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The Mushroom, the Frog, and the Rainbow of Desire: A Participatory-Psychedelic Spiritual Emergence

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This article will explore a spiritual emergency through a myth or fairy tale that emerged at the same time I had a frightening brush with death. Two days before the accident I had ingested psilocybin mushrooms. Michael Washburn, among other transpersonal theorists, will be used to interpret, amplify and re-frame this potential 'psychotic episode' with 'borderline features' into something more, perhaps, on the threshold of a shamanic initiation in a liminal state. The mythic sequence in my story anticipates the death-rebirth (perinatal pattern) and evolution of consciousness in the LSD research of Stanislav Grof; an evolution given epic participatory elucidation by Richard Tarnas; and an evolution consummated in the erotic desire for nature found in the panpsychism of Freya Mathews.

Keywords: *psychedelic emergency, participatory spirituality, perinatal dynamics, Stanislav Grof, Richard Tarnas, Carl Jung*

Myth and fairy-tale have long been at the heart of Jungian theory (e.g., Von Franz, 1985) and Jung's influence on transpersonal psychology is pronounced (Washburn, 1996, p. 2). This paper is an attempt at theorizing a fairy-tale as the container of a spiritual emergency that occurred when I was 25 years old. There has since been some room for reflection, contemplation, and integration while writing and researching with transpersonal theory (Lahood 2007, 2015, 2019, 2022). Moreover, its archetypal flavor suggests the unfolding of the perinatal sequence (ala Grof) and an attempt at self-healing or transformation.¹ This accidental and liminal brush with death left me with a "myth to live by" (after Joseph Campbell). And now, after so many years of reflective water under the bridge, I am prompted to theorize the myth for the transpersonal and anthropological record.

Jungian analyst Clarissa Pinkola Estés author of *Woman Who Run with The Wolves* (1989) declared,

There must be a little spilled blood, sometimes a good deal of blood, on every story if it is to carry the numen—the medicine.

A Rude Awakening

My story has a good deal of blood on it and I hope to show how it still carries a numinous medicine and magic. The following myth I now think of as something like a shamanic story, but it was written 40 years ago prior to my engagement with transpersonal psychology and I did not have the understanding of "shamanism" or spiritual emergence that I have now (e.g., Lahood, 2008).

Some background seems warranted. With the birth of my son (among other triggers), I participated in a series of spiritual or archetypal meltdowns (Lahood 2006). Several psychologically challenging, but ultimately healthy, ego-deaths and metanoias had occurred. With the gift of hindsight, at some level, beyond my awareness, his birth (in part) had catalysed a kind of purification process. It was as if my psyche was attempting to slough off its sense of separateness and return to a condition prior to the ego, or *regression in service of transcendence* after Washburn (1995). There were several acute life-review-like experiences, and what is called a *spiritual emergency* by Grof (1989), then the

crisis peaked in what Gregory Bateson called "self-initiation" (1972, p. 328) and in what Mircea Eliade called an "initiatory dream" (1964, p.38)

According to the Eliade, initiatory dreams, sicknesses, and ecstasies are means of "reaching the condition of a shaman" and they transform the "individual into a technician of the sacred" (p. 33). Let me be very clear: while these frames of reference rescue me from "madness" (for which I am grateful) they may unfortunately thematize me as being some kind of "shaman" and I do not think of myself in these terms, in any way, shape or form.

In an extremely vivid dream, I smashed through a window cutting my right forearm very badly. I was asleep, sleepwalking. In the theatre of my dreams, a train was coming through the house with a huge roar to kill me and my 3-year-old son. At that time in my life we were temporarily living in a house near the main trunk line where trains rumbled the house going past at night. My then partner was on a 6-week retreat because she had experienced serious postnatal depression and was due home in the next 2 days. The streetlamp outside our house, in the dreamscape, was the light on the front of the train and there was a terrifying feeling of being trapped and unable to escape this locomotive death. When I could not move the window latch to get my son out of harm's way, I panicked, and smashed through the window. I woke up, horrified, to find I had punched through my own bedroom window and had caught my arm on a jagged piece of glass still stuck to the pane. It was a terrifying way to wake up amid the blood, shock, pain, disbelief ... there was blood on the ceiling. I wrapped a towel around my arm, held my son's hand, went next door to wake the neighbors (at 2 a.m.) to ring the ambulance because we had just moved there and the phone service was not yet turned on. I could not risk driving us as I might have passed out from shock or possibly bled to death. An ambulance soon came, taking my son and I to hospital where I was operated on to remove the large piece of glass stuck in my arm. At some point within the 5 hours I was lying on the slab, I recall the surgeon saying that the glass was very close to the artery and I was lucky to be alive. He said there was a person in the next theatre who had survived a suicide attempt

by driving his car into a train. The surgeon jokingly said "he's in better shape than you and you only dreamed about a train." My son was with a nurse and the ambulance dropped us home at about 8 a.m. on a bright Sunday morning.

Conversations with friends shaped the incident "a nightmare" or "sleep-walking," but I could not understand such a dramatic act, nor the feeling of absolute euphoria and the feeling of expansive, almost triumphant, spaciousness that surfaced afterward and lingered for several days, accompanied by a deep and abiding sense of peace. It is hard to explain but I felt as if I was *satisfied*. In my socialized mind, I decided I was basically just crazy, a bloody lunatic, and consigned myself to that "crazy person" domain which oddly gave me some sense of relief...as I could then give up on being "normal." However, I suggest the terms "crazy" and "psychotic" are far too pedestrian for what was happening to me. The following story surfaced over the next surreal day around 11 a.m. My right arm was heavily bandaged and painful with 50-plus stitches, so with my left hand I tapped out what was to become a lifelong contemplation on my electric typewriter (I had been working as journalist in a small town and now I was employed as firewood cutter). At a conscious level, I believed at the time it was a gift for my son and wrote it as a personal fairy-tale for him—a cautionary tale—not to eat the red and white *amanita muscaria* toadstools who grew nearby and who were deemed to be poisonous; a gift for his 3rd birthday.

