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"Perhaps the most important task today is to learn to think in new ways" ⁱ

(Gregory Bateson, British/Amer. Scientist/Thinker, 1904-1980)

Foreword

In the middle of the 1990s I ran into a series of unusual experiences of a 'supernatural' character. At that time I had no idea what significance these would have on me. And I had certainly never imagined that I would spend the following 10 years to try to understand and explain what happened, both in the experiences themselves, but certainly also in the changes I observed in my thinking and my emotional reaction pattern. Nevertheless, so it was. And despite the skeptical view of the surrounding society I had an unerring confidence that what happened to me was 'natural'. Therefore I had to dig my way through a bulky material of literature and articles to find arguments to support my new belief system. And at some point when I was no longer able to find theories that could offer explanations, I had to develop my own personal ideas and live my life accordingly.

The first thinker I encountered who turned out to be able to help me through most of the process was Gregory Bateson whose meta-thinking offered me some learning models, which gave me an opportunity to structure my experience within a rational framework. In addition, he showed me that it was possible to explore natural phenomena without being tied up by the scientific paradigm that has dominated Western thinking for several hundred years. Bateson claimed that the Western world suffered from a flawed thinking which he termed *hubris*. According to this view human beings of the West had placed themselves outside of nature thus separating a part from the whole and then act as if this part could command the whole, - not least by using modern technology. It was therefore with some enthusiasm that at one point it dawned on me that the mindset I want to introduce and argue for in this book to a certain extent can be considered a proposal that offers a 'solution' on this issue.

Whatever you may think of my proposal, it seems true that Bateson's claim is confirmed every day: the planet is facing cultural, environmental, ethical and social problems which cannot be solved solely through technological developments, nor does it seem possible to define human rights without bumping into outdated traditions that are held beyond discussion. Although a growing number of people believe that the new millennium's biggest challenge is to *understand* instead of fighting each other and that we must learn to *live in harmony with nature* instead of trying to control it, the question still remains to be answered: How will this be feasible, considering the apparently immense economic and selfish interests at stake?

Well, Bateson believed the solution could be found in a new way of thinking - which may seem quite plausible. Further reflection on the matter, however, reveals huge problems: this is not simply a case of shifting from one position to another within the prevailing assumption that the part can control the whole, or a matter of seeking a new cultural or religious learning among those already existing. No, this is a totally new way of thinking that must be able to include all humans on the planet, indicating a breach with the pre-understanding, i.e. the unreflective, automatic habit of thinking from which every individual understands herself and her life. This process seems both daunting and demanding, but is nevertheless an indispensable requirement!

In my opinion, Bateson intuitively knew what caused the problem: it is said that throughout most of his life he was trying to think in new ways, but it also said that he had to admit that he did not succeed. There may be many possible causes, but before I offer my personal suggestion on his difficulties, I have to introduce the reader to the concept of *imaginal* which appears from the title of this book. I was inspired to use this word by the French philosopher Henry Corbin (1903-1978) who was a professor of Islamic religion and who devoted much of his life to studying and disseminating information on Islamic mysticism, - especially to Ibn 'Arabi (around A.D. 1200), much of whose work Corbin has translated into French. In this regard Corbin introduced a *mundus imaginalis* (i.e. an 'imaginal world' ⁱⁱ to denote the sphere between the intellect and the senses as described by Ibn 'Arabi. This is the dimension in which 'the body becomes spirit and the spirit becomes

body', and where revelations occur. It is the inner, hidden world that cannot be achieved with the five known senses, but only with the 'organ' called the *creative imagination*.

According to Corbin the *mundus imaginalis* was banned (in the Western part of the world) from the accepted worldview by an ecumenical council in Constantinople in A. D. 869 where the former tripartite anthropology of spirit, soul, and body was reduced to a duality of body and soul. The 'truth' of the new worldview was underlined by so cruel reprisals against dissenters that it eventually became impossible to perceive spiritual forms as realⁱⁱⁱ. However, it is a fact that many people in the centuries thereafter have experienced the existence of the *mundus imaginalis*, and as previously said, I, myself, belong to this group of dissenters. Consequently, I have personally learned how the excommunication still poses problems up to the present day: it is my opinion that this is what made it impossible for Bateson to involve an absolutely crucial aspect in the new way of thinking he wanted to introduce.

In contrast, I, myself, had to rely on spontaneous experiences of the banned nature, and this book is primarily motivated by a sincere desire to understand myself and create meaning in the way that I *unwittingly* exceeded the 'permissible' limits and *unwittingly* adapted a new way of thinking. These changes may have occurred in a split second, but it took me (and my surroundings) several years to become fully aware of them. In this connection I have, however, always felt a strong urge to clarify and justify the perceived changes, and I only really began to put them into words when I discovered the scriptures that Bateson and Ibn 'Arabi left behind.

I know that there is quite a lot which requires further study and deeper reflection than I have the opportunity to perform here. At the same time, I must also admit that my theorists would probably disagree with me in part of what I'm going to say. However, this does not prevent me from feeling a deep gratitude for the thoughts they put forward in their time, and I have allowed myself to use their words in my own way to convey the impressions I perceived.

Introduction

*"He drew a circle that shut me out:
A villain, a scoundrel, a thing to flout!*

*But love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle that took him in!"^{iv}*

Worldviews in Motion

Looking back in human history there is nothing new in long and tough conflicts on how the world could and should be described. This trend can be seen as a manifestation of the dilemma that humanity has always faced: on the one hand the need to preserve the existing, on the other hand, the need to innovate and evolve. This means that there is a constant tension between two tendencies that pull in opposite directions: some people are so firmly consolidated in the familiar that they represent a circle that shuts all tendencies to change out, while others move beyond the limits of normality and draw a circle that expands the world and is able to contain both the old and something new.

Although change is often a painful process, there is no doubt that constant change is an essential feature of life. You may talk of personal change - both physical and mental - or there may be changes which are considered discoveries or inventions that somehow mark the beginning of a new era. Over the ages pioneers have risen above the masses and introduced the world to new, often controversial ideas and thoughts which received different forms of fate: some aroused interest and curiosity, while others were subject to prompt rejection if not scorn and ridicule. There can be many reasons for the mixed reception, but an important element for being accepted seems to be that the conditions were 'ripe' - the land on which the 'seeds' were thrown must have been prepared for the new thoughts to germinate and grow, and several ideas had to be introduced several times to win recognition.

The Alexandrian astronomer, Aristarchus of Samos, is a good example of someone whose ideas were not approved because - it turned out later - he was ahead of his time. Already B. C. 200 he was promoting the idea that the earth moved around the sun and not vice versa. But the astronomer did not manage to convince his colleagues because his hypothesis implied that the universe and hence the distances to the stars had to be considerably longer than people were able to imagine. So the necessary prerequisites for Aristarchus's thoughts were not present because it was not only the astronomers' beliefs about the earth's position in relation to the sun that had to be accepted: the whole idea (or prejudice) about the universe's nature had to be changed - and this called for a revolution of a metaphysical nature which was impossible to implement. Not until the 16th century when Copernicus re-introduced the same suggestion the road had been paved for the claim, - and even then it took between 100-200 years before it was widely accepted in the scientific world.^v

No matter how well innovative ideas are argued for, it appears that research and discoveries which oppose the known and accepted worldview have always found it difficult to prosper. Some people have even had to pay in the cruelest way for their heretical belief - not least during the inquisition where several who spoke against the canonized knowledge expressed in the Bible were condemned to the stake if they were not - as Galileo Galilei - given the option to withdraw their theories to avoid this brutal fate.

