

On Integrating Numinous Experiences: A Case Study

Viajes Sobre la Integración de Experiencias Numinosas: Un Estudio de Caso

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Abstract

The following case study analyzes Maya's psychotherapeutic journey, which was initiated by her attempts to manage the emotional impact of intense familial conflict. Within the context of her psychotherapy, Maya also sought to integrate her private entheogenic experiences, which provided powerful catalysts for the recovery of her sense of self, and the revival of her relationships. Her therapeutic work took place within an integrative context, with strong influences from Jungian analytic psychology, offering the framework for working through and integrating her entheogenic and therapeutic processes within the timeframe of two years and two months. The material that emerged in Maya's entheogenic journeys were explored through the same principles that would be applied when working with integrating material arising from dreams or active imagination. This paper addresses the potential contribution of entheogens within a therapeutic framework, and emphasizes the importance of integration for the benefits of such experiences to be thoroughly released.

Keywords: alchemy, altered states, entheogens, integration, psychedelic psychotherapy.

Resumen

El siguiente estudio de caso analiza el viaje psicoterapéutico de Maya, iniciado por sus intentos de gestionar el impacto emocional de un intenso conflicto familiar. En el contexto de la psicoterapia, Maya también trató de integrar sus experiencias enteogénicas realizadas fuera del contexto de la psicoterapia, y que le proporcionaron poderosos catalizadores para la recuperación de su sentido de sí mismo, y la reactivación de sus relaciones. Su trabajo terapéutico se llevó a cabo en un contexto integrativo, con fuertes influencias de la psicología analítica de Jung, que ofreció el marco para trabajar e integrar sus procesos enteogénicos y terapéuticos a lo largo de dos años y dos meses. El material que surgió en los viajes enteogénicos de Maya se exploró a través de los mismos principios que se aplicarían cuando se trabaja integrando materiales derivados de los sueños o la imaginación activa. En este trabajo se aborda la contribución potencial de los enteógenos en un marco terapéutico, y hace hincapié en la importancia de la integración para poder aprovechar al máximo los potenciales beneficios de este tipo de experiencias.

Palabras clave: alquimia, estados alterados, enteógenos, integración, psicoterapia psicodélica.

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“The unconscious is the mother of consciousness”
-C. G. Jung, 1968b, p.281

This paper unfolds the healing journey of Maya, a young woman in her early 30’s, who began her psychotherapeutic process while trying to cope with the emotional impact of her strained relationship with her mother. It is not uncommon to work with people that address familial conflict and its intrapsychic remnants. What was unusual about Maya was that alongside her psychotherapy she also sought to support her healing process through the use of entheogens. Maya’s psychotherapy provided the space and framework for integrating her entheogenic experiences, and the significant openings they supported into her unconscious, allowed her to journey deeper within her Self (in this article self with a lower ‘s’ is used to denote the ego, the centre of consciousness, and Self with a capital ‘S’ refers to the psychic totality of conscious and unconscious).

As terms, both ‘psychedelic’ and ‘entheogenic’ unravel a significant aspect of the psychedelic experience, however for the purposes of this article it is primarily the latter that will be used. Entheogens, a term first used in a paper published by Ruck, Bigwood, Staples, Wasson and Ott (1979), refers to the capacity of psychedelic experiences to generate God or spirit within, signifying their sacramental potential. Maya’s entheogenic experiences explored through a Jungian framework were understood as states of inner communion that unfolded to numinous encounters. For Jung numinosity was an inevitable component of encounters with one’s psychic depths. “For when an archetype appears in a dream, in a fantasy, or in life, it always brings with it a certain influence or power by virtue of which it either exercises a numinous or a fascinating effect, or impels to action” (Jung, 1966, p.70). The term ‘entheogens’ implicitly references Jung’s assertion that God represents an archetype of the Self. He argued that “the soul is assuredly not small, but the radiant Godhead itself” (Jung, 1969a, p. 513) and that “through uniting with the Self we reach the God” (Jung, 2009, p. 338)

