

INNER WORK IS THE HERO'S JOURNEY:
MYTHIC INTERPRETATIONS OF HOLOTROPIC BREATHWORK

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DENNIS R. ARCHAMBAULT

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This dissertation has been
accepted for the faculty of
Pacifica Graduate Institute by:

Patrick J. Mahaffey, PhD
Chair

Dana C. White, PhD
Reader

Julie Lapham, PhD
External Reader

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ABSTRACT

Inner Work is the Hero's Journey: Mythic Interpretations of Holotropic Breathwork

by

Dennis R. Archambault

Individuals engaging their psyches through depth exploration act heroically. This process of individuation is arduous and provokes unceasing variations of issues for resolution. Success is not quick, easy, or assured, but this personal dedication to a fully manifested life often leads to a higher level of consciousness and a sense of meaning.

Myths worldwide narrate imaginal stories of cultural heroes who discover their deepest truths. It takes a hero's courage to make decisions, even everyday ones, and none is more profound than that of embracing experiential, psychic exploration. Heroic inner workers nurture manifesting spirits through psychological rebirths.

From personal experience, few deep healing modalities upwell mythic imagery for their psychic insights and personal truths as successfully as Holotropic Breathwork. The most profound trauma revealed is often that from birth itself, which is too often compounded by societal unconsciousness.

The survival of endangered life forms on our beautiful, blue water planet rests on this modern hero's journey of personal exploration. Deep psychic wounds must be healed. If we are to prohibit the use of

weapons of mass destruction, we must act consciously individually and collectively. Unconsciousness is historically manipulated for personal political power by “Dark Numinosity” archetypes [malefic abusers of sacral-psychic knowledge] that infect the social body with psychic epidemics that lead to wholesale death and destruction. Thwarting this predatory impetus to slaughter may very well depend upon individuals who embrace inner work, and with gained consciousness inform their fellow humans of psychologically healthier courses of action.

Engaging inner work is the modern hero’s journey, and it manifests a life blessed with meaning. This is our time; planetary survival is our imperative.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife and soulmate, Jeanne T. Trudeau, PhD. She is always there in support, in sickness and health, and for better or worse.

I want to acknowledge Stanislav Grof, MD, PhD, for his encouragement of this study, his ready access throughout the writing of this dissertation, his personal involvement in developing the chart of mythic images and personages arising from each of the Basic Perinatal Matrices, and his sharing a copy of his extensive BPM slide show.

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The style used throughout this dissertation is in accordance with the *Modern Language Association Style Manual* (second edition, 1998) and Pacifica Graduate Institute's Dissertation Handbook (2009-2010).

Chapter 1 Introduction

Inner work is the hero's journey. Individuals engaging their psyches through depth exploration act heroically. This process of individuation is arduous and provokes unceasing variations of issues for resolution. Success is not quick, easy, or assured, but this personal dedication to a fully manifested life often leads to a higher level of consciousness and a sense of meaning.

Myths worldwide narrate imaginal stories of cultural heroes who discover their deepest truths. It takes a hero's courage to make decisions, even everyday ones, and none is more profound than that of embracing experiential, psychic exploration. Inner workers nurture manifesting spirits through psychological rebirths.

Psychoanalyst Carl G. Jung, in *The Red Book*, asked himself "what is the myth you are living?" (Shamdasani 197). He did not know the answer. Those who do inner work probably cannot answer either; thus, they undertake an adventure into their unconscious. The unknown becomes known with persistent effort, and enlightenment and healing ensue. The hero of great deeds becomes an illuminating paradigm for others to follow for a life path into primal realms. The superpersonal and transcendent energies that populate the invisible realms of this mythic world become visible forms that the human mind can contemplate.

Those engaged in inner work discover that their personal images are often found embodied in mythological characters who behave as they do

in the present, and many find within themselves the wish that they could act with impunity as did mythic gods of antiquity. The value of such figures is in identifying with them. It takes deliberate effort to allow that which upwells from the psyche to be fully experienced, and perhaps re-lived through them. Inner work is inherently risky and “by descending into the unconscious, the conscious mind puts itself in a perilous position, for it is apparently extinguishing itself” (Jung, *CW* 12: 437).

Deep healing needs time to incorporate increasing levels of consciousness before one can gaze directly upon inner divinities without being consumed by the immense and sometimes destructive power they can unleash.

Friedrich Nietzsche describes today’s hero in his poem, “Between Birds of Prey,” when he writes that Zarathustra sought the heaviest burden and found himself (Luchte and Leadon 90). In “Faust,” Goethe warns inner workers that “through solitudes you will be whirled and driven” (47: 152).

The seeker’s path to wholeness, to consciousness, is nearly always complicated by his or her past which resists change and new integrations, and which also obstructs access to Self. Emile Durkheim appears to concur when he writes that “we hold to the profane world by all the fibers of our flesh; our senses attach us to it, our life depends upon it [and] we cannot detach ourselves from it [without] painfully wounding our instincts” (351). In the end, determination alone, to grow into consciousness by overcoming psychic hindrances, seems to be the hallmark of today’s inner worker hero.

Inner workers discover many issues for transmutation in breathsessions, including personal faults, guilt from hurtful behaviors, moral weaknesses, ongoing “sins” of omission and commission, among a host of others. Consciousness does carry a heavy price, yet it also affords life-enhancing gains in developing one’s character, maturing an ability to discern good from evil, cultivating an acceptance of personal responsibility, increasing self-nurturance, and evolving a communal identity. These are the fruits that inner workers can harvest from depth exploration.

This dissertation interprets images that arise mythically in one healing modality, Holotropic Breathwork (HB), through which “it is possible to induce profound changes of consciousness by techniques which involve breathing” (Grof, *The Adventure of Self-Discovery* 170). Psychiatrist Stanislav Grof and his wife Christina Grof developed Holotropic Breathwork in 1976. They integrate perspectives from modern consciousness research, anthropology, and various depth psychologies. The word *holotropic* (from the Greek *holos* = whole and *trepein* = to move toward) literally means “moving toward wholeness.” This method utilizes the spontaneous healing potential of the psyche (human’s innermost essence), and its energy becomes available in nonordinary states of consciousness. Induced by deep and accelerated breathing, evocative music in a special setting, focused body work, and artistic expression, Holotropic Breathwork participants journey into their

depths. “People who complete certain core material from birth often free themselves to make new choices” (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 64).

Many other experiential and healing modalities are equally valid, such as: “Jungian analysis, psychosynthesis, various neo-Reichian approaches, Gestalt practice, modified forms of primal therapy, guided imagery with music, Rolfing, various techniques of rebirthing, past-life regression, [and] auditing in scientology” (Grof, *Beyond the Brain* 29). Others, especially in the traditions of the Far East, also include techniques requiring focused breath discipline.

Grof, in *Realms of Human Unconscious*, constructs his cartography [map] of the human psyche called the Basic Perinatal Matrix [BPM]. The term *perinatal* is a Greek-Latin composite word in which the prefix *peri-* means around or near, and the root *-natalis* denotes relation to birth. The four matrices [phases] pertain to the birthing process. Perinatal is considered to be the period spanning conception to the first ten months of life.

BPM 1 reflects the “original condition of the intrauterine existence, during which the child and mother form a symbiotic unity,” that is closely related to religious and mystical states of enlightenment (104). Ecstatic feelings are especially prevalent, and bliss is the sense of effortless perpetual contentment.

BPM 2 is related to the first clinical stage of delivery. “The world of the fetus is disturbed, at first insidiously through chemical influences,

later in grossly mechanical ways by periodic contractions” (115). This state of extreme emergency and life threat is due to the cervix not yet dilating, while compression forces continue unabated. LSD subjects [later confirmed by Holotropic Breathwork] feel themselves caged in a claustrophobic world of incredible physical and psychological torture.

The experience of the Second Matrix is reflected in the works of existentialists Kierkegaard, Camus, and Sartre, who write of separation, alienation, loneliness, hopelessness, inferiority, and unexplained guilt. Futile suffering is given mythic expression in the form of Sisyphus and his unsuccessful attempt to roll a boulder uphill, of Ixion affixed to a rolling wheel of fire for eternity, and of Tantalus agonizing in hunger and thirst—yet tempted by nearby fruit and water just out of reach.

BPM 3 is an encounter with death. “For the fetus, this involves an enormous struggle for survival, with mechanical crushing pressures and frequently a high degree of suffocation” (124). In discussion sessions, breathworkers relate images and scenes of complex, catastrophic events. Third Matrix scenes are of havoc, such as the destruction of Atlantis, the end of Pompeii, and the biblical Armageddon. These images are mixed with floods, fires, earthquakes, tsunamis, desiccating winds, and swarming insect infestations. BPM 3 experiences are also accompanied by illuminating insights into human nature, society, and institutionalized phenomena such as political-power structures, war, and religion.

BPM 4 manifests, on a symbolic and spiritual level, the death-

rebirth experience, “it represents the termination and resolution of the death-rebirth struggle” (138). Individuals feel cleansed and purged, as if they have disposed of an incredible amount of “garbage” (dysfunctional beliefs and behaviors). BPM 4 is the matrix of actual birth, but it is also the matrix of rebirth ceremonies. Mythic figures of BPM 4 emphasize superhuman achievements, such as those of Hercules cleaning stables, Saint George slaying the Dragon, and Theseus defeating the Minotaur.

Grof cautions that in a therapy context the natural chronological order of BPMs does not necessarily follow sequentially because perinatal matrices show great inter-individual and intra-individual variability in depth exploration breathsessions.

Mythic consciousness also occurs in prayer, meditation, ecstatic dance, art, ascetic withdrawal, isolation trials, religious rituals, temple ceremonies, experiential healing modalities, and initiations of all sorts. According to mythologist Joseph Campbell, consciousness does have limits; it “can no more invent, or even predict, an effective symbol than foretell or control tonight’s dream” (*The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 389). Consciousness is an “after-sensation” realization of the nature of that experience; it is a past tense moment in a present moment understanding. Experiential depth work is a practical approach rather than a theoretical discussion of the depth issue, and it generates a plethora of psychic images with energetic discharges. With many individuals, a “failure to cope with a life situation must be laid, in the end, to a restriction of

consciousness,” (121) whereas heroes [inner workers] become containers that carry forward the evolution of human consciousness.

The problem of humankind today, in comparison to earlier epochs of coordinating mythologies, is that the “social unit is not the carrier of religious content, but an economic-political organization” (Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 387). There is no meaning in the group, but only in the individual. The modern hero-quest is for an internalized image of god who is immanent and must be made known to consciousness. Contemporary life displays all the classic symptoms of the wasteland kingdom—its famine, environmental damage, personal despair, war, and species annihilation. Many people fill their sense of emptiness with diversions of all kinds. The oft-lamented pace of modern life may be a cover for mindless motion that attempts an illusion of purpose.

Mythic figures provide insights into resolving personal conflicts they embody. Those who presume to be heroes are quickly tested by ordeals and trials. Only by defeating the “monster of the status quo: Holdfast” [the tyranny of a fettered past] can the hero be a change-agent (Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 337). Much is asked in the attempt, and much is demanded by the deed. In their search for identity and wholeness, heroes bring gross and subtle aspects of order out of chaos and beget light and resolution while snuffing out dark torments and ever-present doubt.

Not everyone is compelled to embark upon the hero's journey. If one's birth trauma, wounding childhood, and societal estrangement are all minimal or nonexistent, one may be in accord with one's era and group, and may experience no impulse, drive, or interest for depth exploration. This dissertation addresses those who *do* quest, and who do seek their own protean facility that awakens psychic images slumbering in the stone of body-armored muscles, refused memories, and denied traumatic images.

Jung writes that heroes are those who depart on a passage to an inner solitude of a "land not created" (CW 18: 671). They serve as their own pioneering elders who settle in the fluid frontiers of amalgamating borders that circumscribe conscious and unconscious realms. The mythic, imaginal plane slips between the two realms and bonds the fringes between them. Many individuals will not engage this trek through their personal undergrowth but will choose instead to define themselves by their material possessions: cars, houses, and clothes—and still feel empty inside. Those who do not work with purpose or passion that expresses their authenticity but who follow dictates defined by society often experience death bed regrets of not achieving what they know was possible had they taken initiative in life.

The hero inner worker does not accept such forlorn desolation but rather engages cathartic procedures by which past experiences can be "abreacted and discharged" (re-enacted and dissipated) (Freud, *SE 2*:

xix). The individual may be freed of those psychic wounds or may at least learn to accept the magnitude of unconscious issues for further experiential engagements. The knights of King Arthur's court sought the Holy Grail but would not (and inner workers cannot) go forth in a group. Each depth explorer must enter the forest at a point where it is darkest and where no way or path yet exists. For the knights, this was a display of martial courage, but for heroic inner workers, it is less a demonstration of fortitude than a realization that they cannot rely on the group but only on themselves. If not now, when? If not they, who? Heroes affirm that they are *that* person and *now* is their time.

In inner work, heroes exercise willed introversion and activate unconscious images to achieve illumination beyond what Campbell calls "the dark walls of our living death" (*The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 259). It is in the dramatic character of heroes to act or to do, and in that determination heroes are fully engaged in life's meaning. The cost is high. Heroes are estranged from their societies because their exile is the first step in a life quest for consciousness. They overcome personal weaknesses and accept their nameless, unloved, and unchecked parts that have become dictatorial. This challenge requires the "suffering of conflict and surrendering oneself to it" (Murdock 158). Jung adds that even "physical pain is a psychic image" which is experienced as sense impressions (CW 8: 680), and the imaginal personalities discussed later in this dissertation exemplify this.

Depth work equals transfiguration in which heroes undergo the most difficult rites of passage with their initiations into the mysterious and frightening unknown. Courage sustains inner work, especially when it feels as if one's very survival is at risk. "*Breathe through it*" is the Holotropic Breathwork idiom that reverberates in the minds of participants in a breathsession.

A hero's return may not be welcomed, even when they arrive bearing their treasure. Those who will be displaced resist returning heroes in order to maintain control. Campbell cautions that heroes of yesterday become "tyrants of tomorrow unless [they] crucify themselves today" (*The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 253). This sacrifice is inherent in the hero's journey and is ongoing until their final day of life. Throughout this time, the hero must apply great caution against hubristic impulses, or the dark side will emerge again to the delight of vengeful gods.

Jung muses that the symbols of death and rebirth serve the purpose of all mystery religions (CW 5: 644), and inner work seeks intimacy with these powerful forces of the underworld realms which deserve the utmost respect. People are startled to hear, as Robert Johnson states in *Inner Work*, that if they do not go to the spirit, the spirit will go to them in the form of a neurosis (a psychic eruption creating a range of disorders) (10). The disaster overtaking the modern world is the complete splitting off of the conscious mind from its roots in

the unconscious, to the point where gods and devils have become rationalized out of existence.

Heroes of old descend into deep underworlds to explore grotto niches where treasures are hidden. They discover that their new riches are accompanied by coiled and darker impulses. Greed and power pervert the human species, and these venomous bites destroy many good intentions and much good character. The psyche holds much for humans to fear, including their prolific weaknesses. The tales of heroic daring are more impressive because heroes understand these dangers and yet still proceed toward the treasure of their search.

Jung proposes that an inner work quest is allowing the unknown, and where one will meet one's shadow (*CW 9i: 45*). It is in the dark places of the soul that the ulterior, shadowy side feasts on the bounty of all that is repressed until it becomes so powerful as to burst from below to challenge the known above. No one who goes down the deep well is spared, and as Dante warns in the *Divine Comedy*, "Abandon Every Hope, Who Enter Here" (*Inf. 3.9*). Explorers are compelled to enter pits, labyrinths, caverns, tunnels, wells, underground passages, the wilderness, symbolic netherworld tombs, and even to be buried today in coffins, as part of the latest fad, and rescued before the air in the casket is depleted.

In dramatic storylines the hero may die and be symbolically reborn, not unlike the death-rebirth experiences of inner work. As the

priest ousted the magician, inner workers now oust priests. Magic rituals give way to sacrifice, which is replaced by self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice by inner workers is necessary in order to prepare them to receive that which they seek. Confusion reigns in the uninitiated, and when suicide bombers detonate themselves among innocent bystanders, they exemplify “sadistic tendencies under a cloak of virtue” (Laplanche and Pontalis 378). Lost souls take self-sacrifice literally, not literarily. The wisdom of wholeness, however, is needed to find great meaning in service to God while not serving the indiscriminate murder of innocents.

Images are dynamic mosaics composed of symbols. They express themselves in unpredictable movements and in upwellings of psychic energy. “The symbolic imagery of the unconscious is the creative source of the human spirit in all its realizations” (Neumann, *The Great Mother* 17). Through a symbolic language, the unconscious communicates its contents mythically to the conscious mind. In humans’ facility with imagination, primal energies may be transmuted. Freud writes that symbols are “a fragment of extremely ancient inherited mental equipment” (*SE* 18: 242) and our “basic language” (*SE* 19: 135).

Individuals who reject or repress the nature of these energies for the sake of control will find themselves overwhelmed by virulent eruptions as a consequence of this mistaken approach. The conscious mind must embrace primal energies for a fully functioning personality to result. Inner work, prayers, meditation, dreamwork, ceremonies, active

imagination, and mythic imagination are ways to engage these noisome upwellings. The inner process accesses and dissipates them by establishing a nurturing and creative relationship.

At the heart of every hero's story is the confrontation with death. The conquest of the death-fear yields the courage of life, and through this heroes attain relief for their searching spirits. Jung writes that vitality, through self-surrender, renews and releases the hero to embrace the psychological "transcendent function [union of conscious and unconscious contents]" (*CW* 8: 132). It is in this synthesis that individuals derive their unique individuality.

This study interprets mythological imagery upwelling from deep inner explorations with latent (potential) prospects for psychic healing. Participants in Holotropic Breathwork sessions (and other deep inner work modalities) may find gods and goddesses, imaginal creatures, archetypal locations, and animals. In this realm, "buried images remain emotionally resonant" (Verny 186), and personal mythologies manifest themselves out of enstoried psyches and embodied souls. In the past three decades, thirty thousand participants in worldwide Holotropic Breathwork sessions have reported over one hundred mythic images arising from breathsessions, shown in the Table found on page 202.

Jung suggests that in "exceptional states of mind the most far-fetched mythological motifs and symbols can appear autochthonously at any time" (*CW* 8: 229). Experiential inner work modalities embrace

exceptional states of mind which generate dynamic psychic interplays.

Except for the world's ocean depths, the world's geography has mostly been explored; it is the inner world that remains an unknown territory for most. As a nearly certified Holotropic Breathwork facilitator, I have witnessed hundreds of participants revealing new understandings of their psyches in shared feedback following three-hour breathwork sessions. The potential for personal psychological growth is profound, but none is possible without the clarity that results from deep exploration. It is at this deepest level that one must engage and where "the realization of the continuity between the inner and outer worlds can have a healing effect" (Edinger, *Ego and Archetype* 13). Humanity seems universal in expressing nearly identical mythic imagery in its panorama of demons and gods. Images that activate problematic emotions provide the insight needed for healing. Old patterns and dysfunctional behaviors revealed may be excised. The hero's journey entails being in psychic relationship to oneself, one's mythic unconscious, and one's fellow humans. As Campbell adds in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, "The whole sense of the ubiquitous myth of the hero's passage is that it shall serve as a general pattern for men and women [and] therefore it is formulated in the broadest terms" (121). The call to consciousness is the new call to adventure for modern times.

Review of the Literature

The literature utilized in this dissertation is drawn primarily from the fields of depth psychology and mythology. Special attention is given

to Joseph Campbell's work on the nature of the hero's journey and to Stanislav Grof's psychodynamic healing modality known as Holotropic Breathwork.

The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, by Sigmund Freud, is a twenty-three volume set of his pioneering contributions to depth psychology. Freud defines this as "a psychology of those processes in mental life that are withdrawn from consciousness" (SE 18: 251). Freud relates an 1884 anecdote about a midwife that began his thinking about birth trauma. The woman declared that meconium (excreta) was present in the amniotic fluid at birth because the baby was frightened (SE 16: 397). Freud's first mention of birth trauma was twenty-six years later in his 1910 paper "The Psychology of Love" (SE 11: 173). However, he later dropped his attention on birth trauma to focus on the Oedipus complex, which subsequently allowed Otto Rank, one of his colleagues, to publish *The Trauma of Birth*. Freud did, however, define the affect of trauma to be that "traumatic experiences owe their pathogenic force to the fact that they produce quantities of excitation too large to be dealt with in the normal way" (SE 2: xx). It is here that inner workers toil to dissipate residue excitation.

Freud provides many other insights related to this dissertation. He discusses the link between screaming and the perception of an image that arouses pain (SE 1: 366). Vocalization is integral to experiential

depth exploration, including Holotropic Breathwork and other intensive healing modalities. Facilitators urge breathsession participants not to restrain expression in the course of their three-hour sessions. Venting releases pent-up and often toxic memories and resolves much of the charge of their repressed energy.

In the chapter “The Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena,” Freud also expresses his great surprise at the rapidity of healing when he assists patients achieve clarity regarding memory (*SE* 2: 6). The same approach is successful in breathsessions in which participants allow psychic upwellings of images and energies to manifest into consciousness, thus allowing for resolution.

Freud acknowledges the importance of fantasies and unconscious thoughts about life in the womb. This dissertation explores these with Holotropic Breathwork’s Basic Perinatal Matrix (BPM) mythic imagery. Freud observes that if he finds someone bearing all the signs of painful affect—weeping, screaming, and raging—he understands that a mental process is occurring in the individual in which the physical phenomena are appropriate expressions of the sensed images (*SE* 3: 19). Deep experiential work generates a significant level of this activity in breathsessions. In the chapter “The Psychological Characteristics of Dreams,” Freud adds that an explanation of dream images requires a cessation in the “authoritative activity of the self” (*SE* 4: 51), and he correlates dreams and myths when he writes that “in the manifest

content of dreams we find familiar themes in myths” (SE 22: 25).

Breathworkers are taught to let go and to allow what arises in consciousness, a process which requires the ego to be minimized.

Freud reveals that over time he became aware that his patients had unconscious memories of life in the womb, and that for many, this produces a sense of being buried alive (SE 5: 400). This is precisely what many breathworkers experience in BPM 2. The Second Matrix is one of entrapment, in tombs and coffins, and of being swallowed by mythic animals: crocodile, dragon, giant serpent, leviathan, mythic beast, octopus, and tarantula/spiders.

In the chapter “Determinism and Suppression,” Freud writes that “the mythological view of the world is nothing but psychology projected into the external world” (SE 6: 258). Campbell updates this by saying that the problems of humankind today are caused by not having “great co-ordinating mythologies” (*The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 388). The need for psychic engagements of mythological and psychological projections must now be filled by depth explorers on heroic journeys who seek a relationship to life itself from his or her own deep mystery, and that from humanity. “It is not society that is to guide and save the creative hero, but precisely the reverse” (391).

In the chapter “Five Lectures on Psycho-analysis,” Freud christens a successful process of disclosure as a “talking cure” when his patients relate fantasies without suppressing details (SE 11: 13). Disclosure in

breathwork sessions and in closing meetings is an essential part of the overall Holotropic process and healing modalities. In the chapter “On Beginning the Treatment,” Freud rejects the notion that personal improvement can be easily made. Individuals must utilize a rigorous recollection process that connects repressed material for resolution with consciousness (*SE* 12: 142). He strongly asserts that no change is possible until the conscious thought process has penetrated the unconscious and overcome resistances of repression found there. Deep inner work does penetrate to such a level, although it comes only with great effort and time.

Freud makes an observation that still resonates in today’s healing modalities in the chapter “Unconscious Emotions.” “Repression results not only in withholding things from consciousness but also in preventing muscular activity” (*SE* 14: 179). The work of Wilhelm Reich showed that repression of traumatic events leads to the rigidifying of muscular motion, which he named body armoring, with its lost freedom of body movement. This state is created when humans tense up or lock down as a result of traumatic or painful experiences, and over time these repeated patterns of not feeling the pain solidify the musculature against feelings. In this observation, Freud initiates a mind-body integration that has been embraced a century later by participants in inner work.

In the chapter “Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety,” Freud also introduces in a reference to magical acts of undoing what has been done

by “means of motor symbolism, to ‘blow away’ ” (SE 20: 119). Breath exercise and manipulation have a long, worldwide history as means of entering deep states of consciousness, particularly in breathsessions. The past is reentered and major issues are resolved.

The Language of Psycho-Analysis, by Laplanche and Pontalis, provides a special vocabulary of psychoanalysis. In the definition of “Experience of Satisfaction,” Freud is quoted as postulating that the experience of satisfaction correlates with “initial helplessness” requiring another’s aid in obtaining the sought-for item (156). Freud essentially describes one of the basic design elements in Holotropic Breathwork. Each participant is partnered with another, called a sitter. One participant breathes in a three-hour session while the sitter attends to the breather’s needs by dispensing facial tissue, water, blankets, vomit bags, and other items that serve the breathsession. Appropriate requests are accepted and supported. Early frustrations in helplessness and obtaining satisfaction are diminished with each breathsession.

Under the definition of “Primal Phantasies,” the authors quote Freud’s assertion that the universality of interuterine existence is responsible for the organization of phantasy life regardless of personal experience and that they constitute a “phylogenetically transmitted inheritance” (331). This is reminiscent of Jung’s collective unconscious. It seems that the human spirit marches to ancient rhythms. In the definition of “Life Instincts,” Freud discusses his concept of the death

instinct—that it is a sensed return to an earlier state, a less organized form, and at a most basic energy level. Freud asserts that a rudimentary sense of death in the soul of humanity exists which animates dramatic productions of countless death-rebirth initiations worldwide. As will be seen in the chapters on BPM 3 and 4, the transition between these two is often mythologized in such personages as Dionysus, Osiris, and Quetzalcoatl, among others.

In Laplanche and Pontalis' definition "Symbolic Realization," Marguerite Sechehaye is quoted as designating her method of analytic psychotherapy by an attempt to make up for the privations the subject suffered. A client's "needs must be effectively met during the treatment [and in] the same mode as that in which these needs were expressed" (441). From personal experience with psychodrama, developed by Dr. Jacob L. Moreno, it offers an engagement of these needs. Each participant writes a life experience script, with as much detail in setting, tone, and dialog as possible. Staff members and fellow participants are chosen by the participant to play their "life characters." The ensemble recreates the traumatic, harsh memory with dynamic intensity. Fully expressing themselves in the interplay of the psychodrama by saying and doing *now* what needed to be said and done *then*, participants are the protagonists in their own healing dramas. The power of uncensored expression is profound.

Laplanche and Pontalis quote Edward Bibring, who writes, in the

definition “Working-off Mechanism,” that “the repetition of a painful experience under the control of the ego may permit a progressive reduction or assimilation of tensions” (487). Breathsessions allow and encourage these upwellings of troublesome energies, and the element of repetition is inherent in ongoing depth exploration. Inner work takes as long as it takes and may require seemingly inexhaustible repetition, yet this is exactly what participants must work through until they can free themselves from troubling experiences.

In the definition “Secondary Revision,” Laplanche and Pontalis quote from Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* that there is “an intellectual function that demands unity, connection, and intelligibility from any material, whether of perception or thought [and if] it is unable to establish a true connection, it does not hesitate to fabricate a false one” (412). The rise of mythic figures may derive from this imperative to formulate a cause and effect; and, these intercessional forces are often called god(s), whether mythological, pluralistic, or monotheistic. Inner work represents the commitment to understand and resolve the fabrications of identity sustained in the unconscious.

Finally, in the definition “Fixation,” Laplanche and Pontalis quote Freud saying that “the preconditions for fixation are brought about by different historical factors [influence of family configuration and trauma]” (163). Freud develops this thought further when he writes that a fixation to the moment of the traumatic accident lies at their root: “it is as though

the patients had not finished with the traumatic situation” (SE 16: 275). One wonders how many frightening mythological figures are artistically and intuitively created in order that the conscious mind might substitute outer terrifying figures for those which are inner. Mythic images arise during breathsessions as psyche’s offering for a conscious re-experience and resolution of repressed traumatic memories.

The Collected Works of C. G. Jung is twenty volume set of Jung’s pioneering contributions to depth psychology. Jung discusses the positive effects of drawing and painting a psychic situation, especially using colors. Jung writes that “the originally chaotic or frightening impression is replaced by the picture, which, as it were, covers it up” (CW 3: 562). Holotropic Breathwork sees this differently. Participants want a visual representation of the breathsession in their mandala, to render the moment and their feelings artistically for later reflection. Mandala is Sanskrit for *circle* and in this context it also means *center*, with a psychic attribute.

In the chapter “The Theory of Psychoanalysis,” Jung weaves a retelling of an ancient, archetypal hero’s story of the earth appearing in the form of a maiden held prisoner by the winter and covered in ice and snow (CW 4: 494). The young spring sun, the fiery hero, melts her out of the frosty prison where she has long awaited her deliverer. This does reflect a hero’s task, a nature-based one, and a youthful, masculine rescuer. Humanity aspires today to attain a broader definition of hero—

anyone who desires consciousness, and where females are heroes as well as males. It is in the study of mythology that the nature of the subliminal processes is enormously enriched and deepened. The divine hero fights to deliver humanity from the power of darkness.

Jung proposes that humans are “born to the spirit by the fructifying breath of the wind” (*CW* 5: 335). Air movement has universally been mythologized as the agent of new life, such as with the Egyptian legend of vultures, and where “the soul is the magic breath of life” (*CW* 9i: 55). The power of the breath is such that many religious systems utilize it in their devotional practices, as do many healing modalities, such as Holotropic Breathwork.

Jung refers to the mythological complex of the “dying and resurgent god and its primitive precursors” being recharged with magical force in renewal ceremonies (*CW* 6: 325). In early agricultural societies, vegetative celebrations for wheat, corn, and barley ensure a renewed yearly abundance. For the Greeks, the fruit of the vine and wine become the god Dionysus, which is a common figure in BPM 4, the matrix of death and rebirth. This cyclical renewal-rebirth is the essence of the hero’s journey with its separation from home, engaging a transformational process, typified by tests and ordeals in caves, dark underworld grottos, and dangerous places, and overcoming obstacles. Successful, the hero leaves with the sought-for treasure or purpose satisfied.

Jung is explicit, in “Anima and Animus,” that individuals are heroes because “in the final reckoning [they] did not let the monster [of unconsciousness] devour them—not once but many times (*CW* 7: 479). In this achievement heroes are victorious over the negative aspects of the psyche. Inherent in the hero’s journey is a separation between them and their society. The extent to which they are welcomed back with their message is the extent to which the culture is ready to be moved beyond the collective psyche. Jung writes, in the chapter “The Structure of the Psyche,” that the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious (*CW* 8: 325). Since these contents are the psychic functioning of a whole ancestry, the inner worker is in service to a new mythic vision that still taps ancient roots.

