

The Importance of the Sacred in Sacred Breathwork

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The theoretical and experiential basis for what I shall sketch out here, is grounded in and supported by the argument of my book, *PSYCHOTHERAPY AND THE SACRED* (Chicago, Center for the Scientific Study of Religion Press, 1995). The basic point I seek to make is that the “holotropic principle” of Grof, derived from Jung’s concepts of the archetypal Self, its telos and Spiritus Rector function, needs to be set in the larger context of the healing, organizing, and directing experience of the Sacred, and a path of the heart rooted in this experience, and supported by community and an ongoing set of non-breathwork practices. I have great admiration for the work of Grof and his genius in developing this technique, which I have modified in line with my theory of the sacred, Jungian psychology of the Self, and shamanism. I have thus incorporated it into the whole system of Crows Nest Sacred Breathwork .™ While admiring and benefitting from Grof’s work, I critique and seek to strengthen the power of technique with ritual process and a theory of the sacred, and communal context. My own work has been one of bridge-building between the wisdom of ancient shamanic wisdom, and the analytical psychology inspired by CG Jung. In effort to make my point, I will make some comments about shamanism, non ordinary states of consciousness [NOSCs], and their relationship to the sacred, to initiation, to shamanic faith, and my epithet “sonic ayahuasca.” I follow all this with some specific insights and implications from Jung and his analytical psychology.

Why Shamanism Today?

Shamanism is the primal ground, the experiential matrix from which the world’s spiritual traditions have emerged and been nourished. It is the very ancient religion of our ancestors. It has no creeds or dogmas, or scriptures. It does have a few guiding principles and perennial practices whereby it connects with the Spirit directly and ecstatically. It has been attacked by colonialism as a diabolical superstition, and by capitalism as a threat to exploiting the earth for rich lands and their resources, and by scientific materialism as psychotic or mentally disturbed. Yet still it lives in the indigenous cultures, and it is coming back into Western culture, and living again here. It has long been the force that keeps the heart of indigenous peoples beating, and its teachings may save us from asphyxiating ourselves with the toxic wastes of our own minds and their ignorance. It can lead us out of environmental catastrophe and teach us once again to wonder and respect Mother earth. In a time of social and communal fragmentation, indigenous shamanism gives us models of vital communities and gives us hints as how we may more fully develop communities that support an earth-honoring heart-path.

Many people are hungry for shamanic experience today, for the nonordinary states and ecstatic conditions it generously offers. In the wake of Western scientific materialism, we are starved for experience of the Spirit, for a Cosmos that is not indifferent, but magical and friendly. But the spiritual vacuum left by an overly rational and materialistic view has left us with a flatland box that we want desperately to break out of with diversions, addictions, obsessions, distractions, and anything that blots out the boredom of flatland. Shamanism can teach us how to go beneath the surface of modern consciousness, explore the chthonic depths of the psyche, and experience its ultimate and spiritual heights.

I believe shamanism with its repertoire of methods for producing nonordinary and ecstatic states of consciousness, with its reconnecting us with the source, and with its respect for Mother Earth is coming back to modern culture today, because this culture needs healing before it takes the richness of life on the planet down with it. I have been perhaps something of a pioneer, in the past thirty years, taking up the challenge of making this ancient and indigenous wisdom accessible and useful in the modern world. For me the key concept and crucial experience is the ecstatic experience of the Sacred, access to the ultimate source-level of existence. Why this is so can be clarified by stating what I see to be the purpose of a shamanic path that is heart-centered and earth-honoring

The Goal of Shamanism In Modern Life

For me, the goal of shamanism, for modern practitioners, is not to get to a place where you or I can say "I am a shaman," "I have power animals," or "I have great visionary or psychic powers!" Such statements derive from the ego, who is really saying: "I am special because I have special gifts and powers!" This is the relation of a novice, driven by ego needs, and awaiting genuine initiation and transformation from an egoic to a life in service of the divine Spirit, and of other lives.

If we leave the ego's game, we can understand the purpose of shamanism is to transcend, or go beyond the ego's sense of specialness, and its habits of comparisons and judgments of others. The reason for going beyond is to tap into divine power and put it in service of the Divine Spirit's guidance, and of life. From my context within the indigenous Americas, the purpose is to become a little hollow bone servant, able to channel the diagnostic and healing insight, and a power to restore that is greater than myself.