It is perhaps surprising, and sometimes you may even smile a little at the conservatism and resistance which time and again turned up when new hypotheses were put forward, and many will say that this is a tendency that belongs to the past and not in our modern times of transparency and openness.

Nevertheless, in recent decades alternative practitioners have had to fight quite a battle to be just a little bit accepted by the National Health Care of my home country, Denmark. One of the problems has been that they were unable to present so-called scientific 'proof' of the applied treatments^{vi}, some of which are undoubtedly also rather problematic, while others such as acupuncture based on a couple of thousand years of experience in other cultures do not appear to require further documentation.

A lot can be said - and has already been said elsewhere - about this theme. However, what is important here is to discern a positive feature of the process that has taken place and which is not nearly finished yet, namely that a large part of the Danish population now question the basis on which this accepted 'truth' is based. One could also say that a growing number of people have begun to open up to impressions from other cultures and are thus inspired to listen more inwards to their intuitive knowledge. The result seems to be that quite a few can perceive a discrepancy between this internal knowledge and the external which society accept and to a wide extent base any new development on.

Now I have mentioned medicine as an example of an area where many eventually find the circle's border too narrow, but in several other places there are cultural, social and even religious challenges that bid us humans to explore the area outside the accepted circle. It is at this point in time that something unknown unveils itself and pushes some people over the accepted circle line: the means is an experience of the sphere I have mentioned in the foreword as *mundus imaginalis*, - in other words a *spiritual experience*. This may seem to be a pretty hefty claim, which some might find a little far-fetched, but it is nonetheless a claim which I will argue for in this book: here I will present some ideas that I personally have found comfort in, when I happened to find myself in a situation which meant that I could no longer be contained within the well-known circle, because I quite spontaneously had a series of mystical experiences. The solution for me was to draw a new and larger circle - and this book will tell you how I managed to do so by the assistance of various sources. I also want to share with the reader how my reality subsequently appears and how it influences my daily life, which in many ways is very similar to, yet also very different from the life I led before the experiences took place.

The first step for me was to explore how my mystical experiences were perceived around the world, and I wondered why we in Denmark only seem to consider this kind of experience as something pathological, - and I did by no means feel ill. Below I will describe some of the things I have encountered in my quest for meaning.

Perceptions of spiritual experiences

"A philosophy that does not culminate in a metaphysic of ecstasy is vain speculation; a mystical experience that is not grounded on a sound philosophical education is in danger of degenerating and going astray"^{vii}

This opinion can be traced to the Iranian mystic Suhrawardi, who was martyred in Aleppo, Syria, in 1197, but hardly many contemporary philosophers would agree with him in the first part of the sentence, and most psychiatrists or psychologists will probably ever have considered the last part. Although great thinkers such as Descartes and Pascal - and probably also Kierkegaard - had spiritual experiences, there is apparently no professional interest to deal with them, just as it is probably unlikely that a Western university would allow such an experience as a criterion for the award of a diploma within the relevant branches of science! The reasons why the importance of spiritual experience are totally neglected are probably many, but one of them is no doubt that a number of powerful men from the Christian church at an Ecumenical council in A.D. 869 reduced the tripartite anthropology of spirit, soul, and body to a duality of body and soul thus making it impossible (i.e. legal) to consider spiritual forms as genuine phenomena that were really existing. Instead they were banished to the illusion and labeled as fiction.

In cultures outside the Western world it is however possible to find support for Suhrawardi's view. The world's oldest spiritual traditions of which you find scattered remnants all over the globe and collectively name *shamanism*, thus regard the spiritual experience as essential for becoming a *shaman*, i.e. a person

who acts as a bridge between humans and the part of reality that goes beyond them in order to promote a person's or a society's capacity for survival and well-being. But apart from this and from the mystic tradition to which Suhrawardi belonged there is not much focus on the spiritual experience.

Both shamanism and some mystical traditions concentrate on education which provides insight into the spiritual dimension, and the spiritual experience is an essential element in it: either a person has a spontaneous experience, which launches a more formal education, or he/she goes through rituals and techniques which may (perhaps!) result in a spiritual experience. Where training in various fields of knowledge is possible and accessible to many with the ability to acquire learning, it is not certain that the spiritual experience is obtained. It does not seem to occur on command. And although the aforementioned methods, ranging from prayer and meditation over fixed and self-inflicted torture to dancing and drumming, can be considered as an indication of the direction in which we should seek, no guarantee is issued: the spiritual experience seems to defy all attempts at control and imitation. It finds its own way, regardless of what humans may exercise of imagination.

Therefore, it is perhaps not quite as odd as you might think at first glance that there are people emerging in a modern and not particularly religious community as the Danish, who claim to have experiences that may be described as spiritual. This may be due to the media's rapidly growing focus on spiritual phenomena which has made it more permissible to think along these lines, so people are no longer afraid of being labeled as crazy, if they experience something mysterious - something supernatural. But it may also reflect the fact that there is a number of Danes who - without knowing it - are made of the right 'material' for the spiritual experiences to break through.

These are not always nice and pleasant - they can actually sometimes be rather scary - and I consider it possible at least to some extent to avoid any negative impact through information on the subject. Unlike countries such as Sweden, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and the United States^{viii}, Denmark's scientific community seem to have no wish to learn more about the mystical dimension, so instead of meeting the spiritual experiences with curiosity and appreciation, they are normally ignored or rejected as illusions.

This book is intended as an attempt to make a modest contribution to filling in this gap, since I want to argue for the spiritual experience as a way of obtaining the new thinking which the world so desperately needs. I must admit that I can hardly describe myself as an expert, neither in the philosophical nor in the spiritual area, but I meet Suhrawardi's main requirement: I have personally had several spiritual experiences and I have spent these last 10 years studying the topic to the best of my ability. Initially, I just wanted to use the knowledge I acquired to understand and accept myself as the person I had become, and during the process I have come to realize that I may well have bumped into an unacknowledged aspect of the human being that is about to emerge and consequently needs serious attention to be received as a gift to humanity. Only the future will show whether my assertion is correct.

I have divided my book into three parts: In the first part I present my own experiences that extend from lucid dreams or visions into powerful spiritual experiences. These descriptions are given on an ordinary 'daily basis', because when I had the experiences I had concerned myself with self-development, but only to a limited extent. Moreover, I had no advantage of being able to see the series of experiences in a context or place them in a framework of understanding that went beyond the limits of my normal life with a family and an ordinary job in a bank. I have tried not only to describe the experiences themselves, but also to tell you a bit about how I understood them and to what extent they influenced my life. Thus these are mystical experiences interpreted with what one might call 'common sense' at a time when I was open to, but not particularly drawn to the so-called supernatural. In retrospect it is possible to trace a certain development in my explanatory model, so you can say that my everyday understanding - at least to some degree - over a period of time begins to merge with the thoughts that I have found in various books.

In the second part I will address the subject on a more theoretical basis. I will describe the research taking place in this area and the difficulties encountered in this connection. I will mention other attempts to solve the mystery of the spiritual experience and refer to books and websites on the Internet dealing with the area. There will be parts of the papers I've written during my studies in philosophy and philosophy of science at Aalborg University, and I have tried to adapt the text so that it hopefully becomes accessible for the reader. That said, I would also like to underline that I have made use of some models and theories which have

helped me increase *my* understanding, and thus they have all contributed to give my life meaning. There may be other theories that might have been used.

