

SPIRITUAL COUNSELLING AND COUNSELLING SPIRITS

By Don Evans

The first half of this essay was presented as a lecture at a meeting of the “Spirituality and Health Care Network” on March 28, 2006 at Bridgepoint Health Centre, Toronto. I reflected on my experiences in providing counselling and other help for spirits who may intrude on us or be in distress. The rest of the essay deals with my experiences in receiving counselling and other help from spirits, who can enable us to change in positive ways. The essay as a whole is thus autobiographical, full of stories concerning how I became aware of spiritual presences such as deceased human beings, angels and “power-animals”, and how I draw on this sometimes in my personal processes of change and in my spiritual counselling and psychotherapeutic work with individuals and groups.

Although I have no doubt myself concerning the reality of spirits, this is based on my own experience rather than on “objective” evidence. I have no interest in trying to convince anyone else concerning their reality, and if others have had similar experiences they won’t need to be convinced by me. Perhaps, however, they will find my anecdotes and reflections provide some new perspectives on their experiences. And perhaps some people who have never experienced the presence of a spirit may, after reading this essay, will let go of their certainty that no spirits exist, and even “lower their guard” against having such an experience! ¹

Before I launched into my lecture I listed four things that I hoped the audience would have heard clearly and in detail by the end of it. I have the same hope concerning readers of this essay:

1. Sometimes people are suffering physically, emotionally and spiritually because they are being invaded psychically by others, whether living or dead.

Sometimes the invasion is only a contributory cause, and it can be indirectly reduced or eliminated by a conventional psychotherapy that denies the occurrence of psychic invasions. Such psychotherapy can help in so far as it strengthens the patient's resistance to the invasion. Sometimes, however, the invasion has to be dealt with directly, if the patient is to recover fairly rapidly, and sometimes if the patient is ever to recover.

Thus a dogmatic rejection of the possibility of psychic invasion is sometimes detrimental to the patient.

2. Psychic invasions vary from trivial to destructive and from totally unconscious to consciously deliberate. The people who invade, whether embodied or disembodied, vary in character as much as human beings do in general. Among those who invade deliberately, some are merely mischievous, some are seriously addictive, and some are extraordinarily nasty. Except for the nasty invaders, committed to destroying life and love and light, all the rest – the vast majority – can be dealt with by counselling, appealing to their rational self-interest and/or their conscience and/or their spiritual sensitivity. In my experience only the nasty minority need to be frightened if they are to be stopped. And some workers in this area do not resort to spiritual warfare even with the super-destructive invaders.

Most spiritual work in this area, however, is not appropriately labelled “liberation from invasion”. On the contrary, what is happening is that a client and a deceased love one (like a client and a former spouse where neither one has died) are still both co-dependent, so that both people need to be helped in acknowledging the need to let go of an attachment and also in understanding the ways in which this can occur. So my work differs from conventional work with couples who are co-dependent only in the fact that one of the partners has died and must be contacted spiritually.

3. Although some spirits need help from us, some can be of immense help to us. It's not that I am counselling them, but that they are counselling me. They can be called “counselling spirits”, where the word “counselling” is an adjective describing the spirits. They are very important to many of us. Our progress towards health (wholeness,

integration, well-being) can be facilitated by becoming aware of, and drawing on, wise and loving spiritual presences who are accessible to us.

In my own psychotherapeutic work with clients I usually ask them initially not only about current crises and family background but also about any spiritual resources. If they report none, I don't try to impose anything. If, however, their report includes experiences with spirits, I draw on my own intuitions concerning these spirits to encourage further explorations on their part. Even if a psychotherapist has no such spiritual intuitions, he or she can encourage such explorations, whether the client speaks about Jesus or Kwan Yin or Krishna or a power-animal or some fairies or an aboriginal grandmother. Such experiences can, at the very least, provide a context for reducing pervasive distrust.

4. My fourth and final emphasis in this talk is that if people have no awareness of spirits, this need not be to their detriment in becoming healthy in the sense of integrated and fulfilled. Indeed, for some people awareness of spirits can become a fascinating distraction away from what matters most for us as human beings: learning how to receive and give love. Even if one has mystical aspirations, wanting to become united with the joy and love in the Divine Mystery, there are two contrasting paths towards this. On one path, we are indwelt by the spiritual presence of a guru or a saviour who is already one with the Mystery. But on the other path, exemplified for example by the Theravadin Buddhism in Sri Lanka, contact with spiritual presences is strongly discouraged.

So now my presentation begins. Before plunging in to talking about spirits, however, I'm going to speak briefly about spiritual counselling in relation to a distinction between four kinds of spirituality. Only one of these four, the spiritualistic, involves dealing with spirits.

I first presented this distinction at a large conference organized by the Spirituality in Health Care Network several years ago through the Continuing Education Department of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto. The four “pigeon-holes” have turned out to be a useful tool not only in discussing spirituality in health, but also in many other contexts.

1. Humanistic Spirituality: A major factor in healing for human beings is the “spirit” in which a person lives and acts, the combination of mood, motivation, emotion and attitude which he or she brings to their illness, such inner dispositions as trust, hope, commitment or courage. The word “spirit” is used metaphorically here. A humanistic spirituality implies no beliefs concerning the continuation of human existence after death. Rather, a humanistic spirituality is to be contrasted with a reductively materialistic view of human beings where only physical realities actually cause change.

Such a reductive view, though associated with science by its proponents, is rejected every day by scientists in so far as tests must preclude the “placebo” factor. We only establish scientifically the efficacy of some medication if the tests rule out as a factor the beliefs and attitudes of those tested. This precaution is required because human beliefs and attitudes do affect outcomes!

At the meeting of the network for Spirituality and Health Care two months prior, there was a presentation by a Director of Spiritual Care at Bridgepoint Health Centre, David Howes. He provided what can be viewed as an unusually creative and inspiring account of humanistic spirituality at work. In sensitive, subtle and empathetic ways patients at the Centre are being helped in changing the inner spirit that they bring to their situations, shifting their prevailing attitudes:²

towards hope rather than despair,
trust rather than distrust,
compassion towards self rather than harshness towards self,
courage rather than collapse,
flexibility rather than rigidity,
assertiveness rather than resignation.

Humanistic spirituality is understandably the kind of spirituality that is increasingly accepted and even promoted within the tax-supported public health care system. The second kind of spirituality is less frequently promoted within the system, though an increasing number of institutions now tolerate it. I label it “Naturalistic Spirituality”.

2.“Naturalistic Spirituality” Another label might be “natural-energies spirituality”. Like humanistic spirituality, this involves no beliefs concerning a supernatural world of spirits, but it goes beyond the purely humanistic by including a dimension of natural or cosmic energies within human beings and within everything else that exists. One aspect of naturalistic spirituality is exemplified in various current healing modalities such as Reiki and Therapeutic Touch. Practitioners and some clients experience tingling sensations as vibrations pass through the healer’s hands into the client’s body.

Although the existence of such energies does not fit into Newtonian science, it is not obviously incompatible with some contemporary physics and there is some evidence that the process does actually bring healing. As long as practitioners don’t talk about “spiritual” energies, some otherwise-rigid medical doctors can manage to tolerate it.

Another aspect of naturalistic spirituality is paranormal distant healing. Where such distant healing is associated with prayer, a naturalistic interpretation sets aside any explanation in terms of spirit-agencies or God. What is occurring is seen as a purely natural phenomenon, explicable in terms of transmission of thoughts as energies through a continuous natural-energy framework that pervades everything.

3.”Supernaturalistic or Spiritualistic Spirituality” This third kind involves an enormous metaphysical leap into a world-view that includes the existence of spirits, life after death for humans, and perhaps also:

the existence of angels,
and/or so-called ‘power-animals’
and/or ‘gods’ and ‘goddesses’
and perhaps also a “Supreme Spirit” or “God”.

The label “spiritualistic” appropriately reminds us of the particular religious movement called “spiritualism”, but what it includes is much broader, for example, Roman Catholic Christianity, Tibetan Buddhism, popular Hinduism, aboriginal shamanism and New Age spirituality. These differ enormously among themselves and also from very strict monotheisms such as Islam and Calvinistic Christianity

that focus on one Supreme Spirit, God. But all these are included under what I am calling “spiritualistic spirituality” because they involve for many people an unacceptable extension of the realm of reality, an “other-worldly” or “supernatural” dimension. Some people whose spirituality is humanistic and/or naturalistic are also open to making such a metaphysical leap, but many are not.

All the rest of this essay will concern itself with spiritualistic spirituality, but I must first sketch the fourth kind of spirituality, the mystical transformative, for I will be referring to it occasionally.

4.”Mystical Transformative” About twenty years ago during some Christian-Buddhist dialogue I offered a Buddhist a definition of the word “God” by a Christian mystic from Quebec: “an unlimited space of light and love”. The Buddhist found this phrase intelligible in terms of his own experience, though he wouldn’t call it “God”.

“An unlimited space of light and love” is apt because it implies both a union with the Mystery and a transformation of the mystic, whose consciousness is both expanded by light and love and liberated from the narcissistic constraints of self-preoccupation.

The phrase also is in contrast with a different state, where a human being encounters God as a particular spiritual being, the Supreme Spirit of traditional theism.

As I mentioned before, some mystical paths are “stripped down” in that they exclude spiritualistic spirituality, whereas some include it. The inclusion lies in their emphasis on being indwelt by a radically transformed being such as Jesus Christ or the Buddhist Kwan Yin or the Hindu Ramana Maharshi who help us to share in their already-realized transformation. Some agnostic humanists find a stripped-down mysticism attractive in its focus on human transformation. One is not being asked to add a paranormal realm or a realm of spirits or a Supreme Spirit to one’s universe. Rather, one is being asked to become open to experience Mystery. Although my own mysticism involves much spiritualistic experience, I very deeply respect such a combination of humanistic and mystical spirituality.