Initiation in the Process of Becoming Shamanic

This purpose requires that we undergo great self-examination, and dismantle the ego's games and our inhibiting biographical wounds---this is a process of clearing out the bone, or tube, or channel. It is difficult and painful work, a kind of dismemberment and re-assembly--and is called an initiation into shamanism. I sometimes call it "wounded-healer work," for through recognizing and cleaning our own wounds we open ourselves to an inner divine direction that moves each of us towards our unique pattern of wholeness; and to clear away stuff that gets in the way of this purpose. Like any initiation it involves calling, sacrifice, and renewal of life. It is dominated by the archetype of death/rebirth, where an old identity is deconstructed, and a newer more authentic identity is reconstructed from the bones. The outcome makes it possible to walk your talk, which any heart-centered shamanism requires.

The Centrality of the Sacred in Shamanism

For me the Sacred is a neutral term for the Divine Presence or Divine Spirit living and working in the heart of each creature. It is not only the source and inner guide of our lives, it is the divine physician, the inner healer or inner shaman in us all. As such its powers are holotropic, Grof's term for moving us toward wholeness and

healing. Jung made a shamanic move when he originally called this principle the “Spiritus Rector,” --the guiding spirit within the psyche (soul).

My accent differs from Grof’s accent on the moving towards wholeness, or holotropic principle. I agree that this is there, and is crucial in shamanic healing, Jungian therapeutics, and in sacred breathwork, but I emphasize that the ‘holotropic’ is a divine attribute and function in life, and we need to relate to the divine Spirit as a whole, and not simply in one of its functions. When I make this shift, ‘shamanic faith’ and supporting practices (yogas) and community come to have important place.

Grof’s great contribution to contemporary depth psychology, dynamic psychiatry, and transpersonal psychology is that he has derived a rich mapping (cartography) of nonordinary states of consciousness (NOSCs) including those, following CG Jung, that reflect the higher reaches of the spirit, and the chthonic depths of the soul. He has given detailed mappings of a very large variety of NOSCs—experiences that include pre-personal and pre-biographical, for example birth perinatal matrices (BPMs), which is a kind of interface between the personal and archetypal or transpersonal states of consciousness. Grof has pointed out the fact that virtually any other culture on the planet has held NOSCs in very high regard, but our modern scientific and materialistic civilization devalues them and relegates them to areas of fantasy, entertainment and addictions (liminoid experiences). As a result there is a great hunger for NOSCs, and people seek them desperately.

I would add that NOSCs and spiritual experiences are related. To be without one is to be without the other. If our culture is devoid of adequate portals for experiencing NOSCs, it cuts us off from the divine Spirit. This itself is wounding and damaging to the soul, that cannot feel or express its deepest being at the source level. This creates a neediness, a vacuum that substitutes rush in to fill.

The spiritual craving left by a culture devoid of widespread access to NOSC/numinous experiences is a culture of depression and hopelessness, addiction and greed, obsessions and destructive idolatries. These are manifestations of traumatic loss, denial of access to the sacred—and the common problems in living and are actually symptoms of what is missing, or what needs to be included in our lives.

We need NOSCs to get outside what Allan Watts called the “skin encapsulated ego.” This is a metaphor for the need to get outside the box of the mental-ego, of our usual habits of thinking and perceiving. This very box is a source of our suffering, tension, and feeling trapped. Shamanism, with its concern to transcend the limits of the ego-identity aims at transcending the box, not simply thinking outside it, but experiencing the vast and inexhaustibly numinous ranges beyond its purview.

The consensus in the field of transpersonal psychology is that the more time spent in NOSCs, the more we are liberated from lesser self-identifications (Wilber). These

experiences promote self-transcendence, achievements of a greater sense of selfhood.

In particular, we need those kinds of NOSCs that are what I call “sacred states of consciousness,” what Mircea Eliade and Paul Tillich calls “ecstatic.” Etymologically “*ek-stasis*” = to stand outside oneself.” Genuine ecstasy helps us get outside our everyday habitual selves, experience the greater cosmos, a “higher Self” and the Divine Reality that is its ground, source, and reason for being. In old biblical imagery, we need a regular “encounter with the living God.” To be without this access to ultimacy is to already be in a condition of unhealth, unwholeness at our foundations. This condition must be a shaman’s primary concern. It is the ultimate soul loss.