In the third and final part I will explain how my spiritual experiences have influenced my mind and in this connection I will describe my own personal understanding of the new way of thinking. This is actually not so easy, for one thing to be able to do something - to think in a new way - another thing is to explain how you do it. There is a difference between being able to perform a task and to teach others to do it. When you're born and raised in Denmark, you learn Danish, but being able to speak Danish is not the same as being able to teach others the language. Ask anyone who has tried to teach a foreigner Danish; there are many rules in the Danish language of which persons born and raised in Denmark are not aware, let alone can describe!

That is the way I understand the knowledge I have about my new, imaginal thinking: I can use it to a certain extent, but my explanatory models are still quite primitive. So please bear with me in this respect!

As mentioned, I have chosen to present my own experiences, - a situation which has several advantages: I avoid trespassing the ethical limits of other people, - I can personally vouch for everything I write, - and I can take the liberty of presenting my personal interpretation of the events. In addition, of course, there is the personal motive, which is to know myself at a deeper level. It is an eternal, ongoing and exciting process, the importance of which gets clearer and clearer to me each day.

I do not know if Suhrawardi would have considered my studies of philosophy as 'healthy'. He lived in another culture in another era and essential points can therefore be said to be located far away from the context of my thinking. Nevertheless, I hope he would have appreciated my approach; and he might even have given me an appreciative nod, if he had had the chance!

What is meant by spiritual experiences?

Above, I have been talking about spiritual experiences, as if this concept describes something of which we all share a mutual perception. This is perhaps true to some extent: most people probably have an intuition about what is meant, and some may even have had experiences which they consider spiritual.

To create a framework for the issue I wish to address, I find that the time has come to present more concrete details. This is not as simple a matter, for it turns out that there is no fixed definition of what is actually meant by 'spiritual experiences'. The events vary greatly and are impossible to recreate because of their spontaneous and volatile character: there is no way to control them, no direct measurements can be made, and everything must be based on individual reports. This leaves room for diverging interpretations, and these will depend on the worldview of the persons affected.

A frequently occurring form of experiences, however, is identified as the so-called *peak experiences*, - timeless moments, or moments of ecstasy, like that described below^{ix}

a) On 30 December 1984, about 7 p.m., I was in a bus on my way home from work. Suddenly and without warning all around me was enlightened by a golden light, and I slid into a deep, almost meditative state where the surroundings disappeared: the only thing I saw was the golden light both inside and outside of the bus - and I was filled with an "otherworldly" feeling of peaceful bliss. The experience lasted until I got off the bus between 5 and 10 minutes later. But the feeling of peaceful bliss still filled my mind and my body, and now 15 years later I can still feel this feeling when I think of the experience. I was 44 years old when I had this experience, and I was aware that it was a very special experience which I treasured quietly, and I did not tell others about it till many years later.

Today, when I look back on this fantastic experience, I can see that it has made a major influence on my life. It has almost split my life into a life before and a life after.

Before the experience I was an ordinary hard-working, single mother with a good solid job and an education in public administration and organization and HR. I attended to my work, took care of my children and home. I was politically engaged and sat on the school board.

Suddenly I began to notice things I had never heard of before. Some friends told me that they had their horoscope made by a lady who lived less than 15 km from my home. I had never heard of the lady or heard of horoscopes - I thought they only existed as weekly horoscopes in magazines, and to me that was just nonsense.

Now, however, I got curious and had to my own horoscope made - with great personal benefit. And within 3 months from the experience I found myself on a course in personal development, where I learned about chakras, dreams, projections, meditation, astrology, energy and light workers, and much more. During this course, I also had some wonderful experiences, and my interest in astrology, particularly the psychological approach was aroused, and within 6 months I had started on a 3-year course for astrological therapists.

Other experiences are known as visions or lucid dreams, like the following report:

b) I flew out into space and could see the earth from above. It was very beautiful. Then I 'dived' and I discovered that I was hovering over some Chinese people who were busy with their work. I got a message: We all have a job. The task is never greater than we can easily perform it. By listening to ourselves - to our intuition or inner voice, we know what to do. If everyone did their job, there would be complete harmony on earth. Then I got a fantastic sense of deep harmony.

Some experiences have a more intimidating nature, like the following:

c) I had suddenly begun to suffer from panic attacks. I became afraid of dying, I feared being alone, had fear of acting where there were many people, fear of illness, fear of many different things. In retrospect, it was basically fear of life. What will life bring to me? Am I good enough? Who am I? Who was I before - is there a 'before'? And last but not least: What/ who am I to become - and in what way? In this period of anxiety I sought help through a psychiatrist - which gave me a useful push so that I could make the ordinary things that I feared would trigger a terrible experience. But I was still missing 'something' so I contacted an NLP therapist, who explained that as described my condition, she believed that I was close to a big change / breakthrough in my life, and that I should not be afraid if I suddenly had a special experience. It took about half a year from seeing the NLP therapist until the predicted special experience took place:

I lay one night sleeping. Suddenly I woke up and was wide awake. I turned and twisted my body for a while and then suddenly I heard an indescribably deep, loud sound - but only in my left ear. Initially, I considered whether I had begun to suffer from tinnitus, but the sound grew louder and more intense, and my body was lifted up from the bed so that my head touched the pillow and the rest of the body stood upright. I could see the situation from above - and the area where my body used to be was filled with a very bright light. Now, I was asked in a way which was not with words or thoughts: "Do you want to have your karma reduced?" To this I replied: "No". Then I was asked: "Will you let go of your anxiety?" To this I replied: "Yes."

Although NLP therapist had said that I should not be afraid, I was - and what can one resort to in such an inexplicable and strange situation?

I prayed the Lord's Prayer repeatedly. Suddenly the sound stopped and I found myself back in bed as if nothing had happened. It was such a strange experience so the next morning I was considering if I had just been dreaming. But no, I had experienced it. However, I could not really bring myself to talk to anyone about it because I was afraid of being categorized as a lunatic - so I phoned the NLP therapist and it was nice to share the experience with someone who understood me.

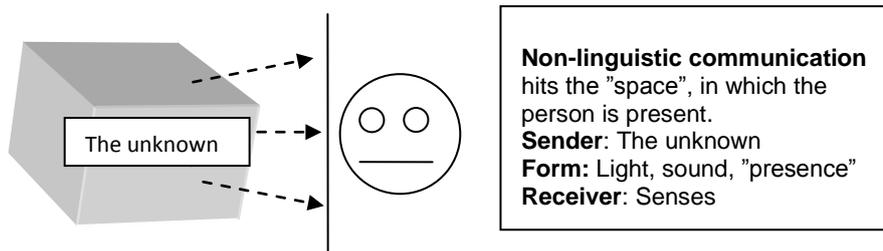
After the experience, my life took a radical change. My dream has always been to work as an independent and helping others – and I succeeded without any problems at all. I did not seek the solutions; they came to me. My relationship with my parents has changed – one could say that at the age of 34 I have finally grown up - and my worldview has changed - it is still changing, and deep down I know that my experience that night will not be my last - there will be more, but not until I am ready to accept and understand.

