surrendered to what was happening in him. He felt it, looked at it and discovered himself.

Hidden qualities

The qualities of our true self, in which primal spirit is manifest, may remain hidden from our consciousness, but they could also be underdeveloped, like muscles which have never been used. Our ability to persevere could be underdeveloped if we were continually confronted with new situations as children, making continuity something unfamiliar. In the same way, assertiveness and strength could be underdeveloped by experiencing a repressive and/or violent youth. Children with parents who give no clear boundaries can lack confidence, but so can those of parents who make too many rules and regulations. These can cause children to react with fear when risks are involved, limiting the development of their ability to take decisive action. A childhood lacking empathy, can overshadow someone’s capacity to empathize.

We all have this kind of reoccurring themes in our lives. They form a part of our life stories and lie on the surface of our true selves, covering them up. By observing this surface layer, and examining it, more and more qualities come free for us to make use of, and to develop further. Then it becomes clear that we are not only sensual, warm, tender, patient, radiant and friendly beings, but also powerful, self-confident, intelligent and goal-oriented ones. And that when we need a specific quality, we are able to effectively manifest it, exactly at the right moment.

Self-examination

With which sub-personalities and/or inner voices do you mostly identify?

What do they tell you?

In which situations do they manifest themselves?

How do they influence your life and your relationship with the world?

What effect does this have on your inner child?
What kind of chatter do you have in your head at the moment?

What qualities are freely available to you? How do you use them?

Are you allowed to be happy? Or are you deterred by inner and outer forces? How do you deal with this?

Do you long to feel pure primal spirit? Or does it frighten you?

What do you imagine when you think of primal spirit?

What would your life be like if you had full access to primal spirit?

Now breathe deeply twenty times. What do you feel physically? What do you feel emotionally? What are your thoughts?

Chapter 7

The Primordial Mother and Father

Help

All the help we need to rediscover ourselves, to find out who we really are, is present in the universe and therefore in ourselves, as an aspect of primal spirit. We can visualize it as an ‘invisible hand’, or as a driving force. In various traditions an aspect of this driving force is called ‘universal will’. This is the masculine component of primal power. The more we attune to it, the more it manifests itself and the more we dare to trust it.

Sometimes, years after a terrible event in our lives, we come to understand that a profound wisdom was behind it, giving us a unique opportunity to learn.

Deeper wisdom

Jolanda, a 48-year-old teacher, was married and had two children from a previous marriage. They had left home. She bullied herself and others, making sure that she had the reins in hand, with everything under control. She was an excellent piano player, a good painter, knew all about alternative therapy, and was an avid reader. She talked rapidly, nervously. When her coach asked her why she was looking for help she replied: ‘ I’m often afraid and depressed. A shrew who maltreats her children.’ She used the coaching sessions to prove nothing had changed.
Then she had a serious accident. Her car crashed into the barrier off the motorway and was a total loss. She was badly injured. Afterwards, while she was recovering consciousness in hospital, she already realized that her life would never be the same. She had relinquished control at last, forced by circumstances. She now says: ‘If I could choose between my old and my new self, I’d always choose for myself as I am now, even though I’m partially paralysed.’

**Universal will**

Universal will is part of primal spirit. It could also be called the ‘cosmic will’ that is active in us. It encourages us to engage in action, to unravel our true selves from their conditioning. Our personal will frequently forms an obstruction to this process, unless it is attuned to the universal will. It is our own choice whether to do this or not. But if we do not, then we suffer. The universal will is a good coach for those willing to listen and learn from it. Life itself is the training, and our interaction with our environment the university.

We experience our personal will as being self-contained. Universal will is more like a driving force. As we examine ourselves more profoundly and have more contact with universal will and begin to trust it, we experience a sense of space and expansion, without losing ourselves in it. We feel led by something greater than our personal will. In that sense, destiny is universal will in action, carrying us towards the truth of our inner experience and of our relationship with the outside world. To resist it leads to suffering. Universal will can be an important source of inspiration for our thoughts. It creates a lucid mind. Through it we are able to see how much energy we waste in maintaining illusions and beliefs about ourselves and others, and how we suffer without this perception.

**To Optimise**

Universal will has the power to optimise. The more contact we have with it, the more it helps us to be honest with ourselves and to make a sincere analysis. Our hearts react to its allure. It could be compared to the attraction between male and female. Our heart draws us to it and this evokes a sense of reality that feels like love. We begin to see the world as it really is, acknowledging that it is not made up solely of love and support. Nevertheless, we will still experience it as love if we accept reality for what it is.

Our deepest longing and the will to strip ourselves bare, to remove all the layers of conditioning, are not motivated by our personal will, but by their resonance with the universal will. We see this reflected in the whole of human history. It was the universal will which transported us from a primitive, not self-reflective, collective unawareness, to the self-reflective, individual awareness, subsequently leading us to self-reflective awareness of unity and the experience of unity of opposites. And that is the mystical experience from which surrender and trust are born.

**Strength to maintain and strength to sustain**

Universal will brings us into direct contact with the male pole of primal power. This is a quality possessed by every human being. It feels different from the female pole, but also gives us a sense of safe-being, of being able to relax.

Universal will can be compared to the hardness of our bones, while the female quality, also present in each one of us, is more comparable to our tender flesh. Universal will mirrors itself in the father-figure, which plays an important role in a child’s life from its second year on. The father-figure is
the motor which activates the universal will. He is the one who encourages and strengthens this quality in the child. The more he does this, the more the child will imitate him in this. However, if the father-figure is someone weak who does not embody this quality, and therefore cannot strengthen it in the child, a different perspective will be passed on. The child will not dare to trust it and could even come to see universal will as something frightening. A classic example of this distorted view of conceiving the universal will as hard, cold and ruthless: God as the severe father, the Almighty, the Judgement of the Lord. This image of masculinity is hard, cold and merciless.

In the same way, the female qualities of receptivity and gentleness have been degraded, causing women and femininity to represent unpredictable emotionality, passivity and weakness.

Together the male and female poles provide a field of tension necessary for the creative process, a fertile base for further growth and blossoming. The essence of female quality in a human being is ‘universal love’. This is the supporting foundation, strength in *maintenance*. The essence of male quality is ‘universal will’, which is more active support, strength in *sustenance*. Aspects of this are: effectiveness, tenacity and concentration.

**Primordial Mother**

Our awareness of this male and female pole within us lies fallow until we begin to try to maintain and sustain ourselves *unconditionally*. One way of doing this is to look closely into the powerful expression of the archetypes in us, passed on for generation after generation. In this case they will be the Primordial Mother and Father, in other cultures the Mother Goddess and the Patriarch, and the Madonna and God the Father in the Christian tradition.

The primordial mother offers her lap. She accepts us unconditionally, which does not mean she will tolerate that which is not sound in us. She helps us look attentively at ourselves and to register what is going on in us.

**Primordial Father**

The primordial father stimulates the courage and tenacity in us (which does not mean driving yourself to the limit) to enter into unknown adventure, into a process of re-parenting. Then we are no longer parents who are constantly monitoring ourselves, supervising our every action, manipulating and criticising. No, we are then the parents for ourselves who make us feel completely safe and sound. At that point change starts to happen, precipitating us back to our true selves. Nothing stands in the way anymore. The main problem is that we forget this so quickly, that it gets lost in our subconscious and that we fail to realize how badly we are treating ourselves. The primordial mother and father are soon pushed aside by the parents, or others from our early youth, who had sway over us, those of flesh and blood who have become our inner voices, our personal sub-personas.

**Seductive or acting tough**

Jeannette and Gina are both young women who have had a distorted image of male and female role-models in their youth. They lacked adequate love and attention. Their mother was hard and distant, manipulating those around her to do her will. The two sisters have learnt to understand femininity as being manipulative. This made them feel insecure and they are now intent on finding their own security in the men around them. Knowing that their father was not there for them they looked to Uncle George. He showed interest in the beautiful Jeanette, but not in the much less attractive Gina. Therefore Gina tried to win attention from her Uncle George through success in sport and at school. But this failed to impress him. Then Gina felt really left out. Meanwhile the beautiful Jeanette had
become increasingly aware of her alluring body and of how she could use it to get attention. Without feeling sexual, she started to act seductively. And the more seductive she acted, the more tough her sister Gina became, and the better her results were at school. Through them she attracted the attention of her teachers. She worshipped whoever paid her the most attention.

Their different strategies, even though they seemed to work, left them with a sense of emptiness. They lacked any contact with supportive female maintenance and male sustenance in their childhood and adolescent years. Their only role-model was their mother, who manipulated. They adopted this manipulative character trait by either acting seductively or tough. The urge to contact their true selves is the only driving force which would bring Jeanette and Gina to the point of giving up the power they have over the masculine world, in order to experience themselves as women. They have had no example of natural femininity in their lives.

What next? There is a great chance that Jeanette and Gina would remain suspended in the web of their adopted past strategies until they were unable to escape, because they have, for instance, become too set in their ways, too old for change. Their lives would then have been a succession of frustrations, since they felt no contact with their essential selves. If they did feel something, they will get over it quickly, assaulted anew by their strategies of seducing or being successful. Their bodies would gradually adopt the build which matched their attitudes to life.

Other possibilities

There is also a chance that they come to look further than their conditioning and feel pain instead of fleeing into the familiar strategy. A woman coach who can serve as a role-model for the primordial mother, therefore making a mother-daughter transfer possible, could show them alternative ways of coping with themselves. Women friends could also fulfil their longing for affection and tenderness for a while. In fact, Jeanette learnt to genuinely give herself love through this kind of representative relationship with a girlfriend, instead of using her seductive tricks. One minute she was the daughter and her friend the mother, the next vice-versa. For her it seemed like a dance of energies.

Woman-to-woman relationships

In fact, many relationships are parent-child relationships. True friendship only occurs when the other no longer has to satisfy expectations. That is possible between two real adults. And when are we really adults? When we cherish our inner child and give it what it needs, ourselves, no longer expecting it from another. Of course, we may reach out to another person, to ask if they would be willing to give our inner child some attention. When a woman surrenders to the erotic call of another woman, there is a good chance that she will transform her negative mother-daughter image and its effect on her life into a beautiful woman-to-woman relationship which is supportive to one another’s development.

Breasts

If it was in infancy that the mother-daughter relationship became disturbed for these women, breasts will play an important part in their eroticism. By giving themselves over to erotic exploration they can experience deep and totally satisfying orgasms. Being a woman would now signify a source of pleasure, lust and satisfaction.

The same kind of thing happens with some men, too. Their first contact with their mother is by looking at and stroking her breasts. Porno photos of women with large breasts can also have a healing function. The breasts must be big, looking from the perspective of a baby, who identifies ‘mother’ with them. The baby feels at one with the breast at which it nurses.
However, others have a marked distaste for breasts because, for instance, they associate mother’s breast with dissatisfaction and fear. Men who are rather fixated by breasts and have the opportunity to live out their fixation also heal what was disturbed in their infancy.

**Lover**

Bas was always like a little boy sucking at her breasts, Barbara recounts. He thought he was rather a good lover and was surprised at Barbara’s objections. Until he realised that he just felt like a little kid from time to time and then was not a good lover.

One evening he came home exhausted and asked Barbara if she would just be a cuddly mummy for him. He was acknowledging the little boy in himself and not projecting it ahead in time, as the so-called lover. In this way he was also present as his adult self who made a straightforward request to Barbara. Now she did not mind at all and lovingly complied. Once Bas had felt cherished on this level, things started to change. Barbara now felt more confident in expressing her own little child, too. Afterwards they both felt very adult and had wonderful sex together.

**The partner’s role**

It all comes down to the fact that any change is reliant upon our own response. We are our own ministering angels, although others can also play a role. Sometimes they are the focus of the stories of our youth, and with them we try to acquire whatever we missed as children. They can also be the inspiring factor in rediscovering ourselves and in relinquishing our obsessions. In that sense partners are each other’s therapists, or teachers, and together form a school for life’s lessons. In this way they are taking a step towards unconditional human love and therefore opening themselves for the infinite, all-encompassing, universal love. Within this universal will is operational. The challenge of life.

Marital fidelity then becomes a choice instead of a self-evident contract.

**No appetite for sex**

All at once it can happen that you lose your appetite for sex for quite a while. There can be countless reasons for this. An important one is a loveless self-image, through which your sense of self-worth is jeopardised. Or you have a certain image of how you should look and how sex should be and are critical about the way it is. You could try finding the root of the problem and solving it. But if that fails, sex becomes continually more problematic, especially if your partner still wants it and strongly insists on it. Sex becomes obligatory and that puts enormous pressure on you. If both partners are perfectionists, it also has to be perfect and it is vital for you both to experience an orgasm. All too soon sex turns into a project, like sleep can also become a project. Some couples discuss it endlessly with one another, which is really the beginning of the end. Sex is beyond words.

**Not making mountains out of molehills**

Try just to accept the fact that you do not feel like having sex, and can acknowledge that your partner does feel like it. And do not be dramatic about it, just accept things as they are; adopting a spirit of playfulness, and act as if there was nothing amiss. ‘Fake it until you make it’, works if you keep an open heart, not allowing angry thoughts and frustrations to get the upper hand. *Fake* is not really the right word. You just let yourself be carried along by the other’s movements, without trying to suppress your (negative) feelings. This will often result in a pleasant surprise.

