



Death Mirrors the Spirit of Life

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to further an understanding of how a soul comes to despair and how the spirit of life is wounded. This question is approached from the perspective of death – in the form of death defying acts and voluntary death – as the dialectic aspect of being and non-being. Death can be a reflection of the life lived and the experience of who I am. The relation between ego and Self determines who I am. Two forms of misrelating between ego and Self will be considered. One causes a sense of omnipotence as the ego identifies with Self, and the other causes a sense of alienation as the ego renounces the Self to establish an intellectual vacuum, which becomes a substitute for lived experience. In both instances, there is a growing despair of inauthenticity and the experience of non-being, which voluntary death and death defying acts attempt to put an end to. Both manifestations of death are attempts to resolve the imbalance between the eternal and temporal dimensions of being – to put an end to the despair of being unconscious of Self – and to affirm being. It is only when there is a conscious dialectic between ego and Self that an authentic existence becomes possible. An authentic existence represents the ongoing commitment to incarnate the human reality that exists between the world of imagination and the world as it appears to our senses. This, I argue, amounts to a spirit with soul.

Introduction

For more than a decade now, New Zealand psychology has been challenged to develop the skills needed to attend to the needs of a religiously, racially and culturally diversifying society (Abbott & Durie, 1987; Durie & Hermansson, 1990; NZPS, Sept. 2001). It may be in this context that the then Associate Minister of Maori Affairs at the New Zealand Psychological Society's Conference in 2000 challenged the behavioural and experimental psychologists of mainstream psychology in New Zealand. She asked the question; 'Do you seriously believe that you, with the training that you get are able to nurture the Maori psyche?; Are you able to see into the soul of the people and tend to the wounded spirit?' (Turia, 2000, August). The minister linked the despair, self-hatred and suicide among Maori people with the psychological consequences of colonisation,

alienation and loss of identity (Turia, 2002, March). She concluded her address to the conference with the rhetorical question: "What is the difference between you saying 'I think, therefore I am' and us (Maori) saying 'we are'?"

In this paper, I propose to address the question about soul and a wounded spirit, and its relationship with the notion of I-am from a Jungian and existential-phenomenological perspective. In Binswanger's (1958) view the way in which a person dies reveals how he has lived, and it is from this perspective that I intend to approach the matter; to understand how a soul comes to live in despair and how the spirit of life is wounded. How can suicide and death defying acts, for example, reveal the spirit in which life is lived? I suggest it does so as the dialectic aspect of being and non-being. It is in death that the experience of I-am is revealed.

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When death becomes a disincarnated event, an impersonal absolute – as it does in the taunting and demeaning act of defying death, or when death becomes a voluntary act of affirmation of character – it points to a life-existence of despair. This despair is different from the despair when death as an idea is a conscious companion, experienced and confronted in the process of everyday life. Whilst the latter may be more precisely seen as suffering, the former is the kind of despair Kierkegaard (1983) refers to as ‘sickness unto death’. Despair, he says, is a sickness of the spirit, a sickness of the self. In a life-existence where death has become a disincarnated event, the unacknowledged spirit of man despairs. That matters of human life and death are appreciated only through the eyes of the natural-biological world is a sickness of the spirit, of the self. On the other hand, where death is a personal experience, the despair is qualitatively different in my view. In this experience, there is an acknowledgement of the spirit and a realisation that matters of human life and death transcend the temporal being. This is the despair qualified as suffering, the perpetual human project of synthesizing the temporal and eternal in matters of life and death.

Physical sickness is not sickness unto death, says Kierkegaard (1983), because although death is the end of sickness, death is not the end. However, despair is a sickness unto death in which the end is death and death is the end. He continues to say that the despair and torment of this sickness is precisely the inability to die: “When death is the greatest danger we hope for life; but when we learn to know the even greater danger, we hope for death. When the danger is so great that death becomes the hope, then despair is the hopelessness of not even being able to die” (p. 18). This is to be understood as the perpetual agony of an existence of non-being. It is an existence where the horizon of opportunity to exist as a whole person – to synthesize the temporal and eternal aspects of being – has fallen away. This is a lingering death, “this sickness of the self, actually to be dying, to die and yet not to die, to die death” (p. 18). It reflects a life-existence without imagination, a hollow and meaningless disincarnated event where there is a distinct boundary between the subjective experience of the world and the world encountered objectively. When one’s life-existence and the world has become “a spectacle for the disincarnate, despotic eye of the spectator” (Brooke, 2000, p. 18) it leads to the despair and ‘hopelessness of not even being able to die’ as one is trapped as an object with all other objects in the mundane world of appearance.