Grof has been a prophet to our culture with regards to NOSCs as therapeutically effective states of consciousness. He has masterfully shown how NOSCs get to the deeper levels of our being, pre-biographical experiences and trauma (BPMs) and how pathological complexes and COEX systems and be illuminated and dissolved in NOSCs. But his work has not given enough attention to the Ultimate Reality itself, although he gives it place in his cartography (Metacosmic Void) and in mystical experiences of Union what can occur in BPM I. This is precisely where my own research and theoretical work join his. Grof leaves out the power of faith and the need for a grounding spiritual path with a regular set of practices, and there is a stark absence of *sangha* or spiritual community.

Shamanic Faith & Ecstasy

In defining the purpose of shamanism today, I implicitly make room for the shaman’s faith. Faith roots in the will to live, and to acknowledge, align with, and live from the source of life itself. You can use your preferred god-term here: God, Great Spirit, Being, Allah). I am not simply talking about faith as “belief in things unseen,” although that is a cognitive aspect, I am talking about faith as the Ultimate Reality which grasps you in the heart of your being, is your life-foundation, and the inner directing force and guide of your life. It requires surrender to the Infinite and Ultimate Source of your being, and it requires ongoing or regular access, -and faithfulness in following the steps it envisions for your life, one at a time. The Shaman’s task is to establish such a close relationship that he or she is effectively a little hollow bone. But this is the ultimate task for every human who wishes to realize their own wholeness and reason for being here.

The Healing Power of Worship

Genuine worship is a ceremony evoking an ecstatic state of communion or union with the divine, or inspiration and renewal through contact with the source level of existence. Praise and hymns of glory, psalms and chants evokes the varieties of numinous experiences of life in the divine presence. A range of activities taking place in worship can include adoration, confession, giving thanks, singing praises, praying and asking for help, and so on. Meditation, inward self-examination, renewal of commitment and surrender in faith may all be a deeply healing and

therapeutic or transformative part of worship. But worship is essentially an ecstatic experience. According to Tillich, ecstasy occurs when the mind is grasped by the mystery of the ground of being. I would add that worship is the ecstatic experience of the source level. The body and emotions are moved, the heart opens in rejoicing, surrender, or rededication of life. Signs of entering into the divine presence are genuflecting, bending the knee, prayerful gestures like mudras and folded hands, sacred sounds and utterances arise spontaneously (*Aum Alleluia, Selah, Kyrie*). What Jung called the “religious instinct” must be periodically satisfied. In the ecstatic state we experience the divine presence in some level or degree. We are somehow reminded of and reconnected to our deepest source and reason for being. We feel a love, experience a sense of mystery, and beatitude that inspires new living, better living, with wider embrace of our loving and caring. In this felt-presence of the divine we can admit our faults, we can ask forgiveness, and we can resolve to live differently.

In our deepest moments of worship we may enter into deep communion, or even union with the divine life. We transcend the separative consciousness of the subject-object structure of finite existence. The results are significant: self-integration the Spirit, or reintegration, alignment with the Source, renewed energy, sense of purpose or mission, and a deeper relationship to the path and spiritual practices of one’s path or tradition can occur. In the case of the shamans’ earth-honoring path of the heart, his or her resolve and surrender to renewed and deepened, our vision is increased, and there is increased integrity. According to Tillich, “...the integration of the personal center is possible only by its [ecstatic/NOSC] elevation to the...divine center.” (ST vol iii 280)

Again Tillich speaks of the integrative organizing power of faith which is based in ecstatically worshipful experience of the ultimate, and in a community’s expression of that faith in their tradition:

...every community of faith tries to shape the unconscious strivings of its members, especially of new generations. If the faith of somebody expresses itself in symbols that are adequate to his unconscious strivings, these strivings cease to be chaotic. They do not need repression, because they have achieved “sublimation” and are united with the conscious activities of the person. Faith directs a man’s life by giving it an object of “con-centration.”