This sketch of four kinds of spirituality is merely a rough conceptual tool, and the boundaries between them are sometimes blurred. For example, the more mysterious the God encountered in

spiritualistic theism, the less it differs from the God of mysticism. But I should note that all four approaches are dimensions in my work as a spiritual counsellor. I now plunge in to spiritualistic spirituality and how it for me involves counselling spirits.

How I got started counselling spirits

About 25 years ago I did something that at the time was new for me. I consulted someone for psychic counselling, a man whom I already knew and trusted. I sought his discernment concerning someone who I thought was invading me psychically, sending me negative energies and feelings of panic and blame. Was this “all in my head” or was it really happening? He told me that the person was, indeed, invading me, though not deliberately. What was being sent to me, however, was being intensified by my own anxiety and guilt, so I’d better deal with that in my psychotherapy. He also taught me some of the rudiments of psychic self-protection.

And that was that: a routine consultation for him and nothing surprising for me. At the end of the session, however, he told me something that was to have much wider repercussions in my life. During the session he had become aware of my mother, who was trying to get through to me and who was in considerable distress. He was surprised to learn from me that she had died a dozen years before, for this meant that she was still “earth-bound” and needed help.

As he spoke, I began to be somewhat aware of her. Soon after, during private meditation and also in the presence of an unconventional psychotherapist, I communicated not only with my mother but also with the three other members of my childhood household, all deceased. One of them, whom I discerned holding my mother in a tormenting grip, had to be forcibly removed as I counselled mother concerning how she was being deceived by her tormentor.

It turned out that a deep healing and reconciliation was possible with my father and my brother. Mother’s tormentor, however, revealed herself to be committed to evil even more resolutely than during her earthly life when she sexually abused me as an infant. This was my first clear awareness a commitment that deserves to be called “demonic”; a

stubborn resolve to destroy divine love and light in human beings and a stubborn resistance against any call to desist and receive forgiveness.

Fortunately such demonic commitment is very rare. Most psychic intruders have some openness to counselling.

What I learned about 25 years ago helped me immensely, and I have continued to learn how to open myself, in unconventional ways, to processes of healing and reconciliation involving my deceased family. It has become clear to me, however, that the unconventional gifts of healing that I have received were meant to be shared eventually with others, even if only occasionally. Most of what I do with others has nothing to do with stopping intrusions or communicating with deceased loved-ones. In my work with individuals and groups as a psychotherapist and spiritual counsellor I'm mostly helping people to uncover unconscious emotional conflicts and to find their own path towards intimacy with Divine Love in their daily lives. From time to time, however, unconventional work involving spirits arises: sometimes for a long-term client or in a group, sometimes when people are referred to me by clergy to physicians or psychotherapists, sometimes when people hear by word of mouth concerning the specialized help I can provide.³

It's not help of a sort that fits in with the worldview of some psychiatrists. A medical psychotherapist once told me that her psychiatrist-supervisor had advised her not to be concerned if a client reported experiences of what seemed to be the presence of a deceased loved-one unless the client was confident the presence was real; then her report was a symptom of psychosis. I told her that by such a criterion I must be unusually crazy! I'm confident of the reality of hundreds of such experiences in my work with people.

Distinguishing invasions from other phenomena

It's not, however, that I hold that such reports are always true. Sometimes if I'm consulted, what I am aware of is patterns of energies left behind by the deceased in a particular room or in something dear to them. I'm not aware of a personal presence with whom one could communicate.

A similar distinction is sometimes important concerning what seems to be a psychic invasion. Sometimes what is going on is not an invasion but a client's awareness of patterns of energies taken into the client's body as a vulnerable child. A demeaning parental voice is sometimes caused by current invasion, but it may be a memory from the past. Or it may combine a current invasion and a memory.

In general, however, I've found that if someone tells me they are aware of a spirit, they are. Even when a person has been diagnosed as schizophrenic and is from time to time caught up in many delusions, some of the reported dealings with spirits are, in my experience, real. And it can be very helpful for such a person to begin to learn how to distinguish which spirits are real and which are not, instead of having them all dismissed by their therapist. The process is similar to receiving reality-checks concerning the everyday world.

Sometimes a person who is not at all prone to having delusions may be mistaken concerning what seems to him/her to be an invasion. A man whom I'll call "George" once came to me with an alarming story. At a previous work-location a co-worker verbally threatened him every day. George had moved his place of work to avoid this abuse, but the co-worker seemed to be continuing to threaten him, though this time psychically. When I "tuned in" I could intuit no such invasion, so I invited George to go into a meditation to see what was happening deep within himself. What emerged was some long-repressed rage, previously disowned, and projected out as if it came from the co-worker, who seemed a probable source but who perhaps had forgotten George by this time. As George claimed and sounded forth his rage, it gradually changed into a very positive, confident self-assertive roar. He later explained to me that he felt himself becoming a lion. When filled with lion-type energy George ceased being a victim. Nor, contrary to what he had unconsciously feared would happen if he released his repressed rage, was he a vicious victimizer. It is important to realize that even if George were really being invaded, all of this psychological repression and projection could also have been going on. In such a case, even if the (real) invader had been dealt with, the long-repressed rage within George would have remained, not dealt with. Esoteric work with spirits, though sometimes very significant, is not a cure-all.

Another example of a delusion about invasion is a young woman whom I'll call "Mary". Her priest invited me to join with some others for an afternoon in "deliverance"-work with her. Originally the invasion was no delusion. She was actually being invaded by a very destructive spirit. That afternoon, however, the spirit was forced to leave by the power of Christ. All of us involved in the deliverance were certain that the spirit had gone. Mary, however, was not! When we told her that whatever she was now feeling arose not from a spirit but from within herself, so that she would now need to do some psychotherapeutic work, Mary clung to the belief that she was still being invaded. Taking on some personal responsibility for dealing with her state was repugnant to her.

In some other instances, however, virtually no psychotherapeutic progress can take place unless first an invading spirit's destructive influence is stopped, at least temporarily. No amount of will-power can avail unless he/she first receives deliverance. Nor will any conventional, non-spiritualistic psychotherapy be able to help.⁴

Communicating with spirits: merits and drawbacks

Rarely, however, is my work so crucial or so dramatic. Usually counselling a spirit occurs in a context where an ordinary, clearly-sane person is being contacted by a deceased loved-one. Sometimes I'm aware of the loved-one's presence and the person is not, and I have to decide whether or not to say anything. If I do mention it I may then try to help the person become aware. If this happens, there can be an entirely private conversation between them. If the person does not become aware, I have to decide whether or not to act as an intermediary. If I decide to do so, it's usually because the message is urgent and significant and, above all, timely. Sometimes there is a conversation among the three of us, and I act as a psychotherapist and spiritual counsellor, helping them to let go of each other, if that seems appropriate and possible. This frees each one to continue on their journey with the other's blessing. This means that the deceased loved one is no longer earth-bound, though he or she may choose to "pay a visit" later on, in a non-intrusive way.

Some religious traditions prohibit communication with the dead. Like many rules, this is a matter of turning a legitimate caution into a rigid, no-exceptions dogma. The cautions could be,
“Let go of your attachments to the dead and get on with your life.”

“Don’t become overly fascinated with weird experiences.”
“Don’t recklessly explore unknown territory.”

Indeed, at this point in my presentation I want to point out some common ways in which involvement in shamanic and spiritualistic work can lead to destructive outcomes. Some people become overly fascinated with exploring the realm of spirits, moved by curiosity and power-seeking rather than by deep caring for their own and other people's wholeness. Indeed, much of my esoteric work has been on behalf of people who are being attacked by spiritual leaders whose groups they have tried to leave. It is not uncommon that people who become skilled in the realm of spirits are corrupted by their powers and become involved in ego-trips, rivalries, revenge and gross interference in other people's lives.

But contacts with deceased loved-ones can be very positive if they take place within a process of personal healing, reconciliation and transformation. I remember a workshop where a man was invited to imagine his father in front of him and to speak from the heart, expressing his disappointments and his longings. Such a psycho-drama can be a very cathartic process as many feelings are expressed. As such, it involves no spirit-work. On this occasion, however, as the man spoke, I became clearly aware of his father's spiritual presence in the room. Should I say anything? On similar occasions in the past with other people it seemed appropriate to remain silent. But after meditating, I was moved to say what I knew: “Your father is here, in this room, hearing what you're saying; he has changed and he is really listening.” The man paused, took a deep breath, and continued speaking. After a while I urged him to open his heart to his father, letting him in. Then I was moved, after asking permission, to place my hand on the man's chest, so that his father's spirit could move through me as a tangible energy to his son. Soon afterward he reported that he had been able to converse with his father, and to feel his father's deep love and acceptance. Much was resolved within the son, who had previously been driven by unresolved father-issues to live a life of

anxious perfectionism. The problem did not disappear, but it was radically reduced.

Childhood conditioning plus current psychic invasion

On another occasion I was invited by a medical psychotherapist to participate in a session with a woman whom I'll call Rose. Rose had been struggling through many sessions with a sense of being controlled and dominated by her father, who had died about a year previously. Much of this arose from her father's influence on Rose when she was a child. His angry and needy "voice" within her had become a part of her. The psychotherapist was gradually helping her to find her own "voice" and to live her life out of that. Much progress had been made in claiming her own right to be herself, but there was a further obstacle; continued psychic intrusion from the deceased father. Both the psychotherapist and Rose had become aware of the intrusion. They were also aware of a recent shift within her father towards letting go of his current hold over her. And she was realizing that her attachment arose from a sense of being responsible for his happiness and from longings which she could now renounce. So the time was ripe for both to let go of a co-dependency that had persisted after death.