Voluntary death and death defying acts are dialectic

aspects of the temporal and the eternal, ego and Self. Voluntary death is the voice of ego-Self alienation and death defying acts of ego-Self identification. Both manifestations of death are attempts to resolve this imbalance between the eternal and temporal dimensions of being – to put an end to the despair of being unconscious of Self.

The dialogue between life and death is a metaphor for the task of establishing an authentic existence, to be an undivided being. I will employ the ego-Self axis concept used by Edinger (1992) to explore voluntary death and death defying acts. Part 1 will attempt to bring a theoretical understanding to these phenomena from a Jungian and an existential-phenomenological perspective. Part 2 will attempt to articulate a life-existence – the theoretical ideal – in which biological and ontological existence mature in concert and die together at the fulfilment of the human project of synthesis.

The question of whether any discipline of thought about human existence that relies on the empirical scientific principles of permanence, absolutes and dualism (in other words, technical reason rather than ecstatic reason) can tend to a wounded spirit is, I believe, answered by inference. And whilst the aim of this paper is not to directly compare individual sickness and cultural complexes of anxiety, it cannot be ignored that the psychological conflict of individuals reflects the collective conflict of societies (Lopez-Pedraza, 1990).

Voluntary death and death defying acts

In the recent past, New Zealand has had one of the highest youth suicide rates among the OECD countries (Drummond, 1997; Ministry of Health, 2001). It is a phenomenon of great concern to the country and has attracted considerable government funding towards research and awareness programmes to date. New Zealand is also a country which promotes itself as an extreme sport tourist destination in the form of ‘bungy jumping’ and white-water kayaking, to name but two activities that are pursued in their utmost form. These activities per se are not unique to New Zealand, but what is unique is the apparent need to have these extreme activities associated with its national persona. It is in Queenstown, New Zealand – the extreme sports capital of the world – where the fearless go to frighten themselves, say Mahne (2004). Moreover, in this oxymoron a metaphysical truth is revealed. These acts reflect the compulsion to triumph over something, to elevate oneself high and above the ordinary. However, anyone “whose goal is ‘something higher’

must expect some day to suffer vertigo”, say Kundera (1995, p. 56). Vertigo is not the fear of falling but rather the ‘voice of emptiness below us’ which beckons us and against which we fearfully defend ourselves. I submit that fearlessness is an unbearable status of being the individual attempts to dissolve. It is a veiled longing to put an end to an apparent and alienating existence. In the attempt to put an end to this existence, voluntary death and death defying acts converge at a psychological level to affirm being. As Kundera (1995) notes, extremes mean borders beyond which life ends, a veiled longing for death. In the longing for death is a hope for life.

The ‘as if’ existence which death defying acts are attempting to put an end to, I submit, is the life-existence of inflation, or, what Edinger (1992) refers to as ego-Self identification. Suicide, on the other hand, attempts to put an end to a life-existence of alienation, which is a disruption of the ego-Self axis in Edinger’s view. Death defying acts and suicide, apparently different, are united in their purpose to establish a more authentic existence. To live authentically seems to have become increasingly problematic in our so-called modern era where the apparent world has become the real world and the ‘real world’ the apparent world because of the notion of dualism, permanence and absolutes. As Engler (1998) points out, we have come to “misperceive what is impermanent as permanent, what is incapable of affording lasting satisfaction as satisfying, and what is without enduring substance or selfhood as being substantial or an independent existing self” (p. 115).