In the foreword to “Introduction to Zen Buddhism,” Jung follows up on an earlier reference (above—*CW* 3: 562) when he writes that “imagination itself is a psychic process” (*CW* 11: 889). Imagination is manifested in the mandalas drawn subsequent to breathsessions. And in the chapter “The Symbolism of the Mandala,” Jung also adds that mandala symbols signify nothing less than a psychic center of the personality not to be identified with the ego” (*CW* 12: 126). Still later, in the chapter “The Psychology of the Transference,” he is even more emphatic: “The first indication of a future personality appears in mandala symbols” (*CW* 16: 400). As previously mentioned, creating a mandala is the concluding task of a breathwork session, and it often

reveals, with visual clarity, the breather's imaginal soul.

In the chapter "Paracelsus as a Spiritual Phenomenon," Jung writes that "air = spirit" (CW 13: 201n). Breathwork is an ancient means of engaging deep inner work and is found in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Jung refers to this imaginal content as a realization of active imagination. Breathwork is both the means and the projection screen for upwelling psychic imagery, and in a shamanic context, it is the horse to be ridden to save a soul.

Finally, in the chapter "Rex and Regina," Jung writes that "any renewal not deeply rooted in the best spiritual tradition is ephemeral" (CW 14: 521). Within the renewal process is a dominant (unconscious regulator) that grows from historical roots and acts like a living being within the individual. When breathworkers have breakthroughs they consistently report experiencing a spiritual component that remains throughout their lives. In Holotropic Breathwork such a being is called the inner healer, although many name it their inner guide or inner shaman.

Otto Rank's *The Trauma of Birth* is an important resource for this investigation. As previously mentioned, it was Rank who first fully developed the concept of birth trauma, which precedes Stanislav Grof's Holotropic Breathwork modality. Later works by Sandor Ferenczi, Nandor Fodor, and Lietaert Peerbolte confirm Rank's ideas, including prenatal dynamics. One of Rank's first assertions is that his work draws

attention to the biologically based law that it is “form which determines the content” (xv). This is interpreted in this work as the potential of mythic imagery to reveal underlying tensions and psychic stresses. Rank believes that primal repression [birth trauma] is the cause of a “partial capacity for remembering” (8). It is in the nature of breathwork, and of inner work in general, that achieving full memory reflects psychological clarity. He also suggests that one reason that people enjoy Greek tragedies, with their anxiety and horror, is that they take the opportunity to abreact (act out in behavior, activated imagination, or cathartic language) primal energies for releasing repressed emotions in dramatic cultural productions.

Rank reflects that psychic, neurologic, and organic symptoms are valid for tracing phenomena back to the primal state. A holistic modality integrating body-mind is dynamic, especially the energetic movements on a breathsession mat. In his “Symbolic Adaptation” chapter, Rank writes that the “expulsion from Paradise is often reproduced with all its really experienced sensations and details” (75). Between BPM 1>2, breathwork participants experience the sensation of being thrown out of paradise. This is the core theme of many creative works worldwide that prompts the protagonist to search for the lost haven (and heaven—or as Freud would say, Mother). Rank asserts that the birth expulsion process is traumatic, and many breathsession participants and mandala artists concur. Birth is the first experience of existential aloneness.

Lastly, Rank writes that Greek philosophy begins with Thales's statement "that water is the origin and womb of all things" (168). Many creation myths worldwide are in accord with the belief that all of life is water, when life is enjoyed in suspended bliss. The isolation tanks of the early 1950s, and continuing today, with their super-saturated salt solution, are a means of deep relaxation. The potential for inner work is apparent when, floating nearly on top of the water, participants find that early sense memories arise that conveys being suspended in the womb.

In *Archetypal Psychology: A Brief Account*, James Hillman writes that "any image can be considered archetypal" (13). Completing a mandala at the end of breathsessions, participants express their own archetypes from the images that upwelled in the session and that are portrayed artistically. Hillman writes that archetypes "rather than pointing *at* something archetypal points *to* something, and this is a value" (13). As a portal to something, it is impossible to be detached when creating a mandala; the arisen archetypes will not permit it. The value of the mandala is its primary resonance to the deepest truth of the breather which is accessed in order to recreate the imaginal upwelling.

To study human nature, Hillman writes, is to be at "its most basic level, one must turn to culture (mythology, art, epic, drama, ritual) where these pattern are portrayed" (3). The role of myth in archetypal psychology is not to provide an exhaustive catalog of possible behaviors or to circumscribe forms of transpersonal energies, but rather to open

the questions of life to transpersonal and culturally imaginative reflections. Participation in disciplined deep inner work, with its temporary isolation from everyday events, is more successful than impulsive forays of reflection. Hillman cautions that “one is never beyond the subjectivism given with the soul’s native dominants of fantasy structure” (24). Mythic images are protean by their essence, and because of their fluidity, today’s connection often represents tomorrow’s disconnect. Breathsessions often reveal changes in meaning with mythic upwellings and previous interpretations that were once useful become moribund by forcing old views on new apprehensions. It is precisely because myth presents the exceptional, the exaggerated, and the more-than-human dimension that it represents the suffering of souls. Mythic upwellings are not controllable, and addressing them as a breathsession participant is only successful when the participant meets them on their own ground. The gods reveal patterns of psychopathology that are inherent in the psyche. The way these stories are told indicates a therapeutic insight: humans are their own fictions.

In *Healing Fiction*, Hillman writes that remembering is a commemoration, “a ritual recall of our lives to the images in the background of the soul” (42). In memory is one’s legend and personal mythology. The images found in the BPMs mythologize the birthing process. Fictions that heal, Hillman writes, are “preposterous, unrealizable, and non-literal, from which singleness of meaning is

organically banned” and, this is why psychotherapy has turned to myths to find support of its therapy (102). In breathsessions too, open acceptance is needed for the upwelled, deep psychic material flooding the breathworkers.

According to Hillman, the way we tell our own story is the way we live our life. To be sane, people must recognize their beliefs as fictions and see their hypotheses as fantasies. Taking one’s personal history symbolically, not literally, provides the inner hero with an approach to engaging it, not defining it. Hillman quotes Edward Casey, saying that an image is not content *that* one sees but the *way* one sees. Inner work is learning to unmask one’s persona and to accept whatever truth emerges.

Hillman’s *The Dream and the Underworld* returns to classical theories in terms of the poetics of mythology. The source of mythology, dream, and psychology arises from the same primordial depths. “The underworld is a realm of only psyche, a purely psychical world,” and “to know the psyche at its basic depths, for a true depth, for a true depth psychology, one must go to the underworld” (46). The underworld is the mythological style of describing a psychological cosmos, with its dark side of the soul, its images and shadows, and its gods and figures of death and rebirth. Breathwork is an encounter with these figures. After breathsessions, participants and facilitators meet to share experiences, mandala drawings, and new insights. The process of inner work may be

that of an individual, but such sessions reveal how similar human beings are to one another. Images that arise for one may be a source of insight for others. It is in resemblance, reversion through likeness, that primary principles of psychic events are shared. One breather's experience may be nearly identical to another's, to their great amazement.

Hillman writes that "depth psychology performs the chief function of religion: connecting the individual by means of a practical ritual with the realm of death" (74). Inner work, and breathwork in particular, has the approach, setting, intention, and process that ritualizes the engagement of psychic depths. Death-rebirth experiences invariably are significant issues in three-hour breathsessions. Death appears as a loss of further adventures, human contact, and hope; thus, death is the first fear a hero must conquer. Breathworkers who conquer this fear experience a rebirth; those who do not remain in transition.

The "mandala belongs to the psychic geography of Tibet," Hillman writes (159); however, the Navajo Nation independently developed a nearly identical mandala. The "sand-painted mandalas of the Tibetan and Navajo spiritual traditions, the directional meanings, colors, and symbols are uncannily similar, encoded as they are according to the same system of logic, the dialectical language of nature" (Gold 6). Jung's assertion of a universal collective unconscious appears in these two mandala designs, similarly rendered by disparate peoples. The forms that populate the mandalas of both are differentiated patterns of

polytheistic persons and places. Reading images in their mythical embodiment from a depth perspective reveals archaic forces.

Hillman offers a concept on the nature of the psychopathic personality, that there is an “incorrigible, destructive component that cannot learn and does not change” (163). If this is accurate, perhaps the sense of inexplicable loss expressed in worldwide literary and artistic works is due to an inherent understanding that an ultimate transformation to perfection cannot be attained. Humanity’s “underworld is not only a realm of soul but also one of psychopathy” (163). The best one might hope to attain from it is wisdom. Myth opens humankind to these lessons, but does not ground it because myth’s depth is an allegory that has no bedrock.

In *Re-Visioning Psychology*, Hillman offers an entrance into and behind myth and religion in which the imaginal realm of the psyche is faithful to the reality of the archetypes. He agrees with Jung that fantasy images are “both the raw materials and finished products of the psyche, and they are the privileged mode of access to knowledge of soul” (xvii). Inner work accepts the term *soul* in the context of deep exploration, as it embodies the spirit of imagery stirring from the unconscious. For Hillman, a psychology of image is the basis of a psychology of soul. Hillman writes that “memory not only records, it also confabulates, that is, it makes up imaginary happenings, wholly psychic events;” and, “memory is a form imagination can borrow in order to make its

personified images feel utterly real” (18). Freud says the same thing in the chapter “Secondary Revision,” already mentioned above. These energies are quite vital in breathsessions. Mythical perspectives are significant for imagining, questioning, and going deeper. Ultimately, the breathsession participant does not need to know causes in order to engender a cure. The very act of demonstrating interest in the psyche is rewarded by outpourings of its tumultuous material for consciousness to engage in an ongoing dialog. The overt act of daily recording dreams by inner workers also creates a relationship between them and their deepest essences.

In *Soul’s Code*, Hillman challenges typical mistakes that people make in “identifying vocation only with a specific job” rather than how the job is performed (252). For character, it is not *what* is done but the *way* it is done. Hillman challenges sociology, psychology, and economics—and civilization itself—that seem “unable to estimate the worth of such people who do not stand out” (257). Those who walk outside such narrow boundaries, who listen to the quiet voice within, and who provide their own assessment of their worth are called heroes. A *daimon* is a calling, or a soul, or wisdom’s voice in the ancient world. It is analogous to Holotropic Breathwork’s inner healer, which is said also to be a figure from “our place of inner wisdom” who gives specific guidance in intimate psychic realities.

Individuals can see their visible image in a mirror and may come to

confront their inner truth. An exercise in group therapy that many have found excruciating, to the point of avoiding it, is the use of a full-length (or large) mirror in the privacy of one's home. The exercise is to stand naked in front of the mirror for five minutes, then to report on feelings at the next group session. Most people recount deep, primal rejection of their bodies, and of themselves. The hero's journey is a turning inward process, despite discomfort or disquietude. One of the most profound benefits of inner work is in accepting oneself with imperfections, and realizing perfection itself is a "myth."

In *Inner Work*, Robert A. Johnson writes that a "highly conscious ritual sends a powerful message back to the unconscious, causing changes to take place at the deep levels where our attitudes and values originate" (100). Holotropic Breathwork sessions include a ritualized relaxation induction and solicitation of support by the participant's inner healer to guide the breather throughout the session. The invocation of their deepest wisdom brings forth an inherent trust in the healing potential of their unconscious. Many upwelled images may be ugly, but the healing potential is revealed in their particular form of wounding. Johnson cautions great care when approaching the unconscious and exploring its depths. It is powerful—and in control. Respect must be given it if we want to live intimately with the powerful forces of the inner world. Heroes participate in mitigating the "disaster that has overtaken the modern world [in] the complete splitting off of the conscious mind

from its roots in the unconscious” (9). Johnson adds that consciousness is not a competition for highest honors; “it is better just to do your humble inner work” (217).

In *Transformation*, Johnson uses Hamlet as a metaphor for the emptiness and loneliness of modern existential life because he has “no roots in the instinctive world and his head is not yet in the heavens, where he can gain the nourishment of enlightenment” (36). There is no peace in such a life, he asserts, except when Hamlet, or an inner worker, becomes conscious. Inner work, and breathwork especially, releases enormous amounts of energy and allows passivity, depression, and seclusion to dissipate.

Sounding almost like a Holotropic Breathwork facilitator, Johnson urges that artistic visualizations be accepted on their own merit when individuals enter into the depth exploration process. So many artists, he cautions, “failed their calling because of a limited, less-than-perfect expression of their vision” (91). Trying to capture the elaborate spirit of a breathsession is impossible for most; for breathworkers however, imperfection is warmly encouraged.

In *Mythology of the Soul*, Jungian analyst H. G. Baynes writes that “what is repressed is not extinguished: the ever-increasing tension caused by the repression of essential vital elements mounts eventually to an explosion” (669). The birth of the soul begins with the realization that this is found in the individual psyche. Those in deep inner work are

those who apprehend this existence within themselves. The inherited life-will at its deepest core, the soul, contains unfilled psychic potential. Breathwork sessions generate a host of mythic forces and some may be considered life guides. Baynes cautions, however, that there is a danger in taking “mythological symbols much too concretely” because of the bewilderment occurring with their endless contradictions (693). Fantasy figures are symbolic and cannot be measured, weighed, or intellectually apprehended because no definite and constant meaning is affixed to them. They are suggestive only for the inner worker and are not a mandate for rote deeds of behavioral repetition. Fantasy is the medium of future achievement. It is the manifestation of instinctual potential which envisions a deep realization of inherent talents and skills. As allegory, this potential finds manifestation in the inner healer who also acts as an inner shaman.

Baynes writes that the “primitive origin of the mandala design is the magic circle that was made around the consecrated place to protect it from inimical spirits,” such as that found in the earthwork surrounding the temple at Stonehenge (304). The mandala celebrates an initiatory essence in its beckoning of divinity. It has a unifying effect by “possessing the power of bringing attention and interest back into the center of being” (583). The drawn mandala at the end of a breathsession provides an integrated vision of that experience.

Psychic support may be reflected in the Holotropic belief that one

receives exactly the issues for engagement in each breathsession, despite any breather's goals to resolve other issues. The participant is the one *who* breathes, but more importantly, *is* breathed. Invoking the inner shaman, an instinctive and reflective image, seekers are guided to their own healing wisdom and to spiritual and cosmic mysteries.

In *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, Erich Neumann writes that "the hero is the archetypal forerunner of humankind in general" and that their fate is the pattern with which the masses of humanity must live. The hero represents the struggles of "consciousness and the ego against the unconscious" (251). Heroes gain possession of the masculine and feminine sides of themselves. Jung adds that they integrate their anima and animus as inflections of the conscious and unconscious. Neumann asserts that heroes are like others, mortal and collective, "yet at the same time [they] feel [themselves] a stranger to the community" (136). The hero of today, the inner worker, is one who finds *communitas* (unstructured community in which everyone is equal) by joining societies focused around healing modalities. The premise that society integrates the hero contains a profound opposition: the hero also integrates the society. Restlessness abides deep within the human species, and the initiation of society into heroism may be one indication of a modern development toward expanding consciousness.

Rebirth is the object of initiation rites. All who are initiated, and who undergo a profound shift in consciousness, are reborn, transformed,

and learn to appreciate their higher spiritual nature. Neumann writes that in myth and ritual a revivifying self appears in the form of a god at the ego's experience of its death, and the "hero myth is fulfilled only when the ego identifies with this self" (255). The hero realizes that the support of heaven at the moment of ego death means nothing less than to be born anew. Breathworkers in the Third Matrix experience mythic gods with a death-rebirth attribute, such as Osiris, Orpheus, Attis, Balder, and Dionysus, to name a few. Paradoxically, wholeness is created when the personality experiences ego death simultaneously with self-birth.

Native American Indians' "essential content of initiation is the acquisition of an individual 'guardian spirit'" (145). Holotropic Breathworkers share this concept of an "inner healer" and welcome it to play a decisive role in their sessions and lives, as do shamans, priests, and prophetic figures. Inner work amalgamates these figures in the depth process of attaining higher consciousness.

In *The Archetype of Renewal*, D. Stephenson Bond discusses the modern world and that its ways of functioning "are no longer sufficient to the moment" and the loss of guiding principles amounts to a crisis of faith (7). Referring to the Babylonian Akitu ceremony, Bond describes a time in history analogous to modernity when mythological undercurrents of death and rebirth attended the end of the world [by apocalypse] and the dawning of a new age.

Bond's work explores current societal forces and concludes that the present return of chaos is typical of that which comes at the end of historical cycles, such as in a Kali Yuga, which in Hindu scripture is the last of four cycles and an age of vice and violence. "Life has a way of confronting us with experiences that shatter our convictions. As life goes on, old attitudes are proved to be inadequate to the challenge" (23). The modern world is at such a juncture; however, individuals find peace and meaning in their personal myths, guiding fictions, and cognitive scripts. Each of these is a core component of separate healing modalities utilized by inner workers.

Modern life "at the collective level [has] symptoms [that] include a breakdown of cultural values due to the lack of psychic authority in old formulas that are no longer numinous [and] a splintering of cultural power centers due to competing claims" (33). On a personal level, the symptoms are of a loss of faith and "a sense of stuckness or inability to make progress, the loss of a job or relationship, and a disinterest in things one previously found interesting" (32). Societal and individual malaise is the result.

Inner workers, and even those that are not, live in a culture that no longer transmits a guiding principle of how to live life meaningfully, and are now "thrown back into their own inner resources to find it" (114). Breathwork sessions reveal a number of mythic figures that arise as mirrors of inner truths and may, in their lessons, enrich breathworkers

who resonate to their own unconscious through them.

In *Through Pediatrics to Psycho-Analysis*, D. W. Winnicott compares “external reality not so much with fantasy as with inner reality,” and he warns that “fantasy is part of the individual’s effort to deal with inner reality” (xiv). His patients, he claims, achieve successful breakthroughs when they see how their dissociations of true and false selves operate in them. Inner workers learn to (re)experience that which has been muted, hurt, and misused ruthlessly by others. In the introduction, M. Masud R. Khan explains that Winnicott chides adherents to the traditional psychoanalytic approach because they use a specialized language “in a way vastly beyond their [patients’] means and capacity” (xxxiii). This self-aggrandizing lexicon severs the connection needed for a therapist-patient relationship. It is imperative that the analyst allow patients the space, time, and opportunity to recount their hurts and deprivations in the best manner they can. It is equally imperative that inner workers allow their deepest truths to be heard without adding restrictions that inhibit depth exploration.

Winnicott writes that Freud (and Rank in his *Trauma of Birth*) “believed in the significance of birth trauma as a scientific worker, and not only as an intuitive thinker” (175). Complete resolution needs “a reliving of the traumatic birth experience in the analytic setting” (190); however, he adds that “there is no such thing as treatment by the analysis of birth trauma alone” (193). The appeal of complex death-

rebirth ceremonies, and inner work itself, arises from individuals who intuit or who know traumas related to their own birth, childhood, and adulthood and who subsequently engage in depth exploration modalities to heal them.

Winnicott and Grof agree that emotional development begins while the infant is still in the womb. Winnicott intuitively Grof's Second Matrix when he writes that "among features typical of the true birth memory is the feeling of being in the grips of something external, so that one is helpless" (184). This feeling is exactly the Second Matrix's no-exit resignation. It must simply be breathed through for a resolution.

In *Realms of the Human Unconscious*, Grof describes his observations from seventeen years of research and analysis utilizing LSD. Grof is encouraged by the fact that his work is compatible with and parallels existing psychological systems: Jung's analytical psychology, Roberto Assagioli's psychosynthesis, and Abraham Maslow's peak experiences, as well as many religious and mystical schools of various cultures.

In *Beyond the Brain: Birth, Death and Transcendence in Psychotherapy*, Grof makes an argument for the validity of LSD usage in psychotherapy. He acknowledges that it is often hard for those without first-hand inner work experience, or experience with LSD, to relate to his conclusions that are based on decades of nonordinary states of consciousness. Grof writes that the general strategy of experiential

therapy is to reduce the emotional charge attached to negative systems, thoughts, and memories.

Traditional psychology, psychiatry, and psychotherapy assert that “physical traumas are not thought to have a direct influence on the psychological development of the individual or to participate in the genesis of psychopathology” (97). Grof disagrees and believes that physical traumas are regularly instrumental in the development of such disorders as asthma, migraine headaches, psychosomatic pains, phobias, sadomasochistic tendencies, depression, and suicidal ideation. The modern hero is found in those who relive their life traumas for healing and for therapeutic benefits. There is no shortcut, however, and the path to deep healing is frequently painful and hard.

Life itself is often filled with serious injuries, medical operations, debilitating diseases, rape, war woundings, and situations such as near-drowning or electrocution, which are traumatizing. Holotropic Breathwork’s four BPMs include one hundred deities that reflect birth trauma, in a particular matrix, and these mythic figures reveal the range of the psyche’s inventiveness.

Inner workers discover many resonances with comparative religions and world mythologies that offer insights on the unconscious. When self-exploration and analysis reach sufficient depth, spiritual elements emerge spontaneously into consciousness. Grof states that the “ultimate measure of one’s standard of living is the quality of the

experience of life and not the quantity of achievements and material possessions” (431). In Holotropic discussions, breathworkers often reiterate this belief by relating their breathsession experiences guiding them to a larger life-meaning rather than the typical consumer modality prevalent in Western cultures.

Lastly, Grof concludes that “it seems as if the experience of birth determines one’s basic feelings about existence, image of the world, attitudes toward other people, and capacity to handle problems and projects” (251). Depth exploration offers a powerful access to the unconscious for the purpose of transmuting negative assessments in life to positive ones.

In *The Adventure of Self-Discovery: Dimensions of Consciousness and New Perspectives in Psychotherapy and Inner Exploration*, Grof develops his cartography of the psyche which explores transpersonal experiences individuals have with the world around them.

Breathworkers often find that all of life is sensed as being one spirit or soul. In breathsessions, Grof writes, individuals may develop “accurate understanding of various complex esoteric teachings,” including the Kabbala, Zohar, I Ching, Tarot, Gnostic teachings, and those of arcane languages (139).

It is the principle of Holotropic therapy to recognize the healing, transformative, and evolutionary potential of nonordinary states of consciousness. By using the breath, dynamic equilibriums of underlying

symptoms are transformed. Once it is activated, psychic life finds its way to inner workers. Images, symbols, and senses upwell in a steady stream by invitation. Profound psychosomatic healing and personality transformations may occur even though they elude rational explanations.

Grof refers to Wilhelm Reich's profound work on "body-armoring" in which the muscle groups are frozen in compression. Belly breathing, rather than shallow upper-chest breathing, opens the diaphragm and releases constrictions. Respiration has a special position among the body's physiological functions. It is an autonomous function, but it can also be easily influenced by volition. An increase in the rate and depth of breathing typically loosens psychological defenses and leads to release and emergence of unconscious material. Alexander Lowen's *Bioenergetics* also uses breath with the addition of stressful body positions. The tension cannot be sustained and locked memories discharge through the pain. Rolfing is a body-structure realignment modality that deliberately applies direct pressure to points on rigid muscle groups, resulting in a sudden release of submerged feelings.

According to Grof, emotional discharges from breathwork cover a wide spectrum, the most common of these are "anger, aggression, anxiety, sadness, depression, feelings of failure and inferiority, guilt and disgust" (176). The physical manifestations also include muscular tensions, headaches, gagging, nausea, vomiting, choking, hypersalivation, sweating, sexual feelings, and a variety of motor

movements.

Hyperventilation is combined with evocative music in Holotropic Breathwork to induce nonordinary states of consciousness for healing purposes. Like breathing, music and other forms of sound technology have been used throughout human history as powerful mind-altering tools. Since time immemorial rhythmic drumming and chanting have been the principle tools of shamans in different parts of the world. Today's sophistication in musical instruments and sound mixing allows for dynamic resonances that elicit the vigor of the mythic unconscious.

Spiritual Emergency: When Personal Transformation Becomes a Crisis, an anthology edited by Stanislav Grof and Christina Grof, cautions that for centuries it has been known that dramatic and difficult episodes can occur during spiritual practice, and the road to enlightenment can be rough and stormy. Psychic exploration may arouse deeply disturbing, profoundly dangerous, and unfinished biographical experiences. Utter fear and confusion may be the result of personal growth work that is disruptive, chaotic, and overwhelming. With individual exceptions, "mainstream psychiatry and psychology in general make no distinction between spiritual emergence and mental illness" (2). Experiences of deities and demons, mythical heroes and landscapes, or celestial and infernal regions have no logical place in the world as they are understood by Western science. "In a universe where only the tangible, material, and measurable are real, all forms of religious

and mystical activities are viewed as reflecting ignorance, superstition, and irrational or emotional immaturity” (3). Direct experience of spiritual realities is interpreted as “blissful hallucinatory confusion” where “religion would be the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity” (Freud, *SE* 21: 43).

Grof and Grof write that despite the advancement of human knowledge, humankind has yet to eliminate “the most destructive aspects of the human psyche [which] are malignant aggression and insatiable acquisitiveness” (235). These forces are responsible for the unimaginable waste caused by modern warfare and reflect the alienation of modern humanity from itself, spiritual life, and moral values.

In *The Holotropic Mind: The Three Levels of Human Consciousness and How They Shape Our Lives*, Grof points out an important difference between exploring the psyche in nonordinary states and doing so in ordinary states. In nonordinary states such as Holotropic Breathwork “significant biographical material from our earliest years frequently starts coming to the surface in the first few sessions” (22). It is as if an inner radar system scans the psyche and the body for the most important issues and makes pertinent upwellings available to the conscious mind.

The experience of personal surrender “is a necessary prerequisite for connecting with a transpersonal source” (74). Arrogance and defensiveness tend to fade away as depth explorers discover the power of humility, often prompting them to be of service to others. Grof refers to

Abraham Maslow's lifetime work that "urged that there was a need to 'depathologize' the psyche, that is, to look upon the 'inner core' of our being not as a source of metaphysical darkness or illness but as the source of health and the wellspring of human creativity" (85). Self-actualized people, Grof asserts, are those who allow signals from their core. Their authentic selfhood is defined by the ability to hear, but not necessarily act on, *impulse-voices* within themselves. No psychological health is possible for inner workers or others unless their essential core is fundamentally accepted, loved, and respected. Grof quotes Joseph Campbell in saying that "individual deities should not be worshiped for themselves but should be seen as concrete expressions of the supreme creative force that transcends any form" (160). In Campbell's words, they are "transparent to the transcendent," and they indicate that the way to divinity is *through* divinity (Campbell, *Thou Art That* 18).

Grof writes that the modern world seems to be involved in an apocalyptic process that "parallels the psychological death and rebirth that so many people have experienced individually in non-ordinary states of consciousness" (*The Holotropic Mind* 220). Achieving a new consciousness, with deep reverence for life and ecological awareness, is among the most frequent consequences of the psychospiritual transformation that accompany nonordinary states of consciousness.

In *The Ultimate Journey: Consciousness and the Mystery of Death*, Grof discusses the psychological and spiritual aspects of death, the

single most important personal issue human beings face. Inner workers often encounter mythic personages such as Persephone, Dionysus, Osiris, Wotan, and Christ. Complete acceptance of one's ultimate physical deterioration includes the worst that biology has to offer: decomposition, oozing bodily fluids, and a slow return to dust. Inner work leads to the realization that humanity is more than its corporal form; the *coniunctio* (sacred marriage) of mind and body is a prerequisite for transcendence beyond the purely physical.

Techniques that access the sacred are not limited to shamanism, rites of passage, or ancient mysteries. They also include "the use of powerful mind-altering procedures, such as psychedelic plants or a combination of drumming, rattling, chanting, dancing, fasting, and sleep deprivation" (30). The need to find meaning in life against the background of death and life's impermanence has been a basic dilemma of human existence throughout history.

Holotropic Breathwork is more than merely remembering emotionally significant events or reconstructing them using free association, narrative memory, or transference. The original emotions, physical sensations, and even sensory perceptions are (re)experienced in full age regression. The process of reliving important traumas is a great obstacle for many who are ambivalent about attempting such an intense experiential depth exploration as breathwork.

In *When the Impossible Happens*, Grof writes of his long-time

friendship with Joseph Campbell, starting at Esalen when Grof was the Scholar-in-Residence. He describes how Campbell plays an important role in his personal and professional life, and it is Campbell who radically changes Grof's understanding of mythology and its paramount importance for psychiatry, psychology, and a deeper understanding of human life and death. In a personal anecdote suggesting the importance of mythology to his own life, Grof relates the time when he and Joan Halifax decided to get married during a conference at the Bifrost Lodge in Iceland. In a unique ceremony that was spontaneously reconstructed, Joseph Campbell and the Icelandic mythologist Einar Pálsson performed an ancient Viking wedding ritual for the matrimonial celebration that had not been seen in Iceland since the Christians arrived. Profoundly moving, the ceremony was anointed by a heavenly display of a thrice appearing double rainbow, providing the celebration and astonished guests a celestial spectacle of numinosity.

Tav Sparks, Director of the Holotropic Breathwork program and author of *Doing Not Doing*, has decades of experience as a facilitator and administrator. His manual is a “how *not to*” guide rather than a “what to do” or a “how to” manual. It reveals the deeply nurturing and caring attitude that the facilitator program instills and its message is extensively developed in Chapter 2.

In *The Breathwork Experience*, Kylea Taylor, one of the first certified facilitators, draws upon her many years of rich therapeutic

experience and intimate personal knowledge of nonordinary states of consciousness. Her underlying premise of trusting the process sets the tone for this work. Tunneling through her own sensory, biographical, perinatal, and transpersonal domains allows her to surface in unimagined new places, and these insights inform the reader throughout the book. For those in depth exploration, it is all about trust: the trust of self.

In *Exploring Holotropic Breathwork*, Taylor edits a compendium of participant comments recorded since 1998. This volume is the source of many quoted experiences found in the dissertation. Her selection of written reflections provides a broad exploration of this powerful depth exploration as experienced by Holotropic breathers. It is immediately evident that mythical upwellings do have relevance to Grof and Grof's proposed cartography of the human psyche.

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In *Bioenergetics*, Alexander Lowen discusses the teachings of Wilhelm Reich that analyzes a person's inflexible body structure or muscular armoring as it affects character, and where armoring refers to the "total pattern of chronic muscular tension in the body" (13). Using physical positions that exaggerate muscle tension, Lowen's patients, like Holotropic participants in breathsessions, feel heightened stress. Stressor positions access the unconscious material locked in dysfunctional muscle tension. Lowen demonstrates that suppressed emotions, particularly unhappiness and anger, can block energy flow and cause physical distress. Resisted by the medical establishment then and now, Lowen's work presages the work of Ida Rolf and her deep muscle, structural integration healing modality called Rolfing.