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So far we have claimed that NOSCs can ecstatically open or expose one to the sacred/divine. The experience of the sacred is integrative and healing by recalling the person to their ontological or spiritual foundations of being. Various traditions symbolize this with the “divine physician.” Life becomes, temporarily at least, realigned with its source and directive center and reason for being. This is a direct effect of worship. But the communal context and tradition in which that worship takes place, and through which the faith is communicated, also have an organizing effect in the plurality of drives and chaotic contents that can afflict the human soul

in a disorganizing way. I am saying that worship, faith, the community and traditions together have an organizing and healing effect upon the psyche of the individual practitioner. Let me suggest how this can be so

Worship, Faith & The Symbolic Life

Worship renews the resolve and commitment to walk the path of one's tradition. The Symbols and practices vary greatly in different traditions and cultural contexts. The Christian has the Bible, missal, hymnal, stations of the cross, holy communion, baptism, worship services, congregation and Holy Days, the medicine man with chants and talismans, medicine wheel, and shamanic journeys, questing and fasting, tribe or community, or ayahuasca and other sacred ceremonies. These elements are the symbolic supports of a path (supporting yogas).

Walking your path = walking your talk. This is strengthened by worship or its equivalent in other traditions. Jung called it, living a "symbolic life," and also found it a desperate need for "modern man in search of a soul." For Jung the numinous was the "real therapy" and he saw the need of patients in the second half of life was overwhelmingly for a religious or spiritual framework for living, and for perceiving life through its vicissitudes, gains, and losses..

It is a moment of tremendous and healing achievement when a person on the shaman's path, or any other spiritual path, surrenders and fully commits to it, and allows its path-supporting principles, sacred symbols, spiritual practices (e.g., yogas) and rituals to inform one's daily living, and viewpoint on the ups and downs. The ecstatic experience of what we are calling "worship" (*Hindu Bhakti Yoga, Kirtan, Jewish Shabbos, Sufi Sema and Sohbet*) facilitates and leads to that kind of surrender. Nothing but regular practice will move you along the path towards your pattern of wholeness. Once you actively are on such a path and are practicing it daily, the guiding principles, symbols, texts, rites, sacraments, ceremonies and other elements of that symbolic life give you thrust and direction. Tillich writes:

There are various ways in which faith [expressed through a spiritual tradition] unites a man's mental life and gives it a dominating center. It can be by the way of discipline which regulates the daily life; it can be the way of meditation and contemplation; it can be the way of concentration on the ordinary work, or on a special aim or on another human being. In each case, faith is presupposed; none of it could be done without faith. DF 107

Supporting Yogas

Breathwork is a technique, just as shamanic journey is a technique or spiritual method. We need considerably more than one technique or practice. A single technique is not a path. We need a set of principles and a set of supporting spiritual practices and ceremonies as a context that coordinates and supports any one of the

practices along the heart-path. This is precisely the point at which I modify Grof's holotropic breathwork theory. Connecting with the holotropic force within the person is not enough. We must see that it is the Sacred, the divine Spirit, the source of life needs to be connected with. We need NOSCs, we need ecstasy for this. Grof's holotropic method has supplied this beautifully in a culture whereentheogens are illegal or eschewed, and where therapeutic use of NOSCs is largely ignored or suppressed. But we need to recognize our need for union or communion with the Sacred as the prime focus and concern. At Crows Nest Center for Shamanic Studies, I offer my apprentices and clients a set of principles called the Four Acts of Power, and I offer a practice for listening to the heart anytime, and to the Spirit speaking through the heart anytime (NGS/DIGS). I also offer rich community support, quests for vision, shamanic journeying, fire talks, sacred fires and story telling, each of which is a supporting practice or yoga for the earth-honoring shamanic path of the heart. It is an entire path. Crows Nest Sacred Breathwork™ is my synthesis of holotropic procedures and theory, with my theory of the Sacred, rites of passage and Jungian theory and practices. In all of these practices the sacred is directly involved.