Michael Fordham (1985) postulated that differentiation of the self unfolds through a series of deintegration and reintegration stages of the ‘primal Self’, that mediate between conscious and unconscious states. He considered the ‘primal Self’ to be the infant’s state of integrated wholeness, and saw it’s continuous disruptions by states of ‘deintegration’-meaning the disruption of the original integrated state- as a developmental necessity

for differentiation and individuation. This model is resonant with the death-rebirth model that has been explored most notably within Jungian, psychedelic, and spiritual frameworks, all exploring the transformative and healing potential of such a process. Within the psychedelic literature ego death refers to the experiencing of a complete loss of subjective self-identity, a process that is accompanied by “anguish and joy of overwhelming intensity” (Grinspoon & Bakalar, 1997, p. 13). Entheogens have the capacity to very definitively facilitate the developmental process of deintegration and reintegration of the self. Transformation during a deep entheogenic journey takes place in a rhythmic process of taking the self apart and then putting it back together, in evolutionary service. Chaos gives birth to new order that is of greater complexity than before (Papaspyrou, 2014). The early alchemists saw chaos as the pool of infinite possibility, the primordial creative space. That chaos is our unconscious and the new order is its assimilation into our consciousness. According to Jung, “the descent into the depths always seems to precede the ascent” (Jung, 1968a, p. 19).

Jung (1968d) distinguished between the personal and the collective unconscious. He described the personal unconscious as a superficial layer made up of contents, once conscious, that have retreated into the unconscious by being forgotten or repressed. He saw the collective unconscious as a deeper layer, comprised of contents that have never been in consciousness or individually acquired. For Jung, this was a universal and impersonal layer, filled with timeless primordial images, the archetypes (Jung, 1968a). Archetypes are core elements of Jungian psychology and enormously relevant when studying the psychedelic experience. Archetypal energies express themselves primarily in symbols and metaphors, giving structure and meaning to the collective unconscious, while mediating between unconscious depths and everyday consciousness, with the aim of restoring wholeness of the Self. Conscious will by itself can not always unite a personality (Jung, 1968f), for the formation of the Self, primordial powers of great depth need to awaken and intervene. The symbols that emerge from the collective layers bring into consciousness thoughts, intuitions, and affects, deeply buried within oneself. Their meaning can only be inferred with an ‘as if’ quality. These symbols, if harnessed and integrated into consciousness, can allow us to overcome an initial situation on a higher level (Jung, 1968a) leading the ultimate human goal of

individuation, which is the journey towards unity of the Self. According to Jung:

The underlying, primary psychic reality is so inconceivably complex that it can be grasped only at the farthest reach of intuition, and then but very dimly. That is why it needs symbols (Jung, 1968g, p. 159).

Jung was the first to extensively psychologise alchemy (Jung, 1968c). He saw the alchemical opus as a reflection of the process of individuation, and the search for the philosopher's stone as a process of seeking inner transformation. For Jung the essential purpose of the alchemical opus was the development of the alchemist's soul.

Alchemy was based on a series of cyclic operations where every stage would be taken apart and then put back together, until eventually lead would transmute into gold, and the object would become the philosopher's stone. The alchemists believed that they were simply speeding up the natural processes that took place within the bowels of the earth (Robertson, 2009). This echoes the potential of entheogens to act as catalysts, speeding up the evolution of our individual and collective consciousness, through a thinning of the veil that separates conscious and unconscious mind, and by facilitating conditions for a greater degree of integration between the two.

The alchemical process of transformation was a three-stage process, evolving from chaos to full life (Robertson, 2009). It started from the chaotic dark space of the *nigredo*, associated with the black colour. In psychological terms this is the stage of suffering and darkness. If the alchemist could successfully navigate the darkness of the *nigredo*, this would give way to the *albedo*, associated with the white colour. In psychological terms this is the stage where one emerges from the dark night of the soul with a new understanding. If the work continued successfully on a material and a spiritual level, the *rubedo* would emerge, associated with the red colour. In psychological terms, in this stage the new understandings are slowly integrated into life. For Jung, a mental union marked the completion of the *nigredo*, a union of mind and body marked the completion of the *albedo*, and a union of mind body and ultimate reality marked the completion of *rubedo* (Robertson, 2009).