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell writes that the unconscious carries "the keys that open the whole realm of the desired yet feared adventure of the discovery of the self" (8). The "prime function of mythology and rite [is] to supply the symbols that carry the

human spirit forward” (11). With his exposition on the hero’s journey as a guide, this dissertation interprets Holotropic Breathwork’s mythic imagery as a modern example of this heroic adventure. Engaging inner work modalities, ancient meanings often disguised under figures of religion and mythology become personalized in the process of uncovering individual truths.

In *Myths to Live By*, Campbell writes that he received Grof’s “manuscript of impressive work” on the use of LSD with the treatment of neurotic and psychotic nervous disorders (258). Campbell finds himself freshly illuminated by these findings as he reflects on their mythic forms. In reliving the nightmare of birth trauma, fantasies of inquisitorial torture come to mind. Dramatic works reflect this in the metaphysical anguish and existential despair exemplified in the crucifixion of Christ (“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”), of Prometheus being bound to the mountain crag, of Ixion strapped to his whirling and fiery wheel, and of Buddha’s declaration that “All of life is sorrowful.”

Primitive cultures that have been unsettled by the “white man’s civilization,” where old taboos are discredited, “immediately go to pieces, disintegrate, and become resorts of vice and disease. Today the same thing is happening to us” (10). Inner work compensates for this by providing its own mythic structure. It is from our imaginations that new traditions and world mythologies arise and resonate with the needs of the

human spirit. Those engaged in inner work discover their calling as it reflects a manifestation of a new heroic mythology.

In *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, Otto Rank writes that “if the artist’s ideology is in complete harmony with the collective ideology of [their] time, it is possible that the essential factor of [their] creative dynamism arises from a personal conflict between the individual death-problem and the collective immortality-idea of the particular cultural period” (170). This is often validated in many breathsessions where mythic images of death and rebirth are predominant. In the session, the heroic inner worker releases ego control and terminates dysfunctional beliefs in order to obtain an enhanced life that not only serves themselves but their culture as well. “The artist [does] not merely create collective values from [their] individual need, but is finally collectivized, since out of the totality of [their] existence the community makes a new collective work” (221). The artistically rendered mandala at the conclusion of the breathsession is often an intricately interwoven personal and collective mythic expression of renewal and immortality.

The Myth of the Eternal Return, by Mircea Eliade, defines the *imago mundi* as a very ancient conception of the temple and “the idea that the sanctuary reproduces the universe in its essence” (17). This has resonance to the “temple” created for Holotropic breathsessions. In a darkened room, with hushed voices, an altar is made. On it are items added by the participants, as well as sacred items that invoke

spirituality. Breathsessions engage sacred symbols, and the mandalas that derive from them invoke deep internal reflections. Eliade focuses on the “center,” which breathworkers find at their core to be the realm of the sacred where consecration and initiation are experienced. He extols the willingness to enter deep states of self-review for consciousness and rejects historically outmoded, dysfunctional behaviors based on the supposition of a divine endorsement as a basis of individual authority.

In *Images and Symbols*, Eliade demonstrates, as those engaged in inner work find, that “the function of a symbol is precisely that of revealing a whole reality, inaccessible to other means of knowledge” (177). The symbolic imagery that upwells in breathsessions provides inner workers with the insight that myth and ritual reveal the boundary between consciousness and the unconscious. Survival of symbols and mythical themes in the psyche of modern man, Eliade writes, demonstrates that “archetypes of archaic symbolism [are] a common occurrence in all human beings, irrespective of race and historical surroundings” (35). According to Eliade, a “mandala can be used in support, either at the same time or successively, of a concrete ritual or an act of spiritual concentration or, again, of a technique of mystical physiology” (54). Breathworkers conclude sessions by creating mandalas that often reveal their divine compositions through spiritual and mythic upwellings. Mandalas activate imaginal symbols of consciousness.

Eliade illuminates the concept of death-rebirth when he writes that there is an “intimate interconnection between universal life and human salvation,” and that “death is often only the result of our indifference to immortality” (56). Near-death experiences, inner work, and analysis confirm his conclusion. The embrace of death allows an individual to start anew and to have a rebirth, and especially in Holotropic breathsessions, the participant is always urged to let go and to fully experience ego surrender in order to be free of it.

In *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, Eliade links various symbols into a coherent worldview of a sacred experience, “where a thing becomes sacred in so far as it embodies [reveals] something other than itself” (13). The hero’s boon serves not the manifestation of the hero but the potential manifestation of the society to which the message is directed. Eliade discusses initiation rituals as including even the most elementary ceremonies, such as may be conducted by inner work participants, as “the regeneration of the initiate at the same time as revealing to [them] secrets of a metaphysical nature” (57). Self-reflection in walks and meditations during breaks in day-long or week-long breathsessions solidifies breathworkers in the moment, in themselves, and in the world around them. The creation of the mandala at the conclusion of the breathsession is also a means of accessing these personal secrets found in the collective unconscious.

Eliade intuitively understands humanity's great weakness in its very strength. He asserts that life is considered superior and desired worldwide, yet humanity seems impelled to return to mythical Great Time (the beginning), and where there is the "will to abolish the past totally by abolishing all creation" (399). Perhaps this is the impetus for the current fascination with Armageddon, the end of the Mayan calendar in the year 2012, and the willingness to be a suicide bomber.

Eliade reveals a significant problem with inner work. Individuals engaged in depth exploration may find their own identity and a new direction in life. If they are successful in their quest, they may however reside in countries where such explorations are neither sought nor encouraged, because they do not serve those who will not allow the "overthrowing [of] social conditions" (399). Heroes may then need to find an audience for their boon by redirecting their message to a subculture rather than attempting to educate the larger society itself.

The Hero: Myth/Image/Symbol, by Dorothy Norman, presents an argument that heroic myths change constantly and are different today from when they were first described, and that "they provide both miraculous bridges between one era and another" (4). Heroes are often looked upon as symbolic mediators who make the most of life in the face of every catastrophe. Norman could be describing the rigors of inner work modalities, and Holotropic Breathwork in particular, when she writes, "the hero initially personifies the hardihood to undergo most

difficult rites of passage, of initiation into phases equated with the mysterious and frightening unknown; the discipline of arduous labors, and the ability to survive the symbolical night and winter” (4). Very little compares with the frightening aspects of psychic upwellings filled with mythic peril.

The hero welcomes wisdom’s enlightened warnings of potential mistakes, and despite obstacles and personal limitations, makes the most of life. The hero’s myth is to abandon all and to be abandoned. Heroes enter alone into the places of foreboding: pits, labyrinths, and caverns, looking for treasure. Finding it, they return to share it with their culture [Campbell’s boon].

Today’s hero is the hero of deep inner exploration. This journey is an inward exploration and is no longer a drive for conquest of new lands and cultures. The modern hero’s journey is a quest for choosing life over death, first with an understanding of one’s own psyche, and then that of the collective unconscious.

In *The Eternal Drama: The Inner Meaning of Greek Mythology*, Edward F. Edinger explores inner work when he writes that “myths are not simply tales of happenings in the remote past but are eternal dramas that are living themselves out repeatedly in our own personal lives and in what we see all around us” (3). This is especially true with Holotropic breathsessions and the upwellings of mythic personages. Edinger suggests paying close attention to mythic figures, as they reward the

seeker by providing personal associations that are useful for knowing the direction in which healing could occur. The mythic images found in the four BPMs are such guides for therapeutic wholeness. Heroes, he continues, are to “live our hard fate now because we are destined to exemplify an archetypal image for future man” (5). The resolution of internal traumas requires a resolve that is unrelenting until achieved.

In *The Rites of Passage*, Arnold Van Gennep defines *ceremony* as a way of transmuting one phase of existence to the next “whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally defined” (3). Inner work inherently includes the element of a liminal (from the Latin word *līmen*, meaning a threshold) ceremony that hosts self-transmutation. Van Gennep distinguishes three phases: “preliminal rites [of separation], liminal rites [of transition], and postliminal rites [of incorporation]” (11), which are analogous to Campbell’s separation, initiation, and return. Van Gennep labels his phases as “*rites de passage*” (10). Both classifications mirror each other. He further states that the examination of any life-crisis ceremony establishes the validity of this threefold categorization, and such is found extensively in experiential depth work.

In *Molecules of Emotion*, Candace B. Pert reveals how hard science is coming to accept the integration of mind and body. Pert asserts this linkage when she writes that emotions are the “cellular signals that are involved in the process of translating information into physical reality,

literally transforming mind into matter” (189). Emotions flow back and forth between matter and mind and influence both. If the body’s energy fields are “blocked due to denial, repression, or trauma, then blood flow is chronically constricted, depriving the frontal cortex and other organs of vital nourishment” (289). The effect of this is to limit awareness and the ability to intervene in making decisions that change physiology or behavior, because blockages impede consciousness. Learning techniques to release blockages, breathworkers free themselves. Mind and body become whole when unprocessed sensory input (in the form of suppressed trauma or undigested emotions) is recognized and reduced. “Meditation, by allowing long-buried thoughts and feelings to surface, is a way of getting the peptides [information molecules] flowing, returning the body, and the emotions, to health” (243). According to Pert, “studies have shown that when trauma victims write about their experiences, physiological changes occur, such as increased blood flow and a boost for the immune system that can last for up to six months” (306). These findings provide insight into the value of creating mandalas and writing about insights from breathwork sessions at the end of the day. Pert states that “intelligence is located not only in the brain but in cells that are distributed throughout the body, and that the traditional separation of mental processes, including emotions, from the body is no longer valid” (187). It becomes clear why the work of Grof, Rank, Lowen, Reich, and Rolf holds such promise. Wisdom is in the body, not just in the

brain; and fused into wholeness, an integrated body-mind accesses profound interconnections to consciousness. Myths, it seems, arise from humanity's cellular structure.

Gilbert Rouget expounds on his theory of possession in *Music and Trance*. The primary limitation of his work for our purposes, however, is that music does not induce trance states in breathsessions. *Heightened* awareness is the result of breathwork, not a *possession* state. With this codicil, Rouget accurately describes music, of all the arts, as having "the greatest capacity to move us, and the emotion it arouses can reach overwhelming proportions" (316). This is a common experience in the mythic upwellings from breathsessions. One breathworker is quoted as saying, "I began breathing with the rhythm of the drums. The beat seemed primitive and I felt raw and simple and somehow connected to the core of the earth. I became part of the music. I became a musical note filling the air" (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 30). Music modifies the consciousness of *being*, in space and time simultaneously. Mythic images, personages, and worlds are easily recognized. Music is laden with emotional associations and excels in recreating situations that engage one's entire sensibility. Music creates the feeling of total adhesion of the self to what is happening melodically and rhythmically and brings about a transformation in the structure of consciousness itself.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the methodology and practice of Holotropic Breathwork. Breathwork's highly efficient process of generating mythic images is explored as a means of recognizing and releasing pent-up energies and traumas for resolution.

Chapter 3 explores Joseph Campbell's hero's journey, as well as inner work healing modalities. It also proposes a mythic interpretation of Holotropic Breathwork's inner healer as an inner shaman.

Chapter 4 investigates the First Basic Perinatal Matrix (BPM 1) as the matrix of bliss. Images of Heaven, the Garden of Eden, and Paradise are explored in this chapter. This matrix spans the first ten months of life where, in the first weeks, the fetus grows from unencumbered movement to that of being a baby in full contact with the womb. This matrix also inspires creation myths, such as those teaching that the world begins with "all is water."

Chapter 5 interprets BPM 2, as reported by Holotropic Breathers, to be the experience of entrapment, no exit, or Hell. Those who have claustrophobic fears of confined places, crowds, and oppressive environments may be "fixed" in this matrix. Mythical figures exemplifying this matrix—Ixion, Tantalus, Sisyphus, and Prometheus—are examined.

Chapter 6 explores BPM 3, the matrix of aggression. It is reflected in the common sayings of "all of life is a fight, hit first," "eat or be eaten,"

or “survival of the fittest.” In rebirthing modalities such as Holotropic Breathwork, fires, storms, volcanic eruptions, nuclear explosions, and invasions often appear which symbolize this matrix’s upheaval nature. Mythical figures specifically examined for this matrix are Balder, Odin (Wotan), and Moloch.

Chapter 7 studies BPM 4 as the matrix of freedom through birth (and rebirth), but it also has a darker side. The sudden separation from the mother may involve feelings of rejection or abandonment. Existential aloneness and longing to return to the warmth and security of the mother [Freud] are the impetus for the development of depth psychology and writers such as Søren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus. Here are found figures reflecting mythical death and rebirth: Parvati, Dionysus, and Vishnu.

Chapter 8 concludes this dissertation with implications of mythology to consciousness. In the embrace of nonordinary states of consciousness, the blending of body and spirit permits deep healing. With the courage of the hero, inner workers transmute dysfunctional behaviors into a wholeness of embodied souls and enstoried psyches.

Chapter 2 Holotropic Breathwork Practice and Methodology

Practice

This chapter provides an overview of the practice and methodology of Holotropic Breathwork. The single crucial tenet is the belief that the healer is within each participant. As one breathworker writes, “I began to strengthen the notion of having my own inner healer, instead of relying so much on others to help me facilitate and understand my process” (Harmon, *Exploring Holotropic Breathwork* 204). This innermost being has a rather elusive and dynamic quality to it, with results that often defy cognitive understanding, but which participants repeatedly validate by commenting on their positive experiential outcomes. Another breather writes, “My breathwork experience left me with a cleansed feeling, helped me to make a turning point in my life, and made me experience some inner feelings I never experienced before” (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 29). Individual breathworkers come to know and sense, at some deep level, what they need in order to resolve and integrate their problematic issues. Giving up control and surrendering to the moment allows processes to facilitate healing traumatic wounds.

How and why this happens is very much part of the nature of the human species and this process. Tav Sparks observes, in *Doing Not Doing*, that healing “is the result of that mysterious inner capacity, which might even be known in more mystic circles as grace” (5). The Holotropic

Breathwork therapeutic healing modality does not fit the current medical model that requires an authoritative expert to define the problem and provide the answer. It is through the body, by breath itself, that the self-guided wisdom of healing occurs. Sparks writes, “We give back to each individual what was innately theirs already, the responsibility of being one’s own expert and healer” (7).

A Holotropic Breathwork session is a highly charged, sensitive, and intuitive moment in time. It carries the individual on both a personal adventure and a collective journey that occurs when humans are resonating together in deep process. Participants and facilitators frequently report how alive they feel and how acutely aware they are of physical, mental, and emotional phenomena. A breathworker is quoted as saying that “the energy continued moving in my body. I had the awareness that nothing would ever be the same for me again. That nothing in my life would ever be the same” (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 47).

Boundaries between inner and outer worlds seem to dissolve. In a room crackling with psychic energy, facilitators moving throughout are available to provide any appropriate assistance that a breather may request. The responsibility for breathworkers in an altered state requires extensive training. “Certification in the Grof Transpersonal Training requires about 600 hours” (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 32). This includes twenty-four or more three-hour breathsessions as a breather

and sitter, as well as extensive classroom instruction.

Facilitators go to great lengths to maximize a breathsession, particularly by controlling ambient noise and other distractions. They move about unobtrusively, trying to remain centered in consciousness, despite the cacophony of music, breathwork, and emotional discharging occurring around them. During training, facilitators are reminded that they “enter the breather’s space” when they lean over the breather to speak. They are to be there, but not there, and to be as empty as possible. Almost as a mantra, they are taught that they are not the healer; it is the breather’s inner healer who does the work.

Most Holotropic breathsessions are nonverbal internal processes that do not engage a facilitator’s assistance. Support is provided by a sitter, a partner chosen from among the other breathworkers and with whom the breather will eventually reverse positions. A sitter attends to the breather’s needs when asked, but if not asked, simply maintains constant attention during the session without ever engaging the breather. “The gift of the sitter is that the sitter responds in relationship” (Taylor, *Exploring Holotropic Breathwork* 67). The lack of relationship(s) is usually the cause of the initial wound. A breathworker describes this gift: “With my eyes closed, I reached behind me and my sitter was right there. She held my hand. That was so important. She was there!” (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 36). Breathworkers are seen, heard, touched, and accepted “just as they are,” perhaps for the first time in

their lives.

Facilitators' suggestions often help breathworkers to breathe through troubling blocks, images, or symbols. Symbols possess an "eminently healing character" (Jacobi 100). When the breather can be specific about the psychic images, a cure can take place where "sickness is personified and expresses itself through symbols" (Meier 53). Old woundings may be resolved when memories emerge 'with all the players,' as exemplified by Kübler-Ross' adaptation of psychodrama. This dissertation will further explore the nature of healing and mythic images through an examination of twelve mythic figures in subsequent chapters.

Facilitators are not to speak authoritatively or to define a breather's experience; rather, they are to wait for breathworkers' requests as to how to assist them. Facilitators are also trained to provide guidance, if desired by the breather, on specific body positions to emphasize certain muscle groups, thus intensifying blocked energies. Most traditional therapies encourage verbal exchanges between a therapist and client in which the therapist remains the primary guide of the process. By contrast, in Holotropic Breathwork, the healer is within.

At any time, a breather may request a facilitator's assistance. For new breathworkers especially, an occasional word of encouragement may be all that is needed to assure them that they are breathing correctly. "A whispered, 'you are doing fine,' or 'stay with it,' or 'that's it,' often work" (Sparks 15). One breather is quoted as saying that "at the

encouragement of the facilitators, I decided to stay with it (the headache pain that wouldn't go away) a little longer. I think when I decided to really feel it, the pain started to move. After about fifteen minutes of work it was simply gone. It was amazing!" (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 67). Sometimes a breathworker is in a regressed state and is not in touch with rational intellect. At such times a preverbal or nonverbal communication is best, and a simple: "uh huh," or "mm hmm" is enough to be helpful. At times the breather's process is so emotionally and intellectually powerful that the facilitator's best recourse is to say, "trust your inner healer." Facilitators totally support whatever is emerging. A breathworker is quoted saying, "this surrendering to the process of self-emergence has been called by others a spiritual practice. I don't know what to call it. I was hungry in the desert and I was fed" (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 46). No matter how bizarre and unintelligible the process may seem, facilitators encourage the fullest and deepest expression of what is emerging by saying, "whatever it is, do more of it."

Nonjudgmental acceptance of the breather's process allows the facilitator to be attuned to the session's nuances, not solely by the intellect, which naturally categorizes the process, but by encouraging an accentuation of the symptoms. The breather is to intensify the experience and to "go for it." Sometimes verbal instructions are more complex, especially with someone new to Holotropic Breathwork. Such

breathworkers may be found with their eyes open, not deep-fast breathing, and apparently unwilling or unable to engage in the process. The facilitator approaches the breather gently, easily, and without intensity. Kneeling or sitting nearby for a few minutes without direct involvement establishes the first connection. This approach allows the facilitator to be near the breather without intruding in case the breather is actually deep in a process with eyes open. Otherwise, a soft touch on a shoulder and a whispered “how are you?” is enough to make contact. More often than not, fear has emerged. A few words of reassurance that the breather is safe and doing fine may be all that is required. The facilitator may maintain a gentle touch for security as the breather renews the deeper and faster breathing style, until the breather’s own rhythm sustains the process.

The decision to speak, touch, or engage a breather must be tempered by a question for the facilitator, “whose need is this, mine or the breather’s?” In the final analysis, it must always be the breather’s need or decision that is supported. It is easy to imagine how difficult, or nearly impossible, it is for a new facilitator to know if it is helpful to intervene, or what to say, or whether touching is needed. Sparks writes:

When I finally get it, deep down, that I don’t have to know what to do when I work with a breather—that all I have to do is listen to them, to let them show me, and to follow their lead—an enormous weight is lifted from me. I begin to find a freedom in this work I never felt before. For me, it marks the beginning of a shift, the parting of the veil from just hearing and believing that the healer was within, to being offered the light

of seeing how it all is. (*Doing Not Doing* 21)

In order to avoid injuring participants, facilitators avoid contact with a breather's eyes, throat, abdomen, sternum (breastbone), rib cage, spinal cord, and lower jaw. For other reasons, direct work on the groin area, especially the genitals, is unacceptable at any time. The facilitator training emphasizes that Holotropic Breathwork is supportive body energy work, not physical body realignment.

A facilitator always regards the participant as being in an altered state when in a breathsession. If a breathworker asks for more pressure to be applied to an area, facilitators should proceed with great caution and "remember that as we are applying pressure we should be ready at every second to instantly stop" (Sparks 22).

Simple words of encouragement, such as, "you're doing fine, stay with it," have profound healing capacity. If the participant is coughing or gagging, the sitter prepares the cellophane bag that each breather is provided. One woman I was sitting for vomited intermittently for over an hour. I was impressed with her courage to continue with whatever process was discharging through her. A facilitator joined us and encouraged her by saying, "sound." Screams of rage at her early sexual abuse lay beneath the gagging.

The Holotropic process supports whatever is emerging, and the encouragement is always to increase, exaggerate, and to accentuate the process. A breathworker is quoted saying that "the familiar phrase of—

‘give it a sound’—has enabled me to experience numerous powerful releases by utilizing my voice” (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 83). The wide range of sounds frequently heard in the room includes screaming, baby talk, animal voices, talking in tongues, shamanic chanting, or speech in a language foreign to the breathworker, among others.

The training also emphasizes that facilitators are not to become cheerleaders by commenting upon or praising every manifestation that breathworkers are able to produce. Facilitators only facilitate; they are not to assume responsibility. Holotropic Breathwork is the individual breather’s experience and is not to be externally stimulated or guided. Facilitator disengagement allows a breather to build an uninterrupted momentum for a deep level release and possibly a deeply felt experience of wholeness. Ultimately, the breathworker attains the independent capacity for self-healing.

The therapeutic strategy shifts at the end of the session when facilitators take on a more active role. Prior to the breathsession, breathworkers are informed that at the end of three hours facilitators will inquire about their experience by asking, “how was it for you?”

For those deep in process but stuck, a facilitator’s encouragement might be, “if you can, it is important to stay with it, often a couple more breaths helps clear leftover stuff. I will stay with you, just to see if anything wants to come through—no agenda—and we will stop whenever

you want to.” Sometimes it is simply a matter of working through boundaries, layer by layer, surrendering control as much as possible each step of the way. This may require more breathsessions and a continued willingness to engage in ongoing and powerful psychic upwellings. For those breathworkers beaming with radiating light and blissful energy, little discussion is needed—a wave and a grin say it all.

Methodology

Heroes initiate processes of personal growth and inner work in order to discover meaning in their lives. Much is required to engage in deep exploration healing modalities. As Diane Haug observes, “The decision to do the work of personal transformation takes courage and commitment” (*Exploring Holotropic Breathwork* 160). Gaining courage, as Themistocles suggests, in Plutarch’s *The Lives of the Noble Grecian and Romans*, is “the first step towards victory” (14: 91). Not surprisingly, today’s hero does not embrace the martial air inherent in the word “victory,” a term that originally applied to warfare. Modern courage is rather demonstrated in the ability to allow whatever comes into consciousness and to sustain it for the insight it provides, without forcing it out of awareness. Heroes rely on their own judgment and have a certainty that their course of action is the right one, or remain open until one of greater meaning can be found. If nothing else, they are confident that they are at least moving away from stasis.

Breathworkers enter the crucible of their own substance for the

alchemical transmutation of wounded memories still fueling conflicts. As Cynthia DeFilippo observes, “Sometimes I call the room we breathed in, ‘The Breathing Cathedral.’ It is a place where Heaven and Earth can meet” (200). Reminiscent of temples dedicated to sacred rituals, ceremonies of initiation, and rites of passage, the breathsession room is ritually prepared for the three-hour process. The room is darkened, mats are carefully placed, pathways to bathrooms are established, and potentially distracting stimuli are removed. Consistent replication of the setting and hushed tones create a sacred space for the heroic journey inward. An altar to no particular divinity welcomes the breathworkers to be a conduit for a divine spirit that may manifest through them. A guided relaxation culminates with an invocation to the breather’s inner healer who is called upon to be a supporting figure or essence, and one who provides nurturance and guidance throughout the session so that issues and images may be brought to full consciousness.

The breathsession begins with the facilitator encouraging the breather to breathe faster and more deeply. Evocative music is added to drive the intensity in the room. The high volume level provides a safe cover for any sounds and screams in private or sound-dampened rooms, but badly chosen locations have resulted in law enforcement arriving to investigate. Westerners are socialized to avoid making loud noises in public and certainly never to spontaneously scream out or rage at wrongful treatment by others. It takes courage for breathworkers to

express whatever needs to be voiced, shouted, or screamed, no matter how undignified it may feel. This freedom of expression—saying what needs to be said *now*, for that which was unspoken *back then*—is for many a significant healing breakthrough experience itself. A breathworker is quoted saying that “I wanted so badly to release the sounds of my crying, but felt blocked, like a voice deep inside was saying, ‘Keep silent.’ I felt like a child that had no choice. Applying pressure to my chest helped me release some noise, and finally some anger” (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 40). Breathwork clears many blockages of immobilized energies, although sometimes a facilitator or sitter may also be asked to apply deep, physical pressure or resistance to a muscle or muscle group to intensify the pain for a fuller discharge.

Deep massage inflames frozen memories in painful, burning-stabbing sensations. Hidden away in “castles of armored musculature,” today’s heroes—like Parzival of the Grail Legend—must ask [their inner wounded “king”] a compassionate question, “What is the reason for your suffering?” This relationship-to-self begins the healing process in mythical poetics and soul work. Empathic concern allows “the invigorated “king” [to] perform his regenerative duty” and for the breathworker to access the breadth of their inner kingdom (Bond 73). Body blockages or points of tension are the focus of applied pressure, and tremendous energy may be released by some relatively simple body positions that stress particular areas. In a personal Rolfing session, the

simple, deep pressure of a thumb-knuckle on an over-tensed muscle knot was enough to lift me off the massage table and into a discharge of pent-up energy.

Wilhelm Reich was ahead of his time, proposing in 1933 that traumatic and painful emotions are retained and made inaccessible in “body armoring” [locked and inflexible muscles]. “The body is a repository of personal history, reflecting the vast unconscious, with its own language of communication” (Gilliland 307). An astute observer may observe how children hold their bodies rigidly when being scolded or berated, creating muscle rigidity to block the pain. The nonverbal body language is as stark as that of the spoken disapproval. Repressed memories build until they form an image that manifests in a breathsession. One participant explains, “In my breathsession, I connected numbness to the way I would make myself become numb when my father beat me to avoid feeling the pain” (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 60). Humans seem to know that by crossing their arms, tensing their mouths, and holding their breaths they can “tough it out” and not feel the pain, at least consciously.

Mythological imagery arising for the breather reveals a new way of comprehending the deep forces within the psyche. It cannot be predicted what path, result, goal, or benefit will emerge from a session. One is assured only that by remaining vulnerable and open, whatever needs to come to consciousness will be allowed to do so. Each image is laden with

meaning and potential danger, even if it eludes understanding in the moment.

Holotropic Breathwork unleashes powerful energies, not always for the immediate betterment of the individual. Taylor observes, “In the Holotropic state, archetypal energies often appear on their own, quite unbidden and unruly, and are embodied and expressed in ways external and physical, as well as internal and intuitive” (*Exploring Holotropic Breathwork* 430). Encounters with the archetypal are “the animators behind the images” (Van Eenwyk 103). Jung tells us they may also simply be a “formative principle of instinctual powers” (CW 8: 416). These energies might not be healing or positively transformative in a breathsession; therefore, breathworkers must be cautious. An encounter with the dark side must be greatly respected.

Two breathworkers can have almost identical experiences. A sexual abuse survivor is quoted saying that “a black force of evil was holding me down” (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 104). Another breather is also quoted saying, “I felt possessed or overtaken by some dark metaphysical forces” (Grof, *The Adventure of Self-Discovery* 14). Here is where the hero’s courage, when deep into the journey, is at its most crucial point. One breathworker is quoted observing that “the only way out is through” (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 56). Jacobi asserts that every rebirth, and the reason for heroic inner work, is preceded by a symbolic death that is “experienced [as] a kind of journey

to hell, a state of containment in the darkness, and awaken[s] a new life” (175). This willingness to hold the image or feeling, to process it, and to be with it allows a breather to resolve that issue. The terrifying, repulsive, and overwhelming must not be suppressed out of hand but accepted for what it is: a memory re-experienced in the present. Jung warns that dark archetypal energies carry the danger of “psychic infection” (CW 7: 152), which is seen in histories of mass political movements causing great destruction. Breathworkers have a keen understanding of the need to guard against destructive impulses and behaviors. Their personal histories are often replete with examples of wreckage when inappropriate behaviors were not controlled.

No matter how many breathsessions are experienced, participants commonly experience anticipatory fear of being overwhelmed by the emergence of a too powerful traumatic moment. In closing sessions, however, during which breathworkers report on their experiences, most say that they were given exactly what they could handle in that session. “When we enter a holotropic state with an open mind and no agenda, the psyche seems to ‘select’ the experience that is most charged or ‘ripe’ at that time’ ” (Boroson 31). Rather than the psyche being one’s worst enemy, it becomes one’s best friend. It is that quiet voice that says, “stop!” not in paralysis, but in an urging to become very attuned to the moment and to do what needs to be done.

In a different context, the word “stop!” may be used by any

breather in a breathsession who wants no more assistance from anyone. This request is complied with immediately. The Holotropic Breathwork process honors the consciousness of the breather to know what is needed at that moment. In his essay, “A Brief Marketing Plan for Everything,” Boroson writes that the range of images and issues that arise for breathworkers is not limited to traumas, addictions, depressions, aggressions, sexual problems, meaninglessness, and spiritual emergencies, but also includes those that are “fun, mind-blowing, [and] blissful” (117). The lightness of some sessions does exist, but it seems as if there are more dark sessions; perhaps psychic wisdom reveals itself in its offering to do serious work for the deepest healing.

The temptation always exists to control the process, to dilute, or to repress the power of overwhelming personages and places. If breathworkers can remain centered and secure within themselves, integration and resolution—partial or complete—of the image’s properties are available to them, beyond belief or theory, by experiencing the whole manifestation itself. Even if memory conjures an imaginary happening, according to James Hillman, it is still “wholly [a] psychic event [making] personified images feel utterly real” (*Re-Visioning Psychology* 18). Freud agrees with this statement that whether real or imagined, “psychical reality is a particular form of existence” (*SE* 5: 620). Holotropic Breathwork encourages breathworkers to accept images and feelings as they come, and not to intellectualize the process. They are encouraged to remain available

for whatever is emerging into consciousness, thereby permitting a trinity of body-mind-spirit to be the receptacle of integration.