Part I

Inflation and death defying acts

The spirit of challenge and omnipotence characterizes death-defying acts. Death is mocked and thwarted in its purpose and there is a seeming carelessness and irreverence towards an existential given which, through its positive value, defines and gives meaning to human existence. By rendering death impotent in this irresponsible manner, the fragility of being is forgotten (Yalom, 1980). In this forgetfulness, consciousness and the meaning of self-responsibility is distorted. The individual being is ‘levelled down’ and we all become equal in the name of God (Nietzsche, 1990a), and under this illusion we become irresponsible, mind-less and care-less as-if we are inviolable and immortal. This is the paradox; although the death-defying artist continues to live in the mundane world, he has ceased to be ontologically, whereas in suicide – to be discussed later – the individual ceases to live in the apparent world but

announces his ontological birth.

Inflation

The original state of existence is the irreflective condition of ego-Self unity in which the ego is inflated by its identification with the Self as deity, says Edinger (1992). This is the solipsistic world of ‘myself alone’, says Edinger. The maxim in this world is ‘I am, and all that is, am I’. In this undifferentiated world, there is a twofold problem, according to Edinger. The challenge is to unite the gods and nature without total identification, to maintain ego-Self integrity whilst dissolving ego’s identification. This is the existential pivot of psychological development throughout life, the tension between life forces (ego) and those associated with death (Self), “such is the *opus* to which mortals must submit” (Welman, 2000, p. 134). With each step towards separation of ego-Self identity, the spirit of consciousness is wounded. It is the wound of inflation. It is a complex wound, which consists of the loss of a passive, irresponsible existence and the realization of one’s responsibility and mortality.

With repeated cycles of unity and separation comes a progressive differentiation between the ego and Self. Individuation as an ideal state of being is a conscious dialectic between ego and Self. Nothing remains to be made conscious and the individual stands at the beginning of history – an enlightened and unhistorical being – a modern man in the true sense of the word, according to Jung (1970). He stands at the very edge of the world, “he stands before the Nothing out of which All may grow” (p. 75). I shall pursue this idea in part two.

However, the so-called modern man – in defying death – is a man living the past (i.e., the collective unconscious) and history possesses him through the archetypal structure of the Self. Inflation is the ‘provisional life’ characterised by entitlement and innocence of responsibility towards the circumstantial facts of reality (Edinger, 1992). Marie-Louis von Franz (in Edinger) describes this as a fear to commit, to be bound, to be held accountable, of entering space and time and “being that one human being that one is” (p. 14). This inflation is the lightness of being that is so unbearable; it lacks presence and future, captured in the historical world and a past that overwhelms the constitutionally vulnerable and undifferentiated ego.

Consciousness as relationship does not exist in this psychic orientation because there is no differentiation between subject and object (i.e., participation

mystique). To experience oneself as being-in-the-world requires a conscious recognition of one's physical existence and mortality. In this regard, it is an interrelationship between three modes of existence; the 'own world' (*Eigenwelt*), the world 'with others' (*Mitwelt*) and the 'world around' (*Umwelt*). The "reality of being-in-the-world is lost if one of these modes is emphasized to the exclusion of the other two" (May, 1958a, p. 63). In particular, the interrelationships of these three modes depend upon self-awareness, the 'self knowing itself'. Without this capacity to reflect, death has no positive or personal value, it is an 'event' in the static world of nature. The birth of consciousness is the birth of duality and separateness, says Edinger (1992). He asserts that it is an innate stage of psychic development, which requires the polarisation of opposites; between spirit and nature, consciousness and unconsciousness. Edinger reminds us that before the fall of man he was immortal but unconscious – the remaining tree in paradise offers both immortality and consciousness. In other words, the sufficiently differentiated ego sacrifices itself, concedes its position of centrality and notion of permanence (i.e., independent conscious 'I') to become a conscious relation of Self and participate in the eternal life. Now, the real world and the apparent world resume their original station in human existence with the realisation that there is only one world of being in the conscious attempt to incarnate the Self.