Theater and Story Telling

Since then, I have found a way to keep the story alive as fortunately I have a theatrical story telling bent (around the time it happened I had been getting paid work as an actor in New Zealand) and later was lucky enough to work with Paul Rebillot a Gestalt teacher who had been involved with theater when he had a "dramatic" spiritual emergency (1992). He created workshop structures that were theatrical rites of passage which included a ritualized encounter with the Gods of madness. I have also had a 30-year transpersonal-Gestalt workshop life (Lahood, 2019, 2022) that have had a holotropic (Grof, 1985) charismatic (Heron & Lahood, 2007) and dramatic performative aspect

to them and I sometimes perform the story, taking on all the roles, if the mood is right, as a teaching device and to feed the hungry Gods of spontaneity and creativity (Lahood 2019).² This supportive ritual container has been useful in term terms of my own integration.³

So, the tale of the mushroom and the frog has been mostly told in experiential environments as a way, in fact, of introducing or amplifying Grof's perinatal matrixes, as entertainment, and a kind extralinguistic way of speaking to the evolution of consciousness as "the rainbow of desire" (Lahood, 2019). Similar, perhaps, to what Jacob Needleman (1996) called the "Holy Desire" for communion with God (differing from "desire nature" or instinctual appetite) or more recently what Freya Mathews (2003) called a *conative* (after Spinoza) *desire for nature* a (repressed) desire for erotic consummation with the subjectivity of nature—or in other words, our personhood in congress with worldhood.⁴

I would begin the story this way: "Is there anyone out there interested in Mushrooms (applause); Mother Moon (cheers), Monsters (claps and hoots); and Madness (howls)"; I would then say, "Let me take you on walk, into a forest, past a pond, deep into the center, to the foot of a huge tree, where there lived a little mushroom—a little grey green mushroom."

A Marble of Great Price

But first let me take you back in time to California 30 odd years ago (and 7 years after the story was born) at a training workshop with Stanislav and Christiana Grof, where I was doing an exercise with a woman called Donna—we had paired up to do the breathwork. She was a dynamic person, I felt strangely connected to her and liked her very much.

The exercise was simple: sit back-to-back; one person think of a question (in silence) and the other person was to have a response and write it on a piece of paper. I had a very clear image of a glass marble with a green and yellow inner fleck. The question on her mind she later told me was "can I have a baby?" She was wondering at that time, if she might bear a child with her husband Sean (who was also attending the training). I told her what I had seen, we laughed, pulled puzzled

faces, shrugged our shoulders, and that was that—we went on with our respective days.

Two days later, I went for a walk up a road. This turned into a trail up a valley which wound into some forest and eventually about a mile away from the training site. I stumbled on a natural amphitheater made of 15 to 20 giant redwood trees. From memory I'd say it was about 30 or 40 feet in diameter. I walked to the center of the amphitheater and stood slowly turning around taking in the mandala made of trees. I was excited and thought to myself "what a great setting for my story" (which has as its main character a little grey-green mushroom who lived at the foot of a mighty Totara Tree). As I looked about, to the left of entry, I saw the Tree where the *dramatis personae* would have gathered and where the action would have taken place (the story was now replaying in my mind).

I walked to the greatest of the redwoods in that circle in White Sulfur Springs, California, a long way from Aotearoa, New Zealand, where the Mighty Totara in my mythic imagination would stand. And there in the root system of the real redwood (where the mythic mushroom would have been—was, unbelievably, outrageously, a marble—with a green and yellow fleck—the exact marble. The world fell silent as if it forgot to breathe for a moment. Stunned, I stooped over and picked it up not quite in disbelief, as I was unable to argue with the fact of its material presence. Astonished and excited at its portent I turned around and ran back down the hill. I found Donna and pressed the marble into her hands saying, "I think this is for you." To my way of thinking this was a charismatic gift for her—a gift from God so to speak.

Donna's response was stunning. But before we get to Donna's story, let me tell you the myth. It is usually told to a group of persons sitting in a circle and me acting into the roles with as much theatrical energy as is available. It is my personal "oral tradition" and ritual performance, and I don't know how well it translates to an academic audience in written form. But I ask you to imagine having it performed to you, as if you were hearing it and seeing it and feeling it.

This is the story with only a few nuances added over the past 35 years.

The Frog, The Mushroom, The Taniwha's Gift, and the Rainbow of Desire

This is a story of death ... Oh best beloved.

It is said that Maui is crushed to death in the volcanic vagina of Hine nui te-po. The mother of night.

It is also said that when a great chief dies a great totara tree falls in the forest. This story begins in a clearing in a forest at the foot of the greatest tree in the world.

Where there lived a little grey-green mushroom. He was a happy little fellow with many forest friends who would sit in a circle talking forest talk and singing forest songs sometimes late into the night. So late in fact they could see the twinkling of the stars flashing like colored gems against the velvet black of the night. There was the fantail, of course, the mouse, the bush snail, the embryonic caterpillar. One day, on a day much like today, that embryonic caterpillar asked the mushroom a very special question, "Mushroom you have everything you could ask for but if you could ask for something, if you had a wish, ... what would it be?"

"That's easy," said the little mushroom. "I would wish for a colorful new coat to replace this old grey-green one." You see the little mushroom loved things colorful, the blossoming of forest flowers, the orange-red clouds at sunset, the flashing feathers of bright birds, the twinkling of a distant star, and once, yes once, oh best beloved, the little mushroom had even seen a RAINBOW—the sight of which filled his heart with tremendous awe and strange yearnings.

As soon as the little mushroom had uttered his wish the World Stopped and a Loud Noise was heard coming toward the clearing. The noise became louder and the mushroom's friends became frightened. Fantail flew up into the canopy to see what was making the dread noise. "It's OK," she chirped, "It's only that dreadful loudmouth frog from down at the pond. Well then, I must be off he's such a bore." As she disappeared, a great bloated frog crashed into the clearing and without a word of introduction, plonked himself down in their midst and launched into a great boast about himself.

He had great big, yellow eyes, and a huge, bloated body all wrapped in a rather beautiful red

and white spotted coat. "Welcome," he belched. "You lucky fellows, have you ever seen such a beautiful creature as myself? Why, my coat is famous throughout the forest. It is considered the most wonderful, the most colorful, the most gorgeous thing you ever did see. Am I right?"

And here it must be said that the frog's coat was, indeed, rather beautiful.