So if your partner starts making love to you and you think: ‘Oh, no! Not again!’ , then grab the chance to go with their flow, as it were, and to discover something new, trying a different
approach. If you cut it short without giving it a chance, the game is soon over. Then you will probably go off searching for help in the outside world, while all the help you need is present in yourself. Not feeling like doing something often means you feel like doing something else. It is up to you to find out what that is.

**Fantasizing**

You could also conjure up fantasies of everything you would really like. You could imagine that your desires stealthily enter your partner’s mind and that he or she responds by carrying out your wishes. You could also make concrete suggestions to him/her. But it is also possible that you get angry at your partner, who always seems to be lying in wait for you, ready to pounce.

At times like this you could, for instance, imagine hundreds of horses breaking loose and galloping wildly off in your partner’s direction. The force of their charge carries your rage along. You are one of the horses. Or you could take the reins as the dashing horseman or woman of a fiery stallion, or you could become as playful as a puppy. Ask for help from the primordial mother and father in yourself, to let you play like a child again, and not to feel that you always have to be the perfect lover. You are the perfect lover already, only not on demand. The main aim is to become aware of your own potential and desires, not preoccupying yourself with the impossible or cutting short your partner’s wishes. Then it turns into a game, a dance of energies.

**Sex as project**

Elisabeth is a radiant, lively and attractive woman. She is married to Evert, an equally lively and good-looking man. They are crazy about each other. However, since their marriage Elisabeth no longer feels like having sex, while before they married she could never get enough of it. It happened all of a sudden. The culprit is her conviction: ‘Now it’s serious. I’ve got to live up to my image of an adult woman. This is part of it. It’s my duty.’ She sees marriage as the end of childhood, that things have to get serious now. No more spontaneous impulses… No wonder she had lost her appetite for sex! And because it was meat and drink to Evert, he was getting desperate, and she could feel him constantly breathing down her neck. They had to do something about it, they both felt. They had made sex into a project, and in doing so, strangled the life out of it.

**Temple prostitute**

Luckily Elisabeth realises how she has been putting pressure on herself by finding that she should feel like sex. She comes up with something. She imagines that she is a temple prostitute and the divine energy is flowing through her while a man takes her on the altar. She imagines their juices mixing together and the man-woman antithesis flowing into oneness. At that moment she feels herself as the earth being impregnated by the heavens in a deep orgasm.

**Playful**

She giggled a bit when she told me about it. She is still a playful little girl with a rich fantasy world. That is her strength, but she had allowed it to be repeatedly assaulted by her conviction about her marital obligations. It is an on-going struggle for Elisabeth to give her lack of desire a place in herself in a way that Evert’s sexual advances are not checked or frustrated. Every time her thoughts take over and tell her it is her duty, instead of her playtime, when she is free to fantasize in the situation as it is. I hope that she will feel the maintaining and sustaining power of the primordial mother and father in herself, to guide her on her adventure, back to the source where primal power streams out of itself, to follow its own unpredictable path.
Being our own source of nutrition

The more we just are, without any preconceptions, the more receptive we become towards this state and long to continue in it. What would our lives look like without conditioning or preconceptions, without convictions about how we should be? Or about how others should be? Or about how our lives should be? Anyway, we would no longer treat people around us as if they were our parents who should fulfil our needs, the ones who should give us confidence, respect us, and love us. Nor treat others as those we are angry with, simply because they have failed to give us what we want, or those who are constantly on our backs and to whose piping we think we have to dance.

When we are in a state of unconditioned being, we are conscious of the contact with ourselves and our environment. We are not just a reactive element but are free, real and uninhibited. This creates a greater intimacy with ourselves, and harmony with our environment, possible. It engenders a natural sense of self-esteem, not one derived from the exterior world, like success, a career, standing, knowledge or intelligence. When necessary we are active, receptive, organized, creative and businesslike without having to think about it. We experience primal spirit and become our own primordial mother (love) and primordial father (strength) and their lively children who constitute our spontaneity, vitality, creativity and joy in life. As a matter of course we breathe freely, have a good circulation and feel good. We are our own source of healthy nutrition.

As a direct result of this, we automatically do what is best for ourselves, simply because it feels good, for example, like stopping smoking, drinking or eating sweets. We do it of our own free will, and not because we think we have to.

Homecoming

This is the way we are welcomed into the embrace of reality as it truly is. Feelings of isolation and loneliness vanish to make place for a sense of space, expansion, clarity, peace and presence in the here and now. No longer are we preoccupied with pleasing others, adapting ourselves, blindly walking in the same old routine. And if we do catch ourselves doing this again, we judge ourselves leniently. We are our own substrate, inextricably interwoven with the cosmic whole. We could also say that we have now become our own loving, attentive parent who is respectful towards us and is ever-present, never doing too much or too little, because we are living from the source. And from this everything flows in a natural way, in the best possible way. In other words, we are in the flow of life and that can never flow where there is no channel.

Just try it and trust it. The process will not be easy, and perhaps you are starting to think: ‘Come on, I know this now.’ Or maybe you still ask: ‘But how do I do that?’ Perhaps you are still unable to grasp what you have been reading. It is so simple that it is indeed easy to overlook because you have no idea of what just being means, or of what it entails. You might retort with: ‘What nonsense!’ However, that might be your inner inspector interfering. He or she wants everything to remain as it was and finds the concept of primal spirit far-fetched. But I sincerely hope, dear reader, that you will personally taste the benefits of just being and of everything that stems from it.

Self-examination

Have you ever experienced ‘universal will’, as described above? Does it give you confidence?

In which situations was that?

Do you live by your personal will, standards, values and concepts?
How do you see the female pole in yourself? What kind of personality traits do you associate with it? Are they desirable, or undesirable?

How do you see the male pole in yourself? What kind of personality traits do you associate with it? Are they desirable, or undesirable?

How do you utilize the male and female poles in your life? In which situations?

**Breathing variation.**

Now close your eyes and breathe deeply twenty times. Expand your stomach as you inhale. Imagine you are inhaling the colour blue and exhaling the colour green. With the colour green you drive away all your thoughts, emotions and prejudices and melt into nature’s colour green. You feel yourself becoming increasingly lighter. Now conjure up the image of a flower which is touched by dawn’s pink-orange glow. Imagine you are that flower and let yourself be kissed by the sunrise. Feel how you unfold and your heart opens to the sun.

What do you feel physically? How do you feel emotionally? What are your thoughts? Do you feel the male or the female pole more strongly now?

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Chapter 8

**Love of truth**

**Adjuratory thinking (Solemnly commanded thoughts)**

The solemn commanders of fear in us like to make use of our thoughts. A wide discrepancy often develops between thought and feeling, not to mention emotions like fear, anger, grief and infatuation which stem from feeling. When thought and feeling are not cooperating in a productive way, they cease to be of use to us and can only lead us further astray. Sometimes they resemble two different worlds. Feeling is flawless and direct. It says ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ or remains impartial and, in that sense, is a good guide. Our feeling works to refine our instinct.

It should be possible for thought and feeling to work together productively but unfortunately their joint ventures are seldom successful. That is because our thought process is specialised in setting up ingenious control systems which dominate our inner as well as our outer worlds, with the aim of increasing our security. It employs strategies to protect us from the results of our emotions and therefore takes over the reins, its domination resulting in the suppression of that spontaneous, uninhibited being we once were. This uninhibited self may occasionally pop up unexpectedly at moments when our control system is temporarily not functioning, for instance, in drunkenness. Then everything which has been suppressed comes out. That was the reason Gurdjieff got his students drunk with vodka, giving them strong coffee afterwards to enable them to analyse the outburst.
Distorted feeling

If our parents used a system of control, being over-protective and keeping us strictly within bounds to allay the fear evoked by their anxieties about us, we will probably have adopted a similar strategy in life. Then we may have become people who, like them, allay our fears through monitoring thought; at the same time trying to appease the desires of our parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, other relations and even ancestors. This would be an unconscious attempt to restore a harmony which had been out of balance for many successive generations. Our underlying motive is always to establish security, using any available means. We know no better. It is an automatic reflex.

Thought as the primary instrument to keep in control, and its accompanying strategies, character formations and build, are described in detail in my book *Freeing Yourself*. Throughout the ages, in endless variations, thought has been used in this way. It creates that exhausting chatter in our heads. We seldom realise that our discomfort is mainly due to this chatter. If we do realise it, we find an explanation for it, and so the chatter starts anew. In this way a sort of Baboesjka is created, the type of Russian doll which contains a smaller doll, that has an even smaller doll inside – a whole series of dolls that contain increasingly smaller dolls. If feeling can no longer find free expression in emotion, we will be locked up in the Baboesjka under enormous pressure. A most undesirable situation.

Many individuals escape by becoming depressed. The *compression* then appears to have been replaced by the opposite: *depression*. But has the pressure really gone? In reality we have blocked all feeling. As a drowning man clutches at any straw, sooner or later something will take an unexpected turn. Our bodies always warn us and are the best possible informants. Unfortunately, we seldom take their messages seriously, pushing them aside with some kind of explanation or chemical remedy.

Inner turmoil

Your true identity is then no longer visible, not to yourself nor to others. When you occasionally catch a glimpse of what is happening in yourself, and if it erupts, you may feel deeply ashamed of yourself afterwards. That gives you even more reason to cling like grim death to ways of concealing yourself under the veneer of your adopted behaviour. You just go on. But it weighs heavily on your conscience.

Some people take time off work, others continue until they collapse: with a burn-out, a heart attack or cancer. They stake everything on expelling any form of vulnerability. Because to them vulnerability is not an indication of sincerity, a spontaneous flow leading to empowerment, but of weakness. It makes them feel worthless and just fires them on to new ventures until they drop down dead.

Their commitment and devotion to duty often stem from an attempt to earn love, or failing that, recognition. The slightest feeling of exclusion means humiliation or rejection to them, the opposite of recognition and respect. Instead of allowing themselves to feel the pain this causes, they feel increasingly ashamed or guilty, because they have not lived up to expectations. To show an inkling of their inner turmoil would be the same to them as declaring total bankruptcy or, in some cases, equivalent to pronouncing their own death sentence.

Pressure and valves

The pressure has become an inner voice, operating as an extension of the pressure from the environment. You can see it already happening when children are learning to walk and well-meaning mothers shout enthusiastically: ‘Yes, that’s it! Come on, come on! Well done!’ This kind
of pressure leads to a certain degree of success in life, but then in a surrogate form of satisfaction such as success, recognition, money and status - if all goes well. It is something you never want to lose. And since you know of no other way to feel good, you allow this pressure to govern your life. And the flow of life becomes imprisoned in a reservoir.

Occasionally a trickle is allowed to escape in, for instance, sex. In this way sex becomes a sort of valve, serving to vent pent-up feelings, instead of fulfilling its true naturally-delightful creative function. If this goes on for twenty or thirty years of someone’s life, and it begins at an increasingly early age, the life-current will break through. Fuses will blow. Heart and cells will burst open under the force of the flow. We will disintegrate. Our physical form will disappear but the energy will live on. We will go back to the primal source.

Recognition, money and status are, of course, the goal. There is nothing wrong with hard-work A field of tension can hone rough edges, smoothing the way for greater insight. However the boss sees the result as the goal, instead of engaging the passion, sense of mission and creativity of his employees. It signals the beginning of the end- it can literally break you up.

Is it a real triumph when employees receive a bonus and a day or so off work? It keeps everyone’s spirits up but the pressure continues to mount.

When a result is planned beforehand, the creative potential becomes channelled and the creation or product will either be less than it could have been or a complete failure, squeezed out in a mood of desperation. This is an important aspect of today’s western civilization.

**Turning-point**

On arriving at a crossroad in our lives, often after some painful event, we are in a better position to see through our strategic attitudes to life and to opt for life instead of for survival. Love of truth becomes a more important motivation than simply striving for success. We want to know who we really are. The more we experience being our true selves, the greater our motivation to find out more. And through this we experience a new sensation of bliss. Deep insight and its physical manifestation is so much more fulfilling than the brief satisfaction brought about by a strategic attitude to life.

Everyone wants to be happy, but how we go about pursuing it makes a world of difference.

**Hidden treasure**

A strategic attitude to life with the aim to achieve happiness is sure to overshoot its mark. The treasure will remain hidden. Because this is just a calculating way of attempting to acquire something which is already there but invisible to you. And that is because you are busy with hopes and conditions such as: “If only I had a partner, other work, money, beauty…” or “If I do this, or that, I’ll be happy.” Happiness always seems to be somewhere else rather than in the here and now.

Having a partner, work or money does not necessarily lead to happiness, even though it can help. Neither does happiness depend on specific actions, although these can help. A sense of happiness is something we can enter at any given moment, in any given situation and under whatever kind of adverse circumstances. It is solely the quality of our commitment and unrelenting contact with ourselves which determines the quality of our lives. This is where the treasure is to be found. I described earlier the process of re-parenting via the primordial mother and father in us. If we omit this process, we will be neglecting an important aspect and enfeebling ourselves and our lives. We will also be weakening our sense of happiness, making the treasure-trove impossible.
**Trusting the flow of life**

Luckily the blueprint of our primal power is never completely lost. Everyone is goal-oriented, not with the kind of goal we consciously set but an inherent life-goal. As soon as an opening is made, the energy starts to flow. And we human beings are life-forms filled with this life-force. We breathe. And we do this without forethought or obligation. Even if we hold our breath, we cannot stop it escaping after a while. We breathe because we cannot do otherwise. Nor do we make a conscious approach to life. It comes to us and flows through us.