As shown by the three above reports they differ quite a lot, but nevertheless, it seems possible to point out some common features:

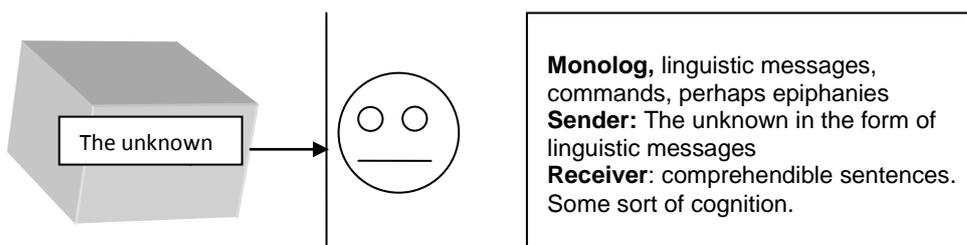
- The experiences all have a *communicative* character (not necessarily linguistic)
- The persons are apparently affected at a deep level by this communication, i.e. the experiences have a transforming effect.
- The communication seems to take place with another kind of reality than we normally perceive through our five senses.
- What is learned can only to a certain extent be described in words

When I highlight *communication* as an essential feature common to the spiritual experience, it is not so much because the content itself has my interest, but rather the fact that there seems to be different *levels* of communication structures, which tentatively can be divided as follows:

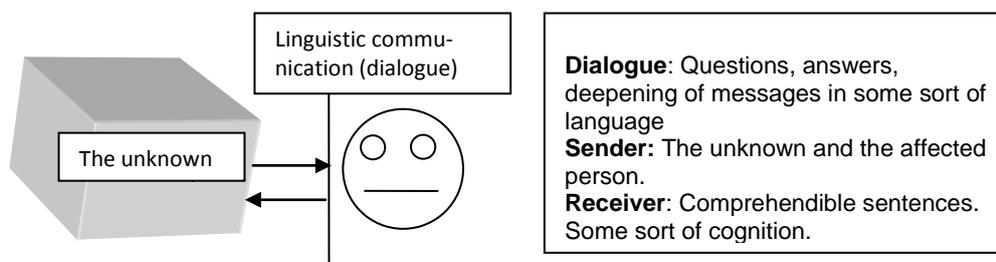
1. A sensory experience that can be considered a wordless, mono-logical form of message from the unknown and goes beyond cognition and logic: it seems to hit the human being without being 'filtered'. In report a), there is light, but 'presence' and sounds also seem to fall into this category.



2. A mono-logical form of message which the unknown uses some kind of language to express. In case b) it is about life's meaning. Sometimes the messages appear in the form of commands to perform a particular deed (cf. e.g. Joan of Arc).



3. A dialogical form of communication where both the unknown as the ultimate personal experience using a kind of linguistic exchange, as in case c), however, is without 'words or thoughts.' "That there may also enter into a form of conversation with the words shown in the biblical account of Moses 'and the burning bush.



From the above examples you will see that several different forms of communication could be involved in a spiritual experience. In c) both a dialogue and a sensory experience consisting of a loud sound take place. There is also a description of seeing the body from above and filled with bright light, which has striking resemblance with the near death experiences that Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross has worked with.

It is difficult to determine the importance of the varying forms of communication. The above method was selected to draw an analogy to the process that can be observed in the development of a human being from a newborn to a grown-up person: a baby will probably receive sensory input without sorting or categorizing it, which I suppose can be compared with example 1. However, in the case of spiritual experiences, the communication takes place not with the physical world, but the unknown,

Later the child will be able to perceive a linguistic communication but is not itself able to provide a linguistic response. This step, I assume is comparable with the above stage 2. And after a while, the child will be able to respond in kind of prattle, progressing to words and phrases, which may correspond to stage 3.

The above model is only a preliminary attempt to provide an outline of the *structure* of the communication that takes place in spiritual experiences, but it will certainly be interesting to explore whether it is possible to observe a development in the *content* of the monologues and dialogues, which could have been written or handed down in different cultures over thousands of years. Unfortunately (from the perspective of a researcher) it has been widely recognized that these mysterious messages should be kept secret, so most of them seem to have been buried with the person who had the experience(s).^x

For my part, I have never felt that it was wrong to share my spiritual experiences with others. But I have not talked to just anybody about them; I have picked my audience with care! I have also held the opinion that it was not the experiences *in themselves* that were interesting; it was rather the *effect* they had on my worldview and my way of thinking. And I have not been able to explain all this until now.

It is therefore as part of my argumentation for a new way of thinking that I choose to present my experiences as an essential element in the developmental process, I have gone through over a long period. As will be seen, the experiences vary from intuitions over lucid dreams to powerful mystical experiences that can all be interpreted as having a task to perform, and which should be seen in a wide context to make sense.

The personal story

The Image in the Mirror

She saw her face in the mirror. But she could not really recognize it. Why did it show the image of an 11-year-old girl when she knew that she was much older? There was something wrong. Something she could not understand. How had she ended up in this family? Was she adopted? She looked through the family photo albums to find a picture of her mother at a time when she was pregnant with her. There was no photo, and even if there had been one, how could she know who had subsequently been born?

She wondered if she had been placed in the right class in school. Should she be moved up? It had happened for another girl she knew. But no, one grade was not enough to cover the age difference, she felt there was between what she saw in the mirror and what she felt deep down. There were so many questions but she could not articulate them, and there was nobody who could answer them. Besides she liked this group of people which was called her family, but still she was not sure that they actually were her family.

In school she was reading about Jesus' life and crucifixion. It made a deep, deep impression on her. She sat one evening in her favorite chair and read about the terrible sufferings that Jesus underwent in connection with the crucifixion. They seemed to penetrate her and she began to cry. She sobbed loudly and had to rush to her mother, who did not understand why her otherwise happy and lively daughter reacted so violently.

She began to withdraw into herself. She, who had previously been fearless and had fought with the boys, grew quiet. Recognition of something pressed its way up, but she was unable to understand or handle it. Without noticing it her eyesight was impaired, and during one school year she became very nearsighted.

She began to fold her hands every evening before she went to sleep. She prayed to God. Prayed to have her normal vision back. But nothing happened. On the contrary, she became more and more myopic. Only eight years later the constant visual impairment stopped.

She forgot her troubles and threw herself into the exciting life of a young woman with education, boyfriends, travel, dance and music. Then she met the love of her life, got married and had a job in a bank, a house and children. Years passed on with practical doings, sometimes with professional training, sometimes with a random search in books looking for something she could not put into words. Until one day when lightning struck, and she began a journey into herself. A journey that went through her eyesight and which should one day reveal that her experience as an 11-year-old girl was not pure fantasy.

This is my story. The story of a person you probably don't know, but who might as well have been you. Why I came tell the story, I cannot say. The best explanation I can come up with is that I was useable. Quite simply. For me there is nothing glorifying about it. Only sheer usability. Of course this can seem a bit lukewarm, and certainly not at all exciting. Sorry. But that is how it has been and so it remains. What I experienced that day as 11-year-old, I now see as an intuitive experience of being much more than my physical body. It was so intense and made so deep an impression that it has followed me my whole life, although there obviously have been periods where it was more in the foreground than others. At a time when I had apparently become ready to cope with this knowledge, the shell was broken, and I went through a series of spiritual experiences that changed me fundamentally.