Before the others could get a word in, he started shouting about himself and his red coat all set about with the white spots. Shouted long and loud until, one by one, the mushroom's little friends quietly slipped away leaving the mushroom all alone with the toad. Only when night gathered, and the dew began to fall did the toad stop his bragging and headed off back to his pond. Shouting all the way.

"Thank God he's gone," said the mushroom, "I hope he doesn't come back." But, come back he bloody well did. The very next morning, mushroom and his friends had gathered in the clearing when in lurched the frog who sat right down in their midst and began bragging about his marvellous coat at the top of his lungs.

And it must never be denied, oh best of beloveds, that the frog's bright red coat with lovely white spots was indeed incredibly beautiful, colorful, and rather special.

But to the mushroom's horror, once again, his friends departed, leaving him all alone with the loudmouth frog. "Look at me, look at me look at me look at me look at me," bellowed the frog. "I am so beautiful! Everyone should have the chance to see me and my magnificence. I say, why don't I climb on your back to give them all a better view?" Then, to the mushroom's other horror, he pulled himself up on top of the mushroom. "I say mushroom, since I am sitting on you, that makes you my stool and since I am a toad, then you are my little 'toad stool!' Ahahaha Look I made a joke everybody. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. I am so funny—mushroom I'll sit on you forever."

Much to the mushroom's humiliation, that is exactly what he did. Every morning the frog would slime his way out of his pond, brag his way through the forest and into the clearing, and pull himself up onto the poor protesting mushroom. Once there, he would launch into loud stories about his beautiful

coat and his stately presence. Every day, for many days, this terrible thing did happen and eventually all the mushroom's friends stopped coming to the clearing. They tried to talk the toad down, to get him off, but he could not hear them. He could only hear the sound of his own voice.

Sad mushroom. One night, when the toad had finished tormenting him and had gone home, and he was all alone, he began to cry. The Mother Moon slipped out from behind a tree and a cloud bathing him in her silvery light. He looked up at her with tears in his eyes and he cried out in prayer, "Oh Mother Moon, please help me! That toad is so fat and heavy and loud. Please help me get him off my back. Once all I could wish for was a colorful new coat and now I don't even have any friends to talk to. Please Mother Moon, please help me." He looked up at the Moon Mother ... and although the mushroom could never be sure ... it seemed to him that

Mother moon winked at him.

I say Marama of the moko winked at him.

Most verily it seemed to him that
the Mother in Moon did most assuredly
wink at him.

Anyway he felt better for his prayer.

The next day, the mushroom was waiting for the toad to turn up and torment him as he always did, but he didn't come. The morning came and went, and still the frog was not there. The mushroom was beginning to think the frog had found someone else to torture when into the clearing leapt the frog in a wild-eyed panic. "Help me!, help me!, help me!" shrieked the frog jumping, jerking and gyrating around the clearing.

"What is it?" cried the mushroom.

"Help me, help me, help me, help me," screeched the frog, throwing himself at the mushroom's feet.

"Tell me what's going on with you," said the mushroom.

"Oh my skin, oh my skin, oh my skin" cried the frog. "I was sitting on a rock this morning in my pond when a monarch butterfly landed on a bulrush nearby and I simply began to tell her that my coat was far superior to her silly little gossamer wings

... which is true you know. When my bragging awoke the Taniwha at the bottom of my pond, it came rushing up out of the deep, dark, depths and now it wants to eat me for its breakfast. I have been running and trying to hide in the bush, but this bloody red coat keeps giving me away. Oh, my skin, he's coming what shall I do I'm going to die. I'm going to die. I'm going to die. It cannot be."

"I know what you must do," said the mushroom. "You must change coats with me immediately. You can take my grey-green coat and hide in the forest and the Taniwha will never find you."

"But mushroom," said the frog, "then the Taniwha will eat *you*." And the world stopped breathing for a moment because this was the first time the frog had thought about anyone outside of his own rather magnificent skin. "Oh no he won't. I'm poisonous, even Taniwhas know that," said the mushroom.

In the twinkling of an eye they changed coats and with a frightened croak the toad jumped out of the clearing. Then with a fearful roar like an earthquake, or cars crashing or trains wrecking, into the clearing came the Taniwha, a red-eyed demon. He had long sharp fangs, razor like claws, scaly skin and a wicked jagged tail all covered in tattoos. His blood red eyes flashed like rubies in his skull as he glared around the clearing as if in an awful rage until he spied the little mushroom dressed in the frog's folly and with a bound, he was upon him.

The mushroom could feel the monster's hot breath on his face, and he knew at that moment that he would be ripped to pieces by the demon Taniwha and he looked straight and directly into the *eyes of death*. When suddenly, unbelievably, outrageously,

the Taniwha winked at him.

I say the Taniwha actually winked at him.

No! I tell you

the Taniwha winked at him.

And with a howl of laughter, The Taniwha leapt out of the circle and disappeared back into the dark forest.

Silence reigned in the forest for a long, green and silvery time as everyone forgot to breathe for quite a while.

Now, the mushroom was never quite sure what had happened that day in the clearing, in the forest, at the foot of the great world tree, with the moon, the frog and the Taniwha but this much is true—and therefore this much we can say, the Taniwha *never* came back. Nor did the frog. To this day, he's still hiding in the forest and lurking in the ponds most of the time keeping quiet about a marvellous coat he once owned. Occasionally, you can hear him at night chirping "I once owned a" But, then he remembers the terror and falls still and quiet.

Only the Moon knows where the Taniwha really is.

This is true: The mushroom got his wish: a colorful new coat all red with white spots ... most splendid. Yet more than this, and better still, with the great fat frog no longer on his back, mushroom's friends all came back when they heard the toad had gone. You see, they could hear the silence and they came to sit in a circle in the clearing and talk forest talk and sing forest songs, sometimes deep into the starry night. Over the years the mushroom's coat seemed to grow and change. When you looked at it was as if you could see twinkling stars, flashing feathers, orange sunsets, purple clouds, forest flowers, butterfly wings; Taniwha's red ruby eyes and yes even RAINBOWS.

And every now and then one of the mushroom's friends would ask, "Mushroom where *did* you get this marvelous many-colored coat?"

the little mushroom would smile
and wink at them.