The three-hour breathsession concludes with each participant creating a personal mandala. Mandalas evolve from a blank 12"x18" sheet of paper containing a large circle [symbolizing wholeness]. The paper's dimensions give some freedom for imaginal expression of spatial forms. In a room fully stocked with magazines, assorted pictures, graphic designs, crayons, colored pencils, and felt tip pens, breathworkers interweave text, images, colors, magazine clippings, found objects, or whatever else they desire into a tapestry that artistically depicts their breathsessions. The fantasies, images, feelings, colors, sounds, and symbols put to paper provide a means back into the day's breathsession, and for reflection in the months and years which follow. A breathworker is quoted saying, "It was while working on my mandala drawing that I finally felt completion with the day's work" (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 44). Each mandala is discussed in that day's closing group meeting. When finally concluded, breathworkers in the breathsession have had three (re)visionings: the first was that of experiencing psychic upwellings, the second was in a discussion of the mandala and the breathsession with the partner, and third was in the final discussion of it with the whole group. Repetition seems to be the crucible in which psychic entities are purified and transmuted.

One consistent theme heard in inner work modalities is the sense

of solidarity that participants feel with the whole human race, a transconscious quest to an ultimate communitas. A breathworker is quoted saying, "The energy slowly washed through my body [with a] great feeling of compassion, of healing" (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 31).

Another observes:

With all of my shock and complaints about the depths of despair I have felt during the last year of breathing, I now understand why this plunge into the dark realms is necessary and how it opens pockets of compassion and understanding toward not only myself, but also toward others and their processes. (Silver, *Exploring Holotropic Breathwork* 333)

Breathworkers who undergo this intense process often form deep bonds. Throughout the workshop, a loving, psychic embrace among group members usually results from the deep sharing involved.

Chapter 3 Mythic Interpretations of Inner Work as the Hero's Journey

This chapter explores inner work as representing a modern version of the prototypical hero's journey. This dissertation proposes that all who engage their psyche in various healing modalities, to the depths of their underworld, undertake a hero's journey. Although this is a rudimentary definition, it is profound in practice. The commitment by inner workers to make themselves available to unresolved life issues, past traumas, and unfulfilled aspects of their life requires unremitting courage. Even more importantly, this dissertation considers it to be inherently heroic to sustain this effort when psychic onslaughts are overwhelming and seemingly unending, as is the case with many participants in Holotropic Breathwork's Second Matrix. Upwelled psychic imagery often yields deep insights when given a mythic interpretation. Besides developing concepts of the hero, hero's journey, and Holotropic Breathwork's inner healer, this chapter considers elements of shamanism and mysticism to be pertinent. The inner healer is described as being an inner shaman and inner mystic. These figures were frequently mentioned in after-breathsession group meetings I attended as figures who guided breathworkers throughout their depth explorations.

Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* is a seminal work in comparative mythology. The purpose of most myths is "in finding the dynamic source in your life so that its trajectory is out of your

own center and not something put on you by society” (Campbell, *An Open Life* 34). His theory of the heroic archetypal personality found in world mythologies presages and exemplifies journeys engaged by inner workers exploring their psychic depths. “The hero’s journey is a metaphor for the inner experiences during a transformative crisis” (Grof and Grof, *The Stormy Search for the Self* 127). It has always been the “prime function of mythology and rite to supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward” (Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 11). The heroes within guide inner workers in their journey to wholeness.

The basic story of the hero’s journey involves relinquishing a present life for one that reflects the “courage to be at one with their wanting and their doing, their knowing and their telling” (Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 85). Heroes are wakers of souls, and they realize that out of their symbolic dissolutions they carry themselves, and their societies, forward by an aroused vitality unavailable to those remaining moribund in sterile status quo. As self-actualizing people, they “are without single exception, involved in a cause outside their own skin, in something outside of themselves” (Maslow 42). It is in their visionary quests that heroes appear “in practically every mythology” (Campbell, *An Open Life* 23), and are seeking causal zones in psychic realms where difficulties reside as reflected in mythological imagery. The spirit of inner work is the adventure of self-healing of consciousness and

soul. Heroes pursue visions of something better, more fulfilling, and more meaningful—guided by *daimon* [an inner soul-spirit] whisperings “of new and wonderful paths” (Jung, *CW* 17: 288). Mythic visions inspire paths to wholeness and on these paths inner workers journey heroically.

Cardinal attributes of heroic adventures are fearlessness and achievement. Heroes find that life in its becoming is always shedding death. “One can experience an unconditional affirmation of life only when one has accepted death, not as contrary to life but as an aspect of life” (Campbell, *The Power of Myth* 152). The Third Matrix is one which confronts the breather with death, destruction, and annihilation. From its fires—as symbolized by one of the primary death-rebirth creatures in this matrix—the Phoenix, it arises reborn and breathworkers do so as well. This matrix must be worked through completely to release destructive energies.

The hero’s search for meaning in life sometimes entails suffering; and in a perverse way, this must be embraced. Nietzsche writes that “Man[kind] does not repudiate suffering as such; [they] desire it, [they] even seek it out, provided [they are] shown a meaning for it, a purpose of suffering” (Grimm 188). Rebirth appears to demand it and “we find a subjective experience of distress, suffering, and helplessness in every crucial transition to a new sphere of existence” (Neumann, *The Great Mother* 67). Suffering is acceptable if it serves a purpose and “our emotional suffering always contains an element of the divine” (Corbett

51). It unites with the energy of the quest for wholeness. In a communion with our numinous center, “the inner voice makes us conscious of the evil from which the whole community is suffering, whether it be the nation or the whole human race” (Jung, *CW* 17: 318). The choice humanity faces is to accept suffering as a given or to explore its nature for deep healing so as to be free of it. Heroes achieve wholeness through experiencing their truths and so become “ripe, at last, for the great at-one-ment” (Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 237).

At a time when the orthodoxies of the modern world are primarily concerned with the maintenance of the existing social order, the more these dogmatic entities attempt to retain their position, the sooner they seem to fragment from within. It is heroes who unite. They plunge into the tapestry of the social fabric and re-knit it through their journeys. Heroes play an essential role in the defense of the psychic integrity of the community. They coordinate their well-being and virtue with those of their societies. The human species seems to resist change, often appearing culturally torpid, until heroes arrive with the right boon, at the right time, and place it deep within societal obstructions. However, a boon offered to a disregarding culture will not be accepted. The nature of heroes is typically of a *now* personality and waiting for the fruition of societal change requires farsighted heroes with initiative, wisdom, and perhaps a lifetime of patience.

It is in the realm of myth that human passion, desire, and thought have their eternal aspect. Those engaging in inner work find their spirit revealed in mythic symbols that upwell from depth exploration.

Campbell is prescient when he suggests that the unconscious “carry keys that open the whole realm of the desired and feared adventure of the discovery of the self” (Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 8).

Victor Turner writes that “for many depth psychologists, identification also means replacement. To draw off power from a strong being is to weaken that being” (174). Rites elicit a primitive wisdom, while depth work elicits sophisticated wisdom. Mythic personages arising from breathwork sessions provide exactly such a healing approach that clarifies, resolves, and depletes bound negative energies of breathworkers’ personal issues. They guide inner healers in finding and opening “the road to the light beyond the dark walls of our living death” (Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 259).

Healing is the transformation of the psyche, and the “subliminal psyche knows much better than any therapist what it needs and how to achieve it” (Perry, *The Far Side of Madness* 161). Transformation and healing are inseparable. Jung adds that “image is psyche” and inner work healing is an awakening to conscious imaginal visions of our infinite natures (CW 13: 75).

The similarity between Holotropic Breathwork’s inner healers and shamans is in their approach to the hallowed realms of souls, and their

knowledge that each of us heals ourself. Grof, in *The Ultimate Journey*, quotes Albert Schweitzer: “Each patient carries [their] own doctor inside [them]. We [medical doctors] are at our best when we give the doctor who resides within each patient a chance to go to work” (29). Grof expands this thought to include a unique feature of shamans, as compared to other healers, that in their use of holotropic states of consciousness they heal themselves and others. Both inner shamans and inner workers see with mystical eyes, as visionary “director[s] of souls” (Eliade, *Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries* 61). It “is not possible to separate categorically the shaman from the mystic” (Campbell, *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology* 298). The center of our pantheon of inner guides now includes an inner mystic—those who seek spiritually esoteric, even alchemical, knowledge of themselves. “Seeing disease in terms of the key concepts of disharmony, fear, and soul loss” is one way of identifying causes of inner and outer life disconnects (Doore 121). There are no easy integrations even if one seeks consciousness, but the outcome is generally worse for those who take no action, and are later suddenly overwhelmed by an eruption of repressed psychic material.

Holotropic breathworkers, and inner workers, quickly discover that the inner path, once initiated, continues until they die. “Self-actualization is an ongoing process” (Maslow 44). Joan B. Townsend writes that a sixty-eight year-old male psychoanalyst summed up his sense of quest by saying, “I am on a spiritual journey and will continue

on it for the rest of my life” (qtd. in Doore 78). The engagement with his—and all inner worker’s—psyche requires constant dying and rebirthing to the selfhood already achieved. Heroes accept that this process entails a “loss and rediscovery [which is] never, nor can ever be, final” (Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* 465). Conquest of fear yields courage, but it is the acceptance of fear that humanizes. Heroes make decisions to grow consciously. Viktor Frankl suggests societies do so as well when he writes “Man[kind] does not simply exist but always decides what [their] existence will be, what [they] will become in the next moment” (131). Attaining wholeness requires one to stake one’s whole being on the effort. Nothing less will do, and “there can be no easier conditions, no substitutes, and no compromises” (Jung, *CW* 11: 906). Inner work is a lifelong commitment, and with continuing embrace, it nurtures a peaceful psyche by obviating overwhelming upwellings from the unconscious.

Engaging in inner work is often prompted by recognizing an imbalance of life-as-envisioned versus life-as-lived. This is also one aspect of the shamanic crisis, where there is too great a disparity between inner and outer worlds. The temporary imbalance of shamans may resemble nervous breakdowns—but the imbalance cannot be dismissed as such. Theirs is a willful journey, as it is with inner workers. Breathsessions in their fullness are chaotic and the room contains an onslaught of expansive energies, typically including

simultaneous screaming, crying, raging, vomiting, pillow hitting, laughing, and dancing—all driven by evocative pounding music. Regenerative psychic processes are messy but necessary; and yet, it is from this milieu that breathworkers grow in consciousness. These behaviors might seem fit for asylums from a strictly medical perspective. And family and friends with no connection to depth exploration, or any healing modality, may also have difficulty relating to someone invested in searching for inner truths. Willed introversion and healing modalities such as those generating psychic upwellings of archetypal images are not for everyone. The risks are enormous, including immediate pain and suffering, retraumatization of old wounds, and even a disintegration of consciousness. Distancing, whether physical or emotional, is the exile of everyday heroes and shamans, and it is from the society of family and friends that they often detach and journey alone until the tests are passed. Personal myths subsist in revelatory truths from direct psychic engagements.

The experience of evolving consciousness is enabled through accessing traumatic contents stored in the unconscious, and in remembering the danger that the sacred poses for those who come in “contact with it unprepared, without having gone through the ‘gestures of approach’ ” (Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* 370). Inner work is not to be engaged without respect or training. Inner workers intuit “something far more deeply infused” inhabiting both the exterior world

and interior realm of one's psyche (Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* 252). Their experiences run the gamut from profound ecstasy to traumatic horror, and the way these are processed determines the affect of relived memories. The intuition of depth wisdom gives a sacred character to interior exploration. Imaginal contents encompass divinities who mythically embody unresolved issues in the psyche.

Great caution must be exercised—dark energies are dark guides of (self) destruction. Malevolent magic is “injuring or destroying an enemy [and] is accomplished by injuring or destroying an image of the same person” (Frazer 1: 55). Dark imagination leads to [self] obliteration, which shuns healing, and ultimately leads to the conjurers' downfall. By contrast, illuminating guides create life-affirming visions. Accessing wisdom is heard and seen in the voices and images of our *daimons*. They offer visions of transmutation, but final decisions must be reserved for conscious deliberation. Manifesting consciousness is built on one life-affirming success after another, and by accepting that “individuation is a process, not a realized goal” (Edinger, *Ego and Archetype* 96).

There seems to be a primitive tradition to Holotropic Breathwork's inner healers that resembles medicine men who access multidimensional figures for their patients' rejuvenations; and, these mythic personages are as unique as those of individual breathworkers. Facilitator Kathleen Silver writes “Breathwork is a modern Western version of shamanism” (334). One qualifier is that shamanism is a journey with intention,

whereas breathwork is a journey of *allowance*. Breathwork facilitates healing at deep levels by allowing psychic upwellings into consciousness, and in this sense is shamanic. James Nourse, facilitator and clinical psychologist, writes that “an intimate connection exists between the phenomena encountered in shamanic and holotropic experiences,” and he adds that, both “take the view that the worlds accessed in such states are real” (406). The shamanic tripartite of suffering, death, and resurrection are also found in the allegorical hero’s journey in breathwork.

Helpers typically appear for heroes whose journeys have crossed the threshold into “a series of increasingly threatening tests or trials to pass” (Campbell, *Pathways to Bliss* 116). These guides bring with them an “atmosphere of irresistible fascination” (Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 55). Inner helpers guide an oblique and mythic approach to the psychic landscape; otherwise, “it is quite hopeless to penetrate directly to the nucleus of the pathogenic [manifested illness] issues, where there is nothing to do but to keep at first to the periphery of the psychical structure” (Freud, *SE 2*: 292). This is the realm of the *daimon*, in “the ancient world [it] was a figure from somewhere else, neither human nor divine, something in between the two belonging to a ‘middle region’ (*metaxu*) to which the soul also belonged” (Hillman, *The Soul’s Code* 258).

The essential requirement for facilitators is that they cannot guide

others without first undergoing inner transformations themselves, much like transmutations of medicine men who “cannot give a healing ceremony until [they] have the ceremony over [them]” (Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* 83). Jung added that medicine men receive their understanding by way of “subliminal thinking and intuition” (CW 18: 1114). Wisdom evolves from transmutations, from refining inner reflections of simple uniformity to understanding complex diversity. Individuals cannot give what they have not received from their journeys, after which they provide their own mythology from the inside, through embracing their inner psyche.

Consciousness yields greater intricacy for the most sophisticated cognitive functions and understandings in the issues in life. Self-observations develop a realization that mythic figures are psychic reflections and embodiments which permit “introspective self-therapy” (Rank, *Beyond Psychology* 44). Spirit journeys with their revelations creates prophets, and the “shaman and medicine men alike claim this power of spiritual vision” (Alexander, *North American* 10: 149). Mystical insights allow inner workers and inner shamans personal fulfillment by transcending local boundaries of time and space into larger mythological realms of wisdom. “Mysticism has always been hostile to every code of morality, not however from an immoral tendency but simply because law and order attempts to bind where there is no longer anything at all to be restrained” (Van Der Leeuw 505). Shamans, mystics, and heroes trust

the inchoate and unstructured truths that arise from deep within their psyches. Corbett writes that “the mystic is mainly interested in the God of direct experience” (2), and this is true for inner healers and inner shamans as well. Townsend writes that wisdom is found in listening to the spirit world with its “interconnectedness of all things fundamental to traditional shamanism” (qtd. in Doore 79). Gifts of great insights into human conditions require access to spirit realms.

The human potential movement of the 1960s gave voice to people hungering for deeper connections to their inner psyches, and shamanism especially found resurgence “in the West precisely because it [was] needed” (Harner 75). Inner shamans may also be invoked prior to a breathsession as nurturing guardians of the psyche. They may be viewed as intermediaries between the known and unknown, where they excel in journeying for inner health, and as “helping spirits [who] possess greater wisdom and knowledge, and [serve] as [an] inner guide and companion” (Smith 21). The holotropic states of breathwork induce what is called the primordial mind, which encompasses aspects that transcend race, sex, culture, and historical time. Self-initiating and practicing shamans induce visionary states by the use of drumming, rattling, dancing, fasting, breathwork, and journeying. Ingesting LSD or other mind-altering psychedelic substance is not acceptable in Holotropic Breathwork due only to its illegality, and this is not a comment on its efficacy. The use of such a substance, as Grof writes, is considered to be

“a powerful unspecific amplifier or catalyst of biochemical and physiological processes in the brain” (*Realms of the Human Unconscious* 32). The use of breathwork is not only legal, it is extraordinarily efficient in depth exploration.

Shamanism is the product of a “general religious experience” (Eliade, *Shamanism* 7). In this, it shares attributes of rituals that offer explicit appeals to supernatural beings (like offerings on the altars in breathsession rooms), and places of worship throughout the world. It is with such supplications that nominal powers are objectified and encountered in “rituals [that] facilitate psychological transformation” (Smith 119). “Shamans always begin healing ceremonies by opening sacred space,” as do facilitators of breathsessions (Villoldo 136). They “actually touch and bring into play the vital energies of the human psyche” (Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 257). Shamans dissipate unconscious forces by practical actions which control such irruptive emotions such as infantile wishes and neurotic fears. Inner healers and inner shamans transmute degenerative chaos for regenerative order.

Shamans have a status-less ranking that permits them to provide objective criticism to their society’s “moral order binding on all” (Turner 116). Inner shamans likewise guide inner workers on their depth exploration process without regard for aspirations of position or prestige. Temporal, ego-driven yearning is ineffectual in finding profundity in life.

Breathsession journeying inspires manifesting souls. Much as heroes exile themselves from their society in order to follow their callings, [inner] shamans “stand against the group and necessarily so, since the whole realm of interests and anxieties of the group are for them secondary” (Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* 254).

As a technique for achieving mythic identification, “a number of its disciplines appear to have been derived from shamanism” (Campbell, *The Masks of God: Oriental Mythology* 283). Included in these modalities are the regulation of breath and rhythmic sounds, which are also essential to Holotropic Breathwork. From one perspective, shamans do not resemble breathworkers in that “shamans specialize in a trance during which their souls leave their bodies and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld” (Eliade, *Shamanism* 5). As mentioned before, trance is not an attribute of Holotropic Breathwork—consciousness is. There is, however, a component of journeying to either the sky or the underworld that is relevant to both disciplines, depending upon the matrix the breather is in during their breathsession.

Inner shamans guide inner workers through populated mythological realms of their mysteries filled with characters rife with sacred enigmas and arcane principles. Claude Levi-Strauss writes that both shaman and psychoanalyst “aim at inducing an experience and both succeed by recreating a myth which the patient has to live or relive” (qtd. in Grimes 375). Imagining is a psychic process and the pantheon of

Holotropic Breathwork's approximate one hundred mythic personages and states of being (see page 202) facilitate easy access into such mythic realms. All guide breathworkers in reliving mythologized moments.

Michael Harner writes that shamans, too, "move between realities, a magical athlete of states of consciousness engaged in mythic feats" (55). This supernatural principle of guardianship unites in its figures "all the ambiguities of the unconscious" and signifies the support of the unconscious, however inscrutable (Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 73). Such mythological figures are "statements of certain spiritual principles," and their appearance marks a new stage in inner workers' biographies (257). Helpers reflect beneficial mythological imagery that "is symbolic of spiritual powers within us [which] comes out of a deeper center" (Campbell, *An Open Life* 21). Eliade adds that "shamanism defends [against] the world of darkness" (*Shamanism* 509). Helpers are the ones with imaginal lanterns, and in breathsessions illuminated journeys inspire manifesting souls.

Larry Dossey writes that a shaman's healing capacity exists because of his or her "spiritual insights and inner visions" (Doore 97). An experience of divinity, analogous to a religious experience, is often experienced in breathwork, but this modality is devoid of specific dogmas, ceremonies, and sacred texts. Meister Eckhart writes in a sermon that "it is not what we do which makes us holy, but we ought to make holy what we do," and we must learn to "sense the quality of

holiness in the world” (Colledge and McGinn 30). With inner work, and Holotropic Breathwork especially, the direct experience of spirituality does not “require a special place or an officially appointed person mediating contact with the Divine” (Grof, *The Ultimate Journey* 223). Inner work does seek relationships to the divine, but this does not necessarily involve a personified godhead, a pantheon of intermediary saints, or formalized ritual procedures.

Shamans are great specialists of the human spirit. Unlike theologians who “follow the path of obedience” (Van Der Leeuw 661), shamans are self-realized and embrace their own revelations. Their integrity and superior functioning, with the mystical dimensions they access, makes them valuable members of their cultural groups, despite consciousness differences. Inner shamans seek rapture, not rupture.

Shamanism—and particularly inner shamanism—is closely related to death and dying. Inner shamans are more likely to make their appearances in later matrices, specifically the transition between BPM 3>4 with its death-rebirth motif. Chapter 4 begins the discussion on BPM 1, the matrix of Paradise.

Chapter 4 Mythic Interpretations of BPM 1

The First Perinatal Matrix (BPM 1) is the matrix of bliss, of mother and child, and is where the two “form a symbiotic unity” (Grof, *Realms of Human Unconsciousness* 104). “The basic characteristics of this experience are an absence of subject-object dichotomy, a transcendence of time and space, exceptionally strong positive emotions (peace, tranquility, serenity, and bliss), and feelings of sacredness [numinosity]” (Grof, *The Ultimate Journey* 131). Nine months is the normal growth period from an embryo to a baby. The womb protects, secures, and satisfies all the requirements of life. “The conditions of the fetus can be close to ideal” (Grof, *The Adventure of Self Discovery* 11). As one breathworker reports, “I was a baby still in my Mommy’s tummy. I was completely safe; every inch of me was surrounded. I was so warm and safe I could feel and hear my Mom’s heartbeat” (Taylor, *Breathwork Experience* 65).

BPM 1 is a time poetically recounted by Holotropic Breathwork participants when there is neither death, toil, nor suffering. Everyone luxuriates in an oasis with “beautiful gardens or park[s], with exotic trees bearing luscious fruit” (Grof, *The Ultimate Journey* 60). This matrix reveals a sacred and spiritual quality to humanity’s corporality.

The mythic realms of Paradise, Heaven, and the Garden of Eden in the first months of pregnancy are derived from the reports of 30,000

Holotropic Breathwork participants over a period of four decades. The vulnerability of these reports is that they are self-reported descriptions by individuals in states of intense psychic arousal. However, the magnitude of this experiential base gives credence to these upwelled images. The fact that none of the reports can be validated scientifically by an objective, dispassionate reviewer may encourage dismissals. Physical science is not, however, the appropriate way to evaluate depth psychological issues of an inner worker's personal mythology and the sense-memory of the fetus. In *Psychology of the Future*, Grof writes:

Academic psychiatry generally denies the possibility that biological birth, whether or not it damages the brain cells, also has a strong psycho-traumatic impact on the child. The cerebral cortex of the newborn is not fully myelinated; its neurons are not completely covered by protective sheaths of a fatty substance called myelin. This is usually offered as a reason why biological birth is experientially irrelevant and why it is not recorded in memory. The image of the newborn as an unconscious and unresponsive organism is also in sharp conflict with the growing body of literature describing the remarkable sensitivity of the fetus during the prenatal period (Verny and Kelly 1981, Tomatis 1991, Whitwell 1999). (31)

BPM 1 is a sensed state of transcendence of time and space. Strong emotions of peace, tranquility, and serenity merge with the numinous (sacrality). Humans are symbolic creatures, keenly aware of both the corporeal and the spiritual. Thomas Aquinas writes in *The Summa Theologica* that "paradise also is not a corporeal, but a spiritual place" (19: 524). In breathsessions, Matrix 1's luminous imagery is Apollonian, resonant of the Greek god of song and music. Breathworkers

may also sense themselves as astronauts floating timelessly in interstellar space as oceanic ecstasy washes over them fluidly and effortlessly. In this state, the infinite is experienced by “*unio mystica* [mystical union]” (Grof, *The Adventure of Self Discovery* 12), and the bonding of the individual human soul with the godhead. This is an era analogous to mythical images of the world coming into manifestation.

The inferential realm of the fetus is poetically embellished in mythologized legends worldwide. Breathsessions may be filled with a sense of a return to Heaven, to the Garden of Eden, or to Paradise. It is also a time of beginnings, of cosmogonic cycles of the unmanifested growing to maturity, then dying, and then renewing. It is a time of rebirths. The new fetus embodies this cycle of conception, growth, and an inevitable fullness. Its birth heralds a dying to the womb, and its sensed Paradise Lost. Eternal returns in breathsessions evoke spiritual-psychic rebirths, and breathers often relate nostalgic narrations also found in the traditions of a paradisiacal time, retold in bucolic variations.

In breathsessions where BPM 1 predominates, breathworkers relate to aquatic animals such as whales, dolphins, and fish—all part of an archetypal Mother Nature. A breathworker is quoted saying, “I felt the undulating as a dolphin’s movement” (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 74). The sensation of floating in the sea found its manifested application in the development of soundproof isolation tanks, filled with a supersaturated water solution of Epsom salt, which first became

popular during the human potential movement that started in the 1960s. My personal experience was of being completely buoyed by the water and feeling almost weightless. Suspended in stillness, my heartbeats generated infinitesimal compression waves from the pulses of the neck arteries, radiating one after another. Studies [2007] at Karlstad University in Sweden by Sven-Ake Bood, involving 140 people with long-term conditions such as anxiety, stress, depression, and fibromyalgia found that more than three quarters of the sufferers experienced noticeable improvements by the use of these tanks. They are still used worldwide for meditation, deep relaxation, and a return to serenity.

Mythology of the Womb

In Fig. 1, a photograph of a nine-week old fetus's environment reveals the placenta and umbilical cord. Cushioned in amniotic fluid,



Fig. 1. Fetus. Used by permission of Omikron/Photo Researchers, Inc.

its personality develops in a womb of muted sound and movement. Otto

Rank refers to Greek creation myths with a quote from Thales: “water is the origin and womb of all things” (*The Trauma of Birth* 168), and also writes that “the birth of the hero [is] from water” (*Art and Artist* 212). “Because embryology is a logos of beginnings, it will be influenced by creation mythemes” (Hillman, *The Myth of Analysis* 224). The imaginal realm of the developing fetus’s psyche nestles its imagination in its paradisaical womb and the sensed world around it.

In an audio CD, “Womb Sounds,” Sheila Woodward captures authentic sounds from a hydrophone placed inside the womb to record the “mother’s voice, father’s voice and music sound in the womb!” (cover label). Sound works as an imaginative agent stirring fantasy for the fetus as well as people in the world. From the Center of Prenatal and Perinatal Music, music therapist and birth Doula, Giselle Whitwell also records sounds of the fetus and mother’s heartbeats pulsating in harmony. They are truly one.

The fetus’s link with its mother goes beyond her chemical secretions and hormonal influences. The mother’s outer physical movements and inner shifting internal organs contact the fetus’s amniotic sac. Sonograms often show a fetus moving arms and legs in dancing or flying movements, which often result in physical contact and maternal delight. Sound and movement engender a rich texture in the fetus’s early memory that is later accessed by inner work. The bliss of BPM 1 is a buried memory, longingly re-embodied.

Breathsessions engender distant sense-memories that may also be the inspiration of creation myths worldwide, that have their beginning in a time when “all is water.” The universal belief in the sacredness of water may be due to the fact that it moves and makes audible sounds and “is thought to be living and tenanted by spirits” (MacCulloch 208). From a *Rig-Veda* hymn (1200 BCE): “In the beginning was darkness swathed in darkness; all this was but unmanifested water” (Sproul 183). In ancient Egypt and at the time of creation, “Before Atum came into being, there was no heaven, no earth, no creature, no little place for any creature to put its foot. Only the waters of chaos existed” (Leach 218). The Achumawi Indians of early California believed that “at first there was nothing but water; no land anywhere, and no light” (Woiche 3).

The Akkadian creation epic (2000 BCE) inscribed on clay tablets, describes the beginning: “When on high the heaven had not been named, firm ground below had not been called by name, naught but primordial Apsū, their begetter, and Mummu-Tiamat, she who bore them all, their waters commingling as a single body” (Mendelsohn 19). Centuries later, with mythic resonance to the Akkadian epic, in *Enumu Elish: The Seven Tablets of Creation: The Babylonian and Assyrian Legends Concerning the Creation of the World and of Mankind*, Sumerian chroniclers recorded Babylonian and Assyrian legends of their conception of the beginning of time: “When in the height heaven was not named, and the earth beneath did not yet bear a name, and the primeval Apsū, who begat them, and

chaos, Tiamat, the mother of them both—their waters were mingled together” (King 1: 3). The conception of these self-evolving cosmoses, and those of a universe declared out of Oceania, especially Polynesia and Micronesia, is addressed by Jung when he writes: “water, especially deep water, usually has maternal significance, roughly corresponding to ‘womb’ “(CW 5: 407). These ancient myths seemingly reflect the experience of the early months of the fetus, with its world of encompassing water, darkness, and undifferentiated sensations.

Mythology of Paradise

One of the earliest references to the Garden of Paradise occurs in the literature of the Sumerians of Mesopotamia, which dates to 1750 BCE. “The word ‘paradise’ derives from the Old Persian *pairidaéza* (*pairi* = around + *diz* = to mould, to form) and this means an enclosed park or orchard” (Armstrong 3). The Persian king of the dead, Yima, has his Garden situated on a “mythical mountain, the source of the Water of Life, where there grows magical trees, including a Tree of Life” (Heinberg 43). In *The Divine Comedy*, Dante writes of a divine forest in paradise that he is “keen to search within, to search around that forest—dense, alive with green, [and] divine” (*Purg.* 28: 1-2). His is a primeval forest of perpetual springs with perfect natural beauty. Mythically, paradise is the “navel of the earth” at the center of the world (Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* 378).

A thousand years after the Sumerians, the Greek poet Homer

describes paradise as being a courtyard where tall blossoming trees grow, with a fence running around it on all sides, wherein pears, pomegranates, apples, sweet figs, and blossoming olives abundantly offer their fruit. The food “never perishes and never leaves off but is bountiful in winter or summertime, all the year round” (*Od.* 7: 117-18). Hesiod describes a magical garden where there is a tree with golden apples to be found beyond famous Okeanos, somewhere in the imaginary world at the ends of the earth, with “beautiful gold apples and fruit-bearing trees” (216). A. Bartlett Giamatti writes, “the earthly paradise: a landscape arranged as a garden; nature in a wild state but wonderfully blessed by the gods; and a pastoral setting for love” (34). The Biblical journey “takes us from the Garden of Eden” through every imaginable chaos and finally leads us to a heavenly, transcended Jerusalem (Johnson, *Transformation* 4).