Now when I write these words, I have spent nearly 10 years to digest and understand and try to explain my development. The following pages will give you an insight into the long and sometimes tough path I had to follow, and it is my hope that you will read them with an open mind so that a phenomenon which is currently regarded as mysterious, perhaps does not seem so any longer, but is just waiting to be explored and understood. Moreover you will probably become aware that life is far greater than we usually think.

When the human being talks

For many years, well ever since I was a school girl, my greatest wish was to have contact with a UFO. Shortly after my confirmation in 1962, it became clear to me that the church (i.e. the Danish national church) had little to say to me, and I assured myself that I was an atheist, and that there was nothing after death. There was absolutely nothing beyond the tangible, physical world.

Nevertheless, I was also convinced that there had to be something more than people on the earth, and with all the talk about UFOs at that time, maybe there was life elsewhere in the universe. Therefore, I often looked up towards the sky while I wished that 'they' would come and visit me. It never happened. Many years later, however, I saw something that put my relationship with UFOs to a test and changed my attitude towards them.

Here you can hear the true story - as well as I remember it.

Actually, I find myself so ordinary that people may find me and my life boring. But still, over a few years, so many unusual things happened to me that I have had to revise this view, although I probably look and behave more or less as I've always done.

It all began with my eyesight - or rather with a slow growing surprise that at the age of 11-12 I suddenly had become very nearsighted. It was not possible to refer to hereditary factors for both my parents had excellent vision. So there might be something else at stake. Anyway, that was how I thought.

In the mid 1980s I heard of Martin Brofman's little book 'Vision Yoga' and it was the snowball that made the avalanche roll: I started meditating, I began to look myself in the eyes in a mirror and tell myself that I loved the woman in the mirror. At the same time, it became clear to me now that I did not know who I was: I could see my reflection, but I did not really know myself.

In spring 1990, I had a strange experience which pushed me a little further:

I had gone to bed to sleep in my favorite position, i.e. on my left side when I suddenly noticed that I flew through the air. At first I became a little frightened, but curiosity took over and I just let things happen. I clearly felt the wind against my face and how my body sped away. Suddenly the flight stopped, and I saw myself standing 20-30 m away a big smile on my face, in what may have been somewhere in space. I saw myself lifting both arms in a form of greeting - up and down, up and down - several times and I clearly noticed the familiar feeling of moving my arms. Then I woke up with a start. I lay in my bed in the exact same position as described above. Nothing suggested that I had moved my arms or any other parts of my body for that matter!

After this incidence I wondered what had really happened, but I could not explain it. The experience was so real and clear that I had to reject that it could have been an ordinary dream. I began to open up to a slight feeling that the world may not be so restricted as I had thought - for how could I both see myself and simultaneously feel the gesture of my arms moving, if I had not been out of my body and inside it at one and the same time?

I was unable to answer my question, but in the summer of 1990 I had another strange experience.

I had just gone to sleep when my younger sister's face appeared in my mind. I had not fallen completely asleep and opened my eyes briefly to look up into the air. I thought: "That was strange, why do I see her?" I knew she was on holiday in southern France with her husband and two teenage daughters, but had not heard anything from them. When I closed my eyes again my sister's face appeared again. I looked at it until it faded away and finally disappeared. Then I fell asleep.

The following day it became clear that my sister, at the time when I saw her in my mind, had been on her way home by car from the resort in southern France. Her husband had fallen seriously ill, and she had

started their car in order to drive the almost 2000 km home as quickly as possible. It was an awful ride - partly because she was a relatively inexperienced driver, and maybe you can understand the experience as my sister's cry for help. It's not unknown that in cases of severe crises things happen that go beyond the ordinary.

After these experiences my quest began to become more focused: I examined many alternative methods, but they all became only short acquaintances, - until I discovered NLP - Neuro Linguistic Programming. Here was finally something that appealed both to my intuition and my intellect. So I spent some interesting and exciting years with NLP, before I had to move on.

Flourishing with NLP

While I was still training NLP, I also acted as an assistant on a subsequent team. It was sometimes hard, when I also had my job and my family to look after. And of course it was easy to press myself too much. One night when I lay down to sleep, I could feel all the symptoms of an emerging influenza in my body. The following day I both had to go to work and in the evening have my NLP group for training. I just did not have time to get sick. In the middle of the night I woke up with pain throughout the body, stiffness in the neck and a headache. It was by no means promising.

During my NLP training I had, however, clarified my strategies for getting well - and I knew that for me it was important to know the disease's message. In this case it was fairly easy to find, because I was well aware that I had not taken proper care of myself for quite a while. The result was that I lay there in bed and promised myself that I would change this, when the next day and the evening had passed. Then I fell asleep and a dream came to me:

I dreamed that I was taken far out into the countryside to a village hall. I was placed outside of the building with the message that I was to bake buns for 42 people who would arrive within half an hour. Then I got busy. A perfect housewife, no-one will hardly call me, but actually I did know how to make buns!

So I rushed into the kitchen, which was both modern and clean. I opened all the drawers and cupboards, but there was no flour, no yeast - in short, none of the things I needed to make the buns. I was desperate and did not know what to do.

Then suddenly ... out of the thin air a pair of hands holding a large bowl filled with dough presented themselves! I was all astonished but did, however, accept the bowl. The dough was now formed into buns, which I put into the oven and they were ready for the guests when they arrived.

The next morning, all symptoms of flu had disappeared. I had obviously received the help I needed 'out of thin air'. But then I began to take more care of myself.

Coincidence?

When you start a course in self development, which for me was NLP, things will inevitably take place which change one's life - how and to what extent will of course depend on the individual. In connection with my NLP training, there was ample opportunity to work with traumas of the past as well as with present-day inexpediencies, - both by undergoing therapy, but certainly also by the exercises we practiced. Let me tell you about a very special experience I had in connection with a practicing session.

We sat in the usual circle when our teacher asked us to consider whether we wanted to sit somewhere else. During all previous modules I had been sitting in the same place, but now I knew that I had to sit next to 'A', - a woman whom I did not know very well, but who - I had been told - had worked with various spiritual areas for some years.

I took my things and moved to sit on her left side. Most of the others in the group remained seated. After a while we were asked to go into groups to practice a new method. I asked 'A' if we should work together, and she consented. Another woman joined us as supervisor, and we went to a room to practice. Here, we agreed that 'A' should do the exercise with me as a client. It became quite an experience ...

The method consisted in imagining my timeline and go backwards in my past by taking steps back on my timeline. I selected a problem to work with (which I cannot remember) and took some steps back. Suddenly I found myself at Jesus' crucifixion. I stood on the ground and looked up. There he hung on the cross. I remember how I threw myself down on my knees. It was a harrowing sight which made an infinitely deep impression on me. ('A' later told that she had been rather confused about the process, - the exercise was about going back to some incidence in the present life - but she decided to let things run).

I cannot remember exactly what happened. Only that at one time I knew that I had to sing. I started to sing an unknown song, which was probably just a few tones, and when I finished the 'song', it was as if air kept flowing out of my throat. I did nothing - just sat there with my mouth open while the air flowed and flowed out - as if I were a balloon that had been penetrated! It was a strange experience - I felt totally exhausted afterwards.

Now when I think of the incidence from a distance, I see that my intuition led me to 'A'. I've probably had to complete my experience as 11-year-old, when I wept deeply and sincerely on the reading about Jesus' crucifixion. I do not fully understand all that happened, but I probably could not have completed the experience with any of the others present.