I say he would smile and wink at them.

Yes indeed! He would just smile
and wink at them.⁵

The Myth as Transpersonal Container

Anthropologist, David Young, in his discussion of "spontaneous visions," and using as a model Jung's archetypal psychology, argued that when something devastating happens to a person and her or his "previous attitudes to life break down," the contents of the "collective unconscious" become activated, and "autonomous complexes" [spirits] are projected externally, "which can lead to psychosis unless these materials can assume a

communicable form such as a vision" (1994, p. 185). Successful communication or translation canalizes these powers into consciousness, which can then become a source of creative insight and energy (p. 186; Lahood, 2015).⁶ I was writing the story for a child, so I believed. Yet, at the same time, I was unawarely creating an artistic and creative container for the liminal encounter with death—a dream that had interacted with the real world in a rather dangerous way.

Borderline Psychosis?

Researching Tamang (Nepalese) shamanism by initiation Larry Peters, a transpersonal anthropologist, noted that rites of passage and borderline personality disorder (BPD) have some common characteristics. He wrote that fasting, altered states of consciousness, body mutilation, and drug taking are typical in rites of passage and BPD. He also noted that BPD is on the rise in Western cultures and may be culture specific to the West because of our lack of meaningful rites of passage.⁷

Self-destructive acting out of BPD patients often occurs in trancelike states involving temporary regressive experiences of merging, fusion, and loss of boundaries. Although they are considered pathological in traditional psychiatry, these altered states are typical in the liminal transitional stage in rites of passage (1996, p. 211).

From this perspective, wrote Peters (1996), that acting out the self-destructive symptoms of BPD can be interpreted as attempts at self-healing and transformation. But the rite goes wrong for lack of social support, proper guidance, and sacred rituals. Then, the liminal state can "be labelled crazy, psychotic or deviant and not placed within a meaningful context" (p. 212). Traditional shamanistic rituals can alter

the patient's relationship to community and cosmos ... ritual not only creates social support, but also generates what Stan and Christina Grof call a "spiritual emergency." This is an intense, emotional crisis that often includes themes of death and renewal but presents opportunities for healing through a deeper connection to

nature, divinity and other people" (1996, p. 209).

For Grof, spiritual emergences were related to the perinatal dimension of the psyche (see below). By the force of their dynamism, these [perinatal-archetypal] energies find their way into the world through the spontaneous ritual-making activity and "religious" encounters, and in what Gregory Bateson (1972) called "self-initiation" (p. 328). Bateson believed that such instances were not conventionally pathological but "trans-contextual" experiences (p. 272), meaning that they could also be artistic and performative but had transcended any one context. These primal responses may generate autonomic symbolic processes, and include a symbolic or real encounter with death; when full-blown, an "endogenous rite of passage" that does not have exogenous social support and validating belief systems" (Bateson, 1961, cited in Peters, 1994, p. 6).⁸

In my case, the liminal mutilation was not repeated, I was becoming involved in creative therapies (psychodrama, Gestalt) and within 3 years was involved in Grof's holotropic community among others. I made sure I got around cultures where deep catharsis and *emotional letting* was permitted and where there was plenty of room for compassionate self-reflection and integration. I think, in terms of a map of the developmental terrain, it is hard to go past that of Michael Washburn's *Ego and the Dynamic Ground* (1995). It is humanely messy, nonlinear, and the concept of *regression in service of transcendence* was of great service.

According to Tarnas (1992), the elemental, cellular and preverbal nature of the perinatal material only "took place when the ego's usual capacity for control had been overcome, either through the use of a catalytic psychoactive substance or therapeutic technique, or through the spontaneous force of the unconscious material" (p. 427). In my case it could have been any or all of these catalysts, but I add human reproduction to the list because of its deep entwinement with sex and death (Lahood, 2006a, 2006b, 2006). Retrospectively, I think the writing of my myth, the creative rendering of the crises into a structured narrative that morning—was perhaps more important than I could have known.

Myth as Ancestral Echoes?

Let's go back almost 200 years—not so long ago. There is a Maori word, *whakapapa*, meaning something like "heritage." As far as it goes, I am an old kiwi, relatively speaking, from *Aotearoa*, New Zealand, via my pioneering-colonizing ancestors—a mixed bag of early Scottish settlers, an English whaler and a Methodist missionary (The Reverend James Watkin of Welsh descent) who translated an early Bible into Southern Maori (as my grandmother told it). Parts of me are ambivalent regarding these not very ecologically nor culturally sensitive occupations (whalers and missionaries); other parts are proud, they are my people, and I honor their lives. I do not think I can write this paper without some kind of nod to those ancestors, the colonial past, and an acknowledgment to Maori peoples—and there would be some who say that past is still very present.

To begin with the toadstool, the red and white "fly agaric" is in fact an exotic foreigner and a colonial import into the society of New Zealand flora and fauna. The story's first title was Aesopian: "How the toadstool got its spots." All characters in the tale are native, indigenous, ab-original except for the fly agaric or (Latin) *amanita muscaria*. As a child playing in the subtropical, dark, dank, bush and creeks that surrounded my home in Wainuiomata (Wellington), these explosions of blood-red-orange with bright, white, spots; these fairytale, storybook fungi, were a loud and marvelous contrast and grew around the bottom of pine trees (also imports). I found this on the web:

Amanita muscaria (fly agaric) is a toxic mushroom containing a hallucinogenic substance, muscimol. Originating in the Northern Hemisphere, *Amanita* was accidentally introduced into New Zealand, and is now widespread. It forms a mycorrhizal association with the roots of various trees, especially conifers, however since its introduction to New Zealand, it has also formed symbiotic mycorrhizal relationships with the roots of native beech trees, displacing native fungi, and in this respect is a pest species due to its competition with endemic species.⁹

Speaking of childhood somewhere between seven and nine I remember becoming engrossed in

a school "project" on Maori people.¹⁰ I wrote to my grandmother on my father's side because he had grown up in Gisborne, which is where Captain Cook, according to European history, "discovered" New Zealand for the English Crown. My father had told me that when he was young, he and his *tangata whenua* friend were caned (thrashed) for speaking *te reo* (Maori language) in the back of the class, as speaking Maori had been made illegal.¹¹ He referred to his "extended Maori family" that had kind of adopted him (his father, a Lebanese immigrant, after the First World War, had died when he was 5 or 6). My father was a man of few words (little wonder), so I have clear recall of him telling me once that the redcoats of the British army were no good because they stood out and they gave the soldiers away in the bush and made for easy targets in guerilla warfare. When teaching me how to spear eels, and "tickle" trout, he would occasionally tell of his childhood and the Maori who taught him; and once, while hunting up a dark, deep, moody, slow-moving tributary, he said there was a *Taniwha* in that place where a friend of his had drowned. I spent many summers in the Wainuiomata river with my fox terrier Zoe, hunting eels and rainbow trout for food and for the love of predation.