This is all about being true to one’s inner self and everything arising from it. ‘The flow of life goes its own way and finds a channel that it nourishes and fertilizes and leads to new creative potential.’ There is no limit. One thing leads to another. The pieces of the puzzle fall into place. Problems change into opportunities, instead of things that demand solutions. Nothing has to change, and yet everything changes - because things have been set in motion. The flow has started. A network of qualities are emerging to stimulate effective action. Very rarely do we trust this process. We are usually governed by fear and its commanding thoughts. (adjurators)

**Thought in service**

Things become sterile when our thoughts are not working for our feelings and vice-versa. The situation can be compared to that of a bad teacher who does not coach but dictates. A good teacher is a good servant. He does not harass the one he is ‘serving’ but gives him respect and encouragement, a firm basis on which to learn. Manipulating thought is not like this. It forces, pushes, criticises and compares. How can we make our thoughts into good servants, so that we can profit most from their quality, without feeling at the mercy of our emotions? In other words, how can we set up a good, democratic self-management? Self-management in which all the voices in us are heard without one taking control over us. Perhaps the answer is in becoming more efficient, that is, to just be with what there is and to give our whole, unlimited potential, just as water from a spring wells to the surface and streams further, creating its own channels on its way. It nourishes and fertilises its bed and flows together with other streams.

Obviously, power-obsessed dictatorship, with a couple of voices in us dominating, is ineffective. Some of our essential qualities, which can only function in freedom, are being suppressed. Successful (self-)management entails being your own substrate for creativity, with respect for everything which has already been created and with your full potential of thought and feeling, ready to perceive where there is stagnation and to free yourself from any ineffective conditioning. Included in our potential are our intuition, intelligence, clarity of mind, strength, concentration, ability to persuade, sensitivity, love, respect, gentleness and attentiveness, but also our ability to manipulate, criticise, provoke, please, compare, or to be wary and distrustful. When necessary we can draw on any one of these.

**Recording**

Martine is eighty years old. Today she is on her daily walk in the woods. Most days her husband Frans goes with her and they take the dog. They retired years ago and therefore have time enough. They have domestic help at home and Frans usually does the shopping and cooks. Martine’s main work is her painting and writing. Everything she experiences she records in a story, a drawing or a painting. Time and again she captures everyday reality. When she sees something beautiful she almost cannot wait until she can put it down on paper. And if there is not enough time for that she takes a photo instead.

This time she is alone on her walk. Frans and the dog are off somewhere else. She thinks how content she feels with her life. She feels safe with Frans. In her childhood she often felt lonely and
lost. From an early age she began drawing fairytale forests with elves and fairies and toadstool houses, or she wrote stories about them. In that way she created her own little world in which she felt safe. She still does the same, she now realizes. She always wants to put things down on paper and be a perfectionist. Therefore her thoughts are always in control of her creative potential.

**Breaking loose**

This insight sets her thinking, but now in a more constructive way. Perhaps she should draw something other than the old tree she has drawn so often and she could possibly leave that spider-web with raindrops for what it is, too. For the first time in her life she relaxes fully in complete awareness. She looks with different eyes at the tree and the spider web. She sniffs the tree, she touches it. She senses its essence. The tree seems to move gently. She breathes in the scent of the woods and feels the enchantment of birdsong and the rustle of fallen leaves. She experiences an unprecedented feeling of bliss. Someday she would paint the tree again but in a completely different way. It would be more vibrant, more fluid. It would no longer need to be so precise. Ironically enough, it would portray the tree much more effectively than all her previous attempts.

**Disgesting emotions**

When we are truly as open, vulnerable and as inquisitive as a child, a natural flow takes over and realizes our true potential. It is an automatic process, taking whichever channels are available. At last we are able to digest all those bundles of unassimilated experiences and free the deepest areas of ourselves. Then we can place ourselves in an objective reality. We embrace our experiences and open ourselves to them. The process from swallowing to tasting, chewing, absorbing, digesting and then releasing is a selective one - when we take in food we also excrete waste products. Everything that happens in our lives is an opportunity to discover the most profound truths. The way we interact with others, our way of life and our self-expression become the vehicle for the expression of our true self.

The more familiar we become with our true selves, the quicker we are to recognize moments of relapse. In the course of time we see immediately when we are letting ourselves down and draping our lives with security measures and adopting artificial ways. We find it indigestible and literally experience physical discomfort. Intestines react violently to emotions that have not had the chance to be digested. They start fermenting and rotting, with all the unpleasant consequences. However, the situation starts to improve as soon as we have acknowledged this process, fully absorbed, observed and investigated it. A thorough ‘clean-up’ begins, often accompanied by a greater awareness of what is good for us and the need to be more selective.

**Self-examination**

What is your basic attitude to life?

What do you consider necessary for your fulfilment in life?

What makes you happy?

In what kind of circumstances?

How important are other people and the situation in this?

Which kind of essential qualities have been cultivated in you? And which not?

How do you activate them?
What does being happy mean to you? Are you happy? Why or why not? What are the factors that determine your happiness?

What kind of debris that stood in the way of your happiness have you cleared in your life? What is still blocking your path to happiness?

Take twenty deep breaths once again. While you do this, inflate your stomach as if you are blowing up a tyre and then let it deflate completely. Pay attention to your legs and arms. This will give a sense of expansion in your body.

What do you feel now?

What were you thinking just a moment before? Can you foresee what you will be thinking in five minutes?

Try not to think about something awful.

Now breath deeply twenty times. What do you feel physically? What do you feel emotionally? What are you thinking?

Chapter 9

Physical challenge in life

Our divine nature

Our true selves are linked to the immeasurable dimensions of the universe via primal spirit. This flows through us, charges us, is discharged and crystallizes. We own the potential to lead a life in which we experience ourselves and the world as an expression of the divine.

When we experience and observe our breathing with full awareness we make contact with the divine. In Aramaic the word for ‘divine’ is ‘al’, or ‘el’. This also means ‘breath’, ‘life’ and ‘love’. It is primal spirit, our fundamental basis in life. It is ever-present and breathes through us, nourishes us and gives us life, time after time. And what do we do? We obstruct it daily hundreds of times. Every mean thought makes us hold our breath. There are hordes of people who breath superficially, solely from their chests or stomachs.

Breath

Our controlling thought-patterns, that is, our inner adjurators of fear, impel us to react by fighting, fleeing or freezing. All these reactions cause us to hold our breath. If our reflex is to fight, to take action, we will get ready to pounce, like animals do. Our reaction is similar when we flee to avoid any confrontation. And if we freeze, our breathing will become so superficial that it appears to have
stopped. We feel threatened and hold our breath. This results in our freedom and spontaneous life-flow coming to a halt and we become little more than robots, driven by unconscious ‘breath-taking’ motives. Our survival instinct is automatically activated. Our natural state of calm, (getting our breath back), in which life itself flows through us and action occurs of its own accord, changes into a prison and our bodies into armour.

The challenge in life is to just be, without feeling obliged to go somewhere or do something. Being is complete in itself and can satisfy our every need. It is not something somewhere else. Nor is it something we need to acquire. Absence of contact with this state of being means absence of contact with our true selves. And then other people cannot reach us either. As soon as we start breathing deeply, inhaling and exhaling twenty times from our stomachs, we will feel as if we are awakening from a long, deep sleep. It can happen spontaneously when we release a sigh or start to hyperventilate.

**Passing through fear**

At 26 Marjolijn was working as a social worker in a clinic for drug addicts. Before she was diagnosed with cancer she had been a rather bossy individual who wanted complete control and usually managed to get it, too. ‘When I was told that my breasts had to be removed I got really scared. I was dumb-founded. It was as if the ground had disappeared under me. I felt as if my life had ended and then I surrendered to it.

My fear suddenly transformed into a profound love of my breasts. In a fraction of a second my whole awareness had changed. I immediately decided not to concentrate on the cancer, but on my breasts. I asked for help from a power more potent than my own and I spontaneously began to breathe more deeply. It was as if a radiant glow started to spread through my breasts.’

**No more cancer**

‘A profound awareness of my body had been awakened in me. It has never left me since. I learned to pay attention to my body and not only to use it as a workhorse, an instrument enslaved to the iron rule I imposed on myself and those around me. I started to like my body and to find pleasure in life, instead of filling it with tasks that had to be done. My approach to others changed. I now took my lead from the existing situation, rather than trying to manipulate the outcome. The operation was minor one, leaving my breasts intact. Now, forty years later, I still have both my breasts and the cancer has never returned. I have become conscious of the way I breathe; aware of when I’m holding my breath and of the fact that, as soon as I start to breathe deeply again, my tension will disappear.’

**Bouts of aggression**

Veronica was a 32-year-old Swiss woman. She was unemployed and lived together with a man of the same age. She looked tense and apparently lacked self-confidence and a sense of fulfilment. She frequently fell prey to feelings of aggression to which she duly gave vent. After numerous visits to social workers and therapy groups she had acquired some understanding of self-awareness, but despite it all, her limited sense of self-worth had continued to influence her relationship with her boyfriend Jan. He was a hard-working, good-looking man who kept her in a dependent position, probably with the best of intentions. Although he had become quite frustrated with her bouts of aggression, he was doing his best to hide this from her.

One day he could not keep it to himself any longer and told her what he thought of her, in no uncertain terms. He declared that he had had enough of her aggressive outbursts. Up until then he
had tolerated them but now no more. She realized that, in her deeper consciousness, she had always been aware of his true feelings about her unbridled outbursts.

**Coping with the past**

Uncomfortable memories from the past now started to re-emerge, alive and kicking. Veronica felt just as mortified by her step-father’s cruelty and disparagement as she did when she was a little girl. She tried to waive the feeling aside but she had lost control over it. Hellish memories well up around her and the pain of the past overcame her once again.

All of a sudden something changed. The ugly memories dimmed and in their place she saw images of past mountain walks. She remembered how proud her mother had been that she could walk so well. Her sense of being a helpless victim transformed into a feeling of empowerment. She felt the strength of herself as a small child before her stepfather began inflicting his cruelty. In some strange Swiss dialect she uttered something that sounded like: ‘Ich bin gut wi’ch bin’. She repeated it over and over again. Her body started to tremble and then she burst out laughing. At last she had allowed herself to start breathing more deeply again. In the following months a dramatic change took place in her; unknown talents surfaced and she discovered a whole new self within herself. This radical transformation had turned her into a much more confident and attractive woman.

She had started the ball rolling…

**The natural rhythm of life**

Our natural life-rhythm is part of universal primal spirit, or life force. It is made up of waves and pulsations in continuous motion and subject to fluctuations. We charge and discharge ourselves via our breath. Inhalation charges; exhalation discharges. Expression of an emotion such as grief, anger or enthusiasm, is discharging. When we discharge too frequently, without recharging, we become exhausted. Our energy becomes unbalanced. The opposite can also happen, that is, we over-charge ourselves and forget to discharge. Then we suffer from stress and restlessness. Here too our energy is imbalanced.

We charge ourselves in a quiet, natural manner in moments of joy, like on receiving sudden insight. Possibly we can then begin to breathe more deeply, in a natural undulating motion of charging and discharging. Sometimes we discharge spontaneously with a deep sigh. The next wave might charge our emotion with grief until we discharge it through a fit of weeping. With each breath we take we are charging ourselves and when we release it, we are discharging ourselves.

**Disruption**

In this way our life becomes an open adventure, a sea of motion. Sometimes the sea is rough, sometimes calm; ever-changing, ever-lasting motion. Suppressed emotion give us a strained look. We are charged with energy which is being held back. Our facial expression and our posture betray us.

Our natural life-rhythm is also disturbed by the demands we make on ourselves. For example, being bent on winning in a certain sport will result in our ambition usurping the place of our pleasure in simply doing our best. An exciting contest is not consistent with a pent-up obsession to win. The latter lacks joy. The natural urge has been transformed into something forced, which frequently leads to sport injuries.

**Strong and supple foundations**
How does primal spirit manifest in our physical selves? One of the universal natural laws is that of gravity, the magnetism of the Earth that draws us to it. What is its effect? To keep us here. It supports us by pulling us into our bodies and allowing us to use our muscles and be active while feeling at home in our bodies. We walk on the Earth which accepts us unconditionally and draws us close. We have to allow ourselves the space to fully feel her. Due to the constant chatter in our heads it is often impossible. We are full to the brim and we feel this in our midriff. When things quieten down and we have the space to dare to experience our bodies, the spaciousness seems more like a gaping hole, often located around our midriff as well. It feels like a vacuum of inadequacy.

**Body-building**

Once we have found the courage to fully experience that empty space, the first thing we notice is a feeling of expansion in our pelvis. The pelvis streams full, not with a feeling of a solid mass but rather of a robust, supple and strong foundation. We are home. Our legs feel like an extension of our pelvis and we have more contact with them. Our knees and feet appear to have a completely different temperature to that of the rest of our body. Feel them with your hands; they have been badly neglected. When we are fully aware of our pelvis, legs and feet, we are acknowledging them as part of us. Therefore leg movement will be synchronised with our pelvis. On this firm foundation we are then able to support our torso, our stomach, midriff, heart and back. Arms and legs join to form a single unit of action. Our armpits provide support to our shoulders, our shoulders to our chest and our chest to our arms and legs, together forming a perfect potential of efficient movement. Above the torso we feel our throat and neck supporting our head.

**Body awareness**

Can you feel your head as an organ now?

Who or what is doing the feeling?

And your face, how does that feel?