This paper is a case study of Maya's process and development within the framework of her psychotherapy over the timeframe of two years and two months. It is based on case notes that were kept throughout Maya's process, and has been

published with her consent, a couple of years after the end of her treatment. Maya was a young professional woman in her early thirties, originally from Italy, who had immigrated to the UK during her early 20's. She appeared competent and self sufficient, managing well in most aspects of her life, with early experiences that had built a resilient outward persona. She entered her therapeutic process at a point of intense conflict in her relationship with her mother, which for 20 years was caught in alienation and disconnection. For two decades they had remained stuck in a cycle of anger, resentment, and guilt, precluding any real intimacy. These relational patterns culminated in the breakdown of their relationship. They ceased all contact, and denied each other's existence, along with their need for each other. During this relational breakdown of a year and a half, Maya's developing psychotherapeutic process, along with three separate experiences with three separate entheogens, gradually provided the catalysts that unlocked their relationship from its fixed conflictual narratives. Maya's psychotherapeutic work took place within an integrative theoretical framework, with an emphasis on the transpersonal elements of her work (e.g. Grof, 1975; Jung, 1965; Maslow, 1971). A clear focus was established on integrating her experiences in altered states of consciousness, which were explored within her sessions in the same way that dreams, artwork, or material emerging from active imagination would be worked through. In practice that meant that we engaged with the symbolic nature of the material emerging from her entheogenic experiences through exploring the associations, amplifications, characters, structure, mood and emotional content, of her visions. In doing so we were working towards harnessing the underlying messages and energies from Maya's unconscious that emerged in a symbolic form, by unravelling deeper layers of meaning. Maya, by establishing meaningful connections between her experiences in altered states of consciousness and her life in everyday consciousness, was able to journey through the deeper layers of her Self. Maya's entheogenic experiences were outside the therapeutic space, and brought in retrospectively. She would undertake these within a therapeutically minded set and setting, with a clear intention that usually related to healing and inner reparation, and supported by a sitter.

The goal of this paper is to explore the impact of the integrated material that emerged out of Maya's entheogenic experiences and to consider the relevance of such material for emotional healing and growth. It is a qualitative case study

and the results were obtained through content analysis of the case notes of Maya's therapy. Maya's process has been filtered through the three stage alchemical model of transformation: a. the nigredo phase, b. the albedo phase and c. the rubedo phase. This provided an in depth framework for understanding the transformative processes that unfolded through Maya's therapeutic process and the integration of her entheogenic experiences, and the results are outlined in a way that reflects that.

The Nigredo phase

The nigredo phase reached its crescendo when all communications between Maya and her mother had ceased. This was a profoundly disturbing and hopeless time for Maya during which her vital energies were driven underground. She experienced the loss of her relationship to her mother as a psychic amputation that was infecting her sense of self, delivering her to inner lands of bewildering confusion. The disconnection from her mother, the most elemental link between her and the wider world, led to a primal terror, and a loss of meaning and purpose.

Four months into her therapeutic journey Maya had an entheogenic experience that captured in a symbolic form the very essence of our work up until that point. She accessed the concentrated insights of this healing phase by the use of Changa, and then integrated these through our work together.

Changa is a herbal mixture of Banisteriosis Caapi leaves and a natural extract of DMT, that create a powerful and short acting psychoactive blend (Chen Cho Dorje, 2010). Due to its short acting nature, Changa has been often used as a quick 'psychedelic hit', neglecting its immense insight potential, when used with attention to the set and setting, and with appropriate integration.

Two visions from this journey illustrated the psychological tension that was the basis of Maya's nigredo phase:

Vision 1. This vision brought to life a wooden sculpture of two fused entities. Their fusion was the source of painful friction. Maya witnessed what looked like dramatic growth spurts resulting in awkward movements and a push-pull dynamic, that seemed physically intolerable.

Vision 2. The second vision took her to a room with a cot and a baby in it. The

baby was fast growing until the room could no longer fit it, as it started growing through doors, windows, and walls.