Although 'A' could not see what I saw or experience what I experienced, she gave me a safe space that allowed for things to happen. It felt like something pushed me from inside, - as if something were to happen. And it was obviously important that it was done in an appropriate manner. Was it a coincidence that on this day (and this was actually the only time it happened during my 4-year NLP-course) we were asked to find a new place to sit? Well, to me it does not seem so.

To blow circle of normality

However you may explain what really happened in that incident, it is a fact that I began to get more strange ideas. Some were so funny that I remember them quite clearly. One day I was challenged by a friend who very boldly asked me what it was I dared not look at since I had made myself so nearsighted! I was puzzled and did not know what to answer, so I decided to meditate on my poor eyesight.

I sat comfortably in my old, green leather chair and did my best to shut down the 'system'. I wanted to go deep inside as I suspected that was where the solution could be found. After a while my body was completely calm and my mind relaxed, so I felt it was time to ask the question: why am I nearsighted? Why can't I see clearly? Without really expecting any answer, I just sat there and relaxed. Suddenly a clear voice sounded: *It's because your thoughts are of the wrong color!*

I must admit I was totally flabbergasted. I had never heard anything like it! How can thoughts have color? Nevertheless, I accepted the explanation and was cool enough to ask: *Well, what color should they have? Green!* was the answer. It got worse and worse. This was nonsense – certainly not at all logical! Yet I sensed to ask another question: *Well, what color are my thoughts now? They are blue,* was the reply. OK, I thought, so I learned that much ... or rather I was confused. My meditative state evaporated, and I did not know what to do with the new knowledge which could not be a product of my fantasy, both because the voice had been very clear, but also because the explanation I received exceeded even my wildest imagination.

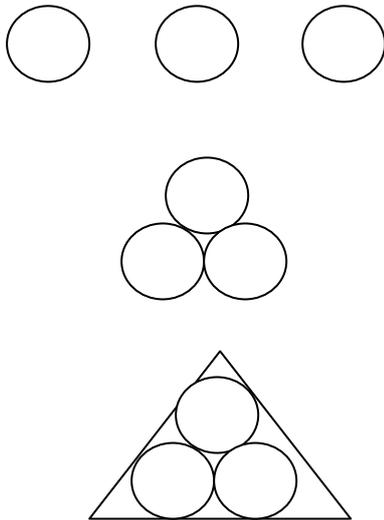
Several years later I became aware of Goethe's unique and interesting thoughts about colors, but I have not yet had the opportunity to delve further into this experience and try to make sense of it.

Other roads to travel

While still training NLP I also took various other courses including one in which we performed a shaman journey to drum sounds.

I flow out over the open sea. I see land and a large seagull, which I know is not my guardian animal welcomes me. On land I meet different animals, including a polar bear and a crab. I walk up towards a mountain and down into a green forest. Here I meet a lynx which is incredibly soft and warm. It declares that it is my guardian animal and wants to help me. I'm tired and go to sleep while the lynx holds me gently. Suddenly everything turns grey before my eyes and geometric shapes begin to appear on the 'blackboard' in front of me. Firstly, three circles roll in from right to left until they all find their place on the bottom of the 'blackboard'. Then one of the circles is moved on to the top of the other two and a triangle is drawn around these three circles which precisely fill out the triangle. The image fades away and is replaced by two triangles both pointing up – one of them slightly smaller and inside the other. The image fades away and a cross is shown just to disappear and be replaced by a circle. The 'blackboard' turns grey and the journey is over.

I tell the group that I have had a geometry lesson, but no one is able to offer any explanation regarding my experience. Below is an illustration of the first process:



Later I discovered that the last-described figure is almost the same as what in theosophy is known as the 'Cosmic Logos', but I still have no explanation about the meaning of this geometry lesson.

Wake-up-calls

In the ensuing period, I had several small experiences, which in hindsight might indicate that something important was coming. For example I heard a voice calling out my name several times when I had gone to bed. It was so clear that I used to sit up in bed and exclaim: *Yes, what do you want?* But there was no one. It was completely quiet in the bedroom. Eventually I accepted that there was no one, and so I just lay there and listened to the voice and murmured: *Well, well. I'm right here!*

One day I was at work. At some point I had an errand on the first floor. On my way up the stairs it was as if lightning suddenly struck down on me. I had to stop and look around. I hardly knew where I was. The question that rang in my ears was: *What are you doing here?* It felt completely wrong to be there. And I had worked in the same place for over 20 years! Subsequently, I had to acknowledge that there was something

that wanted me to work with something else somewhere else. I did not know it at that time, but as will be apparent from the following, radical changes indeed happened in my life.

Leave from work

Autumn 1994 came to be a crucial time for me. I had decided to follow up my NLP training with studies in psychology. As it happened the Danish government had passed a bill which made it possible for employees to apply for study leave on favorable terms and for me this was an opportunity sent from heaven! My employer for almost 24 years granted me permission to take this leave from work, and I was admitted to the study of psychology at Aalborg University. I was thrilled at the thought of going back to study again - I've always been what you might call a bookworm!

The day before my leave started, I biked home as usual thinking that I only had to go to work one more day for a long time. It was fantastic!

After I got home I began to feel a little pain in the left side of my body - from the buttock and down the leg. I did some yoga exercises and tried to relax. As the evening passed by the unpleasant feeling became genuine pain - and I who normally do not have to take pills, had no painkillers in the house. My husband was not home so I could not get help from him. I decided to go to bed and hope for improvement during the night - I had probably just strained a muscle during the bike ride!

In the middle of the night I woke up with an unbearable pain in the left side of my body - from feet to head. I could not move - I was unable to get out of my bed. In the other end of the house my teenage daughter was asleep, but I could not shout loud enough to wake her up. There was no telephone in the bedroom. In short, I was unable to get any help from the outside and was all alone with my pain. However, I remembered that during my NLP training I had uncovered the strategies I use to heal myself, and thus I had become aware that for me it was essential to learn from my illness. In short, I had to go into the pain and listen to my body's reply as to what the lesson for me was to be.

I moved on to my back and found a position where the pain was bearable, and then I began to reflect: What was all this about? Suddenly it struck me that I was indeed going to leave my job which I had held for almost 24 years in order to have a 10-month study leave (well, that was how I thought it would be at that time). It was obvious that there might be something I had overlooked in this connection - something I had forgotten.

I started reflecting on my working position and discovered that in the midst of my enthusiasm to dedicate the next several months to studying, I had forgotten how much there was for me to be grateful for: I had held a good job where I had earned my living, - for many years a place where I had met many wonderful people - a place where I had been treated with respect. There was so much to be thankful for. But I had forgotten to be grateful - something that probably often happens when one gets spoiled and takes things for granted!

Now however, I felt a flood of joy and peace. There was so much to be grateful for - so many people to thank. Here was the learning, but the pain was still there. I could hardly move.

In my desperation, I said inside myself that now I had done everything in my power, and then I shouted out into space: 'Come and help me!' Scarcely had I said the words before an energy like some kind of electricity filled my left side from head to toe, - and the pain began to disappear.

I lay there completely bewildered and wondered what had happened! Now I could move and find a position where I felt no pain at all. My body relaxed and I fell into a deep dreamless sleep.

The next morning there was a minor side-effect, but not more than I could easily get up and off to work.