Can you feel your eyes? Your nose? Your mouth? Your ears? Your chin? Do you still have contact with your feet?

We can experience our body’s effortless carrying-power, all its parts attuned. We are able to feel every cubic centimetre of it. By doing this we achieve a more balanced and natural posture, because we are in contact with the whole.

**Posture**

A person’s posture and their way of walking gives us revealing information about their state of mind. Our posture is an expression of ourselves. Standing upright and walking are not only reliant on our legs but on our body as a whole. Hundreds of muscles are activated just by walking.

For example, a person can walk in a depressed, maniacal, spastic, hysterical or masochistic way. A *depressed* walk reveals weakness in the muscles of the back. Vital impulses are missing. The head hangs forward and the face muscles are also slack.

A *maniacal* way of walking looks as if the person in question is being hunted and is making a desperate attempt to escape. The muscles in their back are extremely tense, under pressure from intense impulses.
A person who is misplaced in this world but still does their best to survive in it exhibits a \textit{spastic} walk. They look as if they are veering all over the place.

A \textit{hysterical} walk exhibits theatrical mannerisms. One of the distinguishing traits of hysteria is seduction using sex-appeal and the suppression of sexual need. Heart and genitals are experienced as separate. With their breasts thrust forwards and their buttocks pushed back, women are able to suggest sexuality, while in reality this is suppressed. This is because in that position the thighs are being pressed together and the genitals pulled backwards which creates a chronic tension in the thigh and pelvic muscles. These gradually become hard and stiff, instead of strong and flexible. Eventually the muscles will no longer be able to function as intended. Woman who frequently display themselves like this are blocking their orgasmic potential.

Hysteria manifests in men through a so-called relaxed, easy-going and slightly flirtatious pose, with something seductive in their look. They approach women as sexual objects. As soon as their heart opens, all sexual feeling leaves them. Both attitudes are based on attaining power over others.

A neck tilted forwards is also a sign of suppressed sexuality. It obstructs what Wilhelm Reich called ‘the orgiastic reflex’, in which the head is thrown backwards. The forward-tilted neck is also typical for people with a \textit{hankering} posture. This looks needy and questioning, the effect often reinforced by other traits such as a forwards-tilted pelvis and a mouth hanging half-open.

The silhouette of a person who has consistently and uncomplainingly taken on too much life will be of a head sunk between the shoulders and a sturdy, thickset body which is just as capable of going full out as stepping hard on the brake. A permanent air of harassment will be emanated. This is the \textit{masochistic} build, one of the various character and body formations which I have described in detail in my book \textit{Freeing Yourself}.

\textbf{Are you in your mind or in your body?}

Please remember not to let your inner critic, antagonist or perfectionist answer the following questions for you!

I am appealing here to your deepest self, your non-judgemental consciousness.

Do you see your body as a temple with many entrances, sacred places and exits, and where celebrations of life take place daily?

Or is your body more like a machine which you consider should always function well and into which you jettison all sorts of trash, as the mood takes you.

And when the machine is out of order, do you then call for help to get it repaired, to get it patched up and parts replaced?

Are you aware of what your body means to you?

Are you aware of your body all the time? Or do you have no contact with it except when it hurts, or you feel hot or cold, or when you experience pleasure?

And if you are aware of your body, are you aware of it as it really is?

Or is your awareness coloured by preconceived ideas about it?
What kind of ideas do you have about your body? Is it large, small, fat, thin, attractive, ugly, old, or young? That it is made up of organs, bones, joints and muscles covered with skin?

And how does your body feel in response to such ideas?

Are you a respectful inhabitant of this body which is always at your service?

Do you take care of this body which, as far as it can, is at your beck and call, day and night?

Do you give it everything it needs?

Do you give it the space to let primal spirit flow through it via, for instance, your breathing?

Are you conscious of how often you hold your breath?

Do you really feel your body, or do you just think about your body?

Are you paying attention to signals from your body?

**Life awareness: body awareness**

Perhaps you have failed to acknowledge the extent to which your body-awareness is linked to your thoughts. Have you ever looked closely at your thoughts when you felt heavy, slow, stiff or rickety? Or, on the other hand, when you felt light, free and in the flow of things. You probably think this is due to circumstances at a given moment. That is not true. The thoughts and ideas you entertain at a given moment about your current situation are the determining factor. Some people have everything they could wish for but still feel miserable while others feel happy despite the most oppressive circumstances. Pessimists or optimists? People who accept reality as it is consider it more as a new opportunity for experience and discovery, rather than as a problem. It is possible to register what you feel in your body, and the place you feel it, and to then examine it.

Which part, or parts, of your body tell you that you are relaxed?

Are you aware of your tension at times?

Where do you feel that tension most?

The majority of people only become aware of tension when particular limbs become stiff and start to hurt. Some are so used to tension that they find relaxation strange and threatening. Release of tension is experienced as loss, as dying. Sometimes it feels safer to allow the tension to build up to a climax. Mind and body become rigid and harden. All progress has stopped and the moment will come when the pressure becomes too great. Energy forces itself through, with all the dire consequences. Space and relaxation will eventually be achieved, though in extreme cases, by death.

**Essential body-experience**

In our minds we form an image of our body and make it into an object with a certain shape. In other words, we objectify our body instead of just opening ourselves to experience it and feel it fully.

How would we experience our body as our true selves?

Is our body as we think it is, or do we experience it as something completely different?
Can we just be our body and consciously experience it?

Do we feel it as something fixed or flowing, or as something tingling or sparkling like air-bubbles?

Do we have the courage to just be in whatever we are experiencing, without a lattice of thoughts, ideas or concepts?

Don’t we long for this?

Isn’t this our natural state? But then why are we so very scared of it?

As babies we experience our bodies without thinking. We left this phase behind us when we began to think. Fear gained sway and we began our attempts to ward it off and channel it. This was our response to the way in which our close surroundings effected this natural state of being. This is our personal story. Do we dare to leave this behind us, to flow with the stream back to where we once began, to an infinite universe, our source, the departure and arrival point of our existence?

**Surrender**

Do we dare to release the boundaries of our body and to surrender to death and rebirth?

Do we dare to enter a breathtaking space where there is nothing to hold on to?

Is it possible for us to enjoy a feeling of weightlessness and translucence? Or is that what makes us afraid?

After all, it will feel like dying if we have always perceived our body in the way dictated by our thought-patterns, conclusions and convictions. That is how we survived. And then to start truly living feels like letting go, being swallowed up, losing our identity. Rebirth and a new start based on ourselves as a safe and nurturing foundation, has become unfamiliar terrain.

Essential experience of our body can be compared to passing through a gate and meeting our true selves.

**Physical dimensions**

Most people lose contact with their bodies very early in life. The head then becomes isolated, no longer feeling part of the body as a whole but as governing intellect. Someone like this has all kinds of passing thoughts, few of which will be consciously registered. He feels either comfortable or uncomfortable but further pays little attention to his body. Hunched shoulders or other strange twists and turns in the body, go unnoticed.

Are you aware of your body or is it just a tool?

Do you already feel some slight resistance at the word ‘body’?

Do you listen to the information given by your body and give it serious attention?

If all the little stabs of pain, tingling and itching sensations, stiffness and little shocks could become words, would you then listen to them?

What kind of words would represent these sensations?
Formulation

There is constant activity in your body, always something happening inside. Sometimes it is almost imperceptible and therefore difficult to put into words. Sometimes it is intensely painful. But instead of experiencing this pain as a call from our body, a ‘love call’, we try to ignore it and to get rid of it. Translating information from our body into words demands an unfamiliar use of language. Still, in making the effort to formulate your physical sensations, your awareness grows. Visualisation can help. For instance: I feel as if a snake is crawling through my belly or an elephant is overpowering me, or as if fishes are swimming or butterflies fluttering inside me. Perhaps it feels hollow, or empty or transparent or just absent. To understand your body you need to be receptive to its messages.

Warmth and affection

Those individuals open to physical experience often have a transparency and radiance about them. They are lively and at the same time gentle. They are friendly and spontaneous but not pushy. They feel their centre in themselves, not in the exterior world, while the outside world has a large place in their hearts. To be in contact with their bodies like this opens the way for them to be in contact with the cosmos, which makes any physical limitations vanish and leads them into a boundless dimension. Their awareness of pain changes. This is not escaping from the body, but connecting via the body. Plus it is possible to simultaneously experience the warmth and affection of physical contact with another person. The one does not preclude the other. There are multi-dimensional possibilities.

Cleaning up

Sullied reactions are something we have to face up to. After all, we are only human. Our emotions are responses to our prior history which are instigated by a current situation. Previous experiences live on in us, and regularly play their part. I have already described the way in which we can easily slip into unconsciously projecting a situation from our past on to something happening now.

Charlotte is 28. She has reached an impasse at work and frequently gets angry at her boss. She thinks there might be deeper patterns of behaviour at the root of her troubles. She can see the resemblance between the way her boss acts towards her and the way her father did when she was a little girl. She remembers him as being unreliable. Apparently she considers her boss to be the same. So Charlotte has been projecting the image she has of her father on to her boss, who could turn out to be a completely different character.

Being in the present

An emotion is essentially our primal spirit modified by prior experience. Love is an example of an unmodified aspect of primal spirit which wells directly out of the core of our being. If we check our emotions, suppress them, deny them, identify ourselves with them or project them on to others, giving them the blame, we are polluting the channel through which our life energy travels via our breath. Our system becomes blocked, mostly in the region of the stomach, heart and head. We become exhausted from the pressure which arises. It becomes frightening and our thoughts become obsessive.

By feeling the emotion fully in all its rawness, without trying to change anything, just by observing and examining it closely, we are opening ourselves to something of essential worth, that is, our presence (being present, presence of mind).

Relief
It is therefore important for Charlotte to experience her anger fully. Instead of identifying herself with it she can now look at it closely, noting when her boss upsets her so badly. That happens when he says to her: ‘I don’t think you’re quite with us at the moment’. She feels this as an attack and hears his comment with the ears of the little girl who was unjustly blamed for something she had not done. She acknowledges this.

Now a downward spiralling movement begins which will purify and clear the channel in her for primal spirit. She can now use this to her benefit. From a position of strength she retorts: ‘Excuse me, what do you mean?’ Her boss replies: ‘You look so dreamy. I was wondering if you were in love.’ In fact he had no intention of criticising her work. After this incident she started to work on herself in earnest.

She now looks at her boss in a completely different way. Their relationship has become more open and relaxed. Both of them can now have a sigh of relief.

**Waltzing through life**

Most of us have become blocked. At an early age we began to hold our breath in uncomfortable situations. Therefore many sensations of body and mind have remained unexplored. We are often not aware of this. With presence of mind and loving attention we can re-establish our contact with these sensations. Then we are once more going with the flow.

A healthy body with a nervous system which functions well (parasympathetic for relaxation, sympathetic when action is needed) is our vehicle. It works on primal power, romping, flashing, sparkling and tumbling. It flows, ripples, croons and whispers. We are alive. Nothing can stop the flow. We have taken the first step and now there is no looking back. It looks clean.

**Little boys should not cry**

Ronald is a good-looking 55-year-old doctor who was born in the tropics. In his practice he often discusses with his patients the way that energy can build up in the body. He knows that all too well from personal experience. However, he does not see it as the physical component of a psychic attitude. As a small boy he was regularly beaten with a stick. The culture he grew up in considered vulnerability as weakness and it was unacceptable for boys. Little boys were not allowed to cry, even in the most terrible of circumstances.

He has well-developed muscles but they also form a hard armour. He drives his body to the utmost, taking on anything which demands extreme physical effort. He has a high pain-tolerance, which gives him a feeling of having everything under control. He challenges his armour by putting it under even more pressure, thereby developing even more rigid muscle-plated armour. Underneath all this armour a deeply wounded being is struggling for breath.

**Too painful**

Ronald is generous, especially towards women. He is always trying to please them and seduce them. He married twice. Both marriages ended in divorce, and he was financially stripped by both. He became bankrupt and was put under legal restraint.

During a visualisation he described the leaves, the coconuts, the monkeys in a palm tree and the sky above the rooftops. When his coach asks him to imagine a monkey climbing down, he loses the image and starts to talk about something else. None of the things he visualises ever touches the ground. That is obviously too painful. He prefers to stay up in the air of the world he has created for himself. His most important inner sub-personality in establishing this is his seductive pleaser. That
is how he shows himself and the world that he is good enough. It is not an easy thing for him to surrender.

An illusionary world of imaginary success keeps him on his feet.

Self-examination

What do you feel in your body?

Where do you feel it?

If that feeling could speak, what would it have to say? The first thought which enters your mind here is usually the most relevant. For example, if you think: ‘I can’t do that’, then this is what will need to be examined.

How often do you hypnotise yourself with the thought ‘I can’t do that’ or ‘I’ll get that done’?

How do you feel about this? How does it effect you?

To what degree do you hypnotise yourself with stimulating thoughts and compliments (pats on the shoulder) like: ‘How well I do that!’; ‘I can do that!’; ‘I made a good job of that!’

Are you aware of your body at the moment? Bring your attention to your arms and legs and breathe deeply. How does that feel? Now walk around and try to keep fully aware of your body. What is going on in you while you are walking around?

Chapter 10

Coaching

Our lives can provide the right environment and substrate necessary for breaking through to our true selves. However, if the right substrate is not provided we will drift further and further away from our essential being. At a certain moment we may feel so lost that we go in search of someone to help us find our way. There are many paths and methods on hand for this. Good counselling can help to ease the process of exposing our true selves. And how does a good coach go to work?