At the session to which I was invited, I talked with him, counsellng him, and then she was able to communicate with him, partly through me as intermediary and partly directly. They both said, "Goodbye", each receiving love and liberation from the other. Rose could get on with her life, including a new possibility for letting men into her life. And he could get on with whatever personal changes awaited him beyond this earthly plane. She still had to do more work on her father's "voice" within her, replacing this more and more with the "voice" of her own authentic, independent self. And he, though able to reassure his daughter that he was now "okay" (his death had been by suicide) needed more change and healing. But the session of spiritual communication was an important turning-point for both of them. Similar turning-points occur between father and daughter in everyday counsellng sessions. The only difference is that in spiritualistic counsellng sessions one of the persons has passed on.

Forcible Eviction of Invaders

The reconciliation could take place because the father-spirit had become more open since his death. Sometimes, however, the invader is not open, and must be forced to leave. This requires the consent of the person being invaded, who in some instances may have formed a strong attachment to her persecutor (similar to what can happen in spousal abuse). But often, as in cases of spousal abuse, the attachment and vulnerability can only be worked through if the abuser is at least temporarily removed. In my experience, an abuser-spirit can be removed by threats of spiritual violence or by actual spiritual violence. The violence involves occasioning a terrifying chaos and helplessness into which a nasty human spirit can be thrown by spiritual presences incomparably more powerful than any human being. Usually I call upon Christ as warrior, remembering his vigorous cleansing of the Jerusalem Temple and seeing the body of the person being invaded as the “Temple of the Holy Spirit”. I also remember St. Paul’s teachings concerning spiritual warfare. Sometimes if I am trying to help a woman to learn how to protect herself, I will explicitly call on Kali, a Hindu “goddess” who is especially scary to most male persecutors of women. I’ve also, with a Jew, called on the God of Moses. With a Buddhist, invaded by a bogus lama, I’ve called on Kwan Yin, a Tibetan Buddhist “goddess”. With a Muslim, seriously ill because of a black magic “hex” from enemies in Iran, I’ve asked Allah to send an angel to expel the invaders. With an aboriginal, invaded by a power-hungry medicine man, I’ve called on spiritual grandfathers and grandmothers.

Where an invader is vindictive, some element of deterrence is usually needed, as in our criminal justice system. So the invader undergoes a terrifying though temporary onslaught by Warrior Christ or Kali, and hears a warning pledge from me that worse will happen if they ever bother this person again. So the invader is not only evicted but also motivated never to return again. Sometimes, instead of an eviction, the invader is placed within a box of mirrors facing inwards, so their negative energies of hate and rage bounce back to them. Also, Jesus enters into the box with the invader, encouraging repentance and offering forgiveness.

Counselling Ordinary Invading Spirits

Fortunately vindictive spirits are rare, and truly demonic spirits are extremely rare. Usually the invading spirit has some sense of enlightened self-interest to which I can appeal, and often even some conscience. The appropriate approach is not a dramatic exorcism-type expulsion and may not even involve any threats. It's usually, mainly or entirely, a matter of counselling. When I came to the session involving the suicidal father I was prepared to invoke threats, but this did not turn out to be necessary. With some invaders I appeal to enlightened self-interest: "What you're doing isn't getting you anywhere; you'll be much better off if you stop hanging around on earth" With others I appeal to conscience: "It's not fair what you're going on doing to this person". Sometimes I can even appeal to the soul: "Acknowledge your guilt and allow divine forgiveness to transform you". In all instances I try to find out whether there is a deceased person who loves the invader. That deceased person, plus perhaps an angel or two, can accompany the invader as they leave this realm, and move on. The vast majority of invasions require only firm, gentle counselling.

"Do-It-Yourself" Counselling

Sometimes I try to teach a person how to deal with a psychic intruder on their own, without me, or only occasionally having to consult me, perhaps on the phone. Such an approach seems especially appropriate if the person seems to be especially vulnerable to psychic intruders and needs to be able to deal with this on an ongoing basis. As their ability develops, they may be able to help other people who are being invaded. Several people informally "apprenticed" with me in such matters. After a while, they found that only occasionally do they need advice or help from me, and this is more frequently concerning their work with others. Eventually what was previously experienced as an invasion is merely a signal that someone is attempting an invasion of oneself, or a signal that someone else is being invaded. One can be entirely on one's own in helping others in this way, not usually needing advice or help from me or anyone else. (Of course, if what is happening is unusually puzzling or disturbing, I recommend that they do what I do: seek a second opinion.)

It is important to realize that one's original “wound” (being too vulnerable to psychic intrusions) can become a “gift” (helping others find healing). Indeed, in so far as one's service to others in spiritual counselling is spiritualistic, the main preparation is learning for oneself the art of encountering spirits, helping them and being helped by them.

On Being Transformed by Spirits

Another way in which the wound can become a gift is that if one is very “porous” in one's energy-field, letting in too much that is negative, one can often learn how to let in much that is positive. The world is heavily populated with loving, healing spirits, whether angels or disembodied humans or “gods” and “goddesses” who are expressions of the Divine Mystery. These can help us, not only by expelling psychic intruders, but more importantly by helping us to become better people: more loving, less self-preoccupied, more empowered in our service to others and closer to the Divine Mystery. People who are very “armoured” in their energy-field are typically less vulnerable to intrusion, but this is at the price of being more resistant to being indwelt by positive spirits and by the Mystery.

When I refer to ways in which some spirits can be profoundly transformative if we allow them to “invade” us, I refer to a dimension of spiritual counselling that is far more important than counselling spirits and thereby helping them: being counselled by positive spirits who thereby help us become more loving. Here what I call “counselling spirits” switches meaning, and instead of “counselling” being a verb concerning our activity, it becomes an adjective describing them. There is much that we can learn from these counselling spirits. Some of the help is through words or images that provide counsel, advice and guidance. And some of the help is non-verbal: we learn to resonate with them in our physical bodies in ways that allow us to be changed by them. In the final sections of this presentation I will sketch the process of learning from spirits as it has arisen within me and in my work with others. (The rest of this essay was not included in my presentation to the Spirituality in Health Care meeting.)

The Relevance and Irrelevance of My Autobiography

Before I launch into autobiography concerning my own learning from spirits, I should note a contrast between this and what I have been recalling concerning my counselling of spirits, where much that I presented was likely to be very relevant to anyone involved in such work, relevant because what can go wrong for us is often quite similar.

In our positive spiritual paths, however, each of us is very unique. This is especially true if our paths have strong spiritualistic components. Each of us has a distinct path. Different spiritual helpers come to us at different times in our lives. They bring a unique calling in relation to both what we need to learn in this life and what soul-strengths need to be manifested by us in our social context. So as a spiritual counsellor for others my task is to support the other person in his/her path, drawing from my own spiritual history only in so far as it is relevant in the moment. Thus even if a person is very open to experiencing spiritual presences, what is appropriate for that person emerges in a unique way for them. The fact that my spiritual history has been immensely rich and varied is important only in that I am more likely to be able to “tune in” to whatever is happening right now in another person. But as I outline some of my spiritual history in this essay, it is not the case that anyone else would benefit by replicating it!

On Being Transformed by Spirits: Preparation Through Bio-Energetics and Meditative Yoga

So I will begin to present a series of anecdotes concerning various events in my life that have shaped my overall understanding of spiritualistic paths, both my own and that of others. My account of the sequence of events in my own journey may not be relevant to others. For example, I will be noting how I moved through bio-energetics and then moving-meditation yoga to spiritualism and then into shamanism. As I’ve observed others learning how to receive transformative help from the world of spirits their sequence is different, though it may include ingredients that are somewhat similar. But even the ingredients may be different!

In the early 1970s I was undergoing a process of psychotherapy in which I was gradually opening up to bodily awareness of my emotions

and my life-energies, which had been deeply repressed. The process was intensified when in 1974 I successfully challenged an onslaught of arthritis that had suddenly savaged my whole body. The cure included fasting two months eating only grapes. The main factor, however, was a bio-energetics body therapy which uncovered and released the repressed rage with which I had unconsciously paralyzed my body. This process also released a new flow of life-energies throughout my body. I gained a new sense of myself. I no longer accepted the philosopher Descartes' slogan, "I think, therefore I am" as the central truth concerning myself. I replaced it by "I feel embodied emotions and life-energies", therefore I am". What became prominent was not intellect but passion. Of course thinking was still a part of my identity. Although during the transformative processes I refrained as much as I could from thinking, after the processes, I thought about what I had discovered. Indeed, I published some passionate reflections about passion in chapter 6 of my book, *Struggle and Fulfillment*.⁵

By the mid-1970s I was increasingly involved in a form of moving-meditation yoga that reinforced the bio-energetics in that it encouraged spontaneous bodily movements in response to bodily energies and also provided a new access to heavenly energies that could move my body. The bio-energetics and the yoga together indirectly fostered an enhanced awareness of energies in nature and in other people, and a developing capacity to distinguish among these energies. The energies of a friend or a tree or a crystal all felt different from each other, and each distinctive vibrational pattern was clearly connected with its distinctive material origin. Some of my own energies, however, were only minimally connected with my body at the energy-centre on the top of my head. I experienced these energies as very subtle and delicate vibrations, in contrast with the thick and gross vibrations within my pelvis. They seemed more heavenly than earthly and hence (I thought at the time) more "spiritual". Thus when I engaged more and more in yoga meditations that involved minimal bodily awareness, the energies experienced during these meditations seemed even more "spiritual".

