Alternative States of Consciousness in Shamanism, Imaginal Psychotherapies, Hypnotherapy, and Meditation Including a Shamanism and Meditation Inspired Personal and Professional Training Program for the 21st Century Psychotherapist:

A Cognitive, Intrapsychic, Experiential, and Transpersonal Research Project and Program

by

Allen Holmquist

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Research Project and Program

by

Allen Holmquist, M.A., M.S.

A paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
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Alternative States of Consciousness in Shamanism, Imaginal Psychotherapies, Hypnotherapy, and Meditation

Including a

Personal and Professional Training Program for the Shamanic and Esoteric Meditation Based 21st Century Psychotherapist

A Cognitive, Intrapsychic, Experiential, and Transpersonal Research Project and Program

Abstract

Shamanism, hypnosis, imaginal psychotherapies, and meditation are based on the use of what we in the modern western world think of as non-ordinary human consciousness. These four modalities have fundamental similarities and differences in purpose, theory, technique, type of alternative consciousness, and their application of non-ordinary reality. Shamanism, the oldest and most intertwined with the cultures in which it is practiced, will be explored as a model for individual healing and transformation and professional training. The shamanic way will also be explored as a model of consciousness and a world-view that offers individuals, groups, and society much needed coping mechanisms, healing techniques, and transformative values that may be helpful in dealing with this trying and important transition time for humanity. Imaginal therapies, meditation and hypnosis all have their roots in shamanism, although in some parts of the world at certain times in history, shamanism borrowed from meditation in its adaptation and development.

A brief history of shamanism and the use of the altered states of consciousness and imagination in healing, given in Section One, Chapter Two, page 59, will serve as a foundation for an exploration of ordinary and alternative consciousness. While consciousness in one form or another is experienced by all humans at all times, it is presently little noticed, understood, appreciated, and utilized by the layperson, psychotherapist, hypnotherapist, academic, or researcher. It is usually not considered a meaningful, let alone crucial, variable in comprehending the human being and devising strategies for improving and healing the human condition. A particular type of consciousness, named the therapeutic state of consciousness and based on the shamanic and meditative states of consciousness, will be offered as an optimum consciousness for the psychotherapist, hypnotherapist, and healer. This therapeutic state of consciousness can serve as balance to the counterproductive effects of an overly rational western society as well as model for a way of life in which the scientific, intellectual mind is but one, albeit important, aspect of the whole person.

Principles for training in the therapeutic state of consciousness will be outlined and discussed along with guidelines for implementing a personal training program in what will be called 21st Century Therapy. A specific set of experientially based techniques will be offered as a way to carry perception and knowledge gained from the therapeutic state of consciousness into the psychotherapist's office.

I have personal experience with each of the four modalities, allowing me to offer first hand knowledge, heart felt examples, and hands on description of the phenomenology associated with each discipline. In the interest of relevancy, accuracy, depth, meaningfulness, and vitality, I have used myself as the primary case study for this paper.

Dedication

For people, and other beings everywhere, who add their energy and creative efforts toward a fuller apprehension and manifestation of the meaning, purpose, and healing inherent within the Power, Love, Wisdom, Beauty, Harmony, Balance, and Unity of the One Creator. And for That Universal Spirit, in Whom we live and move and have our being, and of whom, we are but an evolving reflection.

Acknowledgments

To Virginia, with whom I have walked a magical path of joy and suffering and whose love I had frustrated and devalued, for shocking me out of depression and into a journey of healing and wholeness, for embodying light *and* shadow, for teaching me how to write a coherent paper, for endless and invaluable editing, for postponing her dreams to support me in mine, and for a relationship that has surpassed even my loftiest expectations and fulfilled my deepest longings.

To Pachamama, Gaia, Sophia, the resplendent Being that ensouls the earth and all its inhabitants, the great manifesting feminine principle, the goddess of spirit in matter, for providing healing and inspiration from the ground up and the soul out.

To the Sky People, for waiting while I healed body, emotions, intellect, mind, and spirit.

To Brave, for dreaming me into this life, for being a connection to the past and the future, and for dancing with my eviscerated self as Lioness watched.

To Trickster/Shaman, for helping Brave dream me into this life, for joining with Imaybe to activate my own inner trickster/magician, and for literally taking me in to himself (swallowing me) for a shamanic type training and initiation experience.