The coach as midwife and parent

Nowadays the term ‘coach’ is used more frequently than ‘counsellor’. A coach can be seen as a kind of ‘midwife’ who helps in the birthing process of the true self. The attentive, loving presence of such a person, at every step we take further down this path, becomes subsequently like that of a parent who really sees the essence of their child and gives them their full attention. This immediately provides a good role-model of how to parent oneself in a satisfying way. The first step
is almost always that of allowing the inner child to live. During a certain phase of this work we can best be compared to children who are learning to walk. A child first needs to hold someone’s hand to keep their balance while making their first steps. Then he tries it alone. Sometimes he succeeds, sometimes he falls and reaches out for support. After a while he finds his balance and starts to move independently.

**The coach as travelling companion**

The next phase can be compared to that of adolescence. Just as an understanding parent is able to guide a youngster on their path to adulthood, a coach formulates his or her observations objectively, so that one can learn to look at and acknowledge oneself. Open questions from the coach will encourage self-reflection and, in a later stage, he/she changes into more of a companion on the journey back to the Source. He or she has travelled this route several times and has fallen into various pitfalls before. A feeling of brotherhood – or sisterhood - or simply friendship - develops.

In training with a coach it is important that you feel secure and respected. A good coach is authentic and humane. The contact is between two equals, even though the coach will be expressing all the qualities of a good parent. This means that you can be sure of not being manipulated into a position of dependence, despite being guided and having a mirror placed in front of you.

You do not receive advice and whatever is said is not obligatory. You will be helped to discover your own answers. It feels as if the best of you is being drawn out, instead of attention only being given to what is wrong with you. After a session you feel lighter, freer and stronger than before, even though you will have been confronted with some hard truth. You now know where you are.

**The coach as teacher**

Stanislav Grof said:

“A therapist should be more of a teacher. The correspondence between the experience of a mystic and that of a psychotic is that they both have the same experience. Where the mystic starts swimming, the psychotic drowns. Therefore the psychotic needs someone to teach him to swim.”

The coach, is to a certain extent, a teacher who shows you the way back to whom you really are. He teaches you to explore, to acknowledge and to chart experiences and to treat yourself more lovingly. Frequently he is teaching the lessons he is learning himself. I once heard a statement which I think is applicable to most of us: ‘You teach best what you are learning.’

A coach can teach you to observe and examine the strategic defences to life you have adopted. He can show you the security you are trying to realize with it but which proves unreliable in the end. He helps to free your emotions, to feel your fear, grief and anger. He teaches you to swim in deep water so that you do not drown.

**Insight**

You realize that unwelcome or even forbidden emotions make you feel depressed. You begin to recognize the effect that your defence system with its survival strategies has upon your emotions. You notice that whatever is hidden beneath the surface is freed by your new attitude to life and that when you accept your emotion, it can be assimilated and cleansed. You will find that an emotion which you do not try to repress never lasts longer than from three to eight minutes. You will be surprised by the memories which arise. All of a sudden you recognize how you have organized your life and how you have found the way back to your true self. Your thoughts now help you on your
way, instead of holding sway over you. In that respect your mind is not a power block but a loving servant, a coach that gives you space, relief and peace.

**Willingness**

According to Ken Wilbur everyone requires a different approach, depending on the level of consciousness in which he functions. The level can be determined through where the boundary or wall is in someone’s experience between the self and the non-self. In areas which transcend the personality and in which someone feels one with the universe, all boundaries vanish, as does the wall.

If someone strongly identifies with a part of himself, the boundary will seem very close. He will place other parts of himself beyond the boundary and will be tempted to project them on to others. Someone like this has a very limited awareness and is almost incapable of self-reflection. He could either rant and rave against the world or retreat into a world of his own.

**Coachable**

This makes it difficult to coach some people. They might immediately bury their heads in the sand and take off with the words: “I've tried everything. Nothing helps. Now do you see?” However, it is also possible that something begins to dawn when he is shaken awake by the coach and made aware of the victim-role into which he is manipulating himself.

As soon as someone is prepared to look closely at themselves, coaching becomes possible. There are so many different lines of approach, both via body or mind. It is essential to find a coach and the form of training which feels comfortable. Even your neighbour could be the best coach for you. Some people are born coaches and fulfil that role unconsciously.

**Obligatory**

Madeleine is 29. She is a tour guide and also dabbles in commerce. For years she has walked around with feelings of aggression about the way in which she has been (mis-)treated, according to her reckoning. As well as blaming her parents she also feels victimized by an older woman with whom she had a relationship and who had subsequently left her.

Madeleine protected her inner ‘wounded little girl’ with her *femme fatale* stance. She had an aggressive, authoritarian expression in her eyes. Her longing for attention, love and warmth was concealed behind an angry whining tone with which she both claimed attention and exercised criticism towards those close to her. She used the coaching sessions to divert all the attention to her coaches’ past, instead of concentrating on herself. “You are only going to make yourself more dependent like this”, said her coach. “You could also pay the same attention to yourself”.

**Independent**

At that point Madeleine realised that she had to face up to the fact that she was alone and felt lonely and had always been living in an illusion. She had never permitted herself to fully feel her emotions and shouted them down by painting other people black. Gradually she allowed herself to feel her fear of loneliness. That was not easy but a process started in which her longing for independence took the upper hand and her fear began to ebb away. It felt as if she had arrived at a point in her life where everything was in a constant process of renewal.

This insight allowed an opening that enabled her to confront her behavioural patterns. She began to concentrate on the things that interested her in life. Her expectations with regard to others
decreased. Warmth and love became part of a self-evident flow of giving-receiving, an integral aspect of her life.

**Self help**

The process of healing is not necessarily dependent on outside help. Reading, nature, contact with others, a certain environment or sport can also function as ‘self-coaching’.

Most essential is that you are placed in situations where you consciously experience, observe and examine yourself in circumstances in which your conditioned, automatic reactions give way to a less conditioned, more authentic way of reacting. The shift from survival to actually living can then take place.

To come into contact with whom we really are is a mystical experience in which we consciously surmount our boundaries. Everything that happens in an individual’s life, each intervention, whether it is therapeutic or not, from whatever source it comes, offers an opportunity to invoke this kind of mystical experience.

How is this possible? What leads up to it? Within what kind of framework does it occur? What sort of people experience it and how do they go through it?

**Outsider**

Johanna: “My sisters and I always looked a bit odd as children. We would be dressed in all the wrong clothes, too-long skirts, dated slacks and hand-knitted cardigans with lots of buttons. We had long hair (short was considered ‘common’); all summer we would have to wear boots (because of ankle-support) and socks (otherwise you’d get a bladder infection – which I often had later in my life). We were renowned in our neighbourhood as ‘the crazy folks from Number 13’. I was embarrassed by my parents. I didn’t want them to come anywhere with me where they’d be noticed.

I went to high school, where I did quite well. I was a fanatic hockey-player and my parents came to watch sometimes -which I hated. They were always critical, found that I should have played better - whereas I was rather pleased to be playing in one of the top leagues. Every evening I would sit at the dining-room table doing my homework. I didn’t know any better. When my class went on a film outing, the next morning I would say that I had forgotten about it or make some other excuse. I didn’t even bother to ask permission to go since my parents were bound to refuse. They found films detrimental to one’s development. Everything had to be educationally valid – even our holidays and we had no radio or T.V. in our home. After my first degree I worked part-time to pay for my further studies. My parents paid the first two years. Every six weeks I had to go home to collect the money and account for the last sum. I had to make a record of what I’d spent the money on. How I hated it!”

**Standing on my own two feet**

“On my 21st birthday I received a letter from my mother stating that although I was now officially an adult I should still do what I was told because they paid for my studies. That was the point when I decided to start working, in order to escape the pressure. Of course, that upset my parents and I didn’t see them for years afterwards which gave me a great sense of liberation, even though I could barely make ends meet with what I earned. It was fantastic to earn my own money and no longer to have to say a humble ‘thank you’. My tiny room was worth the sacrifice.

Now I’m 50 years old and live alone - haven’t had a relationship for years and actually don’t want one. I guess I’ve had too many bad experiences in that area. As soon as I feel the slightest
suggestion of butterflies beginning to flutter, I take control. I don’t want to know and besides, I’m
good at choosing all the wrong types of men. Sometimes I think back on the good times I had in
certain relationships but when I think of the crude way I was then dumped it casts a shadow over
my whole life.

When my mother died she was 75 years old and I noticed I was quite unmoved, nor did I miss her
afterwards. Our contact had been superficial and sporadic for years. I thought I was unfeeling. “The
apple hasn’t fallen far from the tree”, I thought. It was the way I was brought up.”

Coached

“I have been coached for some time now. I feel as if I have two different people inside me. One of
them cries her heart out; the other is sceptical. There’s no way I can sympathise with ‘little
Johanna’. Even the idea sends the shivers down my back and my whole being wants to scream
“NO!”

The warmth, understanding and touch in a coaching session disturb me intensely. I don’t know how
to respond to them and everything goes haywire. I stiffen completely. I’m determined to continue
the sessions- to cooperate - since I’m sure they’ll do me good. But I really have to get used to that
sort of thing.

In this period I began to read about the development of consciousness, about ‘returning to your true
self’ and about being kinder to oneself than I had ever been towards myself in the past. Slowly
something was starting to change. I could cope with my work and enjoyed it and even began to be
interested in other things. I felt more at ease in general and was less dependent on others’ support
and opinions. I felt more at ease socially as well, especially in my position as manager. Things
seemed to be moving in the right direction.”

Regression

“Then, all of a sudden, a reorganisation at work began and - despite all previous agreements and
accords- I was mercilessly put aside, even with the subsequent backing of the union and court
appeals.

What hurt most was that I felt rejected, considered inadequate, when I knew I was good at what I
did. Some people, especially weaker individuals, couldn’t get along with my know-how, my
strength and the way I brought things out into the open. Even colleagues with whom I’d always
worked well, deserted me. I was completely on my own and received no help from anyone. All the
decisions were being made behind my back.

It felt like this was a real crisis, when I thought I’d already been through the worst. All the
improvements of the past year vanished into thin air. I was completely lost.

It now felt good to have the support of my coach behind me. It felt as if she was saying: “It’s OK to
cry.” And I did. I surrendered, whereas in previous sessions I had stiffly resisted. Shortly afterwards
I became frustrated again because I didn’t know where this was leading. It was quite a step to move
from ‘feelings are something to be avoided’ to ‘feelings are allowed’. It felt as if I was listening to
some secret language from a totally strange planet which I could only observe from a distance.

It weighed heavily on me that I was not a member of the clan that can acknowledge their feelings –
that I didn’t understand the rules. As a result I turned my back on them - useless as I knew that was.
But then I asked myself whether, if I could eventually come to terms with accepting my feelings
and join, I would then be able to function ‘normally’- whatever that entailed- in this world full of
conflicting interests and personal dramas in which I seemed to be embroiled. It was not only shock and disbelief that I experienced, but also doubts. Where did I really belong? At that moment I was in No Man’s Land.”

Shame, judgement, impatience

“‘My coach asked me if I was still experiencing anxiety. Her use of the word ‘experience’ instead of ‘feel’ gave me relief, like a refreshing breeze. I was freer in expressing what I was experiencing but still critical.

Once, after bio-genetic bodywork, I said: ‘This is ridiculous - monkey behaviour!’ Naturally I immediately felt idiotic - ashamed of what I’d said. Another option was given: ‘Let yourself go – like an uninhibited child enjoying itself.’ That felt better. Occasionally I was able to release the critical, severe side of my personality for a while but it never lasted long. I’d soon start being judgemental again.

‘Progress is just taking too long - if there is any real progress. But I guess I’m just impatient.” If this had been an objective observation, it would have been acceptable. But being critical like this was draining and it cost me a tremendous effort to understand that I was reacting in the same way towards myself as my parents had in the past. Thoughts and memories raced before my mind’s eye too quickly for me to register them. I also had a problem with the idea that it was possible to observe whatever I thought or felt in an objective way.”

A red birch tree

“The next phase was to position all the different aspects of myself in the exterior space, through placing chairs in different representative positions. I began by sitting in the centre of the room. This was the central position to which I could always return. To my right were positions for my inner controller, pusher, critic and cynic. To my right were positions for my inner children, including the wounded, the angry, the uninhibited, the spontaneous and the playful. I was supported by someone or something from behind. I imagined a red birch tree but at first couldn’t quite place it. Then I remembered: the birch tree was in a park at Versailles and, years ago- in the early eighties- I’d spent a long time quietly contemplating it one afternoon. Since then I had felt a special bond with red birch trees.

With my chair I go and sit in the position of the birch. I find it difficult to express my feelings: “I feel a connection - a bond- I don’t know.”

“Who am I?” I push the critic in myself aside. Slowly I begin to understand and the tears begin to flow.

“Now move to the left with your chair. Go and sit in the child’s position.” Still weeping I moved left.

“Just open yourself to whatever you feel. You are safe.”

I had always been attracted to red birch trees. I found them beautiful and had always wanted to own one but the pitiful cutting I had planted in my garden had not grown well. All of a sudden I had found my tongue.”

The inner controller
“I was then asked to move over to the position of the controller. I couldn’t stop talking: “Of course a tree like that is beautiful but you can’t do anything with it. What I feel? About a tree? No, that’s beside the point. All emotion is revolting and the world is a combat zone in which you have to be strong.