I received a detailed and unexpected letter from my Grandmother. She told me that her/our people had been killed in the Poverty Bay Massacre by Te Kooti—a religious war chief. He founded the Ringatu Church (a hybrid of Judaeo-Christian and Maori) which is alive today. Te Kooti's father tried to kill him as a boy by burying him alive; he had studied the Bible; was wrongly imprisoned; had prophetic visions involving an angel of war; made a spectacular escape taking a British schooner; and his forces waged a guerilla-style war on the East Coast, attacking a settlement in the middle of the night slaughtering and mutilating men, women, and children. A chapter of her family, she said, had been wiped out but for one surviving relation, a girl of 6 years had hidden until her rescue by the militia, made up of Crown troops, opposing Maori factions, and settlers. She wrote of the terror of the attack, the burning houses, but most of all, the sound of the *haka* or war dance coming from the bush (this is what I was told). I kept the letter but eventually lost touch with it.

A Participatory-Psychedelic Spiritual Emergence

A recent documentary claimed Te Kooti got his name from a British army coat he wore, hence: Te Coati. In his religious performances he is said to have taken the shape of the lizard. In Maori tradition lizards are considered highly *tapu* (sacred, prohibited) and Te Kooti would take on the persona of a lizard, stiffening his body, arching his back and spreading his fingers and speaking in tongues.^{12, 13} I cannot help but wonder if the red and white coat is somehow related to this colonial encounter with the Taniwha and his terrifying *haka* which saw our little frog hiding away in terror. And I cannot help wondering if my self-mutilation and story were somehow a strange echo of that dreadful and traumatic encounter between cultures? Or simply a delayed response to the horror and the traumatic family deaths indicated in that letter.

A Multilocal Transpersonal Event

Back to California and the marble: this is what Donna told me. She had gone to school as a child where she had a desk in which she kept two special marbles—a much loved Red Queen and Golden King. Her fantasy life was made up of The Golden King and The Red Queen making and having babies. She would get lost playing at making babies with them in her desk, and one day, she was caught and confronted by the teacher—who on seeing the marbles confiscated them promising that she could have them back later. However, the marbles were never given back. She had felt her reproductive powers had somehow been interfered with by the teacher's action and broken promise (see Lahood, 2022). So, for her, the cosmos had arranged to give her back her marbles to heal the hurt—through our relational co-creation. Many years later, when I asked if she still had it, Donna sent me a photograph of the marble still on her alter—a gift from the universe.

I would just like to pause for moment and take in the depth, complexity and accuracy of this extension, healing, communication. Not sure if I have the language, but David Levin (1985) might, he wrote:

When our awareness and understanding have reached a place in their unfolding where we can begin to experience ourselves as participating

in the continuum of a transpersonal field, a field of synchronicities, interdependencies, and intertwining, interpenetrating existences, it seems to me that our capacity for loving and caring undergoes a radical shift in its openness to beings (p. 153).

In his deconstruction of perennialism in transpersonal theory, Jorge Ferrer (2002) lifted "transpersonal experiences" out of their subjective moorings and reframed them as "transpersonal events." This is a more accurate term, he suggested, because transpersonal events are primarily ontological and multilocal and cannot be reduced only to one person's subjective experience. By consigning these trans-temporal and trans-spatial events to a lone subjectivity they can be viewed as less real, but are also more vulnerable to narcissistic appropriation. What we subjectively experience, said Ferrer, is our share or participation in a dynamic co-creative mystery and the generative powers of life (2002):

I am suggesting that what has commonly been called a transpersonal experience can be better conceived as the emergence of a transpersonal participatory event. The basic idea underlining the participatory turn, then, is not that an expansion of individual consciousness allows access to transpersonal contents, but rather that the emergence of a transpersonal event precipitates in the individual what has been called transpersonal experience. Thus understood, the ontological dimension of transpersonal phenomena is primary and results in the experiential one. (p. 116)

So, while the story was emerging with me in New Zealand seven years before meeting Donna, Donna was only a girl of 10 or 11, which was also when her Sovereign reproductive marbles were taken; when we worked together she was in her early 40s; I was early 30s. The *trans-subjective* psychoid marble "manifested" in the root system of the redwood a few days after our psychic attunement and the viewing of the image of the marble in my mind, and later was found precisely at the moment of imaging the story setting. These unusual

temporal and spatial extensions of consciousness are suggestive of Jung's notion of synchronicity (an acausal connecting principle) in which the human mind interacts with the material world across the subject-object divide of the Western mind—or in kiwi parlance, "a bloody miracle."

Jung, Grof, Tarnas: A Framework

Likely Jung's most far-reaching contribution was the notion of a collective unconscious. He interpreted his research to suggest that beyond the individual psyche there is a pre-personal and trans-personal dimension "manifested in universal patterns and images such as are found in all the world's religions and mythologies" (Edinger, 1992, p. 3). Jung's movement or evolution from ego-centred to Self (God)-centered that he called individuation.

Building on Jung, Grof's (1975, 1980) research proposed a progression of perinatal dynamics that the fetus encounters as birth approaches, which he saw as mirrored in a set of experiences encountered sequentially in LSD sessions—a sequence that appears to follow the classic death and rebirth pattern found in ancient mystery religions and in a way, gave Jung's archetypal psyche a biological dimension. The same patterning has been identified by Grof (1985) in shamanic performances and rites of passage.