(I only went back to my old job for a short period, i.e. about one month the following year: while I was on leave, my employer made it possible to obtain an advantageous redundancy, which I decided to accept.)

In the ensuing time, I had many wonderful - and probably very symbolic - dreams that I will not refer here. Let me instead turn to a more remarkable experience.

I was off on an NLP course and soon after I had arrived I felt a painful crick in my neck. Somebody on the team healed my neck and I managed to complete the course without too much discomfort. No sooner, however, had I come home – where two semester assignments waited to be completed within a short time - before the crick in my neck put me in pain again and prevented me from working. A few months earlier, I had had success with my own healing powers, so I thought why not try that method again? I lay down and imagined how I was able to go into the pain in the neck. Then I asked the pain what it wanted to tell me?

I hereby experience that two snakes pop up from the 'hole'. They move up into my head and produce one channel through my brain to each of my eyes. Then I discover that the hole from which they come, move violently. Out pops a giant dinosaur, representing a very dramatic experience, but I know that it will not hurt me. Then a couple of spiders come out of the hole. I wonder whether they are toxic, but I'm unable to find out. Then it seems as though I'm in contact with lower-level individuals - single-celled aquatic animals (perhaps amoeba?). The presentation of animals fades away and I wonder if my meditation is finished, when I suddenly find myself in a corridor with a number of closed doors.

I open a door at random and enter a big room, - and I remember that I had to be sure to bring my backpack along! I turn around to get it and drag it across the floor and into the room where I place it against a desk. Inside there is a large office-like space. I look around and discover that one of my American NLP teachers is coming to greet me. He is a man whose professional competence and human qualities I value very much. He says that he's been waiting for me. I am flattered, surprised and a little hesitant: what is all this about?

He leads me through the room. It is constructed with terraces so that the floor is lowered as we progress - as in a theater or an auditorium. There are lots of desks with computers, but no other people in the room.

Further on I notice a huge 'window'. While I follow my teacher to the glass arch I discover that I can see planet earth as a great ball dancing in space down to the right. It is a fantastic sight. The blue planet is infinitely beautiful as it hovers in the dark. I am completely speechless with astonishment. The teacher explains to me about the consciousness of the earth - about how this is going to be expanded. He talks and talks, but it is too much for me and I am no longer able to hear what he says.

I wake up from the meditation. Within a few hours the pain in my neck has gone, and I can get on with my psychology tasks.

The most momentous experiences

A few weeks after that I had the most significant and profound experiences which I wrote down a few years later. It simply was not possible for me to put them in writing before. The first is as follows:

The bathroom floor is nice and warm nevertheless cold is travelling up through my feet and paralyze my movements and breathing. I turn slowly toward the shower in the corner. The glass doors are closed, which is normally only the case when someone takes a bath. And now is in the middle of the night! Suddenly, light begins to flow through the sides of the cabin - out through the

glass doors. I'm overwhelmed ... there is light everywhere! The light intensifies - it's like a flaming fire that burns right in front of me and a figure appears in the middle of it!

I am terrified and speechless with terror. I cannot move but just stand there completely paralyzed. I feel malice and hatred flowing towards me as Gollum fingers, trying to reach me. Flames bang up toward the ceiling. A sardonic grin seems to be spreading on the figure's face And then a sound roars! A sound from the earth below pressing its way up through my feet and my legs. A drum sound as from bottomless depths - from the rock of eternity. The sound shakes every bone, every cell in my body. I am totally in its power. Cannot think, cannot act. Only mark how everything in me is shaken violently. Nothing can be hidden, no secrets kept. No escape is possible. I'm totally in the power of this unknown creature! When will the figure step out of the shower cabin, so that I can die - die of fear before it kills me?

Time stands still. Does it exist at all? I do not know and right now it makes no difference. Finally I succeed in moving and I find myself in bed. I throw myself on to my back. The sound disappears and I hear my husband's steady breathing beside me. Now I remember. I've just fallen asleep and had a nightmare. A very real and very scary nightmare. Nothing else. Should I wake him up? No, he'll just be worried, and he cannot do anything. My breathing becomes normal while I lie there staring at the ceiling with my nearsighted eyes. It's incredible that I can see so clearly in dreams, when I have been so nearsighted most of my life. I lie on my back in my bed and slowly begin to look around in the bedroom: There are the cupboards. There is the window with the blinds drawn. The window is slightly open, because we both want fresh air when we sleep - regardless of the weather. There is the chest of drawers with my jewelry box that I received for my confirmation. There is the peg row with my blue bathrobe. After this 'sightseeing' I cast a glimpse at the door. It is closed and there is no sound or light entering through it. Urk! What a dream! I certainly do not want to leave my bed. Honestly, I dare not. I feel comfortably warm under the quilt. My husband is still sleeping quietly in the bed beside me. Why be afraid? He is there! I feel more calm, although I know he cannot protect me from this unreal real, I have just become acquainted with. Nobody can help me. But surely I can help myself - I have always been good at that!

My internal conversation continues for a while. And I start to feel sleepy again. After all - that was just a truly vivid nightmare. I have learned a bit about dreams and their importance. But nothing about the sounds that rise up in a person. OK - tomorrow, I will go through all of it. Now I want to sleep.

I turn on to the left side and close my eyes. I commend myself for being so good at finding strategies to solve my problems.

I begin to doze off and the sound rises up through my body again. It feels as though the universe is below me and that the sound comes from the bottom of it. Through the ground, through the floor, through the mattress, through my body. Instinctively I throw myself on the back - and the sound fades away until it finally disappears. Now I'm wide awake! I lie there staring at the ceiling with my eyes open. What is happening? Am I possessed? I do not feel sick or crazy. I am just totally confused and terrified at the sound and what it does to me. Should I wake him up after all? What can he do? Nothing!

I have spoken with many interesting people in recent years: clairvoyants, palm readers, astrologers, healers - people who have seen angels or lights of a non-ordinary nature. But I, myself, am a completely 'normal' woman with an ordinary life and an ordinary family. In short, very reliable and also uninteresting to most people. So what is happening to me? I do not know. Thoughts fly through my head: There must be an explanation. Maybe not a logical, scientific explanation, but an explanation I can accept.

I 'switch on' the rational left hemisphere of my brain: What have I heard or read that can give a reason for the earthquake I have felt within me? Who was the creature in the shower? It is gone now, but the impression is still in me. I am amazed at myself. Why is it that I do not scream or cry

with all these sinister things going on? How am I actually able to think and to seek explanations when I'm so terrified? It is perhaps illogical, but I cannot scream or cry. Although my husband is in the bed beside me, there is only me here and now. He is there, but he is not there anyway - at one and the same time.

Now when I'm writing these lines, some years have passed since this incident and I still marvel at my behavior: how on one level I could think sensibly and rationally, and on another level I was deeply shocked and powerless.

How could I observe myself and what happened and at the same time be in the incident completely and unreservedly? I have no explanation, but that was how it was.

As I get more calm and I can begin to scan the thoughts and impressions that race through my head until they stop at

The Gate Keeper!

Suddenly, it is obvious to me: I have met the Gate Keeper. The figure in the shower cabin is the Gate Keeper who, according to the theosophical writings, appears in connection with an initiation. It must be it, - although I have not read anything about sounds and earthquakes, there is no doubt in my mind that it is the Gate Keeper. It's like 'meeting a living being, which is the sum of all the shadows of a person but it all happens inside one self' ... something like that, I remember that I have read in Soren Hauge's theosophical writings. It is a huge relief for me to discover this, and I can start breathing normally. After all this is just one step in the development of every human being. It is neither something sick nor unnatural!