I felt myself stiffen, encompassed by armour, and I sat up straight. Suddenly it began to dawn on me that this was not what I wanted.”

Free choice

“Do you realize that you’re free to make your own choice? That you can give the floor to whichever part of yourself you choose?”

“It felt strange, as if I was only then coming to understand what I had read in so many books. I began to see daylight and again the tears sprang to my eyes. I moved back to the left side and cried until I couldn’t cry any more. At the same time I felt strangled, literally as if someone’s hands were gripping my throat. I could barely breathe and almost choked in my tears. I let go a squeak and stretched my arms out. I was no longer paying any attention to the voices of my controller and cynic.”

Give me a hug

“Please, give me a hug,” I say to my coach. Immediately she was behind me, breathing deeply in an even rhythm I soon found myself automatically following. It was easy to follow her lead- it happened without thinking. Her embrace was warm, comforting and supportive. Then there was a fleeting moment of panic. I gagged, coughed, spat and cried, was gasping for breath, uncertain why I was crying but it didn’t matter. Again I retched and sobbed- simultaneously, which normally would be impossible. I felt as if I was suffocating but in between spasms I tried to breathe in the rhythm my coach indicated.

Then my whole body began to tingle, from head to foot. I was shaking so much I had to grip the arms of my chair to keep my balance. I didn’t dare to open my eyes and confusion set in once more.”

Inner child

Breathing deeply, in and out, still keeping in the same rhythm as indicated by my coach, I began to relax. The tingling continued but now felt pleasant.

I burst into giggles, laughing and crying at the same time – as if what was happening was tremendously funny. My knees felt weak and as if they were filled with cotton-wool. My coach pulled me to my feet. “Try to stand up.”

That was easier said than done. I leaned heavily on her, against her, over her- not trusting myself to stand on my own feet for fear of collapsing. Without thinking, I leaned backwards. I just wanted to fall back on to the floor, strange as it seems- to follow the impulse - to let myself go, arms spread wide- to surrender myself to whoever or whatever was behind me. My coach waved in the direction of the mattress and with a sigh of relief I let myself fall on to it with my arms spread wide. That felt good but I was aware of strange sensations, a lightness in my head, a fit of giggles again. Sporadically I felt the urge to hug my coach, to hold her fast. She smiled warmly.”

Two steps forward, one step backward
“I had a cup of tea in a café around the corner, not wanting to step into a taxi directly after the session. Sitting there, watching the rain fall and everyone hurrying past I felt as if I was in a personal oasis of tranquility. I ordered lunch and another cup of tea. I could now understand how the controller and the pusher in me had been in charge, allowing no attention for little Johanna who had been left out in the cold. I decided to re-read all the books I had read previously on the subject since I thought I could glean much more from them now.”

Johanna had made the first quantum leap. Now she could continue on her way, sometimes she might automatically fall back into former patterns of behaviour and feel as if she were back where she began. But that would not be so. Most people take two steps forward and only one step backward. That is the way of progress.

Sometimes a situation becomes so extremely difficult that one’s pain and grief become unbearable and one needs to call ‘all hands on deck’ to avoid falling back into old habits of suppression and denial. The gauge is total exhaustion, listlessness, hopelessness and a grey vision of an outer world which appears inaccessible - an expression of someone’s own inaccessibility.

If this is your situation at present, realize that you are seriously betraying yourself- that your inner child is outside in the cold, freezing to death. Take time to nurture yourself- to discover what your body is trying to tell you and give it attention. Take time off work, because to work at a time like this will only result in a burn-out.

Extraterrestrial

Here follows a brief summary of Rosaline’s story:

The character-formation and build of the 33-year-old Rosaline is predominantly ‘schizoid’ (see ‘Freeing Yourself’). This kind of defence system is developed at an early age and is mainly due to a child’s sense of being unwanted and therefore being forced to struggle for her or his basic right to exist.

Rosaline cushions herself from this by leading a secluded existence. Physically she looks as if she might break into pieces. It is difficult to make contact with her – it is almost as if she is on some other planet. Making her feel comfortable and secure with me is of prior importance. She starts to talk without stopping. Her voice is weak, childlike and monotonous. The tragic events she is describing do not seem to touch her, but move me greatly.

I say: “Oh, how awful that must have been!” and feel the tears in my eyes. She notices and looks at me with amazement. I see some colour coming to her cheeks and a glimmer of life appear in her eyes. Contact has been made, however slight.

Livelier

After a few sessions a more comfortable atmosphere developed. I explained to her what I thought was the matter with her. She understood and started to look more compassionately at herself. Often during bodywork she commented: “It is just as if you’re larger than life and are everywhere. I trust you completely and I don’t need to feel ashamed or guilty about anything. It’s an ‘Alle Menschen werden Brüder’- feeling – respect for everyone and everything.”

During this period, in which Rosaline became increasingly more lively, she gave birth to her baby. She was greatly attached to it and it helped her enormously to come back to Earth -where she began to enjoy herself. Above all she wanted to be a warm, loving mother so that her baby would not experience the same trauma as she had as a child.
The Red Road

Some people are able to re-establish contact with the Source without any outside help, like the 91-year-old North American Indian, William Commanda. He is the great grandson of Pagnawatik, the Algonquin chief who led his people from the ‘Lake of Two Mountains’ to their hunting fields Kitigan Zibi to establish a new camp far from persecution and oppression.

In 1961, at an all-time low in his life when he was diagnosed with terminal cancer, he suddenly awakened to what the Indians call the ‘Red Road’. This is the path of forgiveness, love, compassion and reconciliation - the antithesis of the Black Road of suffering, destruction and death. He realized how imperative it was to unite the four races who were separated by the colour of their skin and to join together to walk the ‘good red road’. Since then he has succeeded in inspiring people from all over the world with his plea for racial harmony, intercultural understanding, spiritual development and the purification of the environment.

One of his regular activities is an annual spiritual gathering on his land, which has, in fact, never been officially declared the property of his tribe. It is infertile land and drinking-water has to be fetched from far away, since their own water is polluted with uranium, which causes cancer.

Asthma

Judith was 40 years old and had studied sociology. She explained to me: “After I’d worked in various sectors I began to suffer increasingly from attacks of asthma and becoming more and more afraid of suffocating. I looked for help in regular as well as alternative medicine. It seemed that I was a hopeless case. No one knew what to do with me. All too often I was overmastered by my emotion. My asthma drained me, but my fear was even worse. I even let myself be hospitalized for a while. Then, during an intense attack of asthma I saw images of my father raping me. This was followed by an attack almost every hour. I called my psychiatrist, whom I had visited quite recently. He told me to ask for help in the hospital. I felt deserted by everyone, thrown back on myself. There was no way out and I felt completely shattered.”

Taking the reins in your own hands

“Then something unexpected happened. I mustered my courage and made the decision to take the reins in my own hands. Since I knew myself better than anyone else, I would help myself. I asked for a strong antidote for my asthma and found a therapist to help me to face up to and digest my childhood trauma with my father. Nowadays I can enjoy life again and if I begin to feel afraid during an attack of asthma, I can deal with it myself, without entering the fear or allowing it to overmaster me. That feels really good.”

Astrological consultation

Frank is another example of someone who has found his personal path. He is 66 years old and relates:

“After seven years of depression – no therapist was able to help - I learnt through my astrological studies, that many aspects of our lives are there as part of a greater cosmic plan. Slowly but surely I began to accept the relevance of this hypothesis in my personal life; that whatever happened to me, I could approach it as a necessary step in my learning process. I began to believe that I had already chosen this life before I was born and, through this I was able to look in a different way at important relationships and painful events in my past. Of course, it was confronting, but I felt there was no other choice. So for about two months I wrote down everything, slept little, ate little, drank only lots of mineral water and stopped watching TV or listening to the radio.
At a certain moment I was suddenly overcome- these things always come unexpectedly- by a sense of wholeness. I felt one in an unconditioned stream of love open to everyone and everything. Then I saw everything I had been projecting on to others all my life. My soul felt whole and purified and a new world revealed itself to me. From that moment on my feelings of fear and guilt began to decline and life became much more straightforward. I could forgive myself and others and felt much happier.”

At his deathbed

Cora is 43 years old. She is married, without children and is a housewife:

“I never had much contact with my father. I never thought about him much, was never very interested in him and used to find the way other people discussed the ins and outs of their contact with their parents rather exaggerated. And also how some of them would become so upset about how their parents had treated them. Then, all of a sudden, things changed. My father was dying. I shall never forget the stab of pain I felt. I would never again have the chance to talk things over with him. I was desperate to have that last talk – a talk which I realised I had always longed for. I could not get to his side fast enough - I cycled like a madman all the way. However, when I arrived I had lost my tongue. I had no idea what to say and just managed to stutter a few words of nonsense. He beckoned me closer: “Come here, my dear.” And then there were no more words necessary. It was the first time I really felt my father’s presence and felt how good it was. For the first time I felt that I was his daughter and I felt how good that was. It was the first time I felt that I was myself and that felt good..

The crocodile, the snake and the flatfish

Arnold is 43 years old, has his own business, is married and has two children. He has a friendly, strong and optimistic personality but has been suffering from serious stomach problems and had to stop working.

He had only recently discovered that his business partner, whom he had always seen as a trusted father-figure, had been swindling him. His whole world had collapsed. Since he had never really had a father (his father was in the merchant navy, at sea most of the time) the shock was even more profound. However, he was desperately trying to control the hate and pain he felt towards his old partner and his father.

He had repeatedly dreamed that to his right a crocodile was menacing him and to his left, a snake was slithering towards him. There was no way out.

Becoming the beast

His coach asked him to imagine that he was the crocodile and to describe how he felt. As the crocodile he felt aware of his stealthiness. He wanted to stalk something, to attack it and devour it. He went through a similar process with the snake. He felt how he had the power to poison any living being with his forked tongue. By placing himself in the role of the beasts, instead of as their victim, he sensed a new power. Then he imagined attacking his ex-business partner, devouring him completely and then regurgitating him and spitting in his face. He brightened up after that! However, he relapsed into feeling inadequate and vulnerable again. Since he acknowledged this state and did not resist it, he could relax into it. His eyes darkened and his voice deepened. “I’m now swimming in water. I’m a flatfish, moving gracefully and am at peace. I can take care of myself.”

This was the start of a new phase of life for Arnold. His whole perspective had changed.
Disgust

At the age of 44, Mira was a psychologist, healer and aura-reader. After receiving her degree she had followed further studies in alternative healing. She worked at the university and also had her own practice.

Despite being in the middle of divorce proceedings, she had applied for Gestalt training. When the group first met each other, she was on the edge of a nervous breakdown. She was disgusted by herself – she thought herself a monster, a fiend. Towards the end of the five-day training, things came to a crisis. She was completely obsessive, scared that she would be declared crazy and admitted to a mental institute. She pulled herself together and concealed her face, hoping no one would see the monster she had become. All her life she had hated ugliness and negativity.

Would you please look me in the eye?

The woman trainer sat opposite her and asked: Would you please look me in the eye and tell me what you see?

M.: ‘I see a middle-aged woman with a wrinkled face… Now I see a Madonna, surrounded by light.’

T: ‘Now I’d like you to walk a few steps.’

M: ‘I can’t. I can’t move – I don’t have the energy. I want to go home.’ (She collapses.)

T: ‘You need courage to go on.’

M: ‘Oh lord! Does it have to be like this?’

T: ‘It’s up to you’

Demonic powers

“At that moment I saw a vision of Jesus in the desert, surrounded by demonic powers and wondered what he had done in that situation. The answer was ‘to pray’. To me praying was the same as opening myself. I felt a stream of love and warmth. Now, whenever I feel I’m about to become crazy, I pray. I then feel myself being accepted by the universe - that there is a place for me - just as I am.”

The most impressive aspect of Mira now, six years later, is her open-minded attitude to life. Without any preconceived opinions or ideas, she always welcomes anything new she encounters.

Self-examination

When and how do you experience a wall between yourself and ‘others’?

With which type of person and/or subject-matter does that mostly occur?

Where and how do you experience a wall in yourself?

Are you aware of building these walls yourself – or do you think that others are responsible?

How do you build a wall between yourself and others?
How do you build the wall in yourself? In other words, for which aspects of yourself are you avoiding responsibility?

To what extent does the wall make you feel safe? And when do you appreciate this boundary?

What is your experience with being coached?

Are you able to look objectively at your behaviour and to coach yourself further on your own?

Chapter 11

Dance your Life

Mutual goodwill

In the preceding chapters I have given numerous examples of inspired action as a result of tapping into the primal spirit, or the Source. These included personal experiences, from my own life and that of others close to me or from relevant literature and coaching sessions. In this chapter I will be discussing the importance of dance. The resonance of rhythm and melody in the human organism invokes a movement which can reconnect us to the Source, the core of our being. The relationship between the Source and the universe is one of absolute love and dance is a natural expression of this relationship.

In a newspaper article in August 2004 Bob Fromme describes a dance taking place on a village square in Brittany while he was on holiday in France. He begins in a typically ironic tone, as is common for journalists. Then, all of a sudden, his tone changes. He has obviously been touched.

“…. As soon as the singer had announced the first dance the crowd on the village square began to move in rhythm, very moving to see. They danced in a great circle, with within it a smaller circle and within this another and so on, until every aspiring dancer had found his place. Hundreds and hundreds of people held each other’s hands and made the same uncomplicated steps. No one tried to outshine anyone else or to take the lead, even though one individual dancer was perhaps better and more experienced than the other. Together they formed a unified mass of motion, radiating serene contentment and mutual good-will. I found it quite overwhelming and the tears sprang to my eyes… (Forgive me… but if there is just a single grain of those dancers’ good-nature in you, then world peace will someday be a reality.)”