In combination these two visions, through symbolism, pointed at the necessity of Maya detaching herself from her 'origins'. The first vision, in clear and simple symbolic representation, depicted in an embodied form the need for separateness, in order to allow space for Maya's growth and development. It also offered a powerful image of Maya's ambivalence between her need for fusion and attachment and her need for separateness. Maya's attempts at separating from her mother were abrupt and painful, keeping her need for connectedness unacknowledged and hidden within her shadow. In Jungian psychology the 'shadow' refers to the unconscious, unknown or denied, aspects of oneself. In encountering her shadow Maya made contact with her paralysing anger, rage, and distrust towards significant others, the world and ultimately her self, and got in touch with powerful destructive forces that lived deeply within. While acknowledging and relating to these darker territories of her soul, she started unravelling layers and tales of inner woundedness that lay beneath these. The images that Maya encountered in her experience with Changa became symbolic reference points and meditating objects of the deeply buried and disavowed self aspects Maya was learning to explore in her attempts to find ways of inhabiting her darkness.

The child motif appearing in the second vision relates to the individuation process. The child as an archetype holds a futurity within it (Jung, 1968h). Its symbolism, speaks of the anticipation of a future development, and signals a future change of personality. It is a mediator between the present and the inherent future, signifying how fragile the psychic possibility of wholeness can be. Unconscious communications can transcend linear time as "the unconscious psyche is not only immensely old; it is also capable of growing into an equally remote future" (Jung, 1968b, p. 287).

The nigredo phase is characterised by chaotic unconsciousness (Robertson, 2009). It is a time of inner turmoil, confusion, and uncertainty. "This is the dark night of the soul, the hellish place, the place of putrefaction. The nigredo is the place where a person is most enmired and stuck but this state of dissolution is a prerequisite for the redemptive process that follows" (Read, 2014, p. 154). During this psychic descent into our own underworld we come to face our shadow, and it is through this chaos and the integration of the

shadow that the philosopher's stone can ever truly emerge.

The Albedo phase

The catalyst that facilitated Maya's transition to the albedo phase was the integration of a secondentheogenic journey, ten months into her therapeutic process, with lysergic acid diethylamide, more commonly known as LSD. We have known of LSD's psychedelic properties since Albert Hofmann's 'bicycle trip' in 1943 (Hofmann, 2005). LSD is a substance that carries a reputation of danger and unpredictability due to its widespread misuse and the resultant media sensationalism in the 60's and 70's, and that legacy is sustained by both mainstream and countercultural misconceptions and misrepresentations. However a closer look at early psychedelic research reveals LSD to be a substance of immense therapeutic and psycho-spiritual value, if used with care and attention to the conditions of set and setting (e.g. Fadiman 2011, Goldsmith 2011, Grof 1975, 2001, Hill 2013).

Two visions from this journey mobilized emotional states that allowed Maya to enter deeper layers of her unfolding process:

Maya focused on a growing tension throughout her body and an image emerged, the stone sculpture of a broken goddess. The broken goddess, the wounded mother, the aged woman all flashed before her soul in this image. She felt an immense emotional opening and her heart was flooded with love. She described feeling like her ego-structures were melting away.

A second vision followed up and it was a visual journey that narrated the story of her mother's soul. It told Maya through images that it is a very old soul that has over many lifetimes been trapped in series of terrible deaths. It showed her an early time where the first death was in a desert and birds were eating away the defeated, decaying flesh, a later death in the dark Middle Ages, under an emblem of authority, being condemned to extinction, a whole series of unspeakable endings. Maya was also told that this soul, neither male nor female, is in her mother's body today, and that Maya has some responsibility for helping it transcend this Karmic obstacle. Maya entered her heart and in its core she

found only love; all other layers she could now recognise as her protection. Maya, for the first time in a very long time, felt peaceful in her love for her mother as a fellow soul, free from the restraining dynamics of their material reality, and the inflexible strings of their mother daughter relationship.

Theistic ideas are strongly associated with parental images. "The concept of the Great Mother belongs to the fields of comparative religion [and mythology] and it embraces widely varying types of mother-godness" (Jung, 1968e, p.75), derivatives of the mother archetype. In search of meaning for Maya's vision, we entered the realm of the vulnerable goddesses (Bolen, 2004), and there we unravelled and explored the myth of Demeter and Persephone.