When consciousness refuses to be tempered by reality, i.e., when it becomes distorted by the notion of absolutism and permanence, it becomes arrogant, excessive and without boundaries. It behaves in an omnipotent, irreflective and godlike manner – like a Titan – according to Lopez-Pedraza (1990). Death defying acts reflect the illusion that one's death can be chosen, it seems "like a Titanic, Romantic inflation, coupled with the avoidance of the constant reflection which death plays alongside life – the value of life that comes from the reflection of death" (p. 21). To approach death and appreciate it as a negative value belonging to the biological world only, only as an objective fact, veils its metaphysical truth and purpose as a subjective reality from which consciousness of Self is born. Whilst consciousness of Self affirms one's existence as a finite responsible human being, it also deepens the experience for the spiritual being that exists. In acts of excess there is no consciousness of Self – one is Self – and in acts of suicidal despair, one is no Self (being no Self is an existential dilemma to which I shall attend later).

I consider Kierkegaard's (1983) formulation of 'despair to will to be oneself' as relevant to ego-Self identification. According to Kierkegaard, the despair

to will to be oneself can be traced back to the despair to not will to be oneself (which will be addressed later). He asserts that the "self that he despairingly wants to be is a self that he is not ... in spite of all his despairing efforts, that power is the stronger and forces him to be the self he does not want to be" (p. 20). In other words, when the ego is consumed by Self (spirit only), the Self as potential life remains unconscious and waits to be born, to be incarnated as *Dasein* – in that there, that is mine. I am of the view that it is the archetypal Self that is "the root of despair, whose worm does not die and whose fire is not quenched" (p. 18). It, I submit, continues to burn through images and the imagination – in dreams and fantasy – the spirit forever hopeful of life on earth, hoping for the courage of consciousness to make actual what is possible. It is only through the differentiated ego of our temporal being that the eternal being can be revealed.

According to Welman (2000) death is a destructive threat from the conserving and uroboric Mother and also offers a release from the challenges of life to establish a sense of I-am. Consciousness is therefore continually threatened by both the chthonic and conserving component of Self, and the regressive nostalgia for the 'lost Mother', says Welman. Thus, in the shadow of an inflated life-existence lies the attraction of death as a "sanctuary from the demands of conscious existence" (p. 130). In our so-called modern world that is dominated by egocentric consciousness, the dynamic link between ego and Self is disrupted through inflation and alienation. The death instinct then becomes a call from Self to revive the world of imagination and to re-establish this dynamic link of balance between the temporal and eternal worlds of being. It is, says Welman, "a calling of Being and to Being" (p. 135). It is only through the conscious integration of Self and its archetypal structure that the individual can find the meaning of his existence against the backdrop of the eternal Being.

A narrow escape with death – where the fearless go to frighten themselves – is an awakening experience. It awakens one from one's ignorance of being in despair and a new orientation or *weltanschauung* emerges, according to Edinger (1992). A remnant of ego-Self identity is dissolved and the complementary values of the mundane and mysterious worlds are restored. The insufficiently separated ego that devalues the biological world to the dictates of the imaginal world – regardless of the limitations and constraints of circumstantial facts – comes of age. Consciousness is broadened by the realisation that one cannot rid oneself of the self that one is; to be the self of one's dreams is a mere illusion (Kierkegaard, 1983). Thus,

a broadened consciousness, where ego and Self form a relationship in which both are affected, inaugurates the existence of being human on the other side of despair.

Pain, suffering and death do exist prior to the birth of consciousness, but because there is no consciousness to experience them, they do not exist psychologically (Edinger, 1992). Ego-Self identification equates to the death of consciousness of being – an ontological death – and the potential death at the end of a defying act is meaningless and of no positive value. The emancipating ego – when still narrow, vulnerable and irreflective – answers to the nostalgic call of the primordial Mother with the same mind-less and carelessness with which it pursues death-defying acts. Death defying acts thus reflect a life-existence in which the progression towards separation and differentiation is still in its infancy. The life spirit is wounded by blindness and inflation. “Remember that the Titan, Prometheus, did not want to reflect from death; he wanted to liberate man from thinking about death” (Lopez-Pedraza, 1990, p. 26). Death defying acts reflect a life-existence in the Titanic image of the spirit of consciousness. By sleeping with eyes open, the spirit is wounded by the unchecked inflation of non-being.