On Being Transformed by Spirits: Spiritualism

An even more startling development arose when I began to apply what I had learned in distinguishing among embodied human beings to new experiences of disembodied human beings and angels. This involved only a small shift in what I had already become familiar with. If I became vibrationally aware of a person behind me whom I couldn't see or hear in the moment, it mattered little whether the person were embodied or deceased. I knew someone was there. The two experiences were very similar, so the experiential shift was minimal. The metaphysical shift, however, the expansion of my world-view, was gigantic. Previously, like many Christians, the only experience I had of the spiritual presence of a deceased human being had been an experience of the risen Jesus. During the 1950s I had encountered Jesus in Florence while contemplating a fresco by Fra Angelico of Jesus' transfiguration. The memory of this encounter remained central in my devotional practice for decades, right into the 1990s. In the late 1970s, however, I was also occasionally aware of many lesser spiritual presences.

By the fall of 1980 this spiritual awakening led me to take a course for two winters with an excellent spiritualist teacher. She taught me and others in the group how to trust and use amazing psychic abilities that we had not previously been conscious of. More importantly, we learned how to help discarnate human beings who are "earth-bound" because of traumatic deaths or unresolved earthly attachments. Compassionate counselling by us can help them to resolve their problems and "move on". The devotion of many spiritualists in providing this service to countless deceased persons deeply impressed me. I did not feel called personally to make this service a central element in my life, but I am grateful that some people do. Also I was deeply impressed by the spiritualists' experience-based understanding of what happens after we die and of how to respond to spiritual invasions. It still seems to me that their understanding is ever so much more subtle and humane and personally verifiable than the crude dogmas of most Christian teaching in this area. What I learned was also especially important to me personally in my work with deceased members of my family household, to which I referred earlier.

Another realization that came to me as I learned from the spiritualist teacher was that gifts of psychic and spiritual intuition are not confined to rare individuals who received them in infancy. Such gifts are much more common, and they can often be drawn forth simply by inviting people to use them! I was astonished by the psychic abilities displayed by others, and even more, by myself. I did not, however, become deeply involved in developing psychic abilities. Indeed, in my later writings I emphasized the difference between the merely paranormal and the genuinely spiritual. The latter, which involves expansions in our ability to love, and reductions in our self-centredness, is incomparably more important. . On a few occasions, however, in optional university class-room explorations of the paranormal, I invited students to uncover their own psychic abilities (for example, in intuiting personal details of a stranger by holding their watch or necklace). I did this in the early 1980s at Erindale College, University of Toronto as a way of discouraging dogmatic dismissals of the paranormal by philosophers who portray it as consisting entirely of fraudulent claims made by others, especially by cunning magicians.

Concerning the intuition of spiritual presences who can help us, however, I have continued to foster an openness whenever I am in the context of meditating with an individual or a group. As I indicated earlier, I am always open to the possibility, though I do not press spiritualistic experiences on anyone. Sometimes all that is needed is the vague question, “Do you have any spiritual resources?” Indeed, I am increasingly convinced that it is part of our human nature to be aware of spiritual presences who can help us. In varying degrees, we are born with this capacity, but in many it is repressed during childhood because of social pressures, especially since the scientific and rationalistic Enlightenment. Nevertheless awareness of spirits still sometimes erupts in modern people, who find it difficult to explain it away psychologically, for it is so convincing experientially. And, more generally, I have become convinced that human beings have not only an “emotional unconscious”, typically uncovered through psychotherapy, but also a “spiritual unconscious. Just as emotionally traumatic memories sometimes emerge in consciousness when one is in a relaxed state, so also do positive spiritual memories and states. But for the latter to happen, both client and psychotherapist must be open to the possibility.

Indeed, the most important way in which I grew through the course in spiritualism was that I learned how to become more receptive to a spiritual presence. This was especially important in my relations with the risen Jesus. Nothing comparable to the encounter in Florence had happened for many decades. I assumed that this was because the initiative for his indwelling lay entirely with him. But in the early 1980s I was able to welcome his indwelling spiritual presence into me again and again. In 1994, after I had been prepared through shamanism, Jesus came to me unexpectedly not as a spiritual presence but as an already-embodied total environment around me and within me: not “embodied” in the sense that a video-camera could have detected him, but in the sense that his vibrations were as thick as honey or syrup. And there was no need for me to welcome him into my body, for he was already there in a palpable way. Indeed, he was already everywhere: the resurrected body of Jesus as a cosmic reality. (This awareness has continued since 1994, increasing in intensity and its challenge to any fearful constrictions in my body that resist a free flow of loving energies.)

The “spiritualist” phase was very significant, but it had drawn me away from the embodiment of emotions and of life-energies that had begun during my psychotherapeutic struggle with arthritis. Moreover, my new modes of spiritual awareness had not been adequately integrated into my bodily-emotional life. I remember emphasizing the importance of body and emotions and life-energies in a lecture I gave at an annual conference of spiritualists. Afterwards one listener said to me, “Professor Evans, I didn’t understand much of what you said, but you do have such an interesting aura!” Not all spiritualists are so restricted in their scope of awareness, but this incident contributed to a growing awareness in me that I personally needed to find another path that would reduce my own body/spirit split. At the time I thought that a “shamanic” path would link me spiritually at least as much with earth as with heaven, and would welcome spiritual presences and spiritual energies into my bodily-emotional self rather than merely into my consciousness. (Much later I realized that although traditional shamanism is embodied in its emphasis on connecting with nature, the traditional “shamanic journey” to the lower and higher realms involved leaving one’s body behind. In contrast with this, as I shall soon show, what I learned required a simultaneous bodily-emotional-spiritual awareness.)

Spiritual Apprenticeship in Shamanism.

With two other men, also newcomers to shamanism, I launched on a new path. The first evening we met we were immediately taught by indwelling discarnate native shamans, who continued with us weekly for ten months. They enabled us to experience some of the earthy, joyful wisdom of aboriginal spirituality, especially the sacred circle of elders who preserve the Sacred Fire from generation to generation. They also led us to experience some of the tragic events when white men nearly destroyed them and their spirit as a nation. They did not guide us to seek out a living, embodied aboriginal teacher who would initiate us into any particular ongoing aboriginal tradition. And although they seemed to be from a variety of tribes, only rarely was their tradition identified. We could not claim the authority of an aboriginal lineage, and we did not seek it. Indeed, in the subsequent summer it became clear that somehow our ten months of training were meant to prepare us to receive a commissioning to a special project, which I am about to sketch.

First, however, I want to tell an amusing story from this period. Mike Dean was one of my partners in the shamanic training. He was with me at a summer cottage and we both went back into the forest a few hundred yards, seeing if we could find any native “power-spots” where there had been native rituals in earlier times. After a while, I suddenly heard Mike laughing loudly. “What’s happened?” I asked. He replied, “I’ve received a message from Spirit.” “What is it?” I asked. He replied, “Stop being spiritual tourists!” So we slunk, shame-faced, back to the cottage! Becoming fascinated with the paranormal can become a distraction from genuinely spiritual transformation.⁶

The Beginning of the “Healing Rifts” Group

I had previously met Mike at the course in spiritualism, and he frequently received messages from Spirit. During the summer of 1983 he received a message concerning a momentous special project: an angelic community was asking us to embody whatever spiritual presences and spiritual energies would enable us to overcome our male fears and angers towards women, so that eventually women could in our presence feel safe in retrieving their ancient powers (bodily, sexually,

emotional, spiritually) which they had been forced to hide during centuries of male oppression. The challenge was not only to go through this process to deal with whatever obstacles arose from our personal histories, but also to do this on behalf of men generally, dealing with our collective and historical unconscious as men. The process would be both personal and transpersonal. Eventually the group would become a mixed group devoted to healing the rifts between men and women and between the masculine and feminine aspects of all of us. First, however, we men had to grow up. We were bluntly told that, as we were then, we would simply become the children of any woman who entered the group! The process, it turned out, went on for thirteen years, when we were told that we were ready for the men's group to become a mixed group.

The men's group began in the fall of 1983, and it continued to involve much active intervention by discarnate shamanic teachers and much emphasis on resonating with the earth and with all earth's inhabitants. But the range of spiritual presences and spiritual energies expanded greatly. And we began to realize that we were primarily in the hands of a particular angelic community, "residing" both in heaven and earth. As we met each Monday evening this community, whom we called "The Messenger Community", exposed us to whatever new presence or energy was needed for our transformation at the time. After each Monday we had to assimilate, bodily and emotionally, whatever we had been subjected to, whether from heaven or from earth, whether masculine or feminine, whether frightening or comforting, whether revealing depths of evil in our collective patriarchal past or providing glimpses of a future "heaven on earth".

It was not at all obvious why we four men were selected to undergo this process. It was not because each of us was already well advanced in a process of overcoming the typical male fears and angers that create rifts between men and women. Far from it! Nor could we each draw on similar personal strengths, for we were strikingly different in these. But it was true that all of us had already experienced some psychotherapy and some spiritual practices. And as we faced and endured many transformative tests and trials together we experienced and created a powerful loving energy as group.