The bedroom is again normal. My husband is still asleep beside me. Undisturbed by my nocturnal excesses. My heart finds its normal rhythm. I'm still warm under the quilt.

For the third time I turn on to my left side ... and tumble straight into the earthquake again! It rips and tears in my body but now I know more about what to do: I roll on to my back, fold my hands and try to surrender.... totally, as described in theosophical writings.

The only thing I can think of in order to emphasize this act is to say the Lord's Prayer ... Our Father, which art in Heaven... Hallowed be thy name ... Thy kingdom come ... I keep repeating the lines ... my childhood learning from my confirmation preparation and possibly school comes to mind. It was certainly not at home I learned it. We did not go to church, and for many years I actually thought I was an atheist. Until I discovered that I was simply against the priests in the church who said one thing and did something else. Who wanted to determine both what I would believe and how I should do it. Oh, I believe in the goodness of mankind and I have always done so - and my actions are directed from this point of view. Naive...? Yes, I have teasingly and sometimes reproachfully called myself naïve, until I interpreted my position as having a basic trust in life's order and meaning, which not even accidents, murders and wars can take from me. I'm skeptical of popular interpretations and use of the idea of reincarnation, but I do not doubt that life ... spirit ... manifests itself in every human being and evolves through us. ... Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven ... Give us this day our daily bread ... And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us... Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil ...For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

I have not said the Lord's Prayer for a long time. I wonder if it was at a funeral? Or was it on one Christmas Eve when we had gone to church? I do not remember. But I certainly discover the benefit of knowing something by heart which can be useful even in times when it seems impossible to draw on the normal memory.

I lie there with my hands folded and silently repeat the verse again and again. I have tears in my eyes. It is perhaps the first time I really have 'tasted' on the words. Something in me is moved.

While I lie there and pray the Lord's Prayer infinite calm falls over me. I know I have passed the 'test'. The bedroom looks like before. My husband is still sleeping as if nothing has happened - and here I have experienced perhaps the most overwhelming that will even happen to me? I breathe quietly. I have no idea how much time has elapsed. But it does not matter. I get more and more sleepy and turn gently on to the left side. Everything is calm. I fall into a dreamless sleep and do not wake up until the next morning when the alarm clock rings.

My husband must get up. I may stay in bed for a while. Later on, I have to go to the bathroom. I open the door a little and stick my head inside. There in the corner is the shower. Moist and warm after the family's bathing. I take my time, but I certainly don't feel like having a shower, so I confine myself to wash at the sink. I have eyes all the way down the back, so that I can react if something happens in the shower! But all is calm and I have my breakfast in peace. The family leaves and I am alone with the remains of my horror and my thoughts. They do not seem quite as scary in daylight, but they are still so real, so real.

As my bread and tea are swallowed, the horror transforms into a part of me. It is absorbed slowly but surely, digested and placed around the body, like something I need to live my life with.

After a few days I told my husband a short version of the incident. He listened with interest, but otherwise did not comment on what had happened. Later on I told it to some friends who have had spiritual experiences, too, albeit of a different character. But it was good to share it with someone.

A couple weeks later, I experienced the following:

I wake up at night. I do not know how long I have been sleeping. My husband lies and snores beside me. He does that sometimes, and I usually just give him a push, and then he turns to the other side and everything is okay. But tonight I just cannot stand it. For the first time in our many years of marriage I leave him with my quilt and pillow under my arm. I walk into a room where we have a sofa bed. I lie down on it to sleep.

I guess I'm almost asleep - on my left side - when the sound from the gate keeper experience begins to flow into me. It is like distant drums that shutter me. But now I know what to do: Without hesitation, I throw myself on to the back, fold my hands and pray the Lord's Prayer.

The sound stops.

Slowly and gently my body begins to rise above the mattress. I hover! I'm light as a balloon and at some point I stand in an upright position with both feet on the sofa. And then I begin to speak. It is as if I stand in an assembly, which is in front of me in a semicircle. I cannot see anyone, but I know there is someone there. And I talk and talk while I gesticulate with my hands towards the half-circle. I declare myself. I pledge myself to raising the planet's consciousness. It sounds totally illogical, absurd and yet so true! Yes, that's what I should do ... Of course. My 'free will' has been completely suspended. I – whoever that may be – do not rule anymore. Things just happen. It is light and bright. No opposition, no fear. Everything is fine.

I hear myself speak, and while doing that I watch everything from the back of my head thinking: How fortunate it is that I have left the bedroom - because otherwise I would have woken up my husband with all this talking!

Suddenly it's all over. I lie on the sofa as though I've never moved! Strange! I ponder a little at what has happened but become more and more sleepy. I fall asleep and don't wake up until the next morning.

After the above experiences in November 1994, my life has changed a lot: I have already mentioned that I left my good job after almost 25 years and have undertaken one education after

another. Everything happens at a pace where I can handle it. This is not to say that it's just been easy, but my fighting has primarily concerned my beliefs about the person I thought I was before, and who I apparently was deep inside. It has certainly not been painless. But the pain I've felt has also been OK. No one is to take it away from me. It shall not be alleviated or explained away.

My attention is sharpened. I notice a lot. It can be tedious and exhausting if there is too much new. So I'm good to myself. I need much rest. But sometimes I also need to get rid of everything that builds up inside me. I understand people in a different light. I think almost metaphorically. Incidents and events in human life are used to understand them. It's getting harder and harder for me just to think in a here and now perspective. Everything is placed in a larger context which I have not previously experienced. I understand everything and I understand nothing. I experience my life as a giant paradox.

It's amazing, but also incredibly lonely, because only very few people want to try to follow me when I get the chance to unveil my ideas. My brain is filled with inspiring ideas. Sometimes it feels frustrating not to be able to say what I think. But others cannot understand what to me is so logical and simple. And of course I am also sometimes in doubt: Can it really be true? Is it just something I imagine? So I try to relax and say to myself: Well, it's not for me to decide. And then I laugh a little at it all. Why take everything including myself so seriously?

ⁱ Ølgaard, p. 23

ⁱⁱ By the word 'imaginal' Corbin wishes to distinguish between the experience of a genuine, real dimension which he named *mundus imaginalis* and the 'imaginary' which belongs to human fantasy.

ⁱⁱⁱ Corbin, 1998, p. xxi

^{iv} Cited from memory. Origin unknown.

^v Kjørup, p. 77/78

^{vi} According to a Danish Research Guide for alternative practitioners made by 'Videns- og Forskningscenter for Alternativ Behandling' it is estimated that only 20%-30% of the treatment activities in the established system (in Denmark) are documented or supported by scientific research (p. 6 in the preliminary edition).

^{vii} Corbin, 1997, p. 20

^{viii} Stan Grof may be mentioned as an example of a researcher who takes the spiritual experiences seriously.

^{ix} In this chapter I will try to make clear what I mean by spiritual experiences. These experiences were all made by women I know, and they have granted me permission to use them here.

^x The great Danish author and philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, and the French philosopher and mathematician, Blaise Pascal, ostensibly had spiritual experiences. I will touch more extensively on this subject later in the book.