Voluntary death and alienation

Thus far, I have considered the relationship between death defying acts and ego-Self identification as phenomena that mark the inflated stage of development in the continuous cycle of psychic maturation. In the following section, I propose to consider the relationship between voluntary death and alienation as phenomena of a significant disruption along the ego-Self axis. Part 2 will aim to provide an overview of the ideal stage of psychic development, which all other stages are animated towards.

Alienation

According to Edinger (1992), the expectations of the inflated ego are frustrated by reality and this experience results in an estrangement of ego and Self. Unchecked, this estrangement evolves into a sense of alienation from the basic ground of Self which represents the fullest possible consciousness, says Hart (1997). The Self announces itself through dreams, images, feelings and intuition and is a symbol for the original matrix of existence where there is no division of opposites. However, the Self is not a substance in and for itself, but a status of being which incarnates through relatedness. Suzuki (1998, p. 28)

describes this status of being (where there is a living dialectic between the ego and Self) as one of thoughtlessness where the borders of a discriminating and differentiating consciousness are “overstepped and one is plunged into the Unconscious which is not, after all, unconscious ... this is seeing into one’s Self-nature”.

Subject-object dualism has provided the Occidental with a point of reference to give form to his experience and the world of things, says Kelman (1998). This dichotomy represents, psychologically speaking, the emancipation of the ego from the ‘psychic dominants’ as a heroic act necessary upon the long journey of self-discovery (Jung, 1969). Jung, however, continues and says that this emancipation does not represent anything final and that it is ‘more or less illusory freedom’. It is merely a slice through the never-ending cycle of differentiation and synthesis of our evolving and broadening consciousness – ‘it is merely the creation of a subject, who, in order to find fulfilment, has to be confronted by an object’. The object being referred to here is the objective psyché or the collective unconscious, and not the object perceived by the five senses.

To avoid a confrontation with Self results in a one-sided consciousness in which one is cast into the world of objects to become an object oneself. In this state, which Samuels, Shorter and Plaut (1986) describe as “neurosis”, one can no longer take one’s aliveness, relatedness and identity for granted. In this existential dilemma of ontological insecurity (Laing, 1965; Rycroft, 1972) one is, paradoxically, at the mercy of the rejected Self, beset by what Neumann (1954) refers to as ‘paroxysms of will and action’ (i.e., possession).

This existential dilemma of meaninglessness and despair is brought into focus by Kierkegaard’s (1983) notion of ‘despair to will to be rid of oneself’. I associate this notion with ego-Self alienation. The despair is precisely that it is not possible to be rid of the eternal Self, for if “there was nothing eternal in a man, he would not despair at all; if despair could consume his self, then there would be no despair at all” (p. 21). In alienation, the will to be the other (to be your projection) is to deny the one you are. When you become like the other (if that is at all possible) you are still faced with the one you essentially are. This is the same reality faced when one fails to be like the other: the despair to will to be rid of oneself. “Consequently, to despair over something (to be something other) is still not despair proper. It is the beginning, or, as the physician says of an illness, it has not yet declared itself” (p. 19). The declaration

comes, I believe, when the realization dawns that one does not have a Self, but that the Self has one and that despair is essentially with oneself.

From a non-dualistic perspective of human reality and consciousness, Welman (2000) writes that death does not only refer to a regressive condition, but also to a progressive and evolved state where ego-consciousness gives way to a more encompassing consciousness. Death is now reconstituted as a fuller life, born from the conjunction of opposites held apart by an egocentric consciousness. This establishes a vital connection between Self, death and the imaginal life of Being, according to Welman. This is an “illimitable space or ‘nothingness’ within which images can emerge in their own right” (p. 131). The sacrificial death of ego-consciousness’ proclivity to differentiate and keep apart is a return to the home ground and resurrection of the human imagination, but the renunciation of the qualities of the heroic ego is no easy matter, it “daunts even the gods” (Jung quoted in Welman, p. 133). That which daunts even the gods is the human project of becoming an indivisible being. The capacity to synthesize the eternal and the temporal is something over which humanity cannot but despair. It is this despair which Kierkegaard considers both ‘excellence and defect’ – because man as spirit is not able to die – it raises him above the animal, it indicates his “infinite erectness and sublimity, that he *is spirit* (italics mine)” (p. 15). This eternal dimension of being is what nails man to himself, asserts Kierkegaard. He cannot rid himself of his self. This is eternity’s greatest and infinite acknowledgement of mortal man’s innate capacity to give life to the gods and “it is also eternity’s claim upon him” (p. 21).