When we do sacred breathwork, we make clear the prime importance is to connect with the Sacred, the Divine Spirit, and to ask it for bring what needs insight or healing next. The music selections, especially in the second part of a three part rite is especially numinous, drawing from the various worshipful selections of music from the worlds various religious and spiritual traditions (Bhakti yoga—kirtan, shamanic Icaros, Sufi sema music, classic and modern contatas, and so on. The point is to evoke awareness of the Sacred as the safe and powerful context for insight, opening of deep wounds, and healing. In this middle phase participants often worshipfully pray, form various mudras and sacred gestures known as yogic asanas, they may have mystical visions, they may dance worshipfully like David dancing before the Lord. They may weep as the heart bursts letting out its grief. Ultimately it seems shamanic faith is strengthened, and renewal of life energy and commitment results.

We smudge and pray for whatever we need to advance along our path, or to clear away what is no longer needed, or to bring us the healing we need now. It can be blissful and pleasant, and it can be a journey to hell and back as we face old trauma and “demons” of the past. As Joseph Campbell put it, these “demons’ are images of our limitations –what blocks us from moving towards wholeness. By other names they are pathological complexes (Jung) COEX-systems (Grof), old belief systems and unprocessed wounds. In Sacred Breathwork™ we experience ourselves in the loving space of the divine Spirit, the ultimate guide and safe container of our process. Some individuals seem to explicitly need the experience of worship, reconnecting with their divine Source, realigning their lives, and obtaining renewed vision, or learning to surrender to the direction by and service to the divine Spirit. In all this it is much like ayahuasca. I have called this “sacred breathwork™,” and I have metaphorically named it “sonic ayahuasca,” because it does bare similarities in intent and power of effect. To illuminate my point, lets look at a South American Ayahuasca tradition, known as “Santo Daime.”

Santo Daime & Sonic Ayahuasca:

Santo Daime is an ayahuasca based movement in Brazil that has concretized elements of mystical Christianity with rain forest shamanism. They use ayahuasca, but believe it is simply the vehicle of the Daime. Santo = Sacred, Daime = "Give it to me." Santao Daime = Sacred Give it To me.? What does it give?? Whatever we need to connect with, to face, clean out, or heal. Santo Daime ceremonies are sacraments that take place in a sacred shrine and in the presence of a spiritual community devoted to Santo Daime path.

Santo Daime is both a sacred ceremony and a path. It is considered a tool for self-knowledge, whether pleasant or not. It is a shamanic way of showing you who you are, how you are inside, warts and all. It also shows you, or gives to you ways to become better, more alive, more beautiful as a being.

The elements of the sacred ritual are partly based on Christ, or the "shaman Jesus" as inner guide and divine physician. The Daime would be like the guiding and healing work of the holy Spirit. But the familiar love and respect for nature are part of the ceremony in which earth, sun, moon, mountain and sea and the four elements are honored.

There are two major purposes of Santo Daime Ceremonies. Through the NOSCs evoked, to come into contact with and align with the Santo Daime. It is a devotional path of the heart that is also earth-honoring. You use the ceremony to develop your "spiritual muscles," -to grow on the path. The second purpose to purge, confront, clean, remove, retrieve.

In "the big clean out " you may purge, literally vomiting, but also letting go of things inwardly you no longer need. While the experience is unavoidably transformative, it is not necessarily pleasant. You have asked the "Give it to Me (Daime) to bring you whatever you need. Whatever is in your shadow may come up, whatever buried traumas you have may surface. They say that what you are ready for, happens next. Another way to put it is that whatever is ready to come up next, comes. You usually have to face your own resistances to all this, and go through the resistance. Or the resistance may simply "dissolve." Then the repressed or dissociated memories of trauma emerge. This truth can be difficult, and painful to accept, but once you do so you find yourself freed from its power and influence. You also see ways in which you have harmed others in word and deed. These too are courageously faced. The Daime places in front of you whatever it determines is good to give you now.

You are in an expanded state of awareness and can see things more truly and objectively. You may see truths otherwise too painful to look at, you receive liberating insights that allows the power of the trauma to dissolve. The sacred ceremony itself provides the ritual leadership and containing vessel necessary to face these powerful truths.