Demeter, a maternal archetype, goddess of harvest, grain, and earth's fertility, sank into depression and grief when Hades, lord of the underworld, raped and abducted her daughter Persephone. In response to Demeter's grief the season's halted, Earth became infertile, and famine threatened to destroy humankind. In the face of such destruction, the Gods intervened and Demeter and Persephone were reunited, with the compromise of Persephone spending two thirds of each year in the upper world, and a third in the Underworld, and fertility and growth on earth was restored. The myth became the basis of the Eleusinian mysteries, the most important rituals of ancient Greece, where initiates through undisclosed sacred rites, that some scholars believed to include the use of entheogens (Hofmann, Wasson & Ruck, 2008), experienced the renewal of life after death, mirroring Persephone's annual return from the underworld.

The myth reflected Maya's vision image of the broken goddess in the form of Demeter, as well as the second vision of her mother's metempsychosis, the transmigration of her soul through different body existences and reincarnations with the continuity of Karma, reflected in the death-rebirth ritual that was enacted in the Eleusinian mysteries. The notion of metempsychosis might be a questionable one in our western culture, but time is a different construct when it comes to the language of the soul, "whereas we think in periods of years, the unconscious thinks and lives in terms of millennia" (Jung, 1968b, p. 280).

The Demeter archetype embodies a dual nature, (Bolen, 2004), Demeter before the abduction, symbol of a nurturing, giving, and

fertile mother-goddess, and Demeter after the abduction, a depressed, destructive, and withholding maternal archetype. Persephone, through leaving her origins, is transformed from Kore (maiden) to queen of the underworld. As queen of the underworld, reigning over the kingdom of the dead and guiding the living through it, Persephone has come to her own Self. Immersing into the underworld denotes the necessity for Persephone to enter the deeper layers of her Self, where the personal and collective unconscious reside, in order to transform. Persephone, in her Kore and Queen duality, is an active archetype for entheogenic journeys, representing our ability to move back and forth, mediating between the ego based reality of the real world, and the unconscious or archetypal reality of the psyche. The Persephone archetype is also of a daughter that is too close to her mother to develop an independent sense of self (Bolen, 2004). Separation is important, as Maya's earlier Changa vision had revealed, and reconciliation can only be realised after she has grown nearer into her individuated Self.

The myth provided a metaphor that allowed Maya to recognise and consciously relate to the active archetype of Demeter within her mother, and recognise and work through the active archetype of Persephone within herself. She gradually came to recognise that both herself and her mother held both these archetypes within themselves. Through her work Maya was able to witness and acknowledge the possibility for herself and her mother, reflected in Demeter and Persephone, to grow through their suffering, and recognise that their familial narrative had become stuck at the 'abduction level'. Through the myth Maya gained a different conceptualisation of their relational difficulties, as well as early hints at possible solutions.

The hermaphroditic element of her mother's soul in Maya's second vision, neither male nor female, was another meaningful symbol at this stage of her inner alchemical transformation. The joining together of the opposites is the perfect symbol for what has been accomplished during the albedo phase, which is the union of the strongest and most striking opposites (Jung, 1968h). The hermaphrodite is a "subduer of conflicts and a bringer of healing" (Jung, 1968h, p. 174). The bisexual primordial being symbolises the unity of the personality, the coming to one's whole Self, where conscious and unconscious integrate. In this journey Maya's anger, rage, and distrust, were finally making contact with the hidden subterranean layers of her love, need, and hope.

This journey supported a visceral breakthrough that was a powerful facilitator in Maya's sessions and therapeutic progression. In this journey powerful emotional tides were released for Maya, allowing her to connect with feelings long held back. Jung suggested that the completion of the albedo stage was based on a union of mind and body (Robertson, 2009) and the main function of emotion is to co-ordinate the two (Pally, 2000).