In his book *The Passion of the Western Mind* Tarnas (1991) applied Grof's perinatal matrices to the trajectory of the whole of Western intellectual tradition from original participation, its loss and repression in Western industrial society, and, finally, to the re-emergence of participatory mind in "a (sacred marriage) between the long-dominant but now alienated masculine and the long-suppressed but now ascending feminine" (p. 443)—which he saw as the epochal shift predicted by Jung.

Tarnas' integration of Grof's LSD research into a participatory account moves from original embeddedness, to the loss, separation and repression of the feminine or participatory mind and on into future participation (see Kremer, 1992; Reason, 1994). Some see this recovery as a poetic and post-linguistic venture, (e.g., Cheetham, 2005; Mathews, 2003; McDermott, 2007) whereas the phenomenological tradition claims an always,

already-available attunement (Heron, 1992; Levin, 1985; Reason, 1994). For Grof and Tarnas, the subject object dichotomy that is the modern mindworld is set up in childbirth, and requires a head-on, experiential confrontation with the birth-death process which then restores the poetic-participatory worldview as the split Cartesian mindworld is healed. It is a *particular* participatory future that this paper, and indeed my "accidental" myth are oriented.

In the following analysis I will break my myth into four significant acts. These find easy, if not exact, fit with Grof's perinatal sequence: BPM1 oneness-unity; BPM2 alienation-engulfment; BPM3 struggle and encounter with death; BPM4 unexpected liberation, rebirth, and reconnection.¹⁴ This archetypal process is experienced as psychospiritual *death and rebirth*, and as pointed out by Grof (and followers) cannot be reduced to birth trauma (Bache, 2019). Strongly implied in the myth is the Jungian individuation from a pre-egoic condition to ego-centeredness to Self-centeredness; but also, in the final act, I perceive the stirrings of a participatory self.

Act One: BPM1

The mushroom sits at the foot of the great tree in a mandala-like organization with his forest friends, singing and communicating in forest songs and forest language. Implied in this "original" or "green speech" is a unity, a poetry, prior to duality, the subject-object split and the "fall" created by language. Language and form are still fused. Here we are emerged in a simple, childlike, archaic, original setting—they are happily enchanted in their primitive, pre-reflexive, unified condition.

This would correspond to Grof's first perinatal matrix: being pervaded by a sense of undifferentiated unity. It also suggests Jung's original or archaic self—a pre-personal self, prior to a differentiated ego. For Washburn it is the dynamic ground before primal or original repression (which creates the ego). Also implied in this opening scene is kind of undifferentiated wholeness a mandala-like, uroboric circle (Neuman, 1955).

From a participatory perspective it is suggestive of Barfield's *original participation*—or the *participation mystique* of Lucien Levy-Bruhl where the so-called indigenous mind is in a kind of mystical

fusion prior to the loss of this participation (Ferrer, 2007). For Barfield, this progressive loss signalled a *devolution* of consciousness as a necessary phase for a further evolution (McDermott, 2007).

The Rainbow of Desire

We also note that it is in this good womb of original participation where we learn about the mushroom's wish for a coat of many colors; his future desire for nature (flowers, clouds, bird's feathers and the *rainbow*).

This holy motif is the harbinger of a future relational-Self—the very arc of the rainbow is like some giant multi-colored mushroom made of colored light spread across the sky. In the story, it is a blessing, a prophetic vision, pointing to the new world the mushroom will embody. Peter Reason pointed out the world of original participation and the world of repressed participation are not the same worlds as future participation (Reason, 1994). And, like the shaman's slender rainbow-bridge, it leads to greater communion with the *anima mundi* (the soul of the world). It is his wish for a "new coat" that sets the drama into play. "Only a wish, says Freud, can possibly set our psychic apparatus in motion," wrote Norman O. Brown (1959) in his study of eros. And this wish, this desire for the rainbow (the coat of many colors), according to Freya Mathews, is *conative* (after Spinoza), an erotic desire for contacting and encountering the subjectivity of the world. However, it is possible that cohering in this simplicity is *cosmogensis*; the Uncreate prior to Creation, the Unmanifest, the Hidden Treasure; Deus Absconditus prior to Manifestation and *Deus Revelatus*, Bohm's implicate before explicate order; or in Mathew's way; The One desiring of the Many.

Act Two: BPM2

The second act crises is the coming of the marvellously egocentric frog into the circle. From the Grofian perspective the original unity is lost and the mushroom is engulfed, humiliated and oppressed by the heavy duty frog who *sits* on top of him. This is the beginning of a pronounced period of torture and alienation for the mushroom as the original mandala made up of his friendly circle, their rhythm, their music-making and green language fade away. He becomes isolated, alienated, crushed, lonely and sad at the loss of his friends and the forest life

he once lived with them. He grieves, he weeps, he pines, and (importantly), he *prays*.

From a Jungian perspective the other side of alienation is inflation (Edinger, 1992, p. 12). The frog is the conscious personality, and this full-tilt ego is soundly inflated. The frog takes up all the room as a self-aggrandizing ego in complete identification with the Self and, in fact, experiences himself as deity (Edinger, 1992, p. 7). It is a grandiose and false self image being actualized; a caricature of the authentic *openness to being* that is to come. Where the original unity had gentle multivocal singing, the frog's voice is totalitarian, tyrannical, monological, self-referencing, loud, brash, exaggerated, and bragging—it mutes the multi-voiced original poetic songs of primitive participation.

In his discussion of ego-formation in Jung, Edinger (1992) offered a definition of inflation: "blown up, distended with air, unrealistically important, beyond the limits of one's proper size; hence to be vain, pompous, proud, presumptuous." The arrogance and pride that "goes before the fall," and the way the frog not only puffs up, but also raises himself up at the expense of the other, stepping on the other, seems to suggest a form of narcissism. The fat (headed) frog needs a great deal of attention, not only seen and admired, but adored, even worshiped as a deity. Yet the fragile frog competes with, and is envious toward, the butterfly (and it is here he oversteps). Washburn suggests that the dynamic ground, or Great Mother, is being repressed and sealed off so that the masculine ego and its identity project can emerge (1995). The frog-ego emerges but then he noisily drowns out and smothers the Great Mother, thereby dominating the scene.