We should not think of Daime as a drug nor as ayahuasca—those are mere vehicles of NOSCs. The Daime is a spiritual principle and a healing force, a kind of divine physician within—it is a holotropic force—seeking to move you towards wholeness and healing. You cannot get addicted to ayahuasca, it confronts you with difficult things that aren't pleasurable, and it shows you the basis of any addiction you may have, so you can root it out. What brings people back to Santo Daime sacraments is not addiction, but a desire for communion with the Sacred source, and liberation from suffering. The Daime brings the old Greek maxim “Know Thyself,” an effect opposite of what is necessary for addictions. Like holotropic breathwork™ and sacred breathwork,™ Santo Daime is especially effective in the treatment and cure of addictions, and there are a variety of addiction treatment centers in Brazil working with the Daime to cure drug addiction.

I took this long excursus to show in what way there is a close analogue between sacred breathwork™ and Santo Daime, from which my epithet “sonic ayahuasca” derives. Both suggest a connecting with the sacred directly for spiritual and healing benefit. Both clearly class the process as a sacred ceremony or sacrament because of this acknowledgement of the divine forces at work in and through the ceremony. Both underscore the need for an ongoing path, set of principles, supporting practices (yogas) and community.

A Jungian Psychological View Point on the role of the Sacred.

Jung is often quoted as saying *“the approach to the numinous is the real therapy.”* He was using Rudolf Otto’s phenomenological concept for how we experience the sacred. After Jung’s break with Freud, his public life collapsed, and the famous persona identity he had built up came completely down. He felt “a nobody” in the eyes of the world. Freud had been a kind of disappointing father-figure and mentor to Jung. The collapse of this relationship also echoed his disappointment in his own father around religion and spirituality. Jung could not believe in the old Christian myth, like his father advocated, as its symbols no longer had any life for him in them. He also could not live with the narrow sexual basis of the Freudian psyche. He had not yet discovered his own psychology. He was at a point of psycho-spiritual crisis, what today we would call a “spiritual emergency.” He asked himself at this point: “By What myth am I living?” Jung concluded that he did not know. During the next five years he used methods similar to shamanism to courageously plunge into his own psyche, going to its archetypal depths, and finding many numinous powers there: the archetypes, gods, spirits, and his inner guru, Philemon, who taught him the objectivity of the psyche, and that there was wisdom in the psyche the he (Jung) did not produce. All these kinds of phenomena he considered numinous, evoking awe, fascination, and sometimes fear of madness. This is the period of the now famous Red Book, with its channeling and dialogues, and calligraphy and mandalic art-work. Toward the end of this period Jung had his famous Liverpool Dream, the name means pool of life, and it appeared as a giant city mandala with a central tree giving off golden light. Jung then knew that this was the center, the Self, the sacred axis, and that one cannot go beyond it.

As a psychologist, Jung was reluctant to call it an experience of the divine, so he called it the archetypal ‘Self’, the center and totality of the psyche. Personally, he felt that God had enjoined him upon a certain pattern and destiny. So when Jung asked the question by what myth am I living, what he really wanted to know was the following kinds of things:

1. What was his reason for being, his “*raison d’etre*,” his purpose?
2. What unconscious force, equivalent of the divine for him, which called him onto his path, and what path was this anyway?
3. What irrational force was compelling him to his studies, inner explorations, and publishing?
4. What, ultimately, was pulling him outside himself and not only moving him towards his unique pattern of wholeness, but was demanding he put his knowledge and experience in service of others (patients, students, readers) ?
5. Finally, he wanted to know what supported him, in the face of tragedy and loss, when he could no longer support himself.

As Jung emerged from the Red Book years, all this was clarified. The luminous center of his life-path was the Self as his ontological center and greater pattern of totality, which he was to unfold and live over time. The path of this new mythology is called “individuation,” and amongst its rites and practices are dream work, active imagination, attention to synchronicities, mythic amplification of universal themes.