In the albedo phase something tries to emerge from the collective unconscious layers, which gives it a numinous quality. "The catalyst may be a manifestation of the animus/anima archetype, perhaps the emergence of a wise figure, a higher guiding principle that leads us out of the darkness" (Read, 2014, p. 155). It releases one from black and white positions, allowing greater nuance of meaning to emerge. The ability to hold the opposites long enough, will give rise to new truths. "The alchemist has reached the final part of the albedo stage, having passed through the darkness of the nigredo, and emerged with an early glimpse of the numinous light that will eventually form the philosopher's stone..." (Robertson, 2009, p.100). The final stage of the work depends on loosening identification with the archetypes. Identification with these powerful forces can be psychologically destructive (Jung, 1968i; Stein, 2006; Robertson, 2009). It was now time for Maya to find her way home to the human world, bearing the gifts of the vital energies of the imaginal world.

The Rubedo phase

Maya's transition to the final alchemical phase of transformation was well under way and further facilitated by an ayahuasca journey a year and two months into our work. Ayahuasca is a powerful psychoactive brew of mixed Banisteriosis Caapi vine and DMT containing shrubs. Ayahuasca has had a very long history of shamanic use for medicinal, spiritual, and healing purposes (e.g. Dobkin De Rios 1972, Kilham 2014, Luna 1984, Shultes & Hofmann, 1992). A vision from this journey guided Maya in gaining a deeper understanding of the wounding her and her mother carried forward through their relationship:

Maya was on the first cup and thoughts floated through that put her childhood in order. She felt that her personal unconscious had thoroughly unlocked and granted her pristine clarity. Her mother entered the scene, and the spirit of the vine took Maya in her mother's heart

and showed her, her mother's love for her. She witnessed a vibrant field full of potential. The vine guided her through their relationship. It showed her on one side and her mother on the other and in between a black maze that appeared as an obstacle. Maya asked the vine about this obstacle, and it informed her it was her father's death. It showed her how his death had been an active wound in her relationship with her mother, and how grief had drifted them apart. Maya was advised to visit her mother on her father's imminent death anniversary and share with her what she had learned.

For Jung, in psychological terms, the final stage of rubedo marks the union of mind, body, and ultimate reality (Robertson, 2009). It is associated with the red colour, which symbolises blood, reflecting the process of the alchemist coming into full life. This transition is based on the integration of the earlier insights into the real world and actual life. "The insights are incorporated into our everyday lives as the new ego-Self structure of the individuating person gives us a sounder platform for a life well lived" (Read, 2014, p. 155). Unable to travel on her father's 21st death anniversary, Maya made contact with her mother on the day, a year and a half after their last shared and destructive contact, and exchanged memories of her father's life and death. Maya was astonished to discover from that contact how little she knew about his final days, and how much was left unsaid between her and her mother since his departure from their physical reality. A few months later Maya was able to travel and share with her mother her inner and outer journeys of transformation through her entheogenic and psychotherapeutic explorations and integrations. Her mother confirmed Maya's encounters in the realms of altered consciousness, and the detailed insights from her childhood the vine had granted her, were now grounded between them.

The work that entheogenic journeys facilitate is not miraculous, although it does not fall far short. But it takes work, effort, and a commitment to work with the openings that these intelligent agents and our incredibly wise unconscious facilitate. These are openings that reach completion when supported by integration; otherwise they easily sink back into the unconscious. Maya continued her therapeutic work for another year, and while the real world has its own rhythms and operates on many levels, she had by that point developed sufficient ego strength to maintain her sense of self while being in

relationship to her mother. Her visits back home became more frequent, and like Persephone's annual return to the upper world, this released the mythic and archetypal energies of reunification. For Maya, reading this account of her experiences and therapeutic journey, and granting permission for these to be published, is yet another layer of bringing her rubedo phase to completion, allowing her integrated insights to reach a union of mind, body, and ultimate reality.

In the nigredo stage we must lose our essential nature, the philosopher's stone, in the albedo stage we find it again, and during the rubedo stage we are tasked with bringing it back into the 'real' world (Robertson, 2009).