In the Biblical account of the Garden of Eden, the Lord took “man” and put him in the garden to till it and to keep it (*Gen* 2:15). A variant on the “lone man” story is found in Yakut (Siberian) tales where the dwelling place of the first man was a sort of paradise. First man came upon a giant tree that had resin that was transparent and sweetly perfumed, its bark never dried or cracked, its leaves never withered, and its cones were graceful, reversed goblets. The tree’s roots went deep into the underground depths, the dwelling place of strange mythical beings. He saw an opening appear in the trunk and first man “wished to know

why he was created [and] through this opening in the trunk a female, visible only to the waist, informed him that he had been created to become the father of the human race” (Holmberg, *Siberian Mythology* 4: 351).

Jean Delumeau, in *History of Paradise*, writes that there are three general descriptions of Paradise: a landscape arranged as a garden; nature in a wild state but wonderfully blessed by the gods; and a pastoral setting for love (10). Heinberg, in *Memories and Visions of Paradise*, describes Paradise as situated on a mythical mountain that is the source of the Water of Life, where magical trees grow (including the Tree of Life), and that represents a time of perfection where there is “neither heat nor cold, nor old age nor death, nor disease” (43). Geoffrey Ashe, in *Dawn behind the Dawn*, concludes that Paradise myths have two themes, “one is the golden age” and the other “is a time of ancient wisdom” (2). We can gather from all of these that humanity once enjoyed a special state of harmony, well-being, and companionship with the deities and with nature. Armstrong, in *The Paradise Myth*, develops a resonating theme that paradise is the image of an “eternal spring with a perpetual beginning before and outside the natural cycle” (109). The womb state is the most primal state for humans, and these descriptions are analogous to the BPM I state as expressed in breathsessions.

The cult of Mithras is connected with a spring, and Orphic cults in general associate the underworld with water. An Egyptian legend

recounts how Khepri, the morning Sun God and Lord of All, first lifts himself up from Nu, the watery abyss. India's many stories tell of a golden cosmic egg floating in primal waters, from which issues forth Prajāpati, the creation deity. The Finnish *Kalevala* tells of a primeval sea into which descends the virgin daughter of the air from the sky, destined to become the Water-Mother. A Northwest Canadian myth relates how the world rose from the waters when Yetl, the Thunder-bird, swoops down from heaven. The Creek and Choctaw Indians of Oklahoma have similar tales but instead of the Thunder-bird, a pair of doves perform the same feat. The Hopi Indians believe that "a very long time ago, there was nothing but water on the earth" (Erdoes and Ortiz 115). Julien Ries, in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, writes that in Hindu philosophy the first yuga, or age of the world, is a perfect age where "all creatures lived in a state of spiritual perfection, doing as they pleased, free from heat and cold, fatigue and suffering, ignorant alike of justice and injustice" (5: 2963). Universal tales tell of such a primordial time, a watery time, and with an abundance beyond all imagination.

Mythology of the World Tree

Neumann writes that the Great Earth Mother brings forth all life from herself and is the mother of all vegetation and, "the center of this vegetative symbolism is the tree" (*The Great Mother* 48). This dissertation suggests that worldwide myths relating to the tree are embodiments of vestiges of sense-memories from the earliest weeks in the womb, when

shape itself, even without cognitive understanding, is one of the data that is “filed” in memory. “Cosmologically, the World Tree rises at the center of the earth [and is] the place of earth’s umbilicus” (Eliade, *Shamanism* 270). Myths “tell us that human beings were descended from trees” (Jung, *CW* 5: 349). Trees “[have] a special connection with water, salt, and sea-water;” and, a saline solution is found in amniotic fluid (Jung, *CW* 13: 408). In the epic of Gilgamesh, the “word used for ‘ocean’ means the mythical freshwater sea beneath the earth” (Langdon 5: 226).

Central Asian mythic narrations of the tree of life contain the “belief that the tree of life rises out of a lake or sea of wonderful water” (Holmberg, *Siberian Mythology* 4: 359), and under the tree of life there is one goddess (357).

Ancient tree worship holds that “men and gods are born of trees” (Neumann, *The Great Mother* 262). In Fig. 2, next page, a tree crown and trunk have been morphed over the placenta and umbilical cord, respectively, of the first photograph to celebrate a *coniunctio* [union of body and spirit]. Tree trunks are mythologized as containers, in which dwells “its spirit, as the soul dwells in the body” (49). Its “voice of command suggests that in archaic times the tree and the daimon were originally one and the same” (Jung, *CW* 13: 247). When the fetus touches its own “tree trunk- umbilical cord,” perhaps it encounters its tree daimon also found in worldwide “outcroppings” of the collective unconscious. Tree imagery arising in breathsessions may connect the



Fig. 2. World Tree. Used by permission of Omikron/Photo Researchers, Inc. and Photoshop artist Eric Lennstrom.

breather with their earliest sense-memory as a fetus, as it did for me.

The origins of certain trees are sometimes traced back to human or divine personages. Early Greeks “sacrificed to ‘Dionysus of the tree.’ His image was often merely an upright post, without arms, and draped in a mantle” (Frazer 7: 3). Other embodiments include Philyra and the linden tree, Smyrna and the myrrh tree, the Phaëthon sisters and the poplar tree, Attis and the almond tree, and Adonis and the myrtle tree. The “World Tree is a tree that lives and gives life. The Siberian Yakut believe that at the ‘golden navel of the Earth’ stands a tree [which] rises in a sort of primordial paradise” (Eliade, *Shamanism* 272). Eliade also writes in *Gods, Goddesses and the Myths of Creation* that the Yauelmani Yokut Indians of California believe that “at first there was water everywhere and

a tree grew out of the water” (90). Perhaps one reason that the tree is so pervasive in world mythology is that it symbolizes “archetypal places of mythical birth” (241).

The tree symbolizes the source of all life: representing the mother, the origin of life, and the impulse to attain its fullest destiny by its vertical stature, where “men and gods are born of trees” (262). The Siberian Altai peoples believe that “at the earth’s navel grows the highest tree of them all, whose branches rise up to heaven” (Eliade, *Shamanism* 299). Oswald Spengler, in *The Decline of the West*, captures a sense of their life-impulse when he writes that a tree’s vertical tendency, ever restless, unsatisfied, and straining beyond its summit, merges its presence “in a deep relation with Destiny” (396). The tree is charged with sacred forces “because it is vertical,” and for developed civilizations the tree can become the symbol of the universe. But “to a primitive religious mind, the tree is the universe” (Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* 268).

Creation myths portray trees growing in a pristine, primordial nature. In Norse mythology, the mighty ash tree, Yggdrasil, supports the whole universe. “It sprang from the body of Ymir” (Gayley 374). Ymir is the rime-cold giant who appears in clouds formed of vapors rising in the air. Yggdrasil is also connected with widespread myths of a World Tree growing “in the center of the earth, and reaching to Heaven” (MacCulloch 2: 334). John Weir Perry writes in *Lord of the Four Quarters* that “Odin

hung himself on his own tree [Yggdrasil] in order to obtain wisdom” (186). Jung writes that the tree is the “outward and visible sign of the realization of the self” (CW 18: 243). To embrace the divine is to be granted truth of self and the eternal.

Trees are animated with the spirit of life, and in an ancient Persian creation myth, “the cosmic tree grew out of a cosmic sea, Vourukasha, and that tree that was the source of all life on earth” (Andrews 200). H. G. Baynes, in *Mythology of the Soul*, writes that the tree is the primordial symbol for the mother (434). In *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Wisdom*, editors Matthews and Matthews write that in many cultures trees have been held sacred and are “repositories of memory, lore, and the presence of spirit-beings” (22).

The “tree symbolizes a living process as well as a process of enlightenment, which though it may be grasped by the intellect, should not be confused by it” (Jung, CW 13: 413). It is a “mystery” and an imaginal representation of human life. Its connection is primordial in our collective sense memory. In many cultures the “tree has been held sacred as symbolizing the origin of life” (Baynes 692). Ludwig Janus writes in *The Enduring Effects of Prenatal Experience: Echoes from the Womb* that one of the most widespread mythological themes is that of the Tree of Life. “It connects the middle of the earth with heaven and gives the Food of Life” (182). The idea of a “center” is implied in even the most primitive conceptions of the sacred place, and “such conceptions always

include a sacred tree” (Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* 271). The tree may even become part of divine realms when interpreted as the Cosmic Tree or World Tree. Sacred places almost always include a sacred tree. Trees long have been regarded as mysterious and direct embodiments of the incomprehensible meaning of life. Fertility gods were thought to live in the tree itself. In the savage history of the human race, human sacrifices were often conducted at the base of trees with the victims being buried in the roots immediately upon their death. Frisians, Lombards, and Saxons hung their victims from tree branches. Trees are also associated with the souls of the dead, with elves and spirits, as well as with dwelling tree spirits. According to Erich Neumann, in *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, the Egyptian god Osiris, worshipped as a tree, was the god of fertility, earth, and nature. He combines all the characteristics of the Great Mother and is “water, sap, [and] the Nile [and is] the animating principle of vegetation” (225). One reason trees are regarded as divine is the fact that they renew themselves each Spring with new leaf buds, grow straight, endure for years, and remain long after entire generations have come and gone. In Egypt, tree-birth is considered human rebirth.

Creation myths express in symbolic manner that which is most essential for human life and society by relating everything to a primordial act, as in BPM I. The locus of the sacred, their center, is held to be preeminently absolute. The Tree of Life is thus a reflection of the sacred

in the profane. It is a very common practice of shamans to “launch” themselves into their extra-normal flights to other realms from a tree. In the Siberian Altai shamanic tradition, “we find here an intermediate stage between the world-pillars and the branched world-tree supposed to rise from the center of the earth” (Holmberg, *Siberian Mythology* 4: 340). “Shamans transcend time, space, and the profane condition [with a] reestablishment of a ‘paradisaal’ existence lost in the depths of mythical time” (Eliade, *Shamanism* 171).

The Cabalist tradition views the Tree of Life as a diagrammatic form of every force and factor in a manifested universe and in the soul of man: the *Axis Mundi*, or Cosmic Pillar. Grof writes that trees are known for their longevity and represent a state of “unperturbed, centered, and timeless consciousness independent of the turmoil and upheavals of the world” (*The Adventure of Self-Discovery* 59). Repeated themes throughout BPM 1 are of a tree in an oceanic paradise and a time of pristine bliss.

A prominent Biblical narration has a “dark” overtone. In a Gnostic tractate on the origin of the world there is an account of the tree in Paradise whence came “the wisest of all creatures, who was called Beast.” In reply to Eve’s recounting of God’s commandment not to eat from the tree, nor to even touch it, the Beast replied, “Do not be afraid. In death you [humanity] shall not die. For he knows that when you eat from it, your intellect will become sober” (Robinson 184). The “dark” consequence of God’s decree is that humans are not to attain

consciousness by approaching the tree and eating its fruit [knowledge]. Punished, humanity is driven from paradise and separated from the divine by this edict, which is inimical to the very nature of “his” creature.

The biblical Fall, or being thrown out of Paradise, is mythically reflected in the transition between BPM 1 and 2 where maternal hormones and physical contractions force the baby out of the womb and into the birth canal, but the baby is prohibited from further movement because the cervix has not yet dilated. This gives it then, and breathsessions years later, a sense of entrapment or “no exit.” This exile from the nourishing, effortless-time in the womb is reflected in upwelled visions of unending suffering and punishment without redemption. BPM 2 is the matrix of traumatic entrapment and the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 5 Mythic Interpretations of BPM 2

Inner workers' heroic journeys begin with a descent into their mythic underworld, as exemplified by the Second Basic Perinatal Matrix [BPM2]. Their "passage [into this] magical threshold is a transit into a sphere of rebirth [symbolized] in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale" (Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 90). This maternal realm is where "innumerable rites and myths play the part of the earth womb that demands to be fructified" (Neumann, *The Great Mother* 44). Inner workers' expenditure of psychic energy and their commitment to nurture their personal development creates the potential to make their lives more productive, and "if we understand the dead spirits [of the underworld] as contents of the unconscious that are apparently dead and inactive, then to vitalize them so the ego can hear what they have to say, energy must be poured into them" (Edinger, *The Eternal Drama* 112). Without this commitment in engaging inner work, not only will dysfunctional contents in the unconscious remain so but they may be the source of profound dissatisfactions with life.

Homer immortalizes the activation of departed spirits, wherein souls have no consciousness but acquire it by drinking the blood of a sacrificial animal, an idea that originated in the blood offerings poured out upon the grave. He writes, "then I took the sheep and cut their throats into the pit, and the black-clouded blood poured out" (*The*

Odyssey 117). Here is the where the spilt “blood, sweat, and tears” of breathworkers’ unremitting dedication to their deep psychic exploration is made in breathsessions to elicit guidance (their nekyia) from their inner healers, and “the purpose of [their] descent as universally exemplified in the myth of the hero is to show that only in the region of danger [watery abyss, cavern, forest, island, castle, etc.] can one find the ‘treasure hard to attain’ [jewel, virgin, life-position, victory over death]” (Jung, *CW* 12: 438).

Dionysus is mythically “thought of as the lord of the nekyia, the journey to the Underworld, [because] he was the ruler of the phenomenon of death and rebirth” (Edinger, *The Eternal Drama* 27), and he is connected to rapture, the whole potential for inner transformation” (144). Osiris is another figure who evolves into a patron “of the souls of the departed and king of the lower world, being at the same time the lord of resurrection and of new and eternal life” (Müller 12: 93). Only by undergoing personal psychic sacrifice are inner workers able to be guided by their re-embodied imaginal entities out of their underworld and become psychologically free of dysfunctional, unconscious impulses and behaviors.

The underworld is “a place of the primal forces of life [and] the mill in which the gods reside and [where] the dead are remade, and initiates reborn” (Matthews, *The Celtic Tradition* 2). It is a place where “the symbolism of rebirth always goes back to the symbolism of birth”

(Neumann, *The Great Mother* 159). The Second Matrix is this place; its theme is “descending into the depths of the underworld, the realm of death, or hell [and where] reliving this stage of birth is one of the worst experiences we can have during self-exploration that involves holotropic states” (Grof, *Psychology of the Future* 41).

The personal underworld is a seething realm of unconscious forces, disequilibrium, and conflict. This realm has been the inspiration for many creation myths. One of the most ancient is from early Babylonian mythology. Known as Thalatt (a variant of thalassa, the Greek word for “sea”), Tiamat is a goddess who personifies the sea. She is considered to be the monstrous embodiment of primordial chaos. The narrative character of Marduk, “chiefest among the great gods” (King, *Enuma Elish* 4: 5), is introduced to bring order when he “overcame her and cut off her life” (4: 103). From her body is formed heaven and earth, and from the resolution of chaos is rendered a stable psychic world. Such narrative traditions of resolving chaos through imaginal violence (BPM 3) reflects the very nature of inner work as the means of creating new life. Rebirth is achieved through the resolution of the Second Matrix’s chaos.

The tradition of defining the underworld also contains a rich alchemical exploration of the *prima materia*, in which “the best known synonyms are ‘chaos’ and the ‘sea,’ [and where] the sea in particular is conceived as the ‘matrix of all creatures.’ The *prima materia* is often

called *aqua pontica* [sea water]" (Jung, CW 14: 246). Amniotic fluid resembles a seawater composition, and religious ideas in antiquity "always associate the underworld with water" (Jung, CW 18: 259), where its divine water is "gestated in the womb of sea water" (Jung, CW 14: 317). In the maternal vessel of the womb, each human life begins and develops, true to upwelled mythic imagery in the Second Matrix. Deep water represents the unconscious, where the treasure is "guarded by a serpent or a dragon" (Jung, CW 18, 260). Depth explorations may find breathworkers swallowed by the serpent or dragon (from the Latin *draco* meaning "snake"). The narrative impulse of the Tiamat story continues into Egypt, where it gives "rise to the story of the gigantic serpent 'Apop, the enemy of the sun-god" (Müller 12: 104). Each night 'Apop swallows the sun, but in the ensuing conflict in the darkness, victory brings a new day and the light of a reborn sun. Rebirth is the purpose of the heroic journey from the underworld, and it only comes with the struggle of enormous psychic energy.

The Second Matrix is the realm of entrapment and the sense of imminent death. The renewal process is a profound experience of change and its "harbinger is the motif of death" (Perry, *Trials of a Visionary Mind* 129). Inner workers' heroic journeys are part of the tradition of initiatory mysteries into psychic learning through the "encounter with demons and shadows, the sufferings of Hell" (Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld* 65). One must go to the underworld, and through the Second Matrix, to

reveal and understand the psyche at its basic depths. Passing through this matrix incurs a sense of suffocation, compression, and entanglement. “The subject feels engaged in a claustrophobic world and experiences incredible physical and psychological tortures” (Grof, *Realms of the Human Conscious* 116). “I had experienced feelings again over and over again, session after session, with slightly different characters, the feelings of despair, hopelessness—as we would say—the Second Matrix trauma” (Silver 335). Working through BPM 2, inner workers’ spirits confront and seek release from impulsive behaviors that similarly bind their lives in dysfunctional ways from “entrapment in habitual, routine, or conventional mental structures. Spiritual work is one of liberating this dynamic energy, which must break free of its suffocation in old forms” (Perry, *Trials of the Visionary Mind* 128).

During the birth process, tremendous hydraulic pressures from the mother’s body force the baby into the birth canal, but continued movement is impossible because the mother’s cervix has not dilated. “The muscular structure of the uterus compresses the fetus with 50 to 100 pounds of force. Each time the uterus contracts, the compression cuts off any biochemical communication with the mother by constricting the flow [of oxygen, hormones, and chemicals] through the placenta” (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 66). The baby is effectively imprisoned. It has never experienced such intensity before; “the child [is] trapped in the narrow confines of the birth canal [and] has no outlet for

the flood of emotional and motor impulses, since he or she cannot move, fight back, leave the situation, or scream” (Grof, *Beyond the Brain* 245). It is the first trauma—the womb of comfort and ease has become the torture rack. Because the beginning of life is fraught with such an onslaught of pain and punishment, we may begin to understand the troubled nature of our species. Traumatized by the claustrophobic feeling of “no exit,” the imaginal is the embodied pain of the literal, and becomes an archetype of “one who suffers by psyche” (Hillman, *Archetypal Psychology* 50).

Symptoms of this Second Matrix tend to include throat problems such as tonsil infections, related to traumatic memories of a threatened oxygen supply. Other experiences include “childhood pneumonia, whooping cough, diphtheria, near-drowning, aspiration of a foreign object [including vomit], and assaults by parents or their surrogates, older siblings, peers, and other persons that are associated with strangling” (Grof, *The Adventure of Self-Discovery* 181). When birth struggle memories are close to consciousness, individuals become overly sensitive to situations of dark, narrow places and passages, to feelings of being confined by crowds, or to feeling restricted in breathing due to tight clothing around the throat. Extreme cases of having “umbilical cords accidentally caught around their necks at birth [leads to a life] of swallowing difficulties or speech impediments” (Verny 101).

A person experiencing a fully developed Second Matrix feels caged,

caught in a nightmarish world where “the visual field is dark, ominous, and the general atmosphere is that of unbearable emotional and physical torture” (Grof, *The Holotropic Mind* 48). It is a state that most Holotropic Breathwork participants experience in some, if not many, early sessions—all of which seem interminable. One participant describes this state: “I was grieving that there [was] so little time. I was experiencing the endlessness of time—seeing lives in Africa, Arabia—endless sand, endless suffering, endless grasping and struggling” (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 68). This matrix personally feels like an eternity of misery, where nothing progresses backward, forward, or anywhere in-between. Another breathworker writes, “I felt stuck, feeling powerless and isolated, things will never change” (Forester 196). An intransigent formlessness remains mired where it is; and, despite breathing faster and deeper, nothing seems to be resolvable.

Unbearable, unending emotional and physical suffering finds its fullest expression in the motif of an internalized hell. In BPM 2, “Everything is dark, oppressive, and terrifying” (Grof, *The Holotropic Mind* 46). The Second Matrix gives birth to fantasies of generalized paranoid feelings, bizarre physical sensations, universal danger, and perceptions of insidious toxic influences. Mythic images are of imprisoning swamps, stinking rivers, lakes of fire, and rivers of blood. The baby, about to be born, is awash in a surge of maternal chemicals and hormones designed to induce the birthing process, while the surrounding amniotic fluid now

also contains its own urine and feces from being distressed. Once born, the baby often expresses a special “mad” cry. One way to provoke this protest after birth is by restraining the baby’s movements of arms and legs, which “has the same affect before birth as it does afterward” (Verny 65). Being bound “is reminiscent of the recent birth experience where the child was perforce helpless and the victim” (Greenacre 34).

“Surrender, surrender, surrender” is a mantra that may move the process forward. The “fastest way of terminating this unbearable state is surrendering to it completely and accepting it” (Grof, *Psychology of the Future* 44). The Second Matrix can also invoke feelings of “severe psychological frustrations, particularly abandonment, rejection, deprivation, emotionally threatening events, and confining or oppressive situations in the nuclear family and later in life” (Grof, *The Holotropic Mind* 55). Especially traumatic childhood experiences include being in families of alcoholics, drug addicts, emotionally dysfunctional parents, or sexual abusers—“where nationally one in four girls and one in six boys are assaulted repeatedly by a family member or friend” (Gould 176). “As an abuse survivor, I identified much more with the Second Matrix. I felt stuck, hopeless, isolated, and trapped” (Forester 196).

The Second Matrix can initially feel like a life-text too odious to read, or an absent ending frame, “The End,” from a “misery drama” film. However, breathworkers who continue deep psychic exploration ultimately find relief in confronting these unhealthy patterns and

behaviors generated from family, subculture, and cultural dynamics. Drawing upon the courage of the hero archetype, inner workers persevere until they understand that “knowledge comes through suffering, and suffering is the lot of those whose minds are engrossed with self” (Pargiter 193). People will not endure breathwork, or another intense healing modality, if it is not effective in trauma resolution and personal transformation. Thankfully for those inner workers who make the commitment and endure the suffering, it is generally rewarded with growing consciousness.

Mythology of Being Swallowed

Innumerable legends, fairytales, and myths share widespread archetypal motifs “of being devoured or swallowed [as] a kind of descent into the underworld” (Jacobi 155). The Biblical Jonah is swallowed by a whale, the Irish hero Finn MacCool is swallowed by a monster, Little Red Riding Hood is swallowed by a wolf, the Polynesian Maui is swallowed by his great-great-grandmother Hine-nui-te-po, and the entire Greek pantheon—with sole exception of Zeus—is “swallowed by its grandfather Kronos” (Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 91). Ancient texts from the Sumero-Accadian pantheon have similar narrations, with their primeval battles of the Sun God waged against the dragons (leviathans) of water chaos, and where the Hebrew Yaw “will strangle the dragon which is the sea” (Langdon 134). A watery chaos and a threatening dragon-sea are metaphorical of the infant’s plight in the Second Matrix’s

waters of amniotic fluid during the birthing phase. The threshold is a form of self-annihilation where the hero goes inward to be born again.

Traditional stories of a witch (or big bad wolf) that eats children are common, as are stories with an omnivorous ogre. In alchemical conceptions, it is the lion that ingests the sun. Frobenius relates that the motif of devouring was one of the commonest “components of the sun myth” (Jung, *CW* 5: 365). The sun is sometimes identified with death, “for he devours his children as well as generating them” (Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* 136). A sun hero presents a darker side, a connection with the world of the dead through initiation and fertility. Writers in the fourth and fifth centuries CE linked Kronos-Saturn with dragons or snakes biting their tails (uroboros), which emphasize this image as a symbol of time and signifies that he “devours whatever he has created” (Panofsky 73). Imaginative narratives of myths and fairytales have their impulse in this inevitable cataclysm.

It seems “significant for the development of the *concept of punishment* that not only all punishment devised by humankind in fantasy, but also those converted into deed, represent the primal condition of the womb situation with emphasis laid on its painful character” (Rank, *The Trauma of Birth* 133). The Second Matrix is both this fantasy and reality.

The concept of the “dark night of the soul” that devours a limited consciousness is richly illustrated with images of being swallowed by a

whale, leviathan, serpent, dragon, or monster and is dramatized as “the journey in the ‘belly of a fish for many a hero’ ” (Johnson, *Transformation* 83). Hell is “imagined in the form of a huge monster” (Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation* 64). Here “the hero is swallowed into the unknown” (Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 192). There is a “kind of descent into the underworld, and a sinking back into the womb” (Jacobi 155). It is a time of “being caught in coils, swallowed or poisoned” (Jung, *CW* 17: 219). The task of the hero—and of inner workers—is to overcome these obstacles, to achieve freedom of consciousness, and to be transformed, so that “when the grave is opened, they will rise up from Hades like a newborn from the belly” (Jung, *CW* 14: 316). Breathwork sessions offer a release from a devouring dysfunctional psyche.

The use of serpents for binding, in Ixion’s fate, finds resonance in this Second Matrix, since these animals swallow their prey. Such imaginal symbolism of birthing, with its initial crushing and strangulation, is mythically represented by a serpent’s physical appearance of appearing seeming pregnant, in a prenatal connotation, with swallowed prey bulging in its belly. The “serpentine symbolism [can also] have many different culture-specific meanings such as Kundalini, Ananta, Quetzalcoatl, the snake in the Garden of Eden, and the Rainbow Serpent of Australian aborigines, etc.” (Grof, *The Transpersonal Vision* 32).

Mythology of Unending Suffering

St. John of the Cross believes that suffering is “an important stage in a person’s spiritual development” (Grof, *The Holotropic Mind* 52).

Lionel Corbett writes that “our emotional suffering always contains an element of the divine [and] becomes the beginning of our spirituality”

(51). Edinger adds that “suffering—when experienced consciously as part of the archetypal drama of transformation—is redemptive”

(*Archetype of the Apocalypse* 75). Frankl suggests that “if there is a meaning of life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering” (86).

Spinoza proposes that as soon as the “ignorant of self” cease to suffer they “cease also to be” (31: 463). But for the breathworker in the Second Matrix, there is no elation, no movement, and no immediate relief or salvation, only breathsessions of seemingly endless torment.

Many mythical figures and images reflect unending suffering in BPM 2. Five have arisen during breathsessions in the last three decades: Ixion, Tantalus, Sisyphus, Prometheus, and Tityos. They all have committed some offense against the gods as a cause for their punishment, perhaps dramatizing a rejecting (birthing) womb and a baby’s literally upturned world. Most “sin” narrations have as their cause a desire, greed, craving, or an insatiable hunger for immortality “to exist, to be, and to become” (Rahula 33).

Ixion is a king of the Lapithue in Thessaly, one of thirteen peripheries of Greece. Reneging on a bridal payment, he invites his

father-in-law, Deioneus, to a feast. Upon his arrival, Ixion pushes Deioneus into a pit filled with burning coals and wood, which Ixion has camouflaged. Zeus takes pity on this crime of kindred murder and invites Ixion to Olympus. Ixion falls “in lust” with Hera and is consumed with irresistible desire, which is consummated with a cloud that Zeus conjures as Hera. Zeus, himself guilty of multiple rapes and murders, binds Ixion to a winged wheel (sometimes depicted as flaming) that revolves in the air in all directions for eternity. Slightly different accounts have “Zeus binding him with serpents instead of ropes to a winged and flaming wheel” (Cirlot 547), or Zeus binding him “with snakes on a winged, fiery, four-spoke wheel which turns ceaselessly” (Rank, *The Trauma of Birth* 133). Other accounts also vary: “Ixion revolves within his wheel, himself pursuer and pursued” (Ovid 125), or “Ixion dies spread-eagled on a fiery wheel, symbol of the sun endlessly rolling through the heavens” (Walker 457). “It is possible, however, to see these wheels as similar in meaning to the Buddhist wheel of life, the one turned by the pig, the cock, and the serpent, the forces of concupiscence” (Edinger, *The Eternal Drama* 167). “To be put on the wheel in punishment is to be put into an archetypal place, tied to the turns of fortune [and] the endless repetitions of coming eternally back to the same experiences without release” (Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld* 161). The wheel touches what was, what is, and what might be but with no rest, no resolution, and no hope. This mirrors the

experience of breathworkers in the Second Matrix.

Ixion's death takes place at the hub of the universe, at the *axis mundi*, and this vertical axis becomes the axle for his wheel that rolls him throughout eternity. Such eternal circularity, where "everything [is] moving and nothing [is] changing" (Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld* 161), is a state where "creatures are wracked on this wheel of rebirth" (O'Flaherty 121). Ixion is wheeled through the eons in a condition similar to "samsara" (cyclical and unending birth), which is described in Buddhism, Bön, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, and other related religions. The wheel is a metaphor of a pinion that drives psychic machinery "in which the dead are remade, and initiates reborn" (Matthews, *The Celtic Tradition* 2), and its turnings continually traverse the primal forces of life that reside within the individual's psychic. Worship is given to recurrent seasonal, fiery cycles of hot midheavens and cold night skies, such as in the Corinthian sun cult and European midsummer festivals.

The myth of Tantalus offers many other resonant images. Tantalus, a son of Zeus and the Titaness Pluto, is invited to dine with the gods. He steals their secret menu of nectar and ambrosia, while there, and gives it to the mortals. Euripides suggests that his shameful weakness is his inability to keep a "bridle on his lips when admitted to join the gods to share the honors of their feast like one of them" (5: 394). Not content with one infraction, upon his return to Olympus, Tantalus

murders his son Pelops and serves him in a stew. None of the gods eat their portion except Demeter, who is preoccupied with the loss of her daughter Persephone. Pelops is resuscitated in a manner emulated centuries later in the reconstruction of shamans by “trance-boiling” them in a pot and “re-mempering” them. The myth of rejuvenation by dismemberment and cooking “has been handed down in Siberian, Central Asia, and European folklore” (Eliade, *Shamanism* 66). As punishment for his gruesome actions, Tantalus is condemned to stand chin deep in water from which he cannot slake his thirst, nor savor the ripe fruit hanging just out of reach. In an oblique similarity to the myth of Sisyphus, hanging over the head of Tantalus is “a huge boulder [from Mount Sipylus] perilously suspended” (Reid 1013). Tantalus’ punishment is for the crimes and sins of infanticide, cannibalism, and theft from the gods.