The Self is first experienced as projection and if these projections are accepted, no matter how antithetical, the basic validity of wholeness of being is affirmed (Edinger, 1992; Jung, 1983). Through this self-acceptance, the individual finds the courage to face his finitude and mortality as he attempts to integrate these insights into conscious acknowledgement. Progressively, an optimal balance is struck between the extremes of god-likeness and animal likeness. However, when there is intolerance, non-acceptance of these projections of Self, the link between the ego and Self is severed, and this results in a consciousness that becomes an end in and for itself. This is an epistemological loneliness (May, 1958a) and it is in this vacuum of consciousness-only, that ontological statements are distorted. Anxiety is then seen to be caused by faulty thinking and is not seen as a voice which comments on the experience of non-being.

This broken connection between ego and Self leads to

emptiness, meaninglessness and despair, causing psychoses and suicide, say Edinger (1992). “We do not lack for modern expressions of the alienated state. In fact, they are so ubiquitous, our time could well be called the age of alienation” (p. 47).

In the alienated state, where the voice of Self is no longer heard, the archetypal forces of the Self, paradoxically, unconsciously possess humankind. Humankind feels alive in the apparent world, but he is existentially dead, he is a corpse among people, according to Binswanger (1958). Old age is when the lived past overpowers the life which is yet to be lived, but it is also possible to be biologically young, yet existentially old, the *Dasein* has been fulfilled, according to Binswanger. This is the instance of alienation where the present and future cannot unfold under the overbearing weight of ‘the history of man’. Death then becomes a necessary event to fulfil the life meaning of this existence, to be born the being one essentially is.

An “ego that kills itself is more active, more independent and individual, than the sad resignation of the languishing lover” (Neumann, 1954, p. 97). Voluntary death as a life-transcending death comes to represent a glad release from a *Dasein*, which has been fulfilled. It is the release from an existence without presence or future. From an existential perspective “suicide itself must be understood in this light”, says Binswanger (1958, p. 296). It is the last practical act of this existence which stems from the embodied world of action, deliberation and planning. It is not an act from a world *in potentia* – the ‘as if’ existence – but rather an affirmation, or birth of a deciding and acting individual being. Voluntary death represents that commitment to become the being that one is, to enter space and time and to incarnate the potential life. It is the ‘parting for ever’ from a nihilistic *weltanschauung*, states Binswanger. It is a parting from a world where the conscious connection with the original ground no longer exists. Voluntary death then becomes an affirmation of being-one-self. It mirrors a life that foundered on the existence of not being-one-self and through suicide; one’s authentic presence is claimed. It announces “authentically I am myself, or I *exist authentically* when I decisively resolve the situation in acting, in other words, where present and having-been unite in an *authentic present*” (Binswanger, 1958, p. 298).

In voluntary death – as a reflection of the life lived in despair and alienation – the person finds himself and chooses himself. Death becomes a birth and the individual stands at the edge of the world facing the ‘Nothing from which All may grow’.

Part II

Human existence on the other side of despair

The crisis of the imagining, embodied being revolves around the tension and dialogue between spirit and matter. It is between the extremes of Kundera's (1984) 'something higher' and the 'voice of emptiness below', the spiritual-only and the spiritual-less, where soul and the concept of *Dasein* converge. It is in the empty space between these extremes where that 'there that is mine' incarnates and consciousness is broadened. It is by being natural that one best recovers from one's unnaturalness, from one's spirituality, says Nietzsche (1990b). *Dasein* and soul both represent a third position between the sublime and the mundane as the authentic world of humanity.