Discussion and conclusions

Between the 50's and mid 60's, psychedelic research flourished with an output of over 1000 published papers on psychedelic therapy for a wide range of disorders, (Grinspoon & Bakalar, 1997), and revealing positive results with very low rates of significant risk and complications (Cohen 1960, 1966, Malleson, 1971). The two main therapeutic modes that emerged were psycholytic psychotherapy, based on low to medium doses of psychedelics and on traditional verbal depth psychotherapy frameworks (Curtner 1959; Stolaroff 2002), and psychedelic psychotherapy, based on medium to high doses of psychedelics, and on inducing transcendent peak mystical states that were seen to have a radical effect on one's personality or life view (Grof, 2001). These two approaches, despite their differences, shared common ground, as one can never fully separate the transcendent from the analytic aspects of a healing process (Grinspoon & Bakalar, 1997).

Jung himself opposed the use of psychedelics, as he considered the uprise of unconscious contents a significant threat to ego-structures, but this was a concern he felt was also inherent in the process of traditional psychotherapy (Hill, 2013). Such experiences are certainly not without their dangers for they are also the very matrix of psychoses. Numinous encounters have a dark side, as powerful as their light, and "archetypes can profoundly disturb [and possess] consciousness" (Stein, 2006, p. 48). To remain stuck in numinous lands equals to becoming assimilated to the unconscious, which Stein (2006) argues can lead to a pathological state of grandiose inflation, the loss of ego boundaries and ego integrity, and in the most serious cases to

entrapment in a paranoid psychotic defence. To be possessed or rely defensively on archetypes, can be very destructive on a personal and a collective level (Stein, 2006). In these journeys one is treading the liminal borderlands between conscious and unconscious, which can be as full of creative potential as of disastrous ruin. Here is the stuff of madness, spiritual realization and artistic inspiration. Set and setting, with particular emphasis on our ego strength and integration, is what determines our ability to withstand and navigate the emergence of unconscious contents (Fadiman, 2011). To integrate our journeys is to carry forward the responsibilities that such endeavours come with.

Experiences of this kind, when adequately supported and integrated, have the potential to provide us with developmental turning points, and can be great aids to individuation, life's ultimate developmental goal (Jung, 1968b). They offer the potential to widen our consciousness through the union of conscious and unconscious, what Jung called the 'transcendent function' (Jung, 1969b). Unconscious material are abundantly available, but valueless unless one can creatively extract from these something meaningful to support their integration to our conscious self.

In Maya's entheogenic journeys her underlying psychic reality unravelled as she encountered the numinous and mythic dimensions of her psyche. The mythopoetic function of the unconscious is based on archaic mythological thought forms (Jung, 1969a). The myths and symbols we bring back from these deep soul journeys are part of our psychic life, imbued with vital meaning. Our task is in translating the archaic speech of vision into a meaningful narrative. The unconscious is reality in potential, and for Maya entheogenic agents were powerful catalyst for the emergence of this potential.

The analysis of Maya's psychotherapeutic process, aided by her entheogenic experiences, and framed by the alchemical stages of transformation as these were formulated by Jung (1968c), gives some support to the therapeutic potential of psychedelic psychotherapy. However, individual case studies can always be challenged as their results can not be necessarily generalised, or could have emerged from client and/or therapist bias, and individual recovery case reports can be seen as subjective narratives. Further research with larger samples, as well as controlled comparative studies between traditional and psychedelic psychotherapy, would produce better efficiency indicators. There is a long process ahead of gathering data and forming evidenced-based

practices in order to support effective and safe clinical work with such powerful tools, as well as for developing frameworks that would indicate who would benefit more from psychedelic and/or psycholytic psychotherapeutic modes, and who would benefit more from traditional psychotherapeutic interventions. Although early research assessed risk to be lower than initially expected (Curtner, 1959) its potential needs to be acknowledged, and further studies need to be conducted on the issue of patient-treatment suitability.

The war on drugs has jeopardised the place of entheogens as agents of transformation within the healing spheres. Research has been halted for 40 years and only recently a professional movement seems to have been coming together, with research studies being approved by regulatory bodies. Promisingly, the first training schemes in psychedelic psychotherapy and psychedelic studies are starting to appear (Guss, 2013, MAPS, 2014), aimed at equipping researchers and therapists for working with these substances within legal research settings. One can hope for the future that we can create and live in societies that embrace the transformational potential of the various consciousness states, and support ways to include these for the unfolding of the psycho-spiritual potential of our individual and collective selves.

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