According to Tarnas (1991), this moment is really the root of a necessary evil:

From the perspective suggested by this evidence, the fundamental subject-object dichotomy that has governed and defined modern consciousness—that has constituted modern consciousness, that has generally assumed to be absolute, taken for granted as the basis for any "realistic" perspective and experience of the world—appears to be rooted in a specific archetypal condition associated with the unresolved trauma of human

birth, in which an original consciousness of undifferentiated organismic unity with the mother, a *participation mystique* with nature, has been outgrown, disrupted and lost. Here, on both individual and collective levels, can be seen the source of the profound dualism of the modern mind: between man and nature, between mind and matter, between self and other, between experience and reality—that pervading sense of a separate ego irrevocably divided from the encompassing world. Here is the painful separation from the timeless all-encompassing womb of nature, the development of human self-consciousness, the expulsion from the Garden, the entrance into time and history and materiality, the disenchantment of the cosmos, the sense of total immersion in an antithetical world of impersonal forces. Here is the experience of the universe as ultimately indifferent, hostile, inscrutable. Here is the compulsive striving to liberate oneself from nature's power, to control and dominate the forces of nature, even to revenge oneself against nature. Here is the primal fear of losing control and dominance, rooted in the all-encompassing fear of death—the inevitable accompaniment of the individual ego's emergence out of the collective matrix. But above all, here is the profound sense of the separation between self and world. (pp. 429–431)

4. Act three: BPM3

In the third act crises our dialectic summons the figure of the Taniwha; the furious Demon into the circle (think of the *haka*—the Maori war dance and challenge or the Haka of the All Blacks which questions. "Death, Death; Life, Life: which one will it be?" Arms up, hands slapping thighs, feet stamping, eyes rolling, tongue extended. Here a terrifying, electrifying, and forceful encounter ensues with a powerful, demonic figure, erotic, violent, dark. A dreadful force of nature, death dealing, terrifying and alien to the frog-ego. According to Grof (1985), in LSD sessions, the third perinatal matrix is dominated by volcanic or explosive aggression which takes the form of "titanic fight ... intense sexual arousal, demonic episodes ... all these occur in the context of a determined death-rebirth struggle" (p. 116).

In Maori lore, the Taniwha is a dangerous water demon but also a guardian spirit—in my story the Taniwha is an emissary from Mother Moon (carrying the wink of an I). After Washburn (1988), the demonic power represents the upward surge of the dynamic ground, "The removal of original repression [through, prayer, meditation, ritual, psychedelics] triggers a violent resurgence of the power of the Ground which (along with other nonegoic potentials) erupts into the upper sphere of consciousness and assails the ego within its own domain" (p. 115)

Here comes the wrathful Taniwha emerging in force from the Ground (the Moon and pond); "the confrontation between the ego and the power of the ground that occurs during regression in the service of transcendence [recall the ground, as Great Mother Moon, has been opened by prayer] ... is both an upsurge of nonegoic life into the egoic sphere (the return of the repressed fury of the liberated spirit) and a downfall of the mental [frog] ego" (Washburn, 1988, p. 116). The Taniwha roars into the scene vibrant with fury and filled with a frightful life force. And now a little grey-green coated frog, having shed its egoic-skin in terror, leaves the scene "forever." There has been a transformation to be sure. The power of the ground has won the battle and the ego now "understands that it cannot triumph over the adversary and, moreover, that its adversary is really the ego's own higher life: spirit" (Washburn, 1988, p. 116).

True, from the moment the frog is gone, the mushroom, already changed, already clothed in the world (as we shall see), looks into the Face of Death—he faces the monster in *vulnerability*; *compassionately* he swaps coats (not only for himself—but for the frog); *sacrificially* (he knows he will be ripped to pieces); and then the miracle and transmission—there is dialogical-eros between the Holy Mother, the Messenger, and the Mushroom. The ego (mushroom), at this junction, according to Washburn, is willing to *cooperate with spirit* (1988, p. 116)—that the ego become suffused with spirit, and with a laugh the Taniwha disappears, leaving the clearing transfigured and in a state of deep forest stillness and charismatic silence for a long silvery time. This quiet, empty, stillness is required.

Act Four: BPM4

A Participatory-Psychedelic Spiritual Emergence

The magical shedding and changing of skins; this unexpected reversal, inversion, the outrageous moment when the terrifying Taniwha reveals its benign, caring face through the transmission of the wink ... is symbolic of what Grof (1985) called the *death-rebirth experience*. I paraphrase: impending catastrophe, total annihilation on all imaginable levels, the experience of ego-death entails merciless destruction of all previous reference points of life of the individual. When experienced in its and most complete form, it means an irreversible end of one's philosophical identification with what Alan Watts used to call "skin encapsulated ego" (p. 123) ... funny that! In the transition from BPM3 to BPM4, there is an ego-death which can have physical, psychological, religious, philosophical, and ecological dimensions.

In the fourth matrix, we are rocketed into an unexpected fourth dimension; the annihilatory moment of terror, the cosmic rock bottom, is immediately followed by radiant lights and beauty "rainbow spectra, peacock designs ... visions of nature reawakened in spring ... a deep sense of spiritual liberation, redemption, and salvation. He or she feels free from anxiety, depression, and guilt, purged and unburdened" (p. 123). This was my psychological experience post my near-death encounter (ripped to pieces), and, while it was deeply relaxing, it was difficult to understand until engaging with Grof's work. I remain forever grateful. The phenomenology of nonordinary states and 4th matrix rebirth sequences are highly variegated, Grof (1977) wrote,

The symbolism typical for the experience of rebirth involves visions of radiant light that appear to come from a divine source ("clear light"), vast spaces filled with heavenly blue haze, beautiful rainbows or rainbow spectrum and displays of peacock feathers. Rather frequent are also non-figurative images of God perceived as pure sources of energy ("cosmic sun", Brahma), or personified visions, images of God as an old man sitting on a richly decorated throne and surrounded by Cherubim and Seraphim in radiant splendor. Others experience the union with the archetypal Great Mother or more specific

versions thereof from various cultures, such as the Egyptian Divine Isis. An interesting variation of the same is the symbolism of entering Valhalla or being admitted to the feast of the Greek Gods on Mount Olympus and enjoying the taste of nectar and ambrosia. Also, images of various deities representing seasonal changes of nature and vegetable cycles can occur in this context (e.g. Demeter and Persephone or Attis). Other typical visions involve gigantic halls and richly decorated columns, huge marble statues and crystal chandeliers, and beautiful scenery such as luscious landscapes at springtime, panoramas of snow-capped mountains, breathtaking visions of oceans calmed after a storm, idyllic pastures and flourishing meadows. Frequently there are visions representing the final victory over a powerful enemy, such as the killing of a dragon, Hydra, Chimaera, Medusa, Sphinx or other mythological creature, the overthrowing of a despotic and tyrannical ruler, or the defeat of a repressive totalitarian political regime. (p. 169)