One of the earliest and most persistent spiritual processes involved resonating with a “pillar of fire” extending from the heights of heaven down into the depths of earth. At first we closely associated this image and vibration with reliance on the very masculine Israelite God of the Exodus and with the stirring Christian hymn, “Guide me, O thou great Jehovah”. Week after week, year after year, as our bodies resonated with the pillar of fire, it came to be associated also with the native Sacred Fire and (for me) with the Hindu god Shiva. Eventually we experienced it as the quintessential “masculine divine”. Our resonating was not only in our heads and our hearts but also in our legs and genitals and bellies, awakening and affirming our own “masculine human”. If eventually our men’s group were to become a mixed group, we needed first to become secure in our own divine-human masculinity. Only then would we eventually be able to welcome without fear the fierce presence of women in their mature “crone-energy”, their divine-human femininity.

Such fearlessness also required gradually opening to various forms of feminine spiritual energy. By 1996 we could receive these in their most intense form, through women who embodied and transmitted them. But first and gradually, we needed to become somewhat familiar with them by receiving them directly into our own bodies. In this way, for example, we first experienced Kali, a Hindu expression of the divine feminine whom we experienced as ruthlessly attacking all male oppressors and haters of the human feminine. At first Kali terrified us, for she challenged whatever in us received her deserved wrath. But as we changed, she gradually became a friend and ally. We learned to call on Kali whenever the feminine in women or in ourselves need protection. And in contrast with Kali, we were sometimes nurtured during a temporary “motherless child” state by the Pleiades, a heavenly community of presences whose subtle maternal blessing is wonderfully comforting. Better to call on the Pleiades than to demand unconditional mother-love from a woman and then resent her, even hate her, for not providing it.

Other feminine presences included the “Hideous Crone”, an appallingly destructive, devouring monster-woman spirit, cackling over the prospect of tearing our testicles off and inflicting on us men a gruesome death. This “black witch” image and vibration, unlike Kali or the Pleiades, is entirely a human creation, a personalized pattern of

energy built up over centuries by the unconscious of humankind, both men and women. On the one hand it is men's radically distorted experience of genuine "white-witch" power – distorted by our terrified response to positive female power and by our projection of our own fearful rage on to whoever or whatever carries such power. On the other hand the "Hideous Crone" is a gathering together of women's collective, archetypal rage, accumulated and repressed during centuries of oppression and constriction by men.

In retrospect, it is clear that we needed to enter into the "Hideous Crone" energies, experiencing them in our bodies, releasing our own fear and anger, and receiving the accumulated female rage towards us as men without being overwhelmed. We needed to undergo this process if eventually we were to become able to recognize and welcome the "Divine Crone". And when, later, women entered the group (which by then consisted only of Robin Noya and me), they testified that our recognition and welcome enabled them to move into their divine-human feminine powers more deeply than had been possible in groups where only women were present. The women retrieved ancient feminine energies and discernments. Among other things they reported the following: a sensuous snake-energy that is earthy, powerful and healing; awareness of having large energy-bellies, filled with creative power; deep and inexpressible connection and mutual recognition as women; grief and anger concerning centuries of patriarchal pressure to conceal all this essential femininity, or to lose it entirely. The process of healing rifts thus accelerated for women as they felt the men recognizing and welcoming the "Divine Crone" in them. And, similarly, a recognition and welcome of our divine-human masculine powers by the women helped us to move more deeply into them. This occurred because they could distinguish these powers from "macho" harshness and thus celebrate them rather than fear them.

Returning now to my story of the early men's group, and the divine masculine aspect of our process, I remind you that the pillar of fire linked heaven to earth. At first, however, our experience of masculine energies in the earth was weak and obscure. Mother-earth experiences were much more easily accessible, especially during our periodic sweat-lodges. Gradually, however, our earth-connection as men with the masculine divine was experienced more and more clearly within our (material, earthy) bodies. Thus we could alternate between

father-earth and mother-earth consciousness, eventually combining them in a kind of sacred marriage. This marriage also combined heavenly masculine (sun) and feminine (moon) energies.

The sacred marriage, with its distinction-in-union, took differing forms for each of us. For me there was an expansive exchange between two aspects of my divine-human nature, symbolized by “Anna” (whom I first came to know through the image of the Columbia Pictures woman, but who – it turned out – has close links with Mary, mother of Jesus) and “Poco” (a native leader of a spiritual community in what is now Columbia about 2000 years ago). Eventually in my meditations they were joined by “Donny”, the divine child of their union, who unites masculine and feminine, divine and human, in a young male body. During the early 1990s my daily meditations always included a reminder to myself that, spiritually, I am Anna and Poco and Donny and that, bodily-emotionally, I can and must become them more and more in my ordinary, everyday self. Such a double awareness is paradoxical but necessary. The awareness of who one is spiritually is true, but if it is not being embodied it is merely a grandiose fantasy, a flight from being human.

The expansion of consciousness within the men’s group was not limited to masculine/feminine awareness. The mandate for the project involved an openness to being changed by whatever spiritual energies and spiritual presences the Messenger Community deemed necessary if our men’s group were eventually to become a mixed group. During the process we came to realize that, in principle we as human beings can learn to resonate with anything and everything:

- (i) in our evolutionary history, which is still within us, back through early humans to pre-human mammals to reptiles to rudimentary life-forms to volcanic energies to the Big Bang;
- (ii) in our spiritual world, from ordinary life-energies of earthly creatures through discarnate saints to angels and into our ultimate origin in the Divine Mystery.

Each of us as a human being not only connects with the whole cosmos but also in a sense contains the whole cosmos. The awareness of oneself as microcosm, like the awareness of oneself as locus of sacred-marriage-creating-divine-child, can become a grandiose ego-trip. The remedy is two-fold: (i) conscious embodiment in one’s very limited and

particular body and (ii) acknowledgment that everyone else, too, is a microcosm.

Healing Rifts Compared with Traditional Shamanism

The Healing Rifts process thus included a central element in traditional shamanism: resonating with everything and everyone in nature, whether material or spiritual. We learned how to connect with and contain the energies of the “Big Bang” and of alligators and of early ancestors and of angels, the energies of the four directions (east, south, west and north) and the energies of the four elements (earth, air, fire and water).

The central challenge to us men, however, was very practical, and it both culminated and began in 1995 when women joined us in the group as peers. Whatever weird and wondrous states we might have experienced on our shamanic way, the challenge was to meet the women in the group in a way involving true encounter: with a simultaneous awareness of our own bodily-emotional state, our own spiritual state, and their bodily-emotional-spiritual state. Unlike a traditional shaman on a shamanic journey, one’s own spiritual “journeying” did not temporarily remove one’s awareness of one’s bodily-emotional connections with oneself and with the other person. This insistence on whole-self encounters was immensely difficult. It still is difficult, ten years later, though considerable progress has been made.

What distinguished our path from traditional shamanism was its narrow focus on healing rifts between men and women. This meant that, for example, the Messenger Community did not teach us how to journey spiritually into the “lower world” and the “upper world” to retrieve parts of a person’s soul-essence that had been lost because of traumas earlier in life. This central practice in traditional shamanism, (typically interpreted by contemporary psychology in terms of healing a client’s dissociative tendencies) was not seen as necessary for our project, though one individual in the group privately came to learn how to do soul-retrieval journeys for people. Nor did the Messenger Community provide the group with instruction concerning the use of the Sacred Pipe or other typical shamanic resources such as the use of plants in nature as medicines. It did guide us in traditional shamanic drumming, sounding and dancing and sweat lodge as ways of working

with spiritual energies and spiritual presences. But the ongoing focus for all this shamanic activity was to facilitate healing of rifts between the masculine and the feminine within each of us and between us as men and women. And healing these rifts involved another element in traditional shamanism: retrieving awareness of our natural origins in evolutionary history, especially (but not exclusively) the wisdom of our earliest human ancestors. So we had some important resources in common with traditional aboriginal shamans, though we also lacked others.

We never claimed legitimacy alongside aboriginal groups who have a lineage with handed-down teachings, and our contact with them has turned out to be minimal. In this context, one incident about 15 years ago at a “Life-Skills” conference seemed significant, but only at first. I was leading a small workshop introducing participants to some elementary varieties of meditation when suddenly I became aware that an aboriginal participant was being initiated as a shaman by a host of spirits. An aboriginal wise-woman, also in the group, was also aware of this, as was the participant himself. It was when I was guided by a spirit to put my hands on his shoulders that the whole process began. I was merely the voluntary, but very surprised, instrument of aboriginal spirits who came into him.

At first I wondered whether this was the beginning of some new service to aboriginal communities. I told the new shaman how to get in touch with me if I could be of service in any way, but I never heard back, and did not feel any call to pursue the matter further. Indeed, it turned out that this incident was the first of many where spirits want to make themselves known to someone and does so through me, assuming rightly that I am willing to serve in this way and that I’ll be an instrument rather than an obstacle in the process. Sometimes the spirit blesses me – on the way, as it were – but usually the focus is entirely on the other person. The spirit who wants access to someone can vary greatly. Sometimes it’s a spiritual notable such as Kwan Yin, Jesus, Mary, Krishna, Ramana Maharshi, or the Dalai Lama. (Okay, I admit that I’m name-dropping here!) Sometimes it’s a mentor unknown to the person or to me: a medicine-woman or a saint. Sometimes it’s an ordinary human being, desperate to find through me some way to find reconciliation with an estranged friend.

Am I called to some service within aboriginal communities?
Another way in which the question arose was when an aboriginal shaman with whom I had co-led two workshops asked me whether I could accompany him in some spiritual-healing visits to communities out West. I could not, for various practical reasons pertaining to my health and stamina. The practical reasons still apply, but I wonder.