Sisyphus is the founder of Corinth (then called Ephyra), and is the son of Aeolus, king of Thessaly. He sees Zeus rape the nymph Aegina, daughter of the river goddess Asopus, and promises to tell Asopus what happened if she grants him a spring on top of the Acrocorinth, its Acropolis. Zeus dispatches Thanatos to kill Sisyphus for this disclosure, but Thanatos is tricked into being bound, and no human can die while he (Death) is imprisoned. The god of war, Ares, is then ordered to murder Sisyphus, but does not before Sisyphus is able to tell his wife not to offer the prescribed funeral rites for his burial. Such rites unfulfilled,

Sisyphus is allowed to leave the underworld and return to his life on earth. An enraged Zeus then compels Sisyphus to return to the underworld upon his earthly death from “sheer old age,” and to push a huge boulder up a steep hill in the deepest pit of Hades. The massive stone always slips away and rolls down again to the bottom of the hill. It remains to this day a story of endless toil without success or resolution. Existential writers such as Søren Kirkegaard, Albert Camus, and Jean Paul Sartre have described this eternal and “endless nothing,” in their many works. Samuel Beckett’s iconic play “Waiting for Godot” is about two friends waiting for their friend Godot, who never appears, and they spend the play doing nothing, as nothing can be done but wait.

Prometheus, the son of Iapetus and Themis, and brother to Atlas, Epimetheus and Menoetius, is a wily character in Greek mythology. He tricks Zeus into eating bare bones and fat instead of good meat, which he keeps for himself, and he also brazenly steals sacred fire from the gods and gives it to the mortals. Prometheus also does not tell Zeus of the prophecy that one of Zeus’s sons will overthrow him. His patience at an end, Zeus binds “devious Prometheus with inescapable harsh bonds and inflicts on him a long-winged eagle, which eats his immortal liver” (Hesiod 521-24). Each night the liver regenerates so as to be ready to be consumed the next day. Interceding on his behalf, Heracles kills the eagle, setting Prometheus free from everlasting punishment.

The mythic figure Tityos is of the same nature, except in his case

“two vultures, perched on both sides, rent at his liver” (Homer, *The Odyssey* 11: 578). Thomas Hobbes suggests that the Promethean myth symbolizes an individual who looks too far in the future with his “heart all day long gnawed on by fear of death, poverty, or other calamity” (23: 79). The story of Prometheus, and Tityos, seems to demonstrate, as Hobbes suggests, that eternal suffering becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when inexorable mortality and the vagaries of life are denied. Desire causes pain, a Hindu belief as well, and obsessing to “control life” leads to a life of unconsciousness miserably lived.

The five mythic figures—Ixion, Tantalus, Sisyphus, Prometheus, and Tityos—share the common fate of unending suffering, and serve as powerful mythic guides for psyches activated in breathsessions. Perhaps these mythological figures provide metaphorical lessons as well. All five actively transgress the god(s) whom they know and are directly related to, despite the fact that they are mortal and less powerful. The appearance of these mythic figures may be evoked by breathworkers’ psychic search for an explanation of their trauma of birth.

Arising in concluding breathsession discussions, breathworkers glimpse an awareness of their life as being a divine process of achieving wholeness. In the crucible of the Second Matrix, however, no lasting beatitude is possible just yet. Holotropic Breathwork’s mantra of “a resolution takes as long as it takes” cannot be expedited. Long hours of original birthing labor often find little resolution in a breathsession

lasting only three hours. Many sessions may be needed to resolve the primal sense of entrapment and suffocation. The dynamic of this enervating Second Matrix is inaction: aesthetic ideas are conceived but not created, a perfect world is longed for but not fashioned, and a paradise is anticipated but not found. The soul looks around but sees no path for a release.

When the breathworker deeply regresses and “re-embodies” him- or herself as a baby, he or she may remember being forced into the birth canal. It is at this moment that separateness from “this surrounding other,” the mother, is intuited with each infinitesimal move down the birth canal. Every contraction compresses the placental circulation between mother and baby and severs more of the connection between them. The anxiety of this Second Matrix is “psychically bound” (Freud, *SE* 16: 398); and, a baby can have no greater trauma than to experience its supply of blood and nourishment being interrupted.

Healing may come to breathworkers as a result of understanding “the meaning of [their] suffering” (Meier 131). Frankl suggests that suffering is “not always a pathological phenomenon; rather than being a symptom of neurosis, suffering grows out of [inner worker’s] existential frustration” (123). The newborn is marred by this first, and perhaps most profound, aloneness. Questing heroes must be granted time, after enduring all their sufferings, in order to fulfill their destinies. The mandala drawn at the conclusion of a breathsession is often this vehicle

of transformation.

In the modern world, there is a “terrifying fear of loneliness” (Jung, *CW* 18: 632), and breathwork allows for community in a shared search for wholeness. The Second Matrix is a state where breathworkers identify with populations oppressed by totalitarian regimes, with civilians suffering in wars, with inmates in concentration camps, and with the downtrodden of all ages. As the son of Saturn said to the Trojans, “Of all the creatures that live and move upon the earth, there is none so pitiful as they” (Homer, *The Iliad* 126). The Second Matrix presages the rage that builds in the Third Matrix and which overcomes entrapment and suffering.

Thus, the initiation phase of the hero’s journey typically culminates in situations of hopeless entrapment and imprisonment. “The initiatory mystery, the long journey of psychic learning [and] the encounter with demons and shadows, and the suffering in Hell” is where depth psychology is found (Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld* 65). When these are successfully resolved, heroes may return to their cultures, and their conscious lives, with a “boon.” Those undertaking the perilous journey of inner work into their own spiritual labyrinth find themselves in a region of danger, but one that contains treasures that are otherwise unavailable. Success comes when that which traumatizes is healed. In the language of the mystic, when the senses are cleansed, “the energies are concentrated upon transcendental things” (Campbell,

The Hero with a Thousand Faces 101). Inner workers, as heroes, transcend debilitating unconscious motivations into wholeness of soul-healing.

The fight to survive, the rage to resist, and the explosive nature of violence itself is explored in the next chapter on the Third Matrix.

Chapter 6 Mythic Interpretations of BPM 3

The Third Basic Perinatal Matrix (BPM 3) is one of aggression. Breathsession upwellings are images of raging elements, enormous struggles, violent scenes, and *pyrocatharsis* (the motif of purifying fire in its archetypal form). “Aggressive and sadomasochistic aspects of this matrix reflect the biological fury of the organism whose survival is threatened by suffocation” (Grof, *The Ultimate Journey* 134). Karl Menninger could also be describing this matrix when he writes that the “aggressive instincts lack discrimination, lack judgment, lack perspective, lack everything but power and a destructive goal” (*The Vital Balance* 154). A Holotropic breather describes this experience in stark terms:

I felt as if I was all closed in and I was trying to get out. I began to scream out. I felt anger, hopelessness and hope [. . .] the top of my head hurt [. . .] pressure was on the top of my head. I began to struggle like hell. I felt closed in, trying to get out of a hell hole. The more I struggled for my life, the better I felt.
(Taylor, *Breathwork Experience* 68)

This matrix reflects the conclusion that all of life is a fight which requires constant vigilance and resolve to extirpate challenges from any person or situation. This hypervigilance is like a “prolongation in the mental sphere of the dilemma of ‘eat or be eaten,’ which dominates the organic animate world” (Freud, *SE* 22: 110). This matrix has

[f]requent themes [of] violent murder and suicide, mutilation and self-mutilation, torture, execution, ritual sacrifice and self-sacrifice, bloody man-to-man combats, boxing, wrestling, sadomasochistic practices, and rape. (Grof, *The Adventure of Self-Discovery* 26)

The Third Matrix also embodies the scarcity model—where the breather “has an inability or a limited ability to appreciate and enjoy what is available” (Grof, *The Adventure of Self-Discovery* 260). Nothing is, or can be, permanent, and breathers can never relax their guard for situations that could suddenly, inexplicably, become overwhelming. The experience of the destructive forces of the birth canal, with its most archaic sensation of maternal alienation, separates us from that which enveloped and nurtures us for so many months. Perhaps it is a species-specific birth trauma that burdens us with “aggression [that] is a fundamental characteristic of the individual, the race, the species, indeed—the universe” (Menninger 118).

Breathworkers deep in this matrix find it to have “overwhelming streams of incredibly intense energy rushing through the body and building up to explosive discharges” (Grof, *The Ultimate Journey* 133). Psychic outpourings can be very harmful for those around such individuals unless carefully supervised, and this is the reason that Holotropic Breathwork facilitators have undergone their own “dark night of the soul.” They have first-hand experience of roiling, psychic impulses. Many of these energies “manifest as quite powerful sounds

and movements and take considerable time to process. It would be difficult to sponsor expression of these energies in talk therapy or in the container of most therapy offices [but it can be] in a Holotropic Breathwork session” (Taylor, *Exploring Holotropic Breathwork* 434).

The intensity of personal psychic upwellings becomes cataclysmic when societies reach a critical mass with political leaders calling for aggressive behaviors “accompanied by justification[s] for the expression of violence—‘self-defense,’ or ‘a blow for righteousness,’ or ‘the destruction of evil,’—and are often formulated only after the act and are apt to smack of self-destructive rationalization” (Menninger 213). Birth trauma involves a life-and-death struggle, and “the archetypes of the collective unconscious could also be sources of mass psychopathology, since they are endowed by extraordinary psychological power, cutting across all individual boundaries” (Grof, *The Holotropic Mind* 212). The great danger of our time is a society with weapons of mass destruction that may be overwhelmed by a malefic expression of the collective unconscious, as that which happened in Nazi Germany.

The epidemic nature of this type of psychic contagion is seen in 1930s Germany, where the personal unconscious and collective unconscious have no defense and are overwhelmed, and yield by “becoming first infantile and then primitive” (Jung, *CW* 18: 1322). Jung further writes that nations in such situations of collective misery pass into confusion and disorientation and “become collective on a savior or

sorcerer leader” (1330). A population of psychologically healthy individuals is the only bulwark against such a political movement. In our modern world of advanced means of self-destruction, unhealed psyches can easily propel us toward annihilation.

Albert Einstein replies to Freud in a 1932 letter describing how the individual has within a “lust for hatred and destruction. In normal times this passion exists in a latent state; it emerges only in unusual circumstances, but it is a comparatively easy task to call it into play and raise it to the power of a collective psychosis” (*SE* 22: 201). Inner work that challenges incipient aggression is inherently dangerous work and must be approached with the utmost respect and humility; but if we are to survive, this work is necessary to withstand destructive impulses, individually and collectively.

The dread and resistance of delving deeply into the psyche is “at bottom, the fear of the journey to Hades” (Jung, *CW* 12: 439). *The Third Matrix is Hell*. The underworld is the place for depth psychology, and the womb of extreme psychic energies to be disgorged. The purpose of remaining in turmoil is to obtain healing for traumatic wounds, for mystical insights, for wisdom, and for spiritual treasures of every nature. The journey to the underworld in a breathsession is necessary “to renew fruitfulness” (Jung, *CW* 5: 449).

With all my shock and complaints about
the depths of despair I have felt during
the last year of my Breathing, I now
understand why this plunge into the dark

realms is necessary and how it opens pockets of compassion and understanding toward not only myself, but also toward others and their process. (Silver, *Exploring Holotropic Breathwork* 333)

Breathworkers engage mysteries of transfiguration resembling heroic journeys, which when complete “amounts to a dying and a birth” (Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 51). Deep experiential inner work finds the agony of breaking through personal limitations to be the agony of spiritual growth:

I am lying there breathing for what seems like a very long time. Nothing much is happening. I have this tightening across the top of my head, that’s all. More time goes on and nothing is happening but this sensation across the top of my head. Suddenly I have enough of nothing happening. I let my body move so that I am applying pressure to the crown of my head. My whole body spasms and pushes to add to the pressure. I am filled with energy, with power to push. I am ready to be born. I am birth. (Sullivan, *Exploring Holotropic Breathwork* 72)

In the fundamental rhythm of the cosmos, with its periodic destruction and re-creation without beginning or end, individuals “can wrest themselves [free of repetition] only by an act of spiritual freedom” (Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* 115). In Babylonia the sacred mysteries are held in the name of Ishtar and Tammuz, and Isis and Osiris in Egypt. Ancient Greece and Asia Minor have Eleusinian mysteries. In breathsessions, participants encounter archetypal figures of “deities, demigods, and legendary heroes representing death and

rebirth [such as the resurrection] of the Egyptian god Osiris, or the death and rebirth of the Greek deities of Dionysus, Attis, and Adonis” (Grof, *The Adventure of Self-Discovery* 136). Persephone is abducted by Pluto, Inanna descends into the underworld, and Quetzalcoatl journeys through chthonic realms as do the Mayan Hero Twins in the *Popol Vuh*. These underworld images reveal the nature of “the soul, how it exists in and for itself beyond life” (Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld* 47). The attention inner workers give to the soul’s underworld images are congruent with the spiritual aspect of human existence.

Edinger suggests that transformation seems to be achieved through repeated cycles of change, but that there is often “heavy coagulated stuff which must be sublimated and turned into spirit” (*The Psyche in Antiquity* 2: 124). The Second and Third Matrices provide ample coagulated stuff, too much for most breathers at one breathsession, because this material is the most conflicted and problematic they encounter. When inner workers, and egos, “encounter the transpersonal [they are] transformed” (Edinger, *The Eternal Drama* 116). Relief and tranquility can only occur when “people let go of wrong ideals and collective attitudes” (Von Franz, *Alchemy* 257). Inner work is the process of letting go and of “action through non-action” (Jung, *CW* 13: 20).

To the extent that any one session may provide, the Inner Healer embodies a “transfusion of the self to a ‘divine self’ ” (Perry, *The Far Side*

of Madness 101). Breathworkers may experience wholeness and have the sense of being part of something larger and more meaningful. The underworld realm of the Third Matrix resembles the palace of a lifeless kingdom, as is found in the Grail Legend. Heroes arrive to restore the wounded king, as inner workers seek to restore themselves.

Breathworkers are “the active participant [who] takes the place of the suffering king after the cure” (Rundle Clark 165). The land becomes healed as heroes become kingly. This analogy hides a severe danger for breathworkers if they become self-imbued with kingly might, glory, strength, power, and divinity—they risk a psychic retaliation provoked by their hubris. Each breathsession’s success is limited to *only that* processed material. Personal aggrandizements may very well incite reprisals by upwelled images in the next session—if not sooner—by those internal forces not invested in change, or healing. Dark powers do exist within the individual psyche and are not eliminated; they are only accommodated by a willingness to recognize their energies. To engage in depth work “one must in some way or other cooperate with Hades” (Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld* 48).

Despite fantasies of decay, images of sickness in dreams, repetitive compulsions or suicidal impulses, all movements towards the realm of death are achieved by breathing through fixated traumas. As the hero fights the dragon to release the maiden or access the treasure, or as the hero-warrior abandons self-preservation for his comrades in combat, the

breathworker often finds that “martyrdom is seen as a way to redemption and liberation” (Jefferys 224). Martyrdom, in the sense of inner work, is self-sacrifice of one’s ego control. Programs for alcoholics and drug addicts also assert that one must surrender to powerlessness before a spiritual awakening may occur. Inner workers initially relinquish control in order to gain it later, and trust in the mystery of transpersonal support. Some deep, psychic wounds are so devastating that just being conscious of their nuances can be “re-traumatizing.” The willingness to submerge again to this level of emotional pain is a type of martyrdom deserving of great respect. With this courage, inner workers find “the agony of breaking through personal limitations [to be] the agony of spiritual growth” (Campbell, *The Hero with the Thousand Faces* 190). Breathwork is often agonizing.

In the Biblical account of the mythic banishment of Cain to the wilderness, typifying the alienation of the Third Matrix, “a rejection [is suffered] too severe to be endured” (Edinger, *Ego and Archetype* 44). Cain is ejected from God’s land, as the baby is expelled from the womb. The ancient wisdom in this account is that irresistible change will be imposed. As an inner worker on a hegira, movement into the desert occurs voluntarily in Abel’s case and involuntarily in Cain’s. God punishes Cain (stasis) by making his land unproductive, forcing him out of his comfortable life to become an unwilling fugitive and wanderer. In a slightly different context, Adam and Eve are similarly forced out of

paradise, due only to their desire to know the “fruit” of their world. Many overwhelmed breathworkers have wondered aloud in discussions following a breathsession just who or what was the “active party” prompting their willingness to forgo their comfortable life, unfulfilling though it may have been.

A dark inflection in the Cain and Able motif is that bloodshed is central to both and is connected to God. The root of blood-violence lies in the experience of alienation for Cain [murdering his brother], or the exaltation of animal sacrifice for Abel. One common pattern in psychopathology is that torture and slaughter of animals precedes the same treatment of humans. It is only a small step from animal sacrifice to human sacrifice, most generally for a god.

The “easy” sacrifice of children in the ancient world and the “ready” sacrifice of children today as suicide bombers establish a disturbing trajectory. This sustained practice appears to establish the existence of a Middle East regional psyche which accepts child sacrifice and self-sacrifice of all ages, and where families receive money for their child’s act of self-destruction. Horrific practices are not isolated to the Middle East. In the worship of Tlaloc of Mexico, religious participants “killed a great number of babies each year; and after they had put them to death, they cooked and ate them” (Alexander, *Latin-American* 72). Deep within the human psyche lies a willingness to supplicate an alleged divinity figure with the slaughter of innocents, and to do so as a willing culture despite

the soul-numbing grief of the victim's families.

A reflection into our primal psyches and the darker traditions that our species evolve can also be found in the "custom of putting to death all firstborn children [that] has prevailed in many parts of the world" (Frazer 4: 187). In a story regarding Odin, "Aun, King of Sweden, sacrificed one of his sons every nine years to Odin in order to prolong his own life" (188). The murder-sacrifice of the child (or military age youth) is an example of the misuse of "mytho-religion" to foster personal and societal ambitions, a crime too common in the ancient world and too alluring for those unfit to govern in our modern thermonuclear era.

The example of Aun is not isolated; this impulse beats within the heart of the human species and is exemplified by the Greek god Cronos who attempts to swallow all his children. Only Zeus, the youngest, is spared by a ruse that saves him. Later, with a prophecy of Zeus himself being dethroned, Zeus reverts to this same "crime" by swallowing his own wife Metis *and* his yet unborn child. Perhaps we must not forget to view mythology in the ancient eyes of societal power retention, where "grown-up sons supplant their fathers by force" and where "fathers murder and perhaps eat their infants in order to secure themselves against their future rivalry" (Frazer 4: 192). Here is the inspiration for the Oedipus myth and the impetus for depth psychology.

Mythology of Aggression

Mythology abounds in themes involving aggression and violence.

The breathworker mired in the Third Matrix is not only a victim but is also one who “identifies with the role of the aggressor” (Grof, *The Holotropic Mind* 213). It can be very disconcerting to see oneself as a Nazi SS camp guard or a torturer in a Middle Ages dungeon. Those who continue beyond a few breathsessions find that experiential depth exploration passes through many thresholds, none more laden with forces of darkness and evil than in the Third Matrix. These forces are often exemplified by upwelled mythic images of “Set, Hades, Ahriman, Kali, Moloch, Astarte, Huitzilopochtli, or Satan” (Grof, *Realms of the Human Unconscious* 200). The experiential amalgamation of death, deviant sexuality, pain, fear, aggression, scatology, and distorted spiritual impulses are shared “with its themes of the Sabbath (and Sabbath of Witches-Walpurgis Night) or with Black Mass rituals” (Grof, *The Adventure of Self-Discovery* 135). Inorganic processes include “volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, ocean storms, the destruction of celestial bodies, and black holes” (Grof, *Beyond the Brain* 241). The Third Matrix makes for an intense breathsession.

The aggression of the Third Matrix, “to hit first, often, and always” may stem from the wounds of the breathworker’s body, mind, and soul. Childhood abuse and neglect memories, which often last throughout a lifetime, are especially difficult to re-experience. This type of early violence is at the very root of many of the most serious adult problems and dysfunctions, especially criminality. Grof describes one client’s

shock when he found “the Hidden Killer [exists] within our psyches, if we look deep enough” (*The Holotropic Mind* 58). Even this darkest night of the soul may be healed by acquiring a gentle approach, one that is subtle and that cultivates an accepting presence of feelings and experiences without trying to change them.

Matrix 3 is a cataclysmic inferno of aggression and conflicting energy that every breathworker encounters. As one breathworker puts it, “my mandalas began to show more bloody sacrificial rituals” (McSeveney 286). Upwelled images have the greatest impact the first time they arise and with each subsequent “re-visitation,” their impact is reduced. It is a curious phenomenon that the Third Matrix should have so many volcanic and fiery sacrificial elements to it—especially when one considers that the mother’s body-heat does not increase more than a few degrees while giving birth, although “many mothers feel that their entire genital area is on fire” (Grof, *The Holotropic Mind* 66).

Primal energies of the Third Matrix may be seen in ancient stories of desert sky gods who are portrayed as stern, distant, and severe taskmasters. Yahweh is the most prominent example of this in Old Testament accounts. It is “this type of father who elicits in his son tendencies toward passive submission, as well as the ideal of aggressive and rugged masculinity and a compensatory striving for independence” (Adorno, et. al. 387). As the Hebrews demonstrated, an authoritarian worshipping society will tend to hold a “glorification of the ingroup

[themselves] and rejection of the outgroup” (451), and believe that “weakness is dangerous since it may lead to being devoured [BPM 3 & 4] by the strong” (478). Conquest of neighbor’s lands is given sanction and aggression is given vent. The presumption of superiority as justification for the suppression of other cultures becomes inculcated even in modern societies. This is exemplified by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s statement that “the civilized nations [are] conscious that the rights of barbarians are unequal to its own and treats their autonomy as only a formality” (46: 112).

Our species may struggle with and perhaps displace a collective unconscious birth trauma, with its “ineradicable aggressiveness, destructiveness, and persistent malevolence” (Menninger 115). Our great confrontation with aggression is that it has both good and bad aspects; the bad is its malevolence while the good is its efficacy. To the latter, knowledge rests on the “aggressive act of incorporation” (Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness* 317) and “when the sun hero, having been swallowed by the dragon of darkness, cuts out its heart and eats it, he is taking into himself the essence of this subject;” and, aggression and incorporation “far from being sadistic, are a positive and indispensable preparation for the assimilation of the world” (124). Perhaps our species’ salvation will be with each victorious hero and manifested inner worker, who stands for a new beginning by exercising discrimination in expressing aggression—thereby inspiring their society

to do as well.

Mythology of Fire

The creation of fire deservedly ranks among the most impressive accomplishments of our species; it gives heat, light, and energy. Fire is extensively used in mythology worldwide for ceremonial purifications, celebratory rituals, and divine supplications. “For the Greeks the function of fire was above all purificatory, particularly in relation to the underworld and the dead” (Kingsley 252). “Fire is in [the mythologies of] all the Indian tribes [and is] an emblem of happiness or good fortune” (Alexander, *North American* 46). Embodied in our deepest nature, Jung writes that “among primitives, the soul is the magic breath of life [hence the term ‘anima’] or a flame” (CW 9i: 55). In the Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*, the righteous king Yudhishtira is challenged by an invisible voice (his father Dharma) testing his merit by asking questions, one of which is, “Who is the guest that all life is host to?” Yudhishtira’s reply is “Fire” (Buck 198). Flame is variously regarded worldwide as beneficial, or destructive, or ensouled, or demonic, or sometimes a combination of these in one divine figure—but its importance remains foremost in breathwork in any of its manifestations.

The loss of fire in the ancient world is so great that it is generally considered an omen of misfortune if it goes out on its own accord. “Said a North American Chippewa prophet, ‘the fire must never be suffered to go out in your lodge’” (Alexander, *North American* 46). Fire shares

divinity, and our connection to it inspire superstitious beliefs. Guilty priests were killed who lost their temple's symbolic connection to God.

The interplay between fire and water is seen in the Samoa's origin myth whose children "are fire and water" (Dixon 9: 17). Between these descendents there arises a mighty conflict in which the world is destroyed by flood only to be recreated by the sea god Tangaloa. Many creation myths have mountains or mounds of earth arising from the waters. The Native American Omaha Indians find the earth covered by water but suddenly from "the midst of water uprose a great rock" (Alexander, *Native American* 98). As mentioned in chapter 5, our amniotic fluid is very similar to seawater, and the sense-memory of being awash in the amniotic sac is perhaps the inspiration of watery cosmogonic myths worldwide.

A combination of water and fire is also seen in the mythology of the Finno-Ugric people whose "general methods of purification, used both for people and for the implements of the hunter or fisher, were smoking over a fire, jumping over a fire, washing in water, or being besprinkled with water" (Holmberg 4: 83). One prayer venerating fire as a feminine spirit is "Thou, 'Fire-mother,' with fire and steam, with thy sharp tongue carry up the sacrifice to the great god!" (4: 271). Armenian mythology also shares this veneration. "Fire gave heat and light. Like the sun, the light-giving fire had a 'mother,' most probably the water-born and water-fed stalk or tree out of which fire was obtained by friction or otherwise. To

this mother the fire returned when extinguished” (Ananikian 7: 54). The Indian god Agni represents an aspect of the sacrificial flame and cosmic fire. He “is the eater of the oblations, the mouth by which the god and fathers partake of the sacrifice [and] he is the creator of all the worlds and destroyer of them [and] though he fears the water which quenches him, still he is said to have been born of the waters” (Keith 6: 135).

Fire also has a darker side. Blood sacrifice and fire are universally present in mythology and are most prevalent in the burnt offerings of desert peoples in Biblical accounts. In a New Year’s festival, a Babylonian king would lift a weapon above “his head and burned a she-goat; that meant Marduk who lifted weapons above his head and consumed in fire the sons of Enlil and Anu” (Langdon 5: 320). Here is seen an ancient reference to animal sacrifice as well as a mythologized account of human slaughter and immolation.

Ceremonies dedicated to fire-gods can entail an immolation sacrifice. “Moloch emerges as a netherworld deity to whom children were offered by fire for some divinatory purpose” (Van Der Toorn 585). We learn from Jeremiah that “sons of Judah have done that which is evil in My sight [and have] burn(ed) their sons and daughters in the fire” (*Jer* 7: 30-31). Suppressing this practice is preached in *2 Kings* 23:10, which instructs that “no one make a son or a daughter pass through fire as an offering to Moloch.”

The Punic *mol*/*mul* term is used in the cult of child sacrifice (as

in a *mulk*-sacrifice). An inscription on a stela in Carthage burial grounds, as well in Sicily, Sardinia, and North Africa, establishes this regional murderous practice using fire and ceremonial furnaces.

Disturbing to the modern age, these altar sites contain the remains of children and small animals during the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE. “The religious and mythological symbolism of this [Third] Matrix focuses particularly on the themes that involve sacrifice and self-sacrifice” (Grof, *The Adventure of Self-Discovery* 26).

The classical mythological symbol for Matrix 3 is the firebird Phoenix—which dies in a fire but arises reborn from its own ashes—an apt depiction of depth exploration. A breathworker is quoted describing it as “I felt as if I was afire” (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 68). Staying with the image, breathworkers who struggle past it tend to feel more resolved. Fire is regarded by the ancients as purgation so powerful that it cleansed all impurities in humans “leaving only the divine and immortal spiritual behind” (Frazer 5: 180). Von Franz recounts that a child or “an immortal one is born out of the womb of fire” (*On Dreams and Death* 78). The Aikawoi of South America have Makonaima as their creator, and Sigu as his son and cultural hero. Similar to the Phoenix rebirth, Sigu is “persecuted by two wicked brothers who beat him to death, burn him to ashes, and bury him. Nevertheless, each time he rises again to life and finally ascends a high hill which grows upward until he disappears in the sky” (Alexander, *Latin-American* 11: 270). The

element of fire in breathsessions is either experienced in its ordinary form—as identification with victims of immolation (child sacrifice to Moloch, etc.)—or in an archetypal form of purifying fire [pyrocatharsis] “that destroys whatever is corrupted and rotten in the individual, preparing him or her for spiritual rebirth” (Grof, *Beyond the Brain* 117). Dante references purifying fire in *Psalms* 32: 1 when he writes, “Beati quorum tecta sunt peccata!” [“Blessed are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!”] (*Pur.* 29: 3). The act of “covering” means that a person has spent time in Purgatory enduring a redemptive cleansing fire.

In an Iranian narrative we may see the inspiration for the Promethean story. The ancient storm-god is symbolized in the form of a bird, as an “eagle bringing to the earth the fire of heaven, the lightning” (Carnoy 6: 264). Like the Greek god Zeus, the Iranian god, Trita, has a thunderbolt as a weapon. Trita brings “fire from heaven to earth and prepares the intoxicating draught of immortality” (6: 265). Prometheus’ story, and potentially derived from the Trita narrative, is perhaps one of punishment for questing immortality rather than acquiring fire. Demonstrating the embryonic nature of mythology worldwide, fire theft is also pervasive, especially among the American Indian nations. The Water-Spider of the Cherokee nation snatches fire from where Thunder concealed it in a sacred sycamore, and the First People of the American west coast obtain this precious treasure by stealing it from a jealous

watchman, who then pursues the thief but relays of animals bear it off successfully. The Piegan Blackfeet narrative is similar in that the beaver and woodpecker steal fire from the salmon. Sometimes it is the sun that is stolen, sometimes it is daylight, but in the majority of cases it is fire.

Besides being described as the goddess of the harvest, Demeter also presides over the cycle of life and death. She uses the purifying element of fire for making mortals immortal. Taking human form, she is given charge over the boy Demophoön, son of Metaneira, Queen of Eleusis. Demeter decides to make the boy immortal. She anoints him with ambrosia and each night passes him through flames in order to burn away his mortal nature. Queen Metaneira screams in horror one night, as by chance she sees this ceremony. Her interruption ends the transformational process. Demeter reveals her true identity and scolds her for the lost immortality of her son.

The discovery of making fire by rubbing two sticks together marks a significant evolutionary step for humanity. Such flames are often consecrated as pure and embodying divine spirits. This gift transmutes raw meat and fibrous vegetables into palatable food. Many mythological accounts are of divine figures instructing mortals in making fire. The heaven-dweller myths of the Wachaga of Africa and the myths of Polynesia's underworld provide a rare twist where mortals teach skills of fire-making. In the former, Mrile is a hero figure of the Wachaga. He journeys to heaven and finds Wakonyingo dwarfs or elves of Kilimanjaro

eating raw meat and ignorant of fire. Mrile takes “out his fire-sticks and shows them how to make fire and cook their food” (Werner 7: 137). In their delight, the Wakonyingo provide the abundant game that the Wachagans enjoy today.

Campfire stories inspired by zephyr breezes enflaming hot coals are the natural theater for storytellers’ mythic creatures and elusive spirits. Psyche is the stage of this imaginal moment. Such a psychological projection is comparable to experiential depth exploration. In the simile of the cave, Plato makes a relevant point to depth psychology where the prisoners “see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another” (7: 388). Breathworkers are often in this position and have to intuit meanings from imaginal forms not fully embodied. Edinger adds that Plato’s simile applies “aptly to psychological projection” (*The Psyche in Antiquity* 1: 60), and where forms correspond to archetypal actions and actors, and are given meaning depending upon pre-existing beliefs.