To Imaybe, my shaman within, for lighting the way and creating enough time, energy, space, and health out of little or nothing.

To Knight/Warrior, for your stamina, determination, and staying power.

To Young Monk, for your commitment and dedication to spiritual values.

To My Be Key, for standing in for, and leading me to, the Pachamama, and for thrusting the vital, spontaneous feminine into my inner life.

To Kristen, my “beautiful red haired daughter,” and Tammy, my “beautiful blonde haired daughter,” for joy, love, acceptance, and meaning.

To Patrick Holmquist Moscato, for returning to this planet, and into our lives, at a time when I needed, and was finally ready for, a new way of experiencing the embodied magic of Life that you live so naturally and comfortably.

To Ernie, my adopted father, for being my emissary in the Lower World.

To Doris, my adopted mother, for giving me more acceptance and daily, tangible love than anyone could expect.

To Emily, my birth mother, for giving me this life and for making the right choice.

To John Doe, my birth father, for coming together with Emily to give me this life and with hopes of meeting you next time around.

To Edith Stauffer, for resolute and loving clarification on the beginning of a path.

To Robert Gerard, for passionately and powerfully expanding the vision.

To all shamans, past and present, for planting the seeds, for fighting the good fight, for soaring as a great bird, for pursuing meaning, for tasting purpose, and for sharing the harvest.

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Introduction

A paper comparing experiential and technical aspects of various states of consciousness and four healing and transformative practices that use non-ordinary consciousness could be a dry and mundane affair. But this group of four modalities starts with shamanism, a healing modality that is anything but ordinary. Take yourself back in time a few hundred, maybe even a thousand, years and picture a grass-hutted clearing in Africa, a yurt lined village in Siberia, or an adobe cliff dwelling in North America with dozens of traditionally clad tribespeople gathered around their beloved, awe-inspiring, entranced spiritual leader and healer. Drumming, rattling and chanting electrify the clean, fresh air. We can smell the natural, primal energy of the moment. Nature's beautiful overcoat unfolds in front of us embroidered as mountain, tundra, plateau, lake or desert. Anticipation fills the air. Transported in time to an age still present in our deepest soul, our DNA, we feel curious, a little out of place and, yes, maybe even fearful. We know the stage is set for something. But what? Unfolding before our eyes is an enduring high drama

> …of the shamanic séance. We refer not only to the sometimes highly elaborate 'staging' that obviously exercises a beneficial influence on the patient. But every genuinely shamanic séance ends as a spectacle unequaled in the world of daily experience. The fire tricks, the 'miracles' of the rope-trick or mango-trick type, the exhibition of magical feats, reveal another world- the fabulous world of the gods and magicians, the world in which everything seems possible, where the dead return to life and the living die only to live again, where one can disappear and reappear instantaneously, where the 'laws of nature' are abolished, and a certain superhuman 'freedom' is exemplified and made dazzlingly present. It is difficult for us, modern men as we are, to imagine the repercussions of such a spectacle in a 'primitive' community. The shamanic 'miracles' not only confirm and reinforce the patterns of the traditional religion, they also stimulate and free the imagination, demolish the

> barriers between dream and present reality, open windows upon worlds inhabited by the gods, the dead, and the spirits" (Eliade, 1970, p. 511).

What is really going on in the shamanic ritual? What is real, what is unreal? What meaning can it possibly have for health, healing, and transformation in the modern, western world? Is there anything around today that carries the essence and power of the ancient traditions? How can strange old ways be helpful in the world of scientific discovery, medical cures, cell phones, and cyberspace?

With the beat of a drum and the howl of the healer still ringing in our ears, we know that our journey will be anything but dry and mundane. We venture into a world that is unknown and frightening to most westerners and may seem far removed from a thoughtful discussion of consciousness. To the surprise of some, we will see that the typical modern person has a limited range of consciousness and mental abilities and that these boundaries exclude many of our most vibrant, healing and transformative possibilities.