I will conclude this section on relations with traditional shamanism with an amusing anecdote. A few years ago I was invited by an aboriginal friend to attend a ceremony for his recently-deceased mother. It was led by an elder, who drummed and sounded and danced with my friend. Others respectfully watched the ritual, but I felt moved to join the two of them. Afterwards my friend told me what the elder said to him in private: “Who was that guy? He seemed to know what was going on; but he dances like a white man!”

What relevance to most readers has this section on the Messenger Community in its relation to traditional shamanism? It's not that I think that everyone who is interested in being counselled by spirits should join our Monday-night group! People have many varied callings, and I have already expressed my gratitude to dedicated spiritualists who devote so much of their time and energy to helping “earth-bound” spirits. And there are probably other spiritual groups whose main meditative focus is drawing on transformative help from the spirit world to mobilize creative human responses to the ecological crisis or to the violence that pervades human society, or to the plight of millions of orphans. Participants in such groups will be given many of the spiritual resources that we have received in Healing Rifts. And of course the creative responses to human crises need not always emphasize a dedication to a transformative spiritual process within ourselves. The focus may be primarily institutional: organizing ordinary citizens to shift the power structures of society away from the destruction of nature and of people and towards a reduction of ecological pillaging, violent conflict, oppression, disease and starvation. All these human projects, whether personally transformative or institutional, are significant.

Concerning the Healing Rifts group, I realize that there is a danger that I may inflate its significance because I've been dedicated to it for 23 years. Since the 1960s there have been significant institutional

and ideological changes in some Western societies towards recognizing the rights and dignity of women and the responsibilities of men as husbands and fathers. I strongly welcome these, but my own gut-feeling about these changes is that much of it is still a fashionable political correctness that has not penetrated the unconscious motivations and attitudes of most men, or the expectations of most women. I also believe that a bodily-emotional-spiritual breakthrough within a small group secretly affects many other human beings. A breakthrough within the group makes a comparably deep change more accessible for many others. Of course such a belief makes no sense unless one has a spiritualistic understanding of our human interconnections on a psychic and spiritual level. Another motivating factor for me has been a hunch that a deep healing of rifts between men and women would radically reduce many other conflicts, including our human conflict with nature.

Responding to “Power-Animals”

This essay, however, is meant to provide practical counsel to spiritual counsellors generally, not to promote a particular project. So in the rest of this essay I will be offering some varied observations concerning various aspects of spiritualistic experience. For example, I referred to "power-animals" in the context of shamanism and earlier I described how George stopped being a victim by becoming a roaring lion. Awareness of a power-animal typically arises during a meditation or a dream or a ritual. My first counsel is that, as in the example of George, it is important that the person not only has a visual experience but also enacts and sounds the animal. This may seem silly, but it works! Even if the creature is a snake or a frog or an eagle! My second counsel is not to focus much on an alleged universal meaning of the power-animal according to some shamanic or Jungian book. What matters most is the person's own energetic sense of what is going on. Such an opening of oneself bodily into the distinctive energies of a lion or an eagle or a frog or a snake can be a substantial transformational process. This usually matters much more than a merely intellectual insight.

Being empowered by a power-animal is not the same as something that may also at first seem silly: playfully pretending to be a lion or an eagle. This can be a delightful way to break free of the constrictions of adult self-consciousness so as to become more child-like and

spontaneous, but it is not itself a spiritualistic process. Sometimes the processes of receiving the energies of a power-animal and of pretending to be the animal may stimulate each other or even overlap each other, but the distinction is important. It's similar to a distinction between two approaches to one's spiritual mentor: (i) receiving Jesus (or the Dalai Lama) into one's body and drawing on his energies and direction or (ii) imagining what Jesus (or the Dalai Lama) would do in this situation and behaving accordingly. Whether one is imagining a lion or Jesus, the process involves humanistic spirituality, which is of course rightly significant for many people. But an experience of the real presence of spirit (lion or Jesus) involves spiritualistic spirituality, and while this does not necessarily exclude imaginative pretending, it is different. For some people the real presence is crucially important.

Angels

People within particular religious traditions may confidently present a detailed “map” of the world of angels, for they refer to what their cumulative tradition claims as true. But here, as in the rest of the essay, I will only be presenting testimony based on my own experience. I will be reporting how angels have dealt with me and what I have witnessed in their dealings with others. So I make no claims to be definitive or exhaustive in my account.

For example, I've sometimes been with a person when he or she is receiving counsel or help from a particular, named angel within a particular religious tradition: for example, an archangel called “Michael”. Often the person has a vaguely Christian background but for some reason in their personal history they have problems with Jesus, and this makes Michael more accessible to them. (Others, of course, may experience both Michael and Jesus.) My own personal experience, by way of contrast, has not involved receiving counsel or help in my own life from any named angel, though I've often been aware, in a general way, that a number of angels are present around me, and sometimes an unnamed angel will seek my attention. Often there will be remarkable synchronicity in my life, for example, meeting someone at just the right time, and I will have a strong hunch that some spiritual presences which I've vaguely sensed “behind the scenes” have been at work. But whether one or more of these was an angel rather than a deceased human being, I do not know – or care! The Messenger Community, however, has a

distinctive and significant presence whenever our Healing Rifts group meets. And sometimes I'm clearly aware of an unnamed angel.

How can I tell whether a spiritual presence a deceased human being or an angel? The deceased humans continue to show indications of having had a body, especially in the emotional components of their vibrations, whereas an angel shows no such indications. Indeed, in communication with angels I have sometimes realized that they are very curious about how it feels to be a human being, capable of embodied versions of contrasting emotions such as joy and sadness or sexual passion and terror, or capable of embodied versions of virtues and vices such as courage and cowardice or compassion and sadism. Indeed, on occasion angels have asked permission to be in my body so as to feel the sounds of a symphony orchestra in the way that I can. If the word “envy” didn’t usually imply some grudging of someone else’s enjoyment, I would call them “envious”. But of course an angel has a purity that precludes such pettiness! Indeed their purity is linked with an amazing clarity of discernment that is a wonderful correction of our tendencies towards scattering our attention and obscuring our calling.

Certainly in my encounters with the angels of the Messenger Community I have had a strong sense of a co-operative enterprise, where we are learning from them but they are also learning from us. And over the years we and the angels have together created a complex energy-resource on which we can draw to intensify creative processes within our group and to bring blessings to the earth and to humankind. My own impression is that many diverse groups, some far more significant than ours, have created similar spiritual reservoirs on which all of us can learn to draw.

Christian theology and liturgy emphasize the angels who dwell in heaven and lead in celebrating the glory of the Divine Mystery “up there”. Sometimes I am aware of them when with fellow Christians at Holy Communion I am joining in the prayers of celebration: “And now, with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name...Glory be to thee, O Lord most high”. My main experience of them, however, is not during glimpses of heaven. Rather, I become aware of them as they bring their unembodied presence to co-operate with us embodied human beings in the task of transforming life on earth. And this co-operation applies not only to an

ongoing group but also to individuals. Thus for each person at any given moment there are angels available to help him or her. If a person can become aware of them, and be receptive, considerable change in attitudes and energies can occur. So as a spiritual counsellor in a workshop or a session I encourage, where appropriate, an openness to angels and to other positive spiritual presences. I don't limit my expectations to presences that I've already known, or found personally transformative. Indeed, much of my learning from new spiritual encounters has arisen while working with other people.

Shamanic Psychotherapy

The Healing Rifts group, both the men-only version and the later mixed version, has been motivated by a commitment to reducing the conflicts between the masculine and the feminine within ourselves and between men and women. Since these conflicts have both spiritual and emotional components, many of the transformative processes have involved both spiritual and psychotherapeutic elements, and this combination continued in the Healing-Rifts workshops that the group led for several years.

Sometimes near the beginning of these workshops the men would first meet separately to connect with each other while the women would do the same in another place. Typical differences emerged. The men would usually connect with each other in an aggressive "scrum", wrestling and tussling aggressively (though harmlessly) so as to get "out of their heads" and eventually bringing together heart and genitals in an assertive tenderness. The women would usually connect with each other by forming a circle, holding hands, creating a container for blending and harmony and consensus, bringing heart and womb together in an inclusive receptivity. The separate bonding strengthened each individual to deal with the various fears and angers that arose when men and women then encountered each other.

One process that sometimes occurred involved my offering to provide a "welcome" for women's distinctive angers at men, often accumulated not only from mistreatment during their personal lifetimes but also from many generations of oppression. Within the boundaries of a sacred ritual, and drawing on years of preparation in the group, I could focus my consciousness mainly on the suffering which

gives rise to the rage rather than being terrified. Many women found some catharsis through this. (Of course, it was much more difficult to provide this outside such a context, in my daily life!)

As an extension of this offer of catharsis through raging at me as symbolic representative of repressive patriarchy, I once offered a day-long workshop entitled “Woman and Anger”. As the one man, indeed the one leader, I expected that most of the twenty women who came would come to express their anger at men. To my surprise, only a few did. The rest came to express their anger at women! Many of them said that they avoided workshops led by women because they distrusted women. Their most prominent issues had to do with their mothers, who had rejected or abandoned them, sometimes through alcoholism or psychosis, sometimes in other ways. They had come to this workshop because it was led by a man. So most of the day was focused on issues of anger and anguish between women. I had not expected such an emphasis, but I was grateful to be more of a neutral mediator than a target!

Thus even when a workshop was not officially sponsored by the Healing Rifts group, it could have a Healing Rifts theme. Increasingly however, members of our group began to offer workshops that were much more open in their focus. Although we drew on the understanding of emotional-spiritual processes (“shamanic psychotherapy”) that we had gained within the group, the participants brought no commitment to the Healing Rifts project. Instead, they brought whatever their personal commitments, concerns and aspirations happened to be at the time. For one workshop, however, I invited them to consider a common purpose for the day, not healing rifts between masculine and feminine within us and between women and men but nevertheless potentially universal:

“to become more loving, less self-preoccupied and less conflicted, more heart-present to others, more connected with the earth, more surrendered into the Mystery out of which we all arise”.