All this is my own scholarly reflections on Jung’s process as he described it. Since mythic images come from the psyche and speak back to it, and since myth provides patterns and codes for behavior, Jung felt it important to know what his personal mythology was. When you know your personal mythology you can get more deeply aligned with your highest and deepest Self, and with your unique pattern of wholeness, cooperating with your ‘calling’ in life, and what it is you are called to do. As Jung saw it, many modern people still live in an ancient or medieval mythology, but some are unable to subscribe to it any longer. Its guiding symbols seem dead. This is when you need to find your own personal mythology. Joseph Campbell suggested following your bliss, and I have created the concept and practice of NGS/DIGS to help you find your center of bliss, and Four Acts of Power to help you live from it. It is a way to begin or resume individuating, moving towards your unique pattern of wholeness, when you have lost your way. Jung proposed the analytically assisted individuation process, but we do not have space to explore this here. What I want to highlight is that the luminous center of Jung’s myth is the Self, and it reveals itself in and to the psyche as numinous—as Sacred. It often projects

itself in symbols that have numinous or sacred affectivity associated with them: god images, images of royalty, wise old men and women, diamonds, gold, numinous animals and totems, Great Trees, sacred gardens, mountains and lakes, sacred flowers like the Lotus (*padhma* of Buddhism) or the Mystic Rose of Dante's *Paradiso*.

For Jung the Self lures you towards more wholeness with these kinds of numinous images, or sends you compensatory images when you are off-center and out of balance. The mandala image itself tends to come when you need to feel safety, peace, hope, or when you need grounding and integration, or when you need inspiration to move towards your unique and complex pattern of wholeness with all the opposing forces of the psyche clamouring for union in your life. The Self, the luminous center of Jung's myth, draws you into life, helps you develop, compensates one-sided points of view, suggests union of opposites, and invites you to reconnect with the "realm of the mothers", the collective unconscious to find your ontological foundations within. All this can be read psychologically, and stands behind Grof's term "holotropic" for that is what happens when you experience the Self. It begins moving you spontaneously towards your unique pattern of wholeness.

All this can also be read theologically and philosophically, and I read it as the Sacred manifesting psychologically as the Self, calling you to your unique pattern of wholeness. It is the leap I made in 1995 with my book *PSYCHOTHERAPY AND THE SACRED*. The implications for sacred breathwork, are very important.

The Effect of Numinous Music in Sacred Breathwork.

Sacred Breathwork™ follows the stages of a rite of passage: Stage I, Severance from the ordinary and everyday consciousness, 2) Initiation, descent and liminality of sacred/transformational space, and 3) Return and integration with life. The selection of sacred breathwork music rigorously follows this 3 phase movement. Phase I music is highly percussive and shamanically entrancing to help shift consciousness from an ordinary to nonordinary state. Phase II is strictly numinous music (shamanic and Bhakti type chant, kirtan music, bhakti, devotional music, classical sacred music) which has the effect of evoking the Sacred/Self. Phase II involves music that is calming, centering, earthy in theme and sound (water sounds, bird sounds, etc.) to help bring you back into body and physical world.

In the space left, we can only briefly suggest the sequence, in Jungian/Sacred perspective:

- 1) Ritual structure and process, + connected breath+ numinous music reconnects you with the sacred. The numinous music activates the Self in its centering, guiding, and balancing functions.
- 2) Once the relation to the Self is constellated, it becomes the force guiding and directing you towards your pattern of wholeness.

- 3) As you feel solidly connected (ego-Self axis), trust increases, your deep psyche becomes activated, your heart opens, and you surrender deeply to the process which is autonomous, and which brings up what you need to face, dissolve, let go of, embrace, or witness, in order to move forward.

Summation of Argument

NOSCs are far more powerful in helping us see into and explore the depths of existence and the deep layers and range of the psyche, the rational-verbal methods of modern psychotherapy. Our culture does not offer nearly enough legitimate access to NOSCS, so that ecstatic experience of the Sacred is possible. As a result, any shamanism for our time is well advised to direct its attention to NOSCS and ecstatic connection with the Sacred as a primary focus. This is not an issue in indigenous cultures that take the reality of the Sacred for granted. But in modern Western culture, it is a major cause of suffering and lack of fulfillment. The shamanic task in modern culture is to speak to this need. Grof transpersonal training and holotropic breathwork are addressing this need rather well. But more intentional focus on the sacred is needed, and in context of a supporting path, set of practices (yogas) and supporting community or *sangha*. Sacred breathwork sessions are structured to evoke the Sacred, which is also an evocation of the Self, which results in activating the process of moving towards your pattern of wholeness. The healing and transformative process is powerfully set in motion.