> The attraction of shamanism …appears to be connected for us in the West with the possibility of healing at both the individual and societal levels. It has become quite obvious that personal, social, and environmental disturbances pose a threat not only to the fabric of our culture but also to the existence of all sentient beings, plant and creature. The initiatory and visionary experiences of the shaman, as well as the practical methods used to achieve them, are thought by many to offer a possible key to psychophysical reintegration, while the shamanic world view appears to provide a possible basis for reharmonizing our now out-of-balance relationship with nature and the Earth (Halifax, 1987, p. 215).

More than any person that I have met and spent a day with, Malidoma Patrice Some' knows both the ways of the shaman, and, of western society. He offers a bridge into the tribal world of the ancient healers and their lives in a compelling account of his

life in Of Water and the Spirit: Ritual, Magic, and Initiation in the Life of an African Shaman. Born of the Dagara tribe in the mid 1950's in Upper Volta, now named Burkina Faso, in West Africa, Malidoma was spirited away from his family and village at age four. Raised and educated by Jesuits, self-proclaimed saviors from a so-called civilized society, Malidoma escaped and returned to his people at age 20, only to find he

> "…did not fit into the tribal community. I risked my life to undergo the Dagara initiation and thereby return to my people. During that month-long ritual, I was integrated back into my own reality as well as I could be. But I never lost my Western education. So I am a man of two worlds, trying to be at home in both of them—a difficult task at best" (Some`, 1994, pp. 2-3).

Malidoma, whose name means roughly "Be friends with the stranger/enemy," gives westerners a view of shamanism that is easier to understand and assimilate than that of the shaman who is not western educated. The Dagara often call their children by their perceived destiny and Malidoma is living his name as a teacher of his tribe's ways to North Americans and Europeans. Whether it is in our personal and spiritual growth or our professional abilities to help our therapy clients, are not we often called to befriend inner and outer strangers and enemies?

Malidoma tells a story of the relationship between Dagara grandfathers and grandsons. It begins before birth at the "hearing." At this momentous gathering

> …the pregnant mother, her brothers, the grandfather and the officiating priest are (present)…. During the ritual, the incoming soul takes the voice of the mother (some say the soul takes the whole body of the mother, which is why the mother falls into trance and does not remember anything afterward) and answers every question the priest asks. The living must know who is being reborn, where the soul is from, why it chose to come here, and what gender it has chosen…. Some souls ask that specific things be made ready before their arrival---talismanic

> power objects, medicine bags, or metal objects in the form of rings for the ankle or wrist. They do not want to forget who they are and what they have come here to do. It is hard not to forget, because life in this world is filled with many alluring distractions" (Some`, 1994, p. 20).

For the Dagara there is important communication between the conscious, listening unborn child and the shaman, the family, and particularly the grandfather.

Not long after hearing these words, the universe and my daughter Kristen and son-in-law Stefano, announced the conception of their first child, my first grandchild. Dagara grandfather/grandson tradition flashed to mind and the enriching possibilities it offered for this new relationship touched me deeply. How could I take the wisdom and richness in the Dagara "hearing" and grandfather/grandson traditions and make them mine?…make them his?…make them ours? I began by co-hosting a gathering to honor the new mom, dad and gestating grandchild, at which family and friends came together, to share wisdom, love, and life experience. For my part I spent many hours writing a poem to our grandchild as my first communication, and read it directly to him through Kristen's tummy that glorious evening.

The Dagara traditions hold that "A child's first few years are crucial. The grandfather must tell the grandson what the child said while still a fetus in his mother's womb (Some`, 1994, p. 21). Their conversations are communication between "brothers of the same knowledge group. To know is to be old. In that, the grandson is as old as the grandfather" (Some`, 1994, p. 21).

"What the grandfather and the grandson share…is their proximity to the cosmos" (Some`, 1994, p. 20). The elder will soon retrace his steps back to the very place the grandson just left, and therefore the grandson has much to remind and teach his

grandfather. The elder must also transmit the ways of the earthly life "using the protocol secret to grandfathers and grandsons" (Some`, 1994, p. 20).

As Malidoma remembers, the "grandfather will do anything to make the grandson communicate the news of the ancestors before the child forgets, as inevitably happens. My grandfather obtained this news through hypnosis, putting me to sleep in order to question me" (Some`, 1994, p. 19).