They were still free to formulate their own specific purpose, but it was clear that if they simply wanted to become rich and famous, this was not the place to come!

The Spiritual Unconscious

I am convinced that all human beings, in varying degrees, can uncover repressed memories and discernments in both our spiritual unconscious and our emotional unconscious, which are distinct but often interconnected. Sometimes something spiritual arises in consciousness, for example an awareness of receiving maternal love from Mother Mary, and this provides an additional source of the pervasive trust that enables us to retrieve from infancy an otherwise too-painful emotional memory concerning our human mother. And sometimes the retrieval of such an infantile memory is a pre-condition for being able to find access to a hidden motherly-spirit, for otherwise our unconscious fear and anger towards mother prevent us from consciously receiving love from the motherly-spirit.

Both kinds of retrieval take place at what I call the “threshold” of consciousness. By analogy, think of your consciousness as a crowded room where you are the host. If someone appears at the doorway (the “threshold”) you may be vaguely aware of this, but the person can only enter if you shift the energy of your attention away from the commotion in the room and focus it at the (previously empty) doorway. Previously unconscious items sometimes appear at the threshold if we empty our consciousness through deep relaxation.

Since the notion of a spiritual unconscious is new to many people I should clarify it further. What I am mainly referring to is spiritual items that we once experienced, then repressed and now may remember. For example, you might remember the radiant, loving face of my saintly grandmother who died when you were two. Or you might remember feeling loved by Jesus before you were traumatized as an infant. Retrieval of such memories can be very important. One evening, at a workshop focused on retrieving from the spiritual unconscious, one woman rejoiced in seven very positive spiritual memories from her childhood. It was a wonderful new conscious resource for her, and it helped me to understand how she could still be alive and functioning, for her childhood was the most horrendous I had ever heard about.

The retrieval of specific memories is clearly different from experiences that seem entirely new, for example when I found myself for the first time resonating with Kali. It's possible, of course, that I have

repressed some memories, especially if past-life experiences are a possibility, but the experience of encountering Kali differed from retrieving a memory in that I had no sense that I was remembering Kali: the experience seemed to be new. Some of my encounters with spirits in this life, however, were accompanied by a realization that I had been resisting awareness of them in the past. And more generally I now realize that until the late 1970s I was resisting awareness of any spirits (except Jesus). What the term “spiritual unconscious” conveys in relation to spiritualism is a resistance to awareness of spirits, whether we were once aware of the spirit or now refuse to allow any awareness. (By analogy, the “emotional unconscious” includes not only a resistance to awareness of repressed emotions from the past but also a resistance to awareness of repressed emotions in the present. We can deceive ourselves concerning what we are actually feeling in the moment: to others it may even be obvious that we are angry or sad, yet we are not letting ourselves feel it. Often therapies that focus on present emotions can help people become less resistant to emotions that originated in the past, and vice versa.)

I spoke of resisting awareness of spirits. During most of my life I was very resistant. Since the late 1980s, however, for reasons that I have made clear, my own resistance to awareness of positive spirits has decreased radically. I already mentioned the initiation of a native shaman by spirits coming through me. Similarly, while providing spiritual counselling to a devotee of Krishna, a wonderful “fringe benefit” of this was becoming aware of Krishna: not only Krishna’s playful, wise wit but also the distinctive radiant divine light that comes through him. On another occasion I dropped in unexpectedly on some monks fresh from Tibet who were chanting in their unusual way, somehow producing extremely low sounds plus some high overtones. I joined in and found myself – for the first and last time – making similar sounds. It was sacred gift to me, and it was fun! (One reason why I hope that more people can learn how to resonate with a wide variety of spirits is that this is a superb way to get a feel for other religions.)

Threshold Breakthroughs

Thus far I have tried to clarify what I mean when I talk about working with both the emotional unconscious and the spiritual unconscious within Healing Rifts and its off-shoots. Now I move on to describe some of these off-shoots. In the early 1990s I began to give workshops involving “Threshold Relaxation”. I will now quote from a leaflet which signaled a change in these workshops:

“Previous meditation workshops have been occasions when individuals have uncovered spiritual and/or emotional realities at the threshold of their consciousness and have broken through to a new and liberating self-understanding. Sometimes they became aware of a spiritual presence or a spiritual energy or an inner centre of calm; sometimes repressed longing or grief or rage or terror has emerged, in some cases together with memories of traumatic events; and sometimes the spiritual and emotional emerged together, for example, as a mixture of longing for intimacy with mother and a longing for intimacy with Divine Mother.

In previous workshops such threshold breakthroughs were not directly sought. They usually occurred as an individual was involved in meditations which were open to such possibilities, but which were not focused on them. In this new workshop, as in previous ones, there will be no attempt to pry or push behind the threshold so as to dislodge what has been – for good defensive reasons – deeply buried. But there will be a direct invitation made by each participant to her/his unconscious (spiritual and/or emotion) to yield forth whatever is “ripe” at the time. (Hence the new workshop title is “Threshold Breakthroughs”).

If nothing new emerges into consciousness, the participant will simply continue in a pleasant and renewing state of relaxation. The process itself is gentle, and involves no forcing, yet sometimes the breakthroughs themselves are very intense, and one person’s breakthrough may be a catalyst for another’s.”

As individuals gained experience in threshold breakthroughs, whether in workshops or individually in sessions, they learned to trust the wisdom of their own unconscious. It’s as if outside the door of consciousness there were a long cue of repressed items that could only

gain access to the threshold after other items had been received. And in so far as the workshops and sessions involved contact with spiritual presences never previously experienced, individuals learned to trust their wisdom and good will in timing their entrance into consciousness. In general, the processes of transformative breakthrough involved learning a complex, two-fold art: (i) the art of psychotherapy, uncovering one's own emotional unconscious, plus (ii) a central art in shamanism, gaining conscious access to spiritual presences. As for me, I was learning the art of teaching this complex art. In many instances, I worked myself out of a job, and people left to work on their own. In other instances, people dropped out. But for a period some people continued learning the art, whether with me or in workshops co-led by the four of us who constituted the original Healing Rifts mixed group: Heloisa Porto, Catherine Stone, Robin Noya and me. We co-founded an organization called the "Institute for Shamanic Psychotherapy, which existed formally between 1995 and 2000.

I have been emphasizing the inter-relation between psychotherapeutic processes involving the emotional unconscious and spiritualistic processes involving the spiritual unconscious. I do want to acknowledge, however, that each of these can go on independently. After all, non-spiritual psychotherapy is often very productive! And fortunately a person can sometimes undergo a purely-spiritual process that brings much healing in relation to infantile traumas even if the memories remain almost entirely hidden. I have witnessed this sometimes even where the person was violated sexually in infancy. And, in contrast with this, a powerful new spiritualistic conversion (for example, feeling loved and empowered by the risen Jesus) sometimes enables a person suddenly to retrieve and work through such memories of trauma. Or, conversely, a psychotherapeutic process of uncovering a trauma may enable a person to recall a prior spiritual epiphany that had been blocked by the trauma. Many diverse approaches and sequences exist in the transformative processes undergone by human beings.

On the basis of my own experience, however, I venture the opinion that often (not always) what is best is a combination of spiritualistic and psychotherapeutic approaches. This is true even if a person's goals in undergoing transformative processes are quite secular (e.g. reducing inner emotional conflicts and destructive interactions

with other people). The goal is more likely to be realized if one is helped by an indwelling spirit. The spiritual dimension facilitates the emotional process. And even if a person's goals are very spiritual (e.g. wanting to be indwelt by Jesus or Ramana Maharshi), the emotional dimension facilitates the spiritual process. There are usually emotional conflicts that need to be recognized and dealt with if one is allowing the indwelling mentor to pervade one's whole self.

Mystical Processes

I will conclude by saying something about my own mystical path, first in relation to what I have been emphasizing concerning the need to combine spiritualistic and psychotherapeutic approaches. In recent years, if during meditation I ask for discernment concerning whatever is impeding further unity with Divine Love, what I am enabled to discern usually has to do with some prevailing attitude or motivation that I've been hiding from myself and which has some connections with my personal life-history and which is also an impediment in my daily-life interactions with people. Usually what I discern is that I need to shed an attachment to an old pattern of requirements that I've been unconsciously bringing to my significant others and to my projects and to God: "Unless such-and-such happens I'll fall into despair". Letting go of the attachment involves me in making a commitment in advance not to despair, not to turn away from God's Love, even if the outcome turns out to be deeply disappointing. What matters most is remaining open to God's Love. In so far as an attachment has to do with my personal life-history, for example, an obsession since childhood to find, and connect with, the ideal father (or mother), there is a psychotherapeutic dimension even in this mystical process. Indeed, I might say, especially in this mystical process. (Freud was correct in pointing out our human tendency to create a god-figure out of our infantile longings, but what he didn't realize that the great mystics recognized this too, and saw it as a major obstacle in the arduous process of setting aside false "gods" and coming to recognize the true Divine Mystery. Meister Eckhart once said, "I pray to God to rid me of God!" The God to whom he prayed was the Mystery.)