One of the prominent mythic figures in the Third Matrix is Wotan. “He is Sigfadir, ‘Father of victory,’ and Sigtyr, ‘god of victory’ ” (MacCulloch 2: 58). His High German name, Odin, comes from the Old Norse Ódinn. Whatever the name, he is known for fury, war, battle, and death. Jung saw him in his German patient’s dreams as early as 1918 and he knew that the “blond beast was stirring in an uneasy slumber” (CW 10: 447); his symbolic presence in dreams expresses primitivity,

violence, cruelty, and the powers of darkness. The successful application of the occult by Hitler reflects the ready, even eager, unconscious susceptibility to such shadowy images. His appeal is in mythologizing the Aryan creation myth, with its predisposition for conquest as destiny. It is German citizens who march with Wotan and without them no holocaust or Second World War could have occurred. The Third Matrix feels like this state and more with its “unconscious need for freeing oneself from the repressive and constricting influence of the birth trauma” (Grof, *Beyond the Brain* 415). Outward venting relieves inward turmoil and the angst that breathworkers often experience, especially in the Third Matrix. Its conflagration, revolution, and war seems to mythologize the act of freeing oneself from the birth canal.

Wotan is killed by the wolf, Fenrir, and can only be resurrected at the end of time. At that moment, the world is consumed in a conflagration at Ragnarök and disappears from a subsequent flood. Wotan is resurrected at the earth’s arising from the sea. This end-of-time conflagration is similar to the Biblical Armageddon. Perhaps this mythic account is a reflection of our own biological “water breaking” before the baby is born. This account may also mythologize birth as an imaginal resurrection from a “dying to the womb.”

Balder is another Third Matrix image named by breathworkers over the last thirty years. He is the son of Odin and Frigg. All the energy spirits of fire, water, metals, stone, trees and animals take oaths not to

harm Balder. But Loki, through a ruse, obtains information that the mistletoe did not swear this oath. He tears the parasitic plant from the tree and takes it to the blind Hod, who is instructed to throw it at Balder. Balder is hit and the poison kills him. Balder, too, may only return after Ragnarök is won. On that cataclysmic day, the fire-giant Surt sets the tree [with mistletoe] on fire and Balder then becomes a “revivified life-force” (Jung, *CW* 5: 392), and Odin (Wotan) is reborn (resuscitated) as we have seen.

Of the four matrices, the Third is especially the one that provides the psychic energy to initiate action, to persevere against obstacles, and to overcome limitations against one’s consciousness. An individual, a society, or a civilization regenerates itself by celebrating its cosmogony and by honoring the moment when one year ends and another begins. This honoring is done historically by seasonal planting cycles and by modern celebrations of calendar year changes. Fireworks celebrations and singing “Auld Lang Syne” on New Year’s Eve invite the memory of the living and dead that all may be resurrected in a new birth. Eliade suggests that these cycles of periodic destruction and re-creation allow our species to imagine wresting itself from our mortality by celebratory “acts of spiritual freedom” (*The Myth of the Eternal Return* 115). Inner work will never provide physical immortality but it may remove the fear of death and allow a peaceful acceptance of the human condition: the body may die but spirit lives forever.

We have seen the dynamic nature of fire in the Third Matrix and water in the First Matrix. In an amalgamation, Richard Wilhelm adds that humankind “is spiritually reborn out of water and fire, to which must be added “thought-earth (spirit), as womb” (8). The Fourth Matrix is that spirit of both physical birth and psychical rebirth and the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 7 Mythic Interpretations of BPM 4

The Fourth Basic Perinatal Matrix (BPM 4) is one of physical birth and psychical rebirth. This matrix's corporal and traumatic nature is an archetype of transformation which floods inner workers with considerable emotional affect with the "loss of security and threat of death that accompanies any crisis of radical change. In the imagery of mythology and religion this birth [or more often rebirth] theme is extremely prominent" (Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* 61). Breathworkers struggle through repressed memories. "The propulsion through the birth canal [is] associated with an extreme build-up of anxiety, pain, pressure, and sexual tension followed by a sudden release and relaxation" (Grof, *The Adventure of Self-Discovery* 29). Upwelled images may be of one's first moments as a newborn.

When we take our first breath, our lungs and respiratory pathways open and unfold; the blood that had been oxygenated, supplied with nourishment, and cleansed from toxic products by the mother's body is now redirected to our own lungs, gastrointestinal system, and kidneys. With these major physical acts of separation completed, we begin our existence as anatomically separate individuals. (Grof, *The Holotropic Mind* 73)

In the best of circumstances, the newborn connects with the mother while being held and nursed. "In a natural uncomplicated birth, the baby can experience relief, completion, and triumphal success" (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 69). A breathworker describes the

pleasure that follows the effort and pain of reliving birth when “all of a sudden, I felt comfort. The facilitators were holding my head and back. I felt my heart beating against their hands of comfort. I felt a closeness to them as if they were my new mom and dad” (69).

In the typical modern hospital, the newborn separates from the warmth of the mother’s body and confronts a cold delivery room, disturbing noises, stunning light intensities, and unpleasant tactile sensations. Raymond Moody relates in an 8/21/2009 email how his Near Death Experience (NDE) interviewees remembered an overwhelming bright light and occurrences of coldness during their “going to the brilliant light” experience. Some Fourth Matrix breathsessions resemble a NDE where one anticipates death. This matrix represents an “ego death that immediately precedes rebirth [which] is the death of old concepts of who we are and what the world is like, which were forged by the traumatic imprint of birth” (Grof, *The Cosmic Game* 145). Following this experience of total annihilation, of hitting “cosmic bottom,” we may be stunned by visions of supernatural radiance and beauty. A breathworker is quoted describing the appearance of an angel: “she was beautiful and [her] light shone down upon my body and the light of my spirit rose up and joined with the light of the angel’s. We were One and the darkness and pain of the earth was left behind” (Taylor, *The Breathwork Experience* 75). However, breathsession memories of this time can also be physically uncomfortable and jarring, and breathers

may discover “that they were born with forceps [being used], or in the breech position, or with the umbilical cord wrapped around their neck” (Grof, *The Holotropic Mind* 73).

Some breathworkers find the Fourth Matrix’s upwelled images to be idyllic and similar to those First Matrix ones of spring landscapes with melting snow, ice breaking in rivers, luscious meadows, verdant pastures, trees with buds and blossoms, and beautiful rainbows across the arch of the sky. The major difference is that the First Matrix is contained while the Fourth is open. The Fourth Matrix also reflects an “escape from danger [and where] recollections involve various difficult life situations which the subject resolved by [their] own active effort and skill” (Grof, *Realms of the Human Unconscious* 145).

Fourth Matrix breathsessions tend to be desired because the entrapment and aggression of BPM 2 and 3, respectively, are significantly resolved. This matrix is one of elation and one breathworker describes it as a “top of the cliff” experience where being there requires no effort (Riskin 61). Once breathworkers consistently reach the Fourth Matrix level of consciousness they may stop breathwork, except for those who are dedicated to an ongoing inner work process with this experiential healing modality.

In mythology, “the image of birth from the womb is an extremely common figure for the origin of the universe” (Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* 59). In Eleusinian ceremonies, “by touching a

reproduction of a womb, the initiate evidently gains certainty of being reborn from the womb of the Earth Mother and so becoming her very own child” (Kerényi 106). Humans have worshipped many gods who have been born rather than manifested, as in Hesiod’s poem “first of all Chaos came into being” (33). Some of the birthed gods include Attis of Greece, Krishna of India, Dionysus of Greece, Mithra of Persia, Horus of Egypt, and Jesus of Nazareth. As may be anticipated in the Western culture, Jesus Christ is one of the most frequent Fourth Matrix deities to appear. In ancient Egypt, ceremonies celebrate the return of Osiris’ reconstituted body, which Set scatters, by sacrificing a bull. Its skin “symbolizes the human placenta, and when [the image of] Osiris was enveloped in it he received his ‘new birth,’ i.e., ‘re-birth’ ”(Budge 240).

Mythology of Rebirth

Many gods are born during or around the winter solstice—a time of renewal or rebirth. Especially prevalent figures are the “Aztec Quetzalcoatl, the Egyptian Osiris, or Adonis, Attis, and Dionysus” (Grof, *The Holotropic Mind* 75). Attis’s story exemplifies the process of rebirth. He grows to manhood with the birds and beasts in the hills of Phrygia. His beauty attracts the attention of the goddess Kybele and the princess of the realm. When the marriage of Attis and the princess is about to be celebrated, Kybele angrily appears and smites the guests with madness. Attis escapes to the mountains and kills himself. Kybele is distraught and appeals to Zeus to restore the boy to life. The best she is able to

obtain from Zeus is that Attis's body and hair remain as they are in life but his movement is restricted to only one finger, as a branch on a fir-tree can be seen to rustle slightly in the breeze. Each year spring festivals celebrate Attis as the fir tree and the return of wild vegetation.

The mythologizing instinct of our species is seen in worldwide seasonal celebrations of the forces of nature, and the rebirth of vegetative and animal life. Native American Indians place great veneration in Mother the Earth. It is she who brings forth life and into whose body all life is returned after its death, and abides there until "the day of its rebirth and rejuvenation" (Alexander, *North American* 91). The Tinne, inhabitants of the Yukon, have four great spirits: Man of Cold, Man of Heat, Man of Wind, and a Spirit of Plague; it is with these that "we have the world-scheme of a people for whom the shifts of nature are the all-important events of life" (78). Beyond these greater spirits the Tinne also believe that the soul is "next to" the body and makes it live; the spirits are similar to "those who are becoming again, or awaiting reincarnation" (78). The Tinne's mythology includes a hero tale that we have become familiar with: a hero is swallowed by a water-dwelling monster, and from whose body he cuts his way to freedom. We are reminded again that life comes from water, that the trauma of birth and its entrapment (BPM 2) is overcome by aggression (BPM 3) and reaches birth, or rebirth (BPM 4). Hiawatha and the sturgeon are of this hero tale motif.

Mythically the Fourth Matrix crosses two similar thresholds:

physical birth and psychical rebirth—from a biological womb (dark-night) to a physical birth (light-day) and that of a psychic journey from “the light of the world to whatever mystery of darkness may lie beyond the portal of death” (Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* 62). The willingness to symbolically engage the latter is the essence of the hero’s journey with its tests, ordeals, and trials; and as Jung writes, “when we say ‘psyche’ we are alluding to the densest darkness it is possible to imagine” (CW 11: 448). Revivification, resurrection, or resuscitation “represent the termination and resolution of the death-rebirth struggle” (Grof, *Beyond the Brain* 123). Breathworkers, as well as NDE survivors, have discovered in the Fourth Matrix “that death was actually a ‘rebirth’ into a greater life” (Eadie 31), and where psychic knowledge often stretches forward and backward through time. Breathsessions often provide images of earliest times to those yet to manifest.

Many breathworkers “connect with ancestral memories or draw upon the memory banks of the collective unconscious, that vast sea of awareness that we have shared with all of humankind since the beginning of time” (Grof, *The Holotropic Mind* 113). Buddha instructed initiates not to “accept any doctrine as true until it [is] tested, and proven true” (Evans-Wentz 41). With or without knowledge of Buddha, Holotropic Breathwork does not hold to any doctrine but only to personal experience, and breathworkers are often surprised to learn that they

have access to very specific details of a previous life, which is corroborated with research.

In the case of Karl, a “karmic memory” emerges during a breathsession at the Esalen Institute. Karl relives various aspects of his birth trauma, and then he starts experiencing fragments of dramatic scenes having images of Spanish soldiers, a fortress, tunnels, and underground storage spaces. He produces a series of finger paintings to capture these images, especially one with a ring where he clearly recognizes the initials. In the days and months after the breathsession, Karl travels to Western Ireland and impulsively decides to visit the ruins of an old fortress called Dún an Óir, or Forte de Oro (Golden Fortress). Studying the history of this fort, Karl discovers that the fortress was taken by the Spanish, and Sir Walter Raleigh negotiates with them to surrender. Opening the gates, the British rush in and slaughter every Spanish soldier, including himself who was a priest. He recognizes that the initials of the name of the priest are identical with those that he sees in his vision of the seal ring depicted in one of his mandala drawings at the end of a breathsession. Karl discovers that many of his emotional and psychosomatic symptoms are clearly related to this mysterious past event.

Heroic and courageous life-force narratives are popular worldwide. They tell of Spirit as an embodied psyche desiring expression. The hero’s journey, and inner work, is the healing process of freeing one’s primal

essence in a way that is beneficial to oneself and others. This often requires a bold separation from early dysfunctional experiences. In the process, inner workers often liberate aspects of their soul which are reflective of “factors independent of events in which we are immersed” (Hillman, *Re-Visioning Psychology* xvi). Inner workers are reborn in such raptness, as is told in John 3:5: “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit” (Coogan 152NT). The world of amniotic fluid is that from which life issues, which is told poetically in the First Matrix’s “all is water,” and where this impetus to life, and even to divinity, personifies a cosmogonic relevance.

A breathworker’s mythos is a “spiritual experience [that] wants you to communicate it, i.e., manifest it” (Von Franz, *Alchemy* 260). Plato suggests, in “Meno,” that soul is believed to be as having “been born again [and] having seen all things that exist, whether in this world or in the world below, and has knowledge of them all” (7: 180). To build soul is the hope of every breathworker for all the angst depth exploration engenders.

The Fourth Matrix, of all matrices, is the one which goes beyond an earthly rebirth to a spiritual rebirth. This comes about because of the special nature of a Holotropic breathsession, the selection of its participants, and the design of its healing process. The Fourth Matrix heralds a new way of life through the breathwork process and seems to validate what Fodor writes, that “all initiation rites are ceremonies of

rebirth” (233).

In initiations, lunar divinities can be symbols of death. “The moon periodically disappears—that is, dies—to be reborn three nights later. The lunar symbolism emphasizes the conception that death is the preliminary condition for any mystical regeneration” (Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* 190). It is on the potter’s wheel that the Egyptian god Ptah turns the solar and lunar eggs and “the first act of creation begins with the formation of an egg out of the primeval water, from which emerges Rā, the immediate cause of all life upon the earth” (Budge 119). Inner workers often experience celestial visions and may be guided by a “moon-glow” of psychic, “solar-ego” illumination, but which can be frustratingly erratic as is the nature of inner work.

Breathwork also includes an indirect approach “by participating in a process of transformation which is conceived as taking place outside the individual” (Jung, *CW* 9i: 205). The Inner Healer, Shaman, Guide, or various divinities are entreated to enter the inner work process and support transmutations of dissociative and painful energies.

Breathworkers host the distillation of primal matter in the depth experiential crucible of their psychic life, and they are spiritually reborn out of water, fire, and the symbolic womb of “thought-earth (spirit)” (Wilhelm 8). Maternal “reflection-matter” becomes ensouled, and from breath consciousness, inner workers’ souls are reborn.

Dissolving dysfunctional “scar tissue” from the psychic wounds of

profane existence myths help reframe a personal definition of sacrality, which is revealed as “an attribute not an absolute” (Van Gennep 12). The divine may be apprehended in the hero’s journey. Breathwork is not exclusively about birth trauma but is also in the nature of the sacred: where personal myth and ancestral character converge to be divinely inspired in the present. The sacred manifests through something, and in the context of breathworkers, it evolves from their personal intentions of engaging it in deep-experiential exploratory work. In submitting to the ordeals of initiation, in consecrating the ceremonial setting, and in embracing upwelled symbols of psychic archetypes, personal divinities emerge.

Dramatic narratives of gods, especially those of vegetation, take on human emotions of passion, suffering, and death. Their destiny is to sprout, flourish, and die either consumed or ignored. Each of us experiences this archetypally in different ways. Breathworkers in the Fourth Matrix know the mythic figure of Dionysus, and know that his appearance is not always one of frenzied ecstasy. Robert Johnson is quoted as clarifying the Dionysus archetype by writing, “he is not the god of drunkenness, he is the god of ecstatic vision. He is a god of wine, but that was the wine of religion, not the wine of drunkenness” (Berger and Segaller 183). Dionysus is most famous for being the patron of agriculture, especially the grapevine. Fathered by Zeus, with Semele as mother, Dionysus completes his gestation in the thigh (male womb) of

Zeus. As the god of wine of ancient Greece, he liberates humanity from its troubles, sometimes responsibly but sometimes in that popularly accorded frenetic madness. Breathworkers may experience both in breathsessions. He is the “god experiencing himself in the sufferings of individuation, [and] the source and primal cause of all suffering” (Nietzsche 81).

Dionysus is also the patron of the theater, especially dance. It is “through dance [that] we can gain new insights into the mystery of our inner lives” (Grof, *Exploring Holotropic Breathwork* 158); and as many psychotherapists know, one of the best remedies for depression is dancing. Weeklong breathsession modules set time aside for free movement. Dionysus is one of the last gods to be depressed and for this he is revered. Plato writes in “Ion” that all good poets, epic as well as lyric, compose their beautiful poems “not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed by the influence of Dionysus” (7: 144). He is one of the mythic gods in the Fourth Matrix and the inspiration for many mandalas of breakthrough where the breathworker’s nature is freed to be “wild.”

Dionysus represents the Greek’s “religion of nature,” and his disappearance and return is “an allegorical typification of the destruction and restoration of vegetation” (Rohde 2: 270). Breathworkers in the Fourth Matrix experience death and rebirth symbolically following their natural courses; and in so doing, they become conscious of cyclical

forces impinging on their lives through dramatic mysteries and sacred celebrations.

The Fourth Matrix is also the time when “we can experience a profound encounter with the archetypal figure of the Great Mother Goddess or one of her many culture-bound forms” (Grof, *The Cosmic Game* 146). It is plausible that in depth exploration or in artistic outpourings, significant symbols can be found in creation myths that may arise from our fetal experience because we are predisposed to find their form(s) in the natural world, by way of a tree, egg, or daimon. Neumann presages the human potential movement, and Holotropic Breathwork in particular, when he states that modern man[kind], with its reflective consciousness, speaks of “a direct psychic experience when a content of the psyche, e.g., an archetype appears in a dream, a vision, or in the imagination” (*The Great Mother* 21).

Another mythic god that appears in the Fourth Matrix is Parvati. Born of Himavat and Menā, Parvati is the reincarnation (BPM 4) of Satī who committed suicide by self-immolation (BPM 3). She also endures the traditional mortifications, such as sitting in the center of four fires in the middle of summer until purified. With these two examples, we again find in this Fourth Matrix the sense of renewal after a purifying fire where “we can have the feeling that our body is consumed by searing heat” (Grof, *The Cosmic Game* 144). The theme of this matrix is reincarnation and rebirth. Parvati is symbolic of the aspirant who

wishes to achieve nirvana, the supreme state free of suffering and individual existence. It is a state often referred to as self-realization, which in our context, we may call consciousness. Nirvana breaks samsara (endless rebirth) with its unending cycle of transmigration (passing of the soul at death into a new body or a new form of being) and is essentially the same as reincarnation. In this matrix Holotropic Breathers often describe the experience of cosmic love, or unending and unbounded love for all humanity and life. Parvati is this and also the Supreme Divine Mother or Divine Shakti (the embodiment of the total energy in the universe).

In addition to Parvati, we come again to the worldwide figure of the Great Mother, “who from the beginning is associated with nurturing, with the provision of food” (Downing 9). The workings of the goddess-archetype can be traced in rites, myths, and symbols throughout history. The Great Mother is also known as the Triple Goddesses manifesting in “a threefold form because she unites within herself the complements of the opposites of the psyche” (McLean 10), and “the triplicities of Body, Soul, and Spirit” (16). Many breathworkers, male and female, are equally successful in this amalgamation process through the Holotropic Breathwork’s healing modality: where consciousness arises from the human psyche and is not exclusive to any gender. Jung writes that “in the final analysis the decisive factor is always consciousness, which can understand the manifestations of the unconscious” (Jaffé 187).

The Fourth Matrix is a time for the Great Mother Goddesses of different cultures in “radiating love and protection [in the embodiment of] the Virgin Mary, Isis, Cybele, or Lakshimi” (Grof, *The Holotropic Mind* 76). In her living image(s), she is the great and good mother who has in times of distress been the refuge of humanity connecting us to the whole, and to the ineffable cosmos. In archaic times she is the unfolding vegetation in the cycle of seasons, particularly with cereals, fruits, and the gift of the vine. The nurturing goddess in this matrix can also be a devouring one but only as a prelude to rebirth, but she, as Fourth Matrix goddess, is mostly life enhancing, embracing, and giving. She could be Ariadne, who provides us with the thread we follow as we enter the center of our psychic labyrinth, which then also guides us out of our underworld. A host(ess) can only provide the beginning; life must then find its own way, as do the hero and inner worker in their journeys.

Modern societies assert that they have a high level of culture. They induce individuals to separate themselves from nature, and to eschew hearing voices—even God’s. Only the written word found in religious canons is to be followed. It is “a psychological truth [that] the voice of conscience is the voice of God” (Jung, *CW* 10: 859), and a disavowal of this inculcates a need to seek a standard of behavior outside oneself, with great jeopardy. However, despite instilling a separation of knowing our inner truth from accurately perceiving outer events, neither spirits nor gods would ever have come into existence were it not for the inherent

ability of the human psyche to split off or be dissociated: to “know me vs. mother,” or to “know me vs. symbols,” or “to know me vs. feelings.” But this is also the reason why our time has become so utterly godless and profane: the great masses lack knowledge of their unconscious psyche. Our “religion” is a monotheism of material science and with that comes a denial of autonomous systems with their unconscious images.

Consequently, there is an inability to be introspective, and most individuals therefore attribute disturbances only to outside forces. This leads to collective delusions, incidents, revolutions, and wars—in essence, destructive mass psychoses. The inspired journeys undertaken by inner workers have a larger purpose, mission, or life task to accomplish. They are often guided by an inner voice, or as Jung writes “the original meaning of ‘to have a vocation’ is ‘to be addressed by a voice’ ” (CW 17: 301). Inner workers are directly, or indirectly, in search of callings that provide meaning in their lives, and who allow themselves to be inspired by their internal spirits.

Mythology of the Cosmic Egg

In many mythologies we encounter the egg as the archetypal symbol of world creation. The symbol of the egg “bears not so much upon birth as upon a rebirth modeled on the creation of the world” (Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* 414). In the eastern spiritual tradition “the Soul, having increased inside the egg [is believed to have] sprung from Prakriti [nature], [and taken] the name Brahmá [who existed

first as] the original maker of created beings” (Pargiter 223). As the container of opposites “the egg may, for example, be divided into two halves, white and black, [or] with heaven above and the earth below” (Neumann, *The Great Mother* 42), and we find “[humankind] and heroes originating in the egg” (180). It is content and container at once, and it represents “the chaos apprehended by the artifex [alchemist], the *prima materia* containing the captive world-soul” (Jung, *CW* 12: 306). In our modern world, an inner worker is such artisan and by working *prima material* in the crucible of a breathsession, the breather transmutes portions of their dysfunctional psychic underworld into a more uncorrupted soulfulness of being.

The egg is not just a cosmogonic symbol; it is also the philosophical egg of the “medieval natural philosophers [and is] the vessel from which, at the end, [is the] spiritual, inner, and complete man” (Jung, *CW* 9i 529). In Fig. 3, next page, a “cosmic egg” is overlaid the placenta to represent the moment prior to “the cosmic egg burst[ing] to disclose, swelling from within, an awesome figure in human form” (Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 277).

An example of this egg universality, the Chimus of ancient Peru profess their belief that heroes and mankind originate in the egg. In India, “Prajāpati is the self-begotten egg, the cosmic egg from which he hatches himself. He creeps into himself, becomes his own womb, makes himself pregnant with himself in order to hatch forth the world of



Fig. 3. Cosmic Egg. Used by permission of Omikron/Photo Researchers, Inc. and Photoshop artist Eric Lennstrom.

multiplicity” (Jung, CW 5: 589). The Polynesian islanders of Anaa believe that “the universe was like an egg which contains Te Tumu [The Foundation – male] and Te Papa [The Stratum Rock - female]” (Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* 274). The cosmic egg is emblematic. It is the embodiment of life essence and a relief from the bewilderment of corporal existence seeking spiritual manifestation. It is perhaps an answer to the state of chaos which the Greeks named cosmos, regarding it as a clearing up of the external world. For the classical soul, cosmos is “a harmonic order which includes each separate thing as a well-defined, comprehensible, and present entity” (Spengler 63). In the Egyptian cosmogonic *Coffin Text*, the “first form of God was as a spirit, alone and held in solution in the waters. Then, but still in the waters, God was a

‘circle,’ which was replaced by the symbol of the cosmic egg” (Rundle Clark 74). The cosmic egg is the symbol of the universal power of life and all its potential in those seeking personal manifestation.

In an Icelandic tale, a king’s son is out hunting in the woods when a thick mist envelopes him and he is lost. His companions search in vain. The king is inconsolable and offers half of his kingdom to the person who finds him. A poor peasant girl walks for days until she comes upon the prince lying bewitched in a spell. She follows two evil giantesses to where they take the prince. In their absence she sings the giantesses’ swan song that awakens him. The maiden tells the prince that the two hags went to the top of a tall oak tree and are tossing their life-egg between them, all the while knowing that if they drop it, their lives will end. The maiden tells the prince where to find the forest, and he carefully climbs the tree in which the two giantesses are sitting. As they play their dangerous game, he throws his spear and “hits the egg so that it bursts. At the same time the two hags fall dead to the ground” (Frazer 11: 125). This particular mythic tale does not say that the young prince and maiden live happily thereafter, or that she receives half of the kingdom, nor does the narrative disclose the process of breaking a spell. The point of this tale, given our focus, is that the egg represents life-force itself and it also represents a personal awakening by overcoming dark and self-destructive energies. It is a rebirth to wholeness by taking overt action—as is the essence of the hero’s journey.

This story also has an alchemical element in that the spear, an equivalent alchemical sword, divides the egg. The alchemical sword divides the philosophical egg as well and frees its soul—as in “take the vessel, cut it through with the sword, take its soul”; and as “water and egg are synonymous, the division of the egg with the sword is also applied to the water” (Jung, *CW* 13: 109). The tale, to repeat, begins with a dense mist (water) that swallows the prince, but it is his sword, his force of ego-action, that cuts through the binding of imprisoned unconsciousness that frees his soul.

The Indian account of the god Vishnu is very similar to that of the Nordic god Balder—at the end of time, for both, there is a great conflagration which is quenched by a life-giving rain that revivifies a parched earth. Vishnu first becomes the sun, and he draws into himself the eyesight of every animate being. The world dries up and withers. The earth splits open, and the divine waters of the subterranean abyss are swallowed. The “life-sap has entirely vanished from both the egg-shaped cosmic body and all the bodies of its creatures; Vishnu becomes the wind, the cosmic life-breath, and pulls out of all creatures the enlivening air” (Campbell, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization* 36). The world is in total conflagration (as with Ragnarök) and all matter becomes smoldering ash. Then, in the form of a great cloud, Vishnu sheds a torrential rain and quenches the fire and “the scorched and suffering body of the earth knows at last its ultimate relief,

final extinction, Nirvāna” (37). Grof’s psychic cartography, the BPMs, are exemplified in elements appearing in the Vishnu account: life is swallowed (BPM 2) by the subterranean abyss (BPM 1 waters), there is a conflagration (BPM 3) of all things, and a rebirth (BPM 4) renews life.

Two unfamiliar elements are introduced. The first is that the cosmic life-breath is destructive, not enabling as has been discussed in this dissertation. And second, Vishnu draws into himself the eyesight of every animate being. This “absorption” or “mesmerization” is common with very powerful humans, as with dictators and tyrants, who manipulate others with their compelling eyes or unflinching glare. This attribute is part of what I define as a “Dark Numinosity” archetype, and which is developed in the next chapter. Finally, Neumann writes that in Orphic teachings feminine is always “the egg and the container, while the masculine is that which is born and that which parts the primordial unity” (*Amor and Psyche* 86); we see this in the masculine destruction of the egg-shaped cosmic body by Vishnu.

In a Hawaii origin myth, “a bird laid an egg upon the primeval waters, and this afterward burst of itself and produced the world” (Dixon 9: 20). A southeastern Borneo myth tells of the world being made by spreading earth on the head of the great serpent Ndengei which swims in a primeval sea. Another of their deities descends and discovers seven eggs. Taking two of these eggs, he finds in one a fully formed man and a fully formed woman in the other, but both are lifeless. This deity returns

to the upper world and asks the creator for breath that both might come alive. It is breath, his breath, which revivifies the two comatose humans.

Mythology of Breath

The use of breath within the Holotropic Breathwork healing modality draws upon the most ancient of all knowledge, that the very essence of life *is* breath, and that it is associated with soul.

Breathworkers have a heightened sense of their inner processes and are encouraged to “listen to the inner clues from their organism [and] to trust the intrinsic wisdom of the body” (Grof, *The Adventure of Self-Discovery* 171). They are encouraged to allow upwelled images and to develop inchoate senses of love and mystical connections with other people, nature, and the entire cosmos to develop.

Revered breath has inspired creative narratives worldwide.

Aristotle, in chapter 5 “On The Soul,” refers to Orphic poems where it is written “that the soul comes in from the whole when breathing takes place, being borne in upon the winds” (8: 640). “The Great Spirit, whose power is the breath of life, permeates all nature [and] is the light which reveals creation” (Alexander, *North American* 10: 206). In the Finno-Ugric tradition, “man has also another soul which can release itself from the body, and which is called breath” (Holmberg 4: 6). In Genesis 1: 2 “In the beginning when God created the heavens and earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind [breath] from God swept over the face of the waters” (Coogan 11HB).

“Quetzalcoatl, the wind-god, is the giver of life to the sun and moon as he is also the bearer of the breath of life from the divine pair [Nanauatzin – sun and Tecuciztecatl – moon] to the newborn” (Alexander, *Latin American* 11: 89). In the resurrection text of the New Testament, God is engaged with our spirituality—“by breathing [his] Spirit on the apostles, he was blowing off and removing dust like ashes, [and] kindling and giving life to the spark” (Casey 41). Breath is life and the life of our divine spark within our soul.