In the exploration of healing and transformation that this paper proposes to be, this paper starts with the ancient use of what Malidoma labeled hypnosis and westerners would devalue as child's play and fantasy. Wise elders, craving reconnection with their spiritual roots, create an altered state of consciousness in the child to help him remember and relate the truths of the other world. The esteemed elders of the community turn to the children and use hypnosis to do it. So much for the notion that hypnosis is a modern European invention. In fact, hypnosis as an art is as old as humanity itself.

Ancient peoples communicated their knowledge and wisdom orally. Personal, familial, tribal, and spiritual histories were bound in volumes of stories not paper. Children were taught values, appropriate roles, and the ways of the tribe with metaphor. Over the millennia poetry, myth, and fairy tale have continued to be great communication devices. The great 20th century psychiatrist Milton Erickson is renowned for his story telling,[1] as training for professionals as well as hypnotic work with patients. Many psychotherapists use story, fable, metaphor and other non-rational, indirect forms of communication as integral aspects of their therapy. Shamans were, and are master storytellers and the foundation upon which present day nonlinear communication is based.

Mailwoman's grandfather was a great storyteller. Malidoma tells us that

> Each time I sat in his lap, he took it as a request for a story, and he would always begin by asking a question.
> "Brother Malidoma, do you know why the bat sits upside down?"
> "No, Why?"
> "Long. Long time ago, and I mean long when I say long because that was when animal used to speak to men and men to animals and both to God."
> "Then why don't animals speak to men anymore?"
> "They still do, only we have forgotten how to comprehend them."
> "What happened?"
> "Never mind. We're talking about bats, and why they all sit upside down."
> "Yes. I want to know why they do that."
> "Well, see, there was a time when Brother Bat died and no one knew who he was. The town crier took his body to the crocodile, saying, 'The jaws of this damn thing look like they were borrowed from a crocodile. I thought he might be your relative or something.'"
> "The crocodile said, 'It's true that this guy's got a mouth like mine, but I isn't got no brother with fur, let alone with wings.'"
> "So, next the town crier took the dead bat to the head of the birds tribe.'"
> "And who's that?"
> "It's Mother Sila, you know, the bird that flies high and shoots herself down like an arrow when she goes to catch her dinner. Mother Sila said, 'This animal looks like it's got good wings and reasonable claws, but I never saw anyone in my family with so few feathers.'"
> "And so, finally the town crier gave up and threw the bat into a ditch. But when Papa Bat found out about this, he was very angry. He rebelled against God and ordered the whole tribe never to look up to God again. Since then bats never turn their faces upward."
> "Grandfather, this is too sad. Tell me another one."

What winged, soaring, nocturnal aspect of ourselves whose instinctual radar accurately and effortlessly navigates the darkest, deepest, scariest of intrapsychic caverns have we thrown into the ditch because it does not fit neatly into any mental chamber of our fast paced, intellectually based western life style? What value could these bat-abilities have for modern humans? What gods must we rebel against? Is it necessary to carry the rebellion so far as to never look up to, never relate to these gods again? One

[1] Many examples will be given below.

major tenet of this paper is that a highly skilled 21st century therapist must expand his understanding and experience beyond the highly rational ordinary state of consciousness that characterizes individuals in modern western society. Throwing away rationality or scientific thinking will not be required or suggested, but an adventuresome spirit and a willingness to openly contemplate some of the untouched heights and depths of possible consciousness is necessary. The purpose is an exploration of consciousness, ordinary and alternative, in the service of personal, spiritual, and professional growth to provide a balance for overly rational thinking and limited way of being. This new consciousness can also bring us a step closer to understanding, relating to, and treating the whole person: body, emotions, mind, and spirit. This paper will introduce and develop modalities that offer this promise of balance and wholeness. While these possibilities do not require "never turning our faces" toward the highly valued and rarely questioned scientific, rational, linear way of thinking, they do require expanding beyond and even rebellion against this cherished "god" of western society. Becoming a highly skilled and successful therapist of the 21st century requires it.

To whom can we turn if we choose to rise beyond and sink beneath the rational ordinary state of consciousness and reconnect with long lost supra-rational abilities? And how would this reclamation project begin?

Joan Halifax, medical anthropologist and Harvard faculty member, has personally and professionally built a bridge from the modern western world to the ancient tribal one in her attempt to explore and understand the wisdom and techniques of the shamanic way. A veteran of the battle to become aware of, overcome and let go of our limiting