Resonance

The Essenes, a spiritual community with which Jesus in all probability was closely connected, lived in resonance with the universal life-source. They tuned into it and loved themselves and others as a
creation springing forth from it. Their relaxed attitude towards life, their clarity of mind and expression are directly related to this. Their philosophy was also underpinned by the purposeful creation of physical, mental and emotional peace in various ways, including song, prayer, meditation and dance.

Through dancing a suffering individual can be transformed into a vital, creative and loving being who is aware of the support and nurturing he receives from a universe filled with life-giving energy, that is, filled with creativity. An encounter, induced like this through dance, can transform love which is conditional into unconditional love - the ability to be without prejudice and to trust without excluding anyone or anything. Therefore one’s attitude to life will automatically be founded on compassion, a forgiving nature and a willingness to help.

In Sufism, as well as a certain school of thought within psycho-synthetics, this philosophy of life takes a central position.

**Music and the nervous system**

In 1965 Rolando Toro Araneda, professor in psychology and medical anthropology at the Catholic University of Santiago, discovered the effect of music, rhythm and movement on the nervous systems of patients in psychiatric clinics. Euphoric dancing apparently stimulated the sympathetic nervous system and the sense of self-identity. Regressive dancing, inducing a state of 'melting', was found to address the parasympathetic nervous system. Professor Araneda began to see music as a universal language that was comprehensible to all and the movement stemming from it as a key to potential integration of body and mind, and to furthering contact between oneself and others. He also discovered the relationship between certain movements and certain emotions. Subsequently this led to his development of a new mode of therapy which he called ‘Biodanza’ (i.e. Dance of Life). According to him, the harmonization of music, movement and emotion can form a basis on which we are able to re-possess our full potential in vitality, efficiency, creativity, sexuality and ability to surrender.

**The sound of music**

Whether it is the murmur of the sea, your own heartbeat, the rustling of leaves in the wind, or tones which we are incapable of hearing without artificial aid, the sound of music is everywhere. Pythagoras called it the ‘Music of the Spheres’ and the French writer Tomaties, in his book ‘À l’écoute de l’univers’, describes it as a harmony of rhythm and melody which can also resonate in oneself. If one wants to live in harmony with oneself, then following the rhythm of music with our bodies is a good way to start.

Together with the violinist Yehudi Menuhin, Joseph Campbell also did research into the influence of various types of music on the human organism. Mozart’s music was impressive in that it has a subtle, non-mechanical rhythm with slight variations, similar to the pulse rhythm. From a neurological point of view, the allegros in his music evoke a youthful vitality and heighten the IQ and sexual potency. Its elegant light-heartedness works as an aphrodisiac, a cosmic Viagra. The adagios ground the aroused vitality and harmonize this with our whole being.

Beethoven’s music strengthens the self-confidence; Bach evokes precision and order, while Debussy and Ravel fire the imagination. Jazz and Dixieland induce euphoria; Battuadu leads to release and liberation and Samba can evoke erotic integration. Gregorian music brings equilibrium to the respiration. Therefore, the more we attune ourselves to it, to greater the effect of certain forms of music on our bodies and minds.

**Life dance**
Here follows an account of my experience at a dance workshop led by Rolando Toro:

“We stood in a circle and moved to the music and meandered around, looking each other in the eyes, touching each other gently, while still holding hands in the circle. This wasn’t easy for me, even though I had done several courses of Biodanza before. I felt rather uncomfortable, wanting to overdo it, which would mean losing contact. I felt resentful and judgemental towards myself and the other participants. I noticed that I was feigning contact from time to time, pretending to feel more than I did, as I supposed the others were doing too. ‘Fake it until you make it’, I thought to myself. ‘It’s a try-out.’

Then it dawned on me – I could just let my movements follow rhythm of the music. I was brought back into my body through the rhythm and began to enjoy the sensation. I felt less inhibited and began to look around at others, feeling warmth in my eyes. By the time the music ended, I had lost any feelings of embarrassment.

After this, we walked around on our own, keeping time with the music. We were to open ourselves to the music, to the melody and to the emotional fluctuations we would experience.

**Contact**

Rolando commented on the way people dissociate themselves from their bodies. He made us laugh by imitating the mechanical movements of models and soldiers, showing us how the head, torso, chest and belly appear to have no connection with one another. He also demonstrates the way two people can move up and down to music, without contacting themselves, let alone their ‘partner’. It looks so familiar – you see it happen everywhere people go to dance.

“Are you near- or far-sighted? (N.B. In the metaphorical sense). If you’re near-sighted you’ll see the world as distant and very small. If you’re far-sighted you’ll overlook everything close to you.”

We then were told to walk around, looking at each other, as well as being aware of our surroundings and trying to keep in contact with ourselves. Sometimes we were in pairs, sometimes in threes, fours, fives, sixes or tens. There were at least a hundred participants.”

**Body segments**

“Next we were to work in pairs on the head segment. One of us was to move his head while the other held the head of his partner and followed his movements. Alternately we experienced the flow of giving and receiving, both partners surrendering to the movement, to the music. Our hearts spoke through our hands. Afterwards we did the same exercise with our arm- and shoulder-segments, and lastly with the pelvis segment.

Then a dance followed in which we gently stroked each others faces. The dance became just a wave of movement to beautiful music. “The other is not an object you can shove around, neither are they something to rumple, or grab or pinch,” said Rolando. When you saw an emotion rising in the one you were stroking, the pressure in your hand would change and you would feel his agitation in yourself. You would follow this feeling and then it would develop into a gentle rhythmic movement you made together, while one continued to stroke the other. Rolando also described embracing as a wave-like motion.

It occurred to me that Wilhelm Reich would probably rub his hands in glee at seeing us. These dance movements were clearly inspired by his work, for which Rolando Toro had repeatedly expressed his admiration.”
Encounter

In an encounter you create new strength. That is the poetry of human encounter. You concentrate on the beauty inherent in someone, absorb it and return it. The dimensions are eternal, it is life bestowing life to life. When a person makes his boundaries known, they are to be respected and given space. Human encounters generate vitality, like walking barefoot on grass, or luxuriating in a warm sea bath, or feeling the sun on your skin. Toro describes this as the divine, or angels touching us: “All through the day I see, hear and feel angels and God. They are present everywhere and in everything.”

The other as mirror

The other is able to bring out elements in yourself of which you were previously unaware. Via the other you are able to experience yourself, since he/she is your mirror. Sometimes you feel revitalised, other times you feel blocked. In both instances it can help you to learn to know yourself better. The other can help you to investigate the myriad possibilities and to experience each moment in depth. We all want to connect; that is the miracle of life, and the miracle is nothing other than our human potential – the capacity of our kind – our ability to flourish.

However, everything depends on whether we are just interpreting reality, or experiencing it. If people limit reality through personal interpretation, they will live in a limited reality. They will see, hear and feel less.

When two naked people lie in each others’ arms, a total transformation takes place through the explosion of love, and not only directly through this interchange but also in the world of those micro-organisms – about two hundred and fifty microbes, parasites and viruses - which live on and in them. Similarly, a loving kiss burns 26 calories because it mobilises 260 muscles and the level of calcium mounts, reducing future risk of broken bones.

Good lovemaking increases the level of vitality and the same is true of an encounter via music and movement. Isolation and lack of physical exercise are often at the roots of disease.

New creation

What do we feel about our life? Was it worthwhile? Sometimes we look back at our past with a positive feeling - but often with regret. In general we continue in the same old patterns and inadvertently pass them on to our children. Is it possible to break these patterns? The ability to look at ourselves closely provides us with the opportunity to address them. The more use we make of our potential, the greater the contact with our true selves. Then these patterns will automatically be eradicated, since our perception of every person and situation will immediately change, as well as our reactions.

Awareness is essential in restructuring your life. It encompasses those numerable minor events confronting you and your reactions to them. This is the path to transformation, comparable to the effect music has in instigating creative expression. Each one of us possesses this ingoing and outgoing orientation. You may have your doubts about something but it is still interesting to observe the process which gives rise to these feelings. There is always a combination of internal and external factors.

Having second thoughts

For the duration of a dance you are in a relationship. In it you can express your total potential in self-evident flowing motion. However, this will not happen if your thoughts are directing your
movements. Instead, your mind is preoccupied with worrying about whether you should take initiative or not. Some people never do take initiative. They just wait and worry. Some individuals think: ‘I have to be receptive’, while the other person is waiting for him/her to take the initiative. Some feel they have tried everything and just hope for something to happen – others consider the best action is to do nothing. Confusion reigns.

It is all so devised and unnatural, a reactive and one-way communication which hampers the rhythmic synchronicity (movement and rhythm flowing into one another).

If you acknowledge this thought-activity you will have made good progress. You will be able to see the possibility of allowing it to come as it comes. You will still be thinking but will not allow your thoughts to govern your movement. Perhaps it will be easier to surrender to the rhythmic synchronicity.

**Going with the flow**

“We start dancing in a flowing stream, first alone, later in pairs. ‘Go with the flow of the music.’ I notice I am doing my best to dance well and look good. I am missing the mark. ‘If you just go on moving, you’ll be dancing.’ Even mental/emotional blocks can be expressed and everyone can dance. It is not a question of dancing beautifully, or striving to be best. It is about spontaneous expression of whatever you feel via the musical flow. To go with this flow means continuing with full expression of feelings, even when they include inner conflicts. You become like a river which follows its course in perpetual motion, sometimes as minimal as the ripples in a lake.”

_Rolando: “We all have the tendency to discriminate and to choose a dance partner. In fact, human instinct is basically much less discriminative, more like that of animals that mass together. Instinctive energy flows wherever it is received, wherever it finds a channel. It takes no account of fat, thin, tall, short, young or old. It flows and feels wonderful. It evokes a gentle, loving, rhythmic concerted movement in our bodies – life that is in connection with life. Melting and individual powerful activity alternate, as in every happy community.”_

**Intimacy**

Experiencing intimacy: “Observe your feelings when you allow someone to look deeply into your eyes or when someone avoids a penetrating look. What stops the process? When does fear take over and do you step back into everyday defensive behaviour? Are you aware of your boundaries and do you respect them? Or do you allow them to be overridden? Do you respect other peoples’ boundaries? Or maybe you were never aware of them before? If that is the case, dancing could provide the ideal opportunity to practise because through dance you encourage one another to create and manifest something new. Without a word you give feedback to each other, through the feel of skin, the tautness of muscles, the warmth, the movement and the music. You are creating something new together of which the total is greater than the equal of its parts.”

Then we danced as if we were meeting our partner for the first time. Sometimes the dance was just slight, subtle movement, made primarily with the hands and eyes. While we held each other’s eyes, we touched. Occasionally we switched partners. I noticed how beautiful everyone appears – whoever I looked in the eyes it seemed as if I was looking back through the centuries and was experiencing everything that had happened in the depth of the human soul. Only one or two people avoided the confrontation; their eyes appeared to retreat into remoteness, as if the blinds were down.
“When you look into someone’s eyes you can see the divine in them and then you cannot fail to feel love for them.”

Toro has often worked with handicapped and psychiatric patients. Instead of feeling pity for them, he feels their divinity:

“We are all the same – as divine as we are mad. All of us have histories which veil our divinity.”

**Eros**

Freud introduced the concepts of Eros (life instinct) and Thanatos (death wish) as operational factors in everyone. According to Rolando Toro, there is not a death wish. In his opinion Eros is pure life, the reproductive instinct for the preservation of the species. He considers the death wish more as a perversion of the instinct for preservation of the species and Eros - love and sexuality – as the foundations of evolution. Indeed, the ancient Greeks worshipped Eros in the form of a stone which symbolised the reproductive power of the Earth. Later Eros came to be seen as the god who created order in chaos by unifying the separate elements.

Plato attributed our longing for completion through another human being to Eros. He considered Eros as the power of love, as well as the aesthetic drive, either as love from the soul or as love for the exterior form.

**Fetishism**

The attraction to exterior factors is also known as ‘fetishism’. One individual finds slim people attractive, another prefers plump, short or tall ones. This can often be traced back to the need for a mother or father, or, on the contrary, wanting to be the mother or father oneself. Some women fall for symbols of great bravery: hairy men, King Kongs.

Rolando knows a slender woman who, at the first sign of summer dons her bikini and makes for the beach. When she spots a ‘King Kong’ she goes and lies down near to him and seduces him. All through the summer she will have sex with him but as soon as summer ends she goes home, worn and torn, to her sweet loving little husband who takes care of her until the following summer, by which time she would be fully recovered. Until then she dutifully makes love twice a week, waiting for summer. As soon as it comes, she is again off to the beach in her bikini. ‘King Kong’s’ are her fetish.

According to the maestro we all have a fetish of some kind. This could also be a certain perfume, the type of breasts and so on.

**Health through sex**

Movement in general and dance movement in particular, stimulates sexuality and therefore can cause depression, hysteria, impotence and frigidity to vanish. Sexuality changes the hormonal regulation, making one feel young and energetic and affecting change in one’s appearance. The heart begins to beat more rapidly and one’s whole organism becomes transformed.