We live “in breath” and die without it. Its presence within us keeps not only all of our internal organs in connection with the others, but it also allows our being to be joined by other living beings. It is the force that enables us to move, put muscles in action, and entreats the psyche to upwell its truths. The eastern Yogic tradition of prānāyāma (rhythmic breath control) believes that it cleanses the body and it “aerates the lungs, oxygenates the blood and purifies the nerves” (Iyengar, *Light on Yoga* 36). Breathwork causes peptides, the chemicals that regulate all life processes, “to diffuse rapidly throughout the cerebrospinal fluid, in an attempt to restore homeostasis, the body’s feedback mechanism for restoring and maintaining balance” (Pert 186). Many of these peptides are endorphins, the natural opiates of the body which alleviate pain and promote a sense of well-being. There is no other force or power so concerned with life than the power of breath. Easily overlooked, it is not so simple as it may appear, and its complexity is revealed in its facility to

engage psychic energies.

Many breathsessions are psychic revivifications. Essential to the Holotropic Breathwork healing modality is increased rapid and deepened breath sustained for three hours to driving evocative music. A completely opposite approach is found in the eastern Yogic tradition which seeks a location “free from noise” (Iyengar 58) in order to deliberately regulate the rate of breathing to “check emotional excitement” (45). This tradition envisions the condition of a deep meditative state where “impurities are burnt out of metals when they are melted, so the faults wrought by the organs of sense are burnt out by restraining the breath” (Pargiter 194). Whether ancient or New Age, breathwork modalities are discovered to be vehicles of personal manifestations.

The Fourth Matrix engages that which is inert within and in the process of revivification, psychic images are given a rebirth from the power of the breath itself. It is the last of the matrices in Holotropic Breathwork’s psychic cartography, and it represents both a new birth and a new rebirth; as such, it is the beginning point for physical and psychical life. It is also the culmination point for many inner workers who have worked through the unconscious energies of the other matrices, especially the Second and Third. Breathworkers discover that by activating psychic processes, they will be engaged until the end of their biological life. The psychic relationship is ongoing because

consciousness includes the most elusive aspect of our psyche, the unconscious—with its positive and negative energies. Inner workers engage their deepest psyche and survive, if not flourish. In so doing, they successfully conclude the adventure of their hero's journey and find its treasure to be their own soul.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

This dissertation takes the position that inner work is the quintessential hero's journey. There is a profound difference, however, between direct psychic exploration and studying ancient tales of bravery. Dragons confronted, whales overcome, and trials passed are challenges expressed through literary imagination. Such is not the case with inner workers; mythic images are embodied experiences that arise in the process of breathwork and other deep inner work healing modalities. In this, the modern hero's journey is revisioned; it is a participatory process. Heroes of today discover their own tales, earn their own treasures, and return to share their own insights.

Modern inner workers directly engage their deepest unknown with no safety net; they cannot simply close the book when the tale becomes too scary. Inner workers know that psychic upwellings, once stirred, will not cease until a resolution is achieved. Modern heroes also know that, with persistence, suffering is never final, and "death is always followed by resurrection; where every defeat is annulled and transcended by the final victory" (Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* 101). Those who engage in depth exploration are truly courageous.

The predatory nature of the human being has not abated throughout history, but today, the means of destruction are lethal. Perhaps it is the specter of our species' annihilation that inspires the emergence of the "Human Potential Movement" in the 1960s. Movies,

books, and songs from then until now present dire warnings of the consequences of misguided intelligence. Clearly the insanity of misused creativity in fabricating nuclear bombs and “designer viruses,” and stockpiling lethal chemical agents is alive in the world’s consciousness.

The journey inward is championed as necessary for our species’ survival by Jung and Grof, among many others. Those who engage in inner work, even now, often find that they have to scale back work hours (if they dare risk losing their job), make potential and significant adjustments to current relationships, and spend considerable time alone. Even when it is most needed, participating in depth exploration is not for everyone because of disinterest, a lack of time, a lack of money, or other reasons. Those who compensate for personal inadequacies by power-lust and insatiable greed will not likely engage their depths, either.

Humanity is in great peril, as are the other species of this earth. Human beings increasingly accept that they cannot stop the development of new weapons of mass destruction, nor can they affect those who have the political power to employ these creative aberrations serving Armageddon. The only control individuals have is in their personal lives, over themselves. Their hero’s journey begins, in many respects, with their bodies and their emotions.

Embracing inner work challenges the philosophy of scientific materialism in the Western world, and its mind-body dichotomy. In *Phaedo*, Plato narrates an account of Socrates’ death in a conversation

between two main characters, Phaedo and Simmias. Phaedo says that “philosophers, above all other men, may be observed in every sort of way to dis sever the soul from the communion of the body” (7: 224). Two thousand years later, Descartes appears to agree when he writes that “it seems to me that it is mind alone, and not mind and body in conjunction, that is requisite to a knowledge of the truth in regard to such things [given by God]” (31: 100). He adds “the mind can exist without the body” (155), and asserts that “my soul is entirely and absolutely distinct from my body and can exist without it” (98).

Grof challenges this philosophy by writing “when we systematically practice various forms of holotropic states [we] discover that the relationship between consciousness and matter is fundamentally different from the way it is propounded by materialistic science of the technologized societies” (*The Transpersonal Vision* 82). Jung writes:

If we can reconcile ourselves to the mysterious truth that the spirit is the life of the body seen from within, and the body the outward manifestation of the life of the spirit—the two being really one—then we can understand why the striving to ascend the present level of consciousness through acceptance of the unconscious must give the body its due, and why recognition of the body cannot tolerate a philosophy that denies it in the name of the spirit. (CW 10: 195)

Breathworkers are immediately impressed by the connection between their mind and body; it occurs in the first session and all those that follow thereafter. They experience personal knowledge, proof as it were, of this profound connection. Gilliland writes “bodywork is the most solid

and direct contact we have in communicating with ourselves as embodied beings. The body is a depository of personal history, reflecting the vast unconscious, with its own language of communication” (307). Inner work, and individuation, are the processes of discarding dysfunctional philosophies and accepting personal integrations of one’s deepest nature, which serves “the innate urge of life to realize itself consciously” (Edinger, *Ego and Archetype* 104).

It is easy to write that there exists a mind-body connection; the realization of it is much more difficult to achieve from personal experience. One can be “emotionally frozen” to compensate for early traumatization, and as we saw with Reich’s body-armoring work, each refusal to feel pain is concretized in the body’s somatization. In Bioenergetics theory, the “living history of a person’s life is in the body” (Lowen 323) and the “effort to overcome the body is doomed to failure” (56). Inner workers discover that emotions are foremost in an integration of mind and body and are essential in achieving physical fluidity by unbinding the rigidity in the body’s musculature. “Emotions are what unite mind and body” (Pert 192). Emotions may be defined as “the product of an evaluation [reflecting] an appraisal of the beneficial or harmful relationship to some aspect of reality to oneself” (Branden 109).

Emotions that are trapped in the physical body may be released through breathwork and loud vocal expressions, covered as they may be by pounding evocative music. “Now when heavy, emotional waves ride

me down into the dark corner of my psyche, I can ride together with them, knowing that it will last for a certain time, and afterwards I will be 'back on shore' again" (Høivik 164). It is in the process of "getting in touch" with our emotions that we gain access to our healing wisdom. To be "in the flow" is to allow the coming and going of emotions, and to be free to express "good" or "bad" ones verbally or physically achieves an ongoing communication between mind and body. This flow seems to apply to our cellular nature as well, where "neuropeptides and their receptors are the biochemicals of emotions [and their] contents are exchanged via the psychosomatic network with the many system organs, and cells participating in the process" (Pert 261), and "an emotion is the equivalent of a drug that binds ligands [chemical key] to the receptors in the body" (144). Freud writes that "psychoanalysts never forget that the mental is based on the organic, although their work can only carry them as far as this basis and not beyond it" (*SE* 11: 217). Inner workers accept the body for all that it is and move beyond Freud's stated limitation when they integrate both mind and body in the totality of their being.

Consciousness increases resiliency, flexibility, and comfort in uncertainty in handling issues that arise and confront us today. Inner workers know their own character and values, and live life as it best expresses them. They do not simply follow a treadmill of society's making. When a large issue dislocates the populace, as is now

happening in the deepest recession since the Great Depression, it is inner workers who are best able to adjust by remaining adaptable to change as may be needed.

We are in a time of “rebirth” due to massive unemployment—the hero’s journey is forced upon the unwilling. Andrew Sum, an economist at Northwestern University, authored a 2009 study that states that almost nine million jobs had disappeared from the economy in the past nine years, and 14 million Americans were out of work with little hope of finding equivalent work. At the same time, 8.9 million people were already in the “job market” ready and willing, but unable to work full time—this adds up to nearly 25 million Americans, or 10% of our total population. This does not account for millions more who have simply given up on the prospect of finding a position. Occasional part-time work does not provide for mortgages and the costs of daily living, and does little to stem the downward spiral of the economy. An April 15, 2010 article, by Don Lee, in the *Los Angeles Times* has the headline, “A record 44% of the nation’s unemployed have been out of work at least six months. Many of those 6.5 million may never completely rebuild their working lives.” The article states “never since the Great Depression has the U.S. Labor market seen anything like it.” It is a time of upheaval and forced change, and a new conception, a rebirth, to refashion oneself in a marketplace in flux.

This is a time when the old rules—earn a good education, get a job,

work hard, and retire comfortably—no longer hold. People are adrift. They are skilled, talented, willing to do hard work, yet wandering with no focus for a solution of their own making. They need to birth a new vision, a personal myth that sustains them; in practical terms, they need new vocations. An article by Rick Newman in the March 2010 issue of *U.S. News and World Report* suggests that job seekers need to obtain skills that “are difficult to teach in the classroom: informed intuition, judgment under pressure, and the ability to solve problems that don’t have an obvious solution” (14). These are the very qualities that inner workers acquire as a result of their depth explorations.

As in past cultural crises, it is the arts that give expression to the suffering. Jung said that “movies [are] able to produce amazing symbols to show the collective unconscious” (Berger and Segaller, *The Wisdom of the Dream* 167). Two films exemplify our national *zeitgeist*, and both were nominated for multiple 2010 Oscars: *Up in the Air* and *Crazy Heart*. The titles themselves are apt descriptions of our cultural psyche.

Up in the Air is particularly pertinent in that it follows a dark character contracted by companies to terminate their employees. As a man who “travels 275 days a year,” he (Ryan Bingham) is isolated from personal contacts and from his own emotions. The film exposes the prevalent, callous disregard by those who are willing to take advantage of another if it promotes their own personal gain. He knows what he does hurts people, but for him it is “his industry,” and he takes pride in doing

his business efficiently. Early dialog between him and his boss reveals this.

RYAN (reluctantly acknowledges)

What we do here is brutal and it does leave people devastated, but there is a dignity to the way I do it.

BOSS (sarcastically)

By stabbing them in the chest instead of the back, is that right?

Adding a documentary element, the movie intersperses actual ex-employees who recreate their own conversations of being terminated. Their messages are especially poignant and powerful. One unemployed man is chosen because he reflects how an individual's identity is often defined by a job, and the loss of it makes for the loss of self.

TERMINATED MAN

I just, I guess, you leave me dumbfounded.
I don't know where this is coming from.
How am I supposed to go back as a man
and explain to my wife that I lost my job?

His employment defines his identity, his worth "as a man." Inner work will never shield anyone from such pain of dislocation, but it can provide a sense of grounding from which to begin again. Self-identity is discovered from the search within, and is not defined by others from without.

The movie reveals that cultural success is measured only by work that pays the most money, not doing one's soul work. The film also reveals rationalizations used by companies to put "a spin" on firing employees, such as "greater opportunities await you," or "the sooner you

trust the process, the sooner the next step of your life will unveil itself.” The movie’s archetypal scene develops these themes between Ryan and Bob, an employee being terminated. The scene quickly heats up when Bob hears Ryan’s colleague gush about “the positive effects of your career transition.” Ryan interjects after Bob acidly dismisses her rationalization.

RYAN

I’m not a shrink, Bob, I’m a wake-up call. You know why kids love athletes?

BOB

I dunno, because they screw lingerie models?

RYAN

No, that’s why we love athletes. Kids love athletes because they follow their dreams.

BOB

Well, I can’t dunk.

RYAN

No, but you can cook.

BOB

What are you talking about?

RYAN

Your resume says you minored in French culinary arts. Most students, they work at a fryer at KFC, but you bussed tables at El Picador to support yourself. And then you get out of college and you come to work here. How much did they first pay you to get you to give up on your dreams?

BOB

Twenty seven grand a year.

RYAN

And when were you going to stop
and come back to do what makes
you happy?

BOB (long pause)

Good question.

RYAN

I see guys who work at the same
company for their entire lives, guys
exactly like you. They clock in,
they clock out, and they never have
a moment of happiness. You have
an opportunity here, Bob, this is
a rebirth, if not for you, do it for
your children. (*Up in the Air*)

Inner work is a rebirth, and as Bob is painfully experiencing, it is better suited when it is invited and not imposed.

Songs in a movie soundtrack also carry a message, often more subtle than that of dialog, but powerful nonetheless. The lyrics in the song “Somebody Else,” in *Crazy Heart*, are particularly pertinent to the national sense of dislocation for many of the newly unemployed:

Lyrics

I used to be somebody but now I am
somebody else
Who I'll be tomorrow is anybody's guess
What was thought to be the right way
turned out the wrong way after all
What I took to be the high road was only
leading to a fall. (“Somebody Else”)

With so little personal control, what can people do to help our species survive these perilous times? Perhaps answers can be found in two

approaches, one is inherent in the “Parable of the Sower,” and the other is revealed in Joseph Campbell’s iconic dictum “follow your bliss.”

The “Parable of the Sower” is:

Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:
 And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the
 wayside, and the fowls of the air came and
 devoured it up;
 And some fell on stony ground, where it had not
 much earth; and immediately it springs up,
 because it had no depth of earth, when
 the sun was up, it was scorched; and
 because it had not root, it withered away.
 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew
 up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.
 And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit
 that sprang up and increased; and brought
 forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and
 some a hundred. (St. Mark, *The Holy Bible* 4: 1-8)

Inner workers are much like the sower, they can only spread their message to encourage others to engage in depth exploration, while having no expectation of changing another’s behavior. Some people will listen, but most will likely not if the past is any guide. It is as it is, and inner workers learn to accept life as it is.

Alternatively, our species’ survival may be found in “follow your bliss.” “Find where it is, and don’t be afraid to follow it” (Campbell, *The Power of Myth* 148). To live “in bliss” is to live in meaning. Campbell explains by saying that if people think “Oh no, I couldn’t do that!,” in contemplating some form of vocational work, they are captured by a dragon; the “ultimate dragon is within you, it is your ego clamping you down” (149). This limiting self-concept restricts having a meaningful life.

It is this dissertation's premise that when individuals overcome specious restrictions by investigating their own deepest nature, they find their fullest manifestation—including their calling.

Bliss does not have to be limited to those who have engaged the rigors of inner work; it is available to those who are inspired by its messages. This is the reason, given the world's condition, that inner workers must participate in their outer lives as well as their inner ones. "Deep reverence for life and ecological awareness are among the most frequent consequences of the psychospiritual transformation that accompanies responsible work with non-ordinary states of consciousness" (Grof, *The Holotropic Mind* 221). Veneration is found in the appreciation of life as it is: in the bounty of nature, in moments of shared joy, understanding, and illumination. Life is in the moment. It is in this realization today, in the here and now, that we must live consciously. Inner work is following one's bliss, and it is earned one healing moment at a time, one after another.

Inner work offers another life-serving benefit; it helps to detect those who try to misguide society to ruinous goals. Inner workers learn the nature of projection by recognizing how it operates within themselves. It seems to be in our very nature to project our "stuff" onto others. There comes a time when enough inner work has been done that inner workers do not fall easy victim to engaging in projection—while feeling the dynamic impulse to do so. Projections onto subgroups in a

culture, or neighboring states, have often been the rationalizations for mass slaughter and calls for conquest.

Breathworkers, especially those with extensive experience in the entrapment of the Second Matrix, can easily detect the use of birth trauma imagery spoken by politicians for political gain. Promises of resolving crises often “come in the form of perinatal images: leaders promise to guide us to the “light at the end of the tunnel,” to “lead us out of the labyrinth,” and after the oppressor is overcome, everybody will again “breathe freely” (Grof, *The Holotropic Mind* 214). Enemies are accused of “choking” and “strangling” us, “squeezing the last breath out of our lungs,” or “confining us” (Grof, *The Transpersonal Vision* 122); and, these are exactly feeling states found in BPM 2. Hitler uses *lebensraum* (space to live) as justification to go to war.

Crisis often prompts inner work because the known and familiar have failed, and a new “guidepost” needs to be established. Extreme discomfort is often the impetus for change. The very nature of inner work is to support consciousness. However, for the unconscious, such times are traumatic and elicit dysfunctional behaviors. Jung writes that “the masses are always the breeding ground of psychic epidemics” (Jung, *CW* 9i: 228). Elsewhere he writes, “resistance to the organized mass can be affected only by the individual who is as well organized in their individuality as the mass itself” (*CW* 10: 540). Those who are unconscious are susceptible to those who provoke them into disastrous

courses of action. “All mass-psychology is shaped after the outstanding individual as an inspirational self” (Rank, *Beyond Psychology* 163), and “he” typically precipitates the creation of a new order following his own personality. Here is found the sinister figure of the “Dark Numinosity” archetype.

Dark Numinosity Archetype

The “Dark Numinosity” archetype is defined as a malefic abuser of sacral-psychic knowledge. Hitler is a prime exemplar of it. He writes in *Mein Kampf* that “only those who know the soul of a people, not from books but from life, can understand the impression that success makes on the sensibilities of the masses of adherents and adversaries as well” (58). His insight into human spirituality is revealed when he writes that “only the great masses of a people are suited to be the bearers of such almost religious [sacral] convictions” (127), and he refers to a historical exploitation by religion when he writes that “by using religious forces for political purposes, the crown [Rome] awakened a spirit which it had not at first thought possible” (120). His intention is clear when he states that “all great movements are movements of the people, are volcanic eruptions of human passions [psychic] and spiritual sensations, stirred either by the cruel Goddess of Misery or by the torch of the word thrown into the masses” (136). Clearly these psychic penetrations are not simply the ravings of a madman, but ones serving evil manipulations. His was the flammable voice that incinerated millions in “ovens,” charred great cities,

and scorched the fertile plains of Russia.

“Dark Numinosity” archetypes take advantage of the inherent ability of the human psyche to split off or to be dissociated, already mentioned. Those citizens who are more unconscious are most easily manipulated to deny their own judgment and morality. As Hitler writes, “only when the time come when a race is no longer overshadowed by the consciousness of its own guilt, then it will find internal peace and external strength to cut down regardlessly [sic] and brutally the wild shoots [individual consciousness]” (40). “Dark Numinosity” archetypes also take advantage of societal misery. Also mentioned earlier, psychic epidemics evolve when the collective unconscious is overwhelmed and where an unconscious society becomes “first infantile and then primitive” (Jung, *CW* 18: 1322). The psychic contagion metastasizes from the inoculation of confusion and distrust which creates in the society a need for “a savior or sorcerer leader” (1330). “Dark Numinosity” archetypes are only too glad to fulfill this role.

This archetype suppresses their populace even in their dreams, and which reveal personal “alienation, isolation, loss of identity, and dislocation” (Beradt 6). This work studies the devastating effect of Hitler’s totalitarian regime on the dreams of its citizens from 1933 to 1938. “The overwhelming impression of the dreamer’s anxiety [was] his helplessness, and the near absence of any wish to fight back” (154), and their dreams reveal a shattered “balance between submission and self-

assertion” (155). Hitler’s Third Reich arrogates to itself, by design, a paternal position causing its citizens to “regress in [their] unconscious to the infantile state” (165), and where it is felt that even secret thoughts are read. There can be no resistance to the “Dark Numinosity” archetype when in the darkness of night, in its labyrinth of terror, dreams reproduce all the deliberate distortions experienced in a sinister daytime world.

Hitler is also successful in every early military incursion into other countries, which seems to give him the powers of a magician. His magical ability for conquest and political ecstasy was “equivalent to an authority, a jurisdiction over [human] nature” (Eliade, *Shamanism* 449). The sense of shared greatness with Hitler is based on identification with him as “the magician play[ing] the part of the ego ideal or the superego” (Róheim 46). German unconsciousness goose-stepped its way into infamy, amidst rose petals strewn to a throng’s approval.

Jung found Hitler to be an “utterly incapable, unadapted, irresponsible, psychopathic personality, full of empty, infantile fantasies, but cursed with the keen intuition of a rat or a guttersnipe” (CW 10: 453). But an estimated 56 million people died because of the influence of such a figure. Inner work provides consciousness to withstand such destructive impulses, or the foresight to emigrate to a country not at the mercy of such contagious, collective unconsciousness.

The weight of history and psychology falls heavily today on those

who engage in inner work, and who embrace life now and for the generations to come. It is painful to see the direction of world events and not have the ability to help bring sanity to political decisions. From the perspective of Hinduism, this is a time of Kali Yuga, the Dark Age, where “egoistic, devouring, blind and reckless elements are triumphant” (Campbell, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization* 15). It is an age where “people kill one another, they have no moral boundaries, no check to their violence, no affection, and no shame” (O’Flaherty 71). One needs only to turn on the television to see these displayed daily.

One dictator cannot create havoc worldwide alone; a whole nation or mass movement must be crystallized, and in this is the great danger: “people in desperate search for meaning will hand themselves over to anyone with enough charisma to engage the unconscious” (Edinger, *The Psyche in Antiquity* 34). Jung could not believe how the whole German nation of highly intelligent and cultivated people could be seized by the fascinating power of an archetype, and yet he too felt its spell. “I saw it coming, and I can understand it because I know the power of the collective unconscious” (Jung, *CW* 18: 372). Jung also writes that “the more clearly the archetype is constellated, the more powerful will be its fascination, and the resultant religious statements will formulate it accordingly, as something ‘demonic’ or ‘divine’ ” (*CW* 11: 223).

Inner workers alone could not be successful in challenging an established individual who is the focus of a collective projection as a

savior or sorcerer leader by screaming masses ecstatic in his shared glory. However, given the alternatives, is there any other option but to embark upon a course of inner work, and then apply the fruits of this labor by exemplifying enlightened choices, behaviors, and actions?

We can expect to see the growth of aggressive movements in the future should the world economy sink into an economic depression, or should the American consumer society, which has been the bulwark of the global economy, disintegrate due to excessive and unrelenting job losses and spending freezes. Societal routines and traditions fail in such times, and unconscious psyches become pathological with their autonomous ability to create suffering. Resolutions to underlying issues may either be beneficial or destructive, depending upon subsequent actions. These may be salutary, even when “an every day habit turns symptomatic [and] a natural function becomes an affliction [even then] does a new significance dawn” (Hillman, *Re-Visioning Psychology* 111). This is the very essence of inner work. In the shift from BPM 3 to 4, the old guiding but dysfunctional light is extinguished and a resplendent one ignites and illuminates a wholly new visionary direction. Alternatively, destructive actions may be prevalent because they are easier. Personal inner work not done, mass unconsciousness may lead to ruinous outbreaks of psychic epidemics which have the potential of being methodically incited by “Dark Numinosity” archetypes. Tacitus describes their conduct in ancient times as “the more eager a

man's daring, the more does he inspire confidence, and the more highly is he esteemed in times of revolution" (15:16). It takes consciousness to confront contagion found in such times as during significant societal paradigm shifts.

Freud writes that "certain persons and things are charged with a dangerous power, which can be transferred through contact with them, almost like an infection" (*SE* 13: 21). The average person has great difficulty in dealing with ideologies; "they need concrete personifications—in religion, for instance, or myths or leadership" (Rank, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* 217). A rampaging unconscious mass following a Dark Numinosity figure is the great danger, as history has shown us. Such a figure must be disputed before he [typically] comes to "demonic" fullness rather than challenging an intangible, boundary-less ideology.

Although many "safety nets" prevent starvation and destitution in this country, other nations in our interconnected world are not so fortunate. Only when there is worldwide prosperity can those who have destructive ambitions be detected and reported, rather than protected and shielded. Mass movements must be challenged *before* they become "rabid" if there is to be hope for survival.

It falls to individuals to become aware of their unconsciousness. It may also fall to them to stimulate national and worldwide financial revival. Many national economies are supported by small business and

not large conglomerates. These latter typically amass large sums of money, some of which is used to influence politicians. But it is small “mom and pop” businesses that hire local citizens and serve local markets. I believe that we are coming to a time when small businesses ultimately will sustain this economy, as large corporations continue to reduce payrolls and ship jobs to off-shore sites.

The message that inner work is the hero’s journey is clear. What is not so clear is how inner work can positively affect larger outer “systems.” Perhaps it is enough that inner workers affect an ongoing integration of their conscious and unconscious minds. Jung told Robert Johnson, “If you never amount to anything in ordinary cultural terms, it doesn’t matter. Simply to have taken part in this event of the collective unconscious is your contribution” (Johnson, *Balancing Heaven and Earth* 128), and inner workers can certainly be fulfilled in their quest of engaging their psyches. They may even exemplify a new “inner hero image [bringing] transformation of one’s inner world” (Perry, *The Far Side of Madness* 66), but it remains to be seen if this will ultimately occur.

I am an inner worker too, and I do not accept being a passive observer of the passing scene. Too much depends on governments serving life, not otherwise, and throughout history, governments have been primarily led by power and money. This blue planet island of life, in the cold lifelessness of near space, calls me to apply direct beneficial effort. But how do I provide my boon? How can I specifically assist

those who do not wish to do the work entailed in depth exploration—while still engaging them to do so?

I have one answer. In the course of writing this dissertation and simultaneously undergoing two medical procedures for life-threatening conditions, my inner world became extraordinarily active. Thirty years ago I developed and taught employment psychology seminars, using a workbook I subsequently published in 2007. My thrill is in watching eyes suddenly catch fire with an inner glow as participants awaken to a wonderful vision of who they might be—even within a context of a job—that embodies their essence. In the hospital it became clear that I needed to revise this published workbook, *YourFirstCareerJob.com.*, and make it relevant to today's angst. This has been done. The hospital stays revitalized part of my lifework—beckoned by a “calling, of soul, of daimon, of fate, of necessity” (Hillman, *The Soul's Code* 8). This reawakening has become a waking to my deepest core: to teach.

We each have a calling, and I believe many breathworkers engage their psyches driven by the allure of finding theirs. Plotinus might suggest that our souls became secure because our visions are “appropriate receptacles [being] elaborated” (17: 148). Rudolf Otto writes that our visions reflect that “everything that comes ‘of the spirit’ must be awakened” (7). These descriptions capture what I see in the participants' eyes, and personally feel. Visions awaken to a course of action that gives life meaning. In those imaginal moments, they are reborn.

Fostering Consciousness

The seminars, in reflection, are an initiation into consciousness. It may be presumed that most individuals will not undergo such a rigorous depth exploration of their psyche as found in Holotropic Breathwork. How then can consciousness be fostered? The worldwide financial disaster may provide this encouragement. Millions of terminated employees, and thousands of workers caught in natural catastrophes—such as the BP oil spill that polluted the pristine bounty of the ocean—have to find entirely new ways of making a living. Each individual must rebirth themselves, as suggested in the dialog of *Up in the Air*. To *redefine* oneself as an employee is to *define* oneself as an individual, with multiple skills, talents, and employment experience. In this way, fundamentally perhaps, individuals become conscious for the first time of their own natures. When participants complete the workbook exercises, they are drawn out of limited self-identities and they consistently find a larger vision that fully envelopes them.

Preferential choices reveal their souls in their most basic terms: do they want to work alone or with people; inside or outside; at night or during the day; with their hands or with concepts; materially or spiritually, and so on. These simple choices reveal soulful specificity. The seminar also inherently engages active imagination with participants developing symbolic stories, entering imaginary dialogs between coworkers and managers, and completing daily activities.

Participants learn to define their own criteria for success, and not to allow their aspirations to be proscribed by society. Their uniqueness is discovered from conscious reflection of their depths, and this new assessment has no place for societal categories and mass-group identities. They learn that satisfaction in life is not achieved by the accumulation of material objects; it is achieved by the expression of core attributes, and of allowing one's "soul to sing." As the movie *Up in the Air* urges, the newly unemployed need to recognize that they are at a moment of a rebirth, and that it is time for them to return to what gives them happiness.

The modern era does offer great advantages for citizens of developed countries. Individuals have the opportunity to explore inner truths and manifest their fullest potential. We have the opportunity to engage in a modern hero's journey. Inner work reveals our place in the universe—and in this our lives are blessed with meaning. This is our time; planetary survival is our imperative.

Table

Mythic Images in Holotropic Breathwork's BPMs 1-4

BPM 1 Paradise	BPM 2 Entrapment	BPM 3 Aggression	BPM 4 Birth/Rebirth
Place	Place	Place	Place
Elysian Fields Galaxy/Cosmic Grandeur Heaven Interstellar Space Paradise/Garden of Eden	Descent to Underworld Hell Realm of Death Underworld	Volcanic Eruptions Nuclear Explosions Planetary Invasion	Cosmic Sun Elysian Fields Fire Valhalla
Mythic Personage	Mythic Personage	Mythic Personage	Mythic Personage
Neptune (Roman) Poseidon (Greek) Atman-Brahman	Saturn (Roman) Kronos (Greek) Grim Reaper Tantalus Sisyphus Flying Dutchman Wandering Jew/ Ahasuerus Christ Ixion	Pluto (Roman) Hades (Greek) Devouring Mother Kundalini Shakti Adonis Astarte Attis Balder Coatlucue Dionysus Harpies contaminating food Hercules cleaning stables Innana Kama-Mara Kali Lilith Mayan Hero Twins Moloch Orpheus Osiris Persephone Rangda Tlacolteutl Wotan	Uranus (Greek) Prometheus (Greek) Adonis Allah Atman-Brahman Christ Coatlucue Cybele Dionysus Divine Mother Hera Huitzilopochtli Isis Kali Lakshimi Moloch Osiris Parvati Quetzalcoatl Shiva Thor Virgin Mary Wise Man on Throne
Animals/Creatures	Animals/Creatures	Animals/Creatures	Animals/Creatures
Fish Whales Dolphins	Crocodile Dragons Giant Serpents Leviathans Mythic Beast Octopus Tarantulas/Spiders	Phoenix Sphinx	Phoenix Sphinx Hydra Chimaera Echidna Typhon

Source: Dennis R. Archambault, PhD, in consultation with Stanislav Grof, MD, PhD.

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Fig. 1. Fetus.

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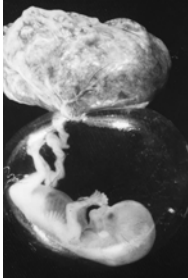


Fig. 2. World Tree.

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Fig. 3. Cosmic Egg.

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