Dasein and soul

Dasein – *sein* (being) and *da* (there) – is a reality of experience of which there can only be one. It is a world created through relatedness, an "unrepeatable cohesion with a specific individual", unique and original which dies when the individual dies (Kruger, 1979, p. 29). This reality, understood as *Dasein*, is circumscribed by the interrelationship of the three modes of existence: *Umwelt*, *Mitwelt* and *Eigenwelt*, mentioned previously. From this ontological premise, it is understood that man shows himself only through himself, it is a being *that carries* (italics mine) his whole existence, says Kruger (1979). To carry one's whole existence, points towards the decisive act of accepting the responsibility of giving meaning to one's own existence as a synthesis of the temporal and eternal.

Dasein, as the human face of existence, casts a certain light upon our idea about consciousness, responsibility, truth, knowledge and death. I am of the view that it also echoes the need for the restoration of the traditional tripartite arrangement of mind, psyche and spirit which has been dichotomized into mind and spirit by the Cartesian mindset of the Westerner, according to Hillman (1987).

Hillman (1992) describes soul as having more depth in ordinary life and being alive and present in most ordinary things. A soulful attitude always leads into the depths, beyond the observing 'I' which escapes the attention of empiricism. We live forgetfully, says Romanyshyn (1982) and psychology is challenged to work with that which was there before man was born, the imagination. The soul is imagination, says Hillman, and in his paper *Peaks and Vales* (1987) he argues that soul is neither spirit nor matter and that a

psychology of depth, of the soul, has to base itself "in a third place between *esse anima*, 'being in soul'" (p. 2). Moore (1992) associates the Buddhist concept of emptiness with soul: it is to experience things, as they are, as they present themselves at that moment, without altering the experience with 'known facts'. In other words, it is a way of living which avoids so-called intellectual truth (technical reason) to cloud experiential truth (ecstatic reason). "First 'soul' refers to the *deepening* of events into experiences; second, the significance soul makes possible, whether in love or in religious concern, derives from its special *relationship with death*" (Hillman, 1992, p. xvi). Soul emerges precisely as result of the *opus* of man to create a meaningful existence between the forces of life (ego) and the forces associated with death (Self).

Dasein implies a consciousness which does not exist in and for itself (Kruger, 1979). It always intends an object and is directed onto that which is not consciousness itself. For example, argues Kruger, one does not just love, but one loves somebody. Thus, consciousness as intentional is always mixed with the subject of experience, of the one being conscious. Consciousness can consequently never be objective in the empirical scientific definition of the term – independent, absolute, verifiable – because it is a transient product unique to the quality of the relationship between object and subject. It is in consciousness as relatedness that events in the apparent world become experiences of the real world, and in this dialectic, two worlds become one where matters of love, religion and death become significant for the being that is 'there'. This is the deepening of ordinary life. It is a life-existence which is present in the most ordinary things and amounts to the restoration of soul in which the world of appearance is always mixed with the human imagination.

This creative embodiment of the dialogue between the mundane world and the imaginative world points towards the maxim of existentialism; that man is always becoming, potentially always in crisis between the forces of being and non-being (May, 1958b). It is this crisis that quickens the human capacity to be conscious of, and responsible for, his existence, "not only as 'being-in-itself', as all things are but also as 'being-for-itself'" (May, 1958a, p. 41). In this I-am experience, the real-I-zation of one's Self depends upon being aware and responsible for incarnating that 'there that is mine'. This, I submit, characterises a living spirit with soul. Milan Kundera (1984) indirectly comments on this crisis of being, this existential burden. The burden to give our spiritual quest a human face can be an almost unbearable Cross. Yet, the absolute absence of a burden results in the unbearable lightness of being as

its soars into the Apollonian heights to “become only half real, (one’s) movements as free as they are insignificant” (p. 5).