Rolando told us the story of his 65-year-old neighbour who was well-established in his role as old man, with the common complaints of his age, until a young political refugee who sought to marry an Italian came to live nearby. From their very first meeting a dynamic change took place in him. He started walking like a young man and his whole appearance changed.
Sexual excitement effects all the organs and stimulates them through the dopamine which is discharged. Even a mother’s love for her child has a similar effect. Apparently Parkinson’s disease is caused by a lack of dopamine.

Natural deep orgasm

Trouble with having an orgasm is a common problem, especially among people who are in their thoughts or a fantasy world most of the time. It is difficult for them to surrender to the reality of the moment. They think, instead of feeling. “What is expected of me?” “Will he marry me?” “If he marries me, I’ll buy that couch.” A woman who surrenders to her feelings, without distracting thoughts, can easily have multiple orgasms, some of which can last up to 20 minutes.

A man who surrenders to his feelings will not ejaculate so quickly but the sexual energy waves through his whole body will enable him and his partner to enjoy long orgasmic love-making with each other. It also depends on the partner, since he or she can help to bring you to orgasm through empathetic, intimate gestures, caressing and kissing. In the same way a meal can be an erotic experience. The sensation of certain materials, like the softness of the sheets when you lie in bed, and the pleasant warmth of your bed could be experienced as an embrace, instead of falling into bed exhausted and instantly going to sleep. Wind, rain and the sea can also give rise to erotic feelings.

Arousal in men and women

Rolando answered a question about whether sexual arousal in women differed to that of men. In general it is thought that women need more time than men to become sexually aroused. That is not true. Women can arrive in a state of high arousal just as quickly as men. It depends on the prelude to the love-play which is often fraught with miscommunication and about which most people still have much to learn. Sex is too frequently oriented towards the genitals and orgasms, certainly by men. A man can also derive pleasure from just observing a woman enjoying herself, without necessarily having to get involved. In these times both men and women are confronted with an identity crisis and if that leads to feelings of worthlessness or depression, it will dampen sexual arousal.

Stages of sexual perception

As an ardent supporter of Wilhelm Reich, Rolando Toro also referred to the four stages of sexual perception:

1. The awakening of desire, permitting it and making contact, touch;
2. Expressing the desire via breath, facial expression, movement, touch and word;
3. Realisation of the desire, union and deep spiritual experience of surrender to the universe of the loved one, total connection;
4. The after-glow in deep relaxation.

Together

“A dance in pairs followed. One person lay down, the other sat next to them, placing one hand on the sixth chakra (the forehead) and the other on the fourth chakra (the heart). Then one hand was placed on the heart chakra and the other on the first (root) chakra. One and another was rocked to Albinoni’s fifth oboe concert. “Everyone is the radiant centre of love and power in a violent world”, said Toro. “Let’s stop being the sputtering centre of irritation.” We were bringing something which
was taking place within us to the outside, creating a network of life on the Earth. Innovation in the field of dance could be both artistic and existential. Both are expressions of an inner process.”

**Yin and yang**

“In dance it is possible to truly encounter each other, instead of turning your backs on one another. You have to make it clear to someone that you are willing to travel to the ends of the world with him or her. Show it with your eyes, your gestures – now express it in a dance. Invite and accept: I give myself and you receive me.

(In many places in the world, just as here in the past, women are not permitted to express their feelings.)”

Then we were asked to express the masculine (Yang, the capacity to concentrate) and the female (Yin, the capacity for dedication). Rolando gave us a demonstration and instructions: “Feel Yin changing into Yang – follow the music. Strength and gentleness. Yin creates Yang and Yang creates Yin, just as in science and technology. Don’t be afraid of looking ridiculous.”

We danced both Yin and Yang - to activate the potential in us which normally lay fallow and which is always present in our whole being. At times I felt powerful and as focused as a spear; at others, I felt feminine, flowing and soft. Dancing a Yin-Yang dance in pairs was giving life to the new creation. Sometimes you followed, sometimes you led, without forethought, just allowing things to come into being, to happen as they would.

We were to look each other in the eyes as Jesus would have done - with empathy: “I see you, I love you.” Then your partner closed their eyes and you stroked the face. The other surrendered and you ended with your hands on his or her chest. You were not there to solve anything; your presence was what counted.”

**Giving love**

“We danced one dance after another. In one dance we were as loving towards our partner as to a child, one of us sat on the other’s lap and was rocked to the music. Another dance was solo. You imagined that the person you loved most was dancing with you, and gave yourself over to everything which flowed from this. The one you had in your thoughts would feel it - since telepathy in a person can be activated.

Then we did an angel dance. We were all angels and had to find our own way of manifesting this. Our energy exchange would be done with eyes closed. With all of us standing close together, we felt each others’ movements to the music. I lost the feeling of standing on my own feet and was carried, and carried others. My hands stretched out, feeling cloth and skin and I felt the touch of others. It was like being in a sea of fluctuating movement and energy. There was no longer any differentiation between inside or outside of myself. Fused into one shapeless being, we surrendered without judgement, without obligation.

…And then once more we were back on our own feet, alone, as individuals.

**Taking leave**

We ended in the same way we began – in a circle, the symbol of infinite eternity. Keeping hold of each others’ hands we moved about, encountering one another in parting, taking leave of each other in the same encounter.
This was the summer workshop with the renowned Chilean Professor Rolando Toro Aranedes, who brings the healing power of dance, music and rhythm into practice and who is striving to set up a network of Biodanza over the whole world, hoping to turn the Earth into a dance party instead of a battlefield.

The music was selected to reflect diverse themes of life, using classic music, soul, jazz, house, folk – as long as it was rhythmic or tonal and would evoke recollection of experiences of: being alone, regression, vulnerability, encounter, contact, touch, stroking, security, gathering, intimacy, closeness, strength, power, macho, combat, seduction, creativity, growth, playfulness, madness, trance, delight, transformation, masculine and feminine. It is either highly active or calm and collected, and is always nonverbal.

“Love, health, freedom, creativity, nourishment, pleasure and harmony are our birthright,” Toro stated in conclusion.

**Self-examination**

How important is music to you?

What kind of music do you prefer?

What do you feel when you hear music?

How do different kinds of music affect you?

What do you do when you hear music?

Do you start moving?

How?

To which kind of music?

Do you experience dancing as an opportunity to express yourself and to make contact with yourself and others?

What do you feel when you dance?

Chapter 12

**The Courage to Love**

**The mystery of the Minotaur**
The lust of Pasiphae, King Minos’ wife, was boundless; slaves and heroes were not enough for her so when a dazzling white bull was presented to the king she could not contain herself. Her savage desire burst into flame at the sight of that beast’s primordial power. She tried to seduce the bull but it did not respond. Therefore she devised a cunning trick, employing a sculptor to build a hollow wooden cow. Inside it she could lie down and position her vagina in line with that of the wooden cow. His lust awakened, the bull mounted the wooden beast and impregnated the sprightly Pasiphae. She would later give birth to the Minotaur, a bull with a human torso. King Minos, smitten with shame, imprisoned the monster in a labyrinth, from which escape was impossible. Pasiphae’s cries rose to Mount Olympus, the seat of the gods and the people of Athens were uncertain whether she was howling from pain or from lust.

The Minotaur grew larger and larger. Each year he claimed seven young men and seven virgins and King Minos chose the victims from amongst the sons and daughters of prominent Athenian aristocrats, the price these citizens had to pay for the murder of Minos’ son, Androgeus. The young men and women never returned from the labyrinth. Neither did the heroes sent by the Athenians to kill the monster. In the end, the hero Theseus received a ball of string from his beloved Ariadne, Minos’ daughter, with which he was able to mark his trail and then to trace his way back through the labyrinth. The Minotaur was killed.

No one knows what happened to the young people who disappeared. It is generally accepted that they were devoured. However, a bull is not a carnivore, neither is a Greek a cannibal. This is a short-sighted option, according to Picasso and Rolando Toro, among others. They have their own vision with which they fathom the mystery of the Minotaur. To them it would seem logical that the Minotaur represents intuitive power and that a good time was had by all in the labyrinth, without anyone being devoured. In Fellini’s film Theseus becomes friends with the Minotaur, giving recognition to the fact that the story of the Minotaur and his mother is about the primordial power (primal spirit) that lives in us all and that is in danger of dying unless we acknowledge, accept and integrate it.

Uninhibited

In one of Picasso’s many etchings on this subject we see the Minotaur with people fleeing in panic. Only an uninhibited young girl with a lantern in her hand welcomes the Minotaur with a bouquet of flowers. Children, including the child within us, are fascinated by primal power rather than frightened by it. The numerous films about monsters, freaks and primordial beasts bear witness to this, and in fairytales, myths and legends this primal force is always present in one form or another. The slaughter of the Minotaur symbolizes the killing of primal spirit, of our intuition. When we challenge primal spirit in its natural purity, it can be integrated and begin to work for us, instead of against us. Only then will we be able to live with passion, surrendering to reality as it is, without fear. We will be guided by primal spirit, instead of being the pawn of an outside world which only wants to curb this life force.

Tree of fears

Rolando Toro introduced the ‘Tree of Fears’ in his Minotaur Project. This tree has four main branches, one symbolises fear of life, the second the fear of love, the third fear of power and expression and the fourth the fear of the original, primal spirit. From these many smaller branches grow, bearing the fruit of our fears. According to Rolando Toro, people in general are less afraid of death than of love. Many have the courage to die for an ideal or patriotism, or to kill themselves but lack the courage to love. Fear of chaos and surrender keeps them in the dark and therefore they miss the beautiful moment of transition from darkness to light.

However, right in the depths of the pit of darkness lies the seed of transformation.
The quantum physicist Ilja Prigogynie calls this the ‘dissipative zone’ in which the seed of implicit order lies hidden. When you succumb to the chaos or you lose your money, your partner or your work; when a loved one dies or you fall sick, then this becomes the humus which makes germination of the seed of transformation possible. Toro names it the ‘seed of eternity’. When you have nothing more to lose and you surrender, the process of growth begins.

Labyrinth

The labyrinth is an archetypal symbol of life and is also seen as symbolizing the personality or the ego in which man has lost his way and his contact with primal spirit. This has been expressed in numerous cultures and art forms. The Minotaur is often depicted with a childlike candour as, for example, Fellini did in allowing Theseus to make friends with the monster. When we embrace this same open-mindedness, life will no longer be a menacing labyrinth in which we might be devoured, but rather an adventure of awakening consciousness. In this sense the Minotaur is more a divine being than a monster.

If things are not going so well for you – if you suffer physically or mentally and are afraid, angry or sad – your situation can be compared to that of being ensnared in a labyrinth. You feel imprisoned, threatened and see no way out.

Little girl with flowers

Are you going to remain behind in your labyrinth all alone? Or is there still a little girl with her bouquet of flowers and her lantern standing nearby, just as in Picasso’s picture? In other words, do you still have the same open-mindedness you once had so abundantly as a child, to explore your labyrinth?

Primal power is sacred and creates life. That the creation of life is pure pleasure gives evidence of a great cosmic intelligence and wisdom which draws a baby to its mother’s breast, pollen to flowers and male to female. It is the eternal momentum. Do you have the courage to acknowledge the Minotaur in yourself, to lay it bare, to love and accept it? Do you dare to defy the fears which are preventing this?

If you are afraid of others watching you, of being ridiculed and made to look foolish, dare to just feel your fear and if you make a fool of yourself - “So what?” - Things always turn out differently than you expect.

All these fears are inter-connected and stem from the same mechanism, that is, the fear of losing one’s identity (the ego death). Once you have freed yourself of this fear, the rest of your fears will disappear automatically.

Instead of adjuring your fears, you could explore the labyrinth in yourself, shedding some light on it and approaching it in the same way as the little girl with flowers welcomes the Minotaur. Then the tree of fear can become a succulent tree of life once more, providing you with the courage to love and the freedom to act.

Just imagine that you are that succulent tree of life, with your roots deep in the earth and your crown soaring heavenwards.

Just imagine that you are the Minotaur.

Imagine being the little girl with the flowers who is not afraid of primal power.
**Self-examination**

How do you feel now? Try to give an alternative response to “Fine” or “Not too well” – try to really examine how you feel. With respect and loving attention, observe everything happening in yourself: your feelings, your thoughts and where and what you feel physically. Follow the movement and describe the changes.

What do you feel would be left of you if you lost your personal identity and died the ego death?

Is it possible for you to achieve this? Or not? What effect does it have on you from within?

If you fail to achieve this, are you judgemental about it?

Which impulses in yourself have you failed to follow in the past?

What have you left unfinished? For what do you lack the courage? What are the consequences of this in your life? How do you deal with these impulses now?

Which of the fears in the Tree of Fear do you recognize? Do you dare to feel them or do you try to suppress them? What is the influence of specific fears on your life? How do you cope with them?

When and where do you stop being self-supporting (giving yourself non-judgemental attention)?

What happens when you no longer support yourself?

How do you recognize this? What happens?

Do you feel a connection with the open-minded being that you essentially are? How do you feel at such moments? What effect does this have?

Are you now tapping the Source?

Just surrender to the experience – without attempting to verbalise it.
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WEBSITES

**Reichiaanse therapie**

Lichaamsgerichte Reichiaanse therapie, postural integration, haptotherapie: Carla van Huis (carls@vanhuis.com)

Lichaamsgerichte Reichiaanse therapie, coaching, bindweefselmassage:

Fred Scholte (fredscholte@hotmail.com)

**Biodanza**

[www.biodanza.nl](http://www.biodanza.nl)