Occasionally, however, the uncovered impediment to mystical union has to do with my not adequately recognizing and appreciating God's transforming Love at work within me. Then what is appropriate

is to move again into thanksgiving, celebrating new spiritual gifts from God. And here we are beyond Freud and most secular psychotherapies. Some humanistic psychotherapies, however, provide a humanistic-spiritual approach in which positive attitudes of thanksgiving and celebration are encouraged in our human spirit. And sometimes a commitment to appreciate everything with thanksgiving and celebration can shift imperceptibly into elementary forms of mystical spirituality, where one begins to experience the Mystery out of which everything arises.

I want to emphasize, nevertheless, the importance of a spiritualistic spirituality in relation to mysticism – for me and for many other people. The most profound transformation that indwelling spirits can bring about in us, with our co-operation, includes but also transcends what can take place within a humanistic approach. We learn how to let go of our self-preoccupation and expand our hearts so as to unite with the light and love and joy of the Divine Mystery. And this typically happens when we allow ourselves to be inhabited bodily by the energy-presence of a human being who has already realized such a state. The process is usually very arduous, for whatever in us resists such change has to be discerned and let go. But much grace is received from and through the realized being, who resonates with us and we with him/her.

For me, the central, decisive presence, my “mystical inner transformer”, has been the resurrected Jesus. With others whom I have come to know as friends or clients I have discerned contemporary realized beings such as Sri Chinmoy or the Dalai Lama; or it may be Kwan Yin, Krishna, Rumi, Ramana Maharshi or some other realized beings continuing from the past.

The expansive transformation wrought in us by a realized being can combine with a shamanistic containing of everyone and everything as a human micro-cosm. For me, the shamanically-experienced presence of Jesus throughout the cosmos combines with his shamanically-experienced presence in my physical body. Jesus thus enables me to connect with the fullness of nature. He also enables me to connect with the fullness of God, resonating with the distinctively divine love, light and bliss that Eastern Orthodox Christians call “the uncreated energies of God”.⁷

In my own experience, the process of embodiment divine love, light and bliss is more arduous than a process of opening one's disembodied, pure consciousness to being filled by these energies. Whether this is true for everyone, I would hesitate to say, but for me, the past few years have involved sequences of repeated challenges. Each time Jesus brings love, light and bliss more pervasively and deeply into my body, my body newly constricts in fear. My body can not easily distinguish between benign and destructive "intrusions", so my body initially identifies Jesus as someone to fear. So bodily symptoms occur: a sustained spasm in my ankle or my neck or my diaphragm or my groin, or a puzzling, sudden exhaustion. Gradually the physical symptoms subside, especially if I allow for quiet time in which spiritual/physical healing can occur. It is true that perfect love casts out fear, but it also uncovers hidden layers of fear that are obstacles to love. Sometimes my physical problems are symptoms of medically identifiable disorders or of neurotic conflicts still remaining in my emotional unconscious, or of deterioration associated with aging (I turn 80 in September 2007). But sometimes it is the process of mystical embodiment that is mainly the "culprit".

In stark contrast with such a state of being filled, we can also be emptied of everything so as to fall into mystical union with the mysterious Origin of everything. This Origin or Source or Divine Mystery can not be described, and can only be referred to in terms that involve negation: emptiness, darkness, silence, stillness, formlessness, unknowing. Meditations on self-emptying loosen one's narcissistic attachment to one's separate identity, letting go of whatever one clings to rather than falling into awareness of Mystery. Eventually, or sometimes immediately, Mystery turns out to be a limitless space of light and love and bliss. In my own experience, such a movement into mystical union through self-emptying involves spiritualistic spirituality, in two ways: (I) Jesus enables me to begin and to continue the process of emptying, though the end involves letting go even of him. (In one meditation led by a Jesuit mystic, we went down in an elevator with Jesus, but eventually when the door opened we had to step out on our own into an Abyss.) (ii) In my path overall, I alternate meditations of self-emptying with spiritualistic meditations of being filled, and both approaches culminate in divine light, love and bliss.⁸

I have already emphasized, that there are paths towards mystical union that involve no spiritualism. I respect these, but my own testimony involves mystical transformation through Jesus, and I have witnessed similar transformations through other realized beings.

The Mystical Unconscious

One final question: Is there a “mystical unconscious” in all human beings, distinguishable from the “emotional unconscious” and the “spiritual unconscious”? Both St. Augustine and (even more clearly) the Sufi poet Rumi said that there is. St. Augustine’s perhaps most famous saying was, “You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in thee”. One of Rumi’ poems goes like this:

“A craftsman pulled a reed from the reedbed,
cut holes in it, and called it a human being.
Since then, it’s been wailing a tender agony
of parting, never mentioning the skill
that gave it a life as a flute.”⁹

For Rumi, the “reedbed” is the Divine Origin of each human being. Each of us longs to return, but we are now like a reed-flute, “wailing a tender agony of parting”, sounding forth our longing to return out of our separation. By becoming human beings we have become distinct from our Origin, but our longing itself draws us back towards union, especially as we become flute-instruments through which the Divine Spirit blows – as our mystical unconscious becomes conscious, and as we embody our Origin.

In my own experience I have found that in so far as I repress my mystical longing I misidentify its origin and its focus. I become attached to people and projects that can not provide the unconditional fulfillment which I have glimpsed in the Mystery. Hence the ongoing challenge is to let go of my attachments to whatever, other than the Mystery, I am treating as ultimate. People and projects can remain important, and often my passion concerning them is confirmed, but I come to appreciate them for what they are, no more and no less.

A contemporary mystic, Thomas Keating, (one of the architects of the Christian Centering Prayer movement) also claims that there is a mystical unconscious, though he uses a different label:

“The first work of the divine therapy to affirm our basic goodness as creatures made in the image of God. This suggests that along with our psychological unconscious, which is the place where we repress emotionally unbearable trauma, there exists equally and more important the ontological unconscious. This is the level of the divine indwelling itself, the presence in us of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Divine Trinity, the source of all reality. This creative presence is always in us...God always dwells within us at a deep level and is trying by every possible means to awaken us to that presence. It’s this presence that is transforming, divinizing, and liberating, healing the emotional wounds of early life.”¹⁰

Keating does not mention a “spiritual unconscious”, but it seems to me important to emphasize and to distinguish all three forms of the unconscious: emotional, spiritual and mystical (ontological). Since the focus of this essay has been on the spiritual (concerning spirits), I have not explored the other two very much on their own, but mainly in their connections with the spiritual.¹¹ Access to all three forms of unconscious is often by means of an intentionally-focused version of “Threshold Meditation”. Because all three are interconnected, however, one has to be open to uncovering repressed in a form of meditation other than the form one initially intended to be open to. For example, if one hopes to experience one’s longing for the Mystery or to have some “glimpse” of the Mystery, what arises in consciousness may be a discernment concerning something emotional or something spiritual that has to be dealt with first.

END-NOTES

- 1.** In this essay I do not try to justify my lack of interest in “objective”, impersonal evidence and my reliance on “subjective”, personal experience. In another essay, however, I reflect philosophically on how we can come to know vibrational realities such as spirits by learning how to resonate with them: “Life After Death: Reflections on Experiences” on my webpage: <http://individual.utoronto.ca>.
- 2.** During the late 1970s I wrote a book that explored such contrasts, though I did not call the topic “humanistic spirituality”. I showed how the same pervasive stance (for example, basic trust) can be seen as a religious attitude a moral virtue and a psychological strength. See Donald Evans, *Struggle and Fulfillment: The Inner Dynamics of Religion and Morality*, (New York, Toronto, London: Collins, 1979).
- 3.** For further material concerning my work with spirits, see my article “A Shamanic Christian Approach in Psychotherapy” in Seymour Boorstein, ed. *Transpersonal Psychotherapy*, 2nd edition, (New York, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1996).
- 4.** Reductionist, non-humanistic psychotherapies are dogmatic in their exclusion of psychic intrusion as a possible element in a person’s malaise. It is important to note that Orthodox Jungian analysis does the same, though its exploration in terms of the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious can be more helpful in dealing with whatever the person is contributing to the problem. In lectures that I gave at Jungian centres in Ottawa (2000) and Montreal (2001) I challenged the adequacy of this approach and noted that Jung himself had spiritualistic experiences that he did not explain away as products of the human unconscious. (I plan to revise the lectures and publish them on this webpage.)
- 5.** See note #2.
- 6.** For an exploration of the contrast between the “merely paranormal” and the “genuinely spiritual” in chapter 6 of Donald Evans, *Spirituality and Human Nature*, (New York, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1993).

7. “God enters into man’s love, remaining there in his intimate reality. This presence is real, indeed most real. This communication of God himself is called ‘Uncreated Energy’. The uncreated energies of God are not ‘things’ which exist outside of God, not ‘gifts’ of God; they are God himself in his action...The doctrine of the energies, as distinct from the essence, is the basis of all mystical experience. God who is inaccessible in His essence is present in His energies.” George A. Maloney, *A Theology of ‘Uncreated Energies’*, (Marquette: Marquette University Press, 1978, pp.73-76).

8. In an essay “Transformative Meditations for Spiritual Healers” I outline and discuss two “filling” meditations and one “emptying” meditation. The latter involves an adaptation of “Threshold Meditation”, adapted towards opening up the mystical unconscious. See my webpage: <http://individual.utoronto.ca/devans>.

9 Coleman Barks, translator, *The Essential Rumi*, (Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 1997) p.146.

10. Donald W. Mitchell and James Wiseman, ed. *Transforming Suffering*, (New York, London, Toronto, Doubleday, 2003), pp.88-89.

11. In previous publications I have explored the emotional unconscious (see those cited in end-notes # 2, #3, and #6) and the mystical unconscious (see those cited in end-notes #6 and #8).