May (1958a) reminds us that the verb ‘to know’ in ancient Greek and Hebrew is the same word for sexual intercourse. Thus, knowledge of another and ‘the other’ begins as an act of intimacy, an experience-near encounter of numinosity in which opposites are joined. Knowledge is thus the embodiment of experience and is created by paying attention to the dialectic between the inner and outer worlds with an imaginative eye. Knowledge approximates the facts of experience and stands in relation to experience as ego stands to Self. It can thus not be permanent or absolute. This dialectic creates something unique and original. The essence of truth is the freedom to reveal that which is in principle already open, states Kruger (1979). That which is revealed is what Kruger refers to as ‘first person statements’ which are ‘in a sense indisputable’, he asserts. I consider images and the products of imagination as forms of ‘first person statements’ of truth. Those images contained in metaphor, symbol or symptom are means by which soul attempts to articulate and announce itself as ‘being there’. This is the being that is there which announces itself when, hypothetically speaking, we already know everything through cold logic and reason.

Being and non-being are inseparable. The one defines the other, a precondition by which the other exists. The crisis of being is a dialogue with the many forms of non-being; the existential given of one’s personal death, death by conformism, death through possession by the Self and death through the despairing alienation from the Self. However, by confronting non-being in its various guises, one’s “existence takes on vitality and immediacy, and the individual experiences a heightened consciousness of himself, his world, and others around him” (May, 1958a, p. 48).

With our modern and dominant egocentric consciousness, death becomes a literal and absolute event in the distant future, and that leads inescapably to the death of meaning, according to Welman (2000). It is also the death of responsibility to confront and acknowledge that despair which is non-being. A meaningful and authentic existence is when events are turned into experiences, allowing oneself to be drawn deeper into living here-and-now. This is a spirited life with soul in which the narrow confines of the literalizing and concretizing ego are renounced in search of meaning in imagination, symbol and expression. “If theoretically, this entails a

confrontation with the reality of Self, then existentially it involves an encounter with the ontological immediacy of death” (Welman, 2000, p. 133).

Conclusion

What is the difference between ‘I think, therefore I am’ and ‘I am’? I have attempted in this discourse to reflect upon this by arguing that the spirit in which life is lived – and how the essence of being is experienced – is reflected in the attitude towards death.

In a life-existence marked by the experience of I-am, there is a conscious dialogue between ego and Self. This dialogue represents life as a third position between spirit and matter, a synthesis of the eternal and temporal being that one is. This life-existence is a living spirit with soul, where the meaning of one’s existence is discovered in the most ordinary things and life created every moment in the here-and-now. It is a life conscious of the authentic suffering to incarnate ‘that world that is mine’, between the will to be Self and the will not to be Self. It is then that one stands in that Empty space, before the ‘Nothing out of which All may grow’ – a modern man in the true sense of the word.

In a life-existence dominated by the experience of ‘I think, therefore I am’, there is a misrelating between ego and Self, between the temporal and eternal dimensions of human existence. One form of misrelating is the ego’s identification with Self, which creates the experience of oneself as if one is inviolable and omnipotent. Life is lived in unconscious despair – even in death there is no hope for life – because one is ontologically already a long time dead (one is Self). This life-existence of despair is articulated through death defying acts which have the same hallmarks of the life lived: irreverent, omnipotent and entitled. The other form of misrelating between ego and Self is ego’s alienation from the latter, which creates the experience of oneself as if one is an independent and substantial existing Self (something other than the self one is). In this life-existence, one lives in the intellectual vacuum of alienation, whilst the imagination steadily atrophies and dies. This life-existence of despair is articulated by voluntary death which bears the same hallmarks of the life lived: I am not of this world, and am constantly gnawing at the emptiness and meaninglessness of it all.

In a life-existence circumscribed by the constant misrelating of the ego and Self, death becomes the

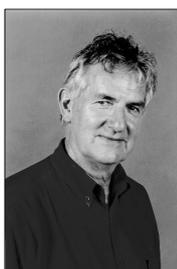
constant calling of Being to restore this disjunction, to invite the undivided being one potentially is – this is

eternity's claim upon humankind.

About the Authors

Gabriel Rossouw holds two Master's degrees, the first being in Counselling Psychology from Rhodes University in South Africa and the second in Analytical Psychology from the University of Western Sydney. He and his family immigrated to New Zealand in 1994 where he is employed as a psychologist in a public mental health unit.

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