Washburn (1988) borrowed the Grofian term *nonspecific amplifier* (the action of psychoactive substances to amplify, enhance and catalyse psychic processes in the unconscious) to describe the action of the dynamic ground at this station (p. 111). Washburn (1995) tracked this development as *regeneration in spirit* followed by *integration*, which include *reenchantment of the world; return to polymorphous sensuality; sacred embodiment and creative contemplation*—as we enjoy our rootedness in the dynamic ground as source of life (p. 120). I believe what was *amplified* was the perinatal sequence, and with it, a specific orientation toward a deeper relation with the world.¹⁵

Personhood and Future Participation

There is no doubt that Grof's BPM4 is framing the final act; however, I propose there is something more to be appreciated in the tale's symbolic finale. It is best read, I believe, as a rudimentary template not only of personhood (after Heron, 1992) but what has been called "future participation" (Kremer, 1992).¹⁶ In other words, the imagery in the finale anticipates *participatory knowing*.

It is not simply an ecstatic expansion of individual consciousness into transpersonal consciousness (although it could be read as this) (Ferrer, 2002, p. 116); nor yet a return to the world of archaic participation; rather, another way of *knowing the world* emerges—as the dialectic of the archetypal sequence is fulfilled—knowing the world by presence to the world. Tarnas (1992), working with the *epistemological consequences* of Grof's LSD research envisioned a new paradigm of participation.

The telos, the inner direction and goal, of the Western mind has been to reconnect with the cosmos in a mature participation mystique, to surrender itself freely and consciously in the embrace of a larger unity that preserves human autonomy while also transcending human alienation. (p. 444)

Along these lines, in their introduction to *The Participatory Turn* (2007) Ferrer and Sherman wrote:

Whereas archaic participation (as articulated by Levi-Bruhl) avoids the subject-object divide through a prereflective mystical fusion with the other and the natural world, emerging modes of participation overcome Cartesian-dualism self-reflexively by preserving a highly differentiated though *permeable individuality or participatory self* as the agent of religious knowing. (p. 38; emphasis added)

What is of great significance in this project is the high prophetic office given human personhood and participatory perception as *co-creators of the appearance of the world*. I say "prophetic" because Ibn 'Arabi, the great Islamic sage, claimed that God created perception in humans so that God could be the object of that perception (Corbin, 1971, p. 22). And, "especially stressed in Ibn 'Arabi, [is] the *Deus Absconditus*, the 'hidden treasure,' aspiring to reveal himself, to be known. However, this very revelation gives rise to a dramatic situation in which the divine Being and the being through which he reveals himself are simultaneously implicated, for God cannot look at an *other*, nor be seen by an *other* than himself" (p. 53). Perhaps our little mushroom's mind is the theater in which prophetic knowing is being born. But more importantly is the

participatory mind also something of a prophetic mind?¹⁷ Here is Tarnas (1991):

The human spirit does not merely prescribe nature's phenomenal order; rather, the spirit of nature brings forth its *own* order through the human mind when that mind is employing its full complement of faculties—intellectual, volitional, emotional, sensory, imaginative. In such knowledge the human mind lives into the creative activity of nature. Then the world speaks its meaning through human consciousness. Then human language itself can be recognized as rooted in a deeper reality, as reflecting the universe's unfolding meaning. (p. 435).

In the final act of my story as the *agent of religious knowing*, we see a distinct mushroom becoming unified with the *Deus sive Natura*. Cartesian-dualism is overcome but it does not find closure in naïve Oneness. There is still a distinct Mushroom "clothed in the world" and this "clothing" is the act of relational perception, "If I look at a tree, perception clothes its [given] being" (Heron, 1992, p. 92). Moreover, the tree and I are in felt participation "in one another's existence" (Abram, 1997, p. 57); following Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Abram wrote,

By asserting that perception, phenomenologically considered, is inherently participatory, we mean that perception always involves, at its most intimate level, the experience of an active interplay, or coupling, between the perceiving body and that which it perceives. Prior to all our verbal reflections, at the level of our spontaneous, sensorial engagement with the world around us—we are all animists (p. 57).

Of course, this *potential* did not integrate in me at 25, not by a long shot—but its potential was seeded in the mythic imagery and gave my initiatory ordeal a subtle orientation and I would like to end this fairytale with a present-day orientation in relation to the final episode in the story.

The Role of Desire

In the final moments, we see the mushroom fulfilling his conative desire for that new coat, drawn by the vision of the rainbow, and in the colorful

declaration of natural presences: flowers, birds, sunsets, and stars. The rainbow of desire somehow calls forth the dialectical drama-action and the mushroom is revealed as the local repository of the Ground. In the first ecstatic blush of the 4th matrix, he has won his beautiful new coat: all red with white spots. The frog, symbolic of Cartesian dualism, is vanquished but *with care* by the mushroom, and the terrible Taniwha is revealed as an uncanny friend and ally; now a guardian angel and messenger; now a daemon rather than the ego-alien face of the demonic (feminizing transpersonal powers).

The "clearing of being" resounds first with cosmic laughter; followed by a *deep silvery silence*; the Moon winks above in her Holy station; and all is made right and whole; all the players are connected through that wink, the trajectory is fulfilled, there is return, rejuvenation, regeneration, as forest people return in *fascination and love* to take up their re-enchanted forest songs. And we see, over time, *integration* as the mushroom's coat begins to reflect its embeddedness and embodiment in nature transfigured.

Regarding the experiential encounter with the perinatal sequence, Tarnas (1992) wrote that it: "constantly brought home to subjects a sense that nature itself, including the human body, was the repository and vessel of the archetype" (p. 428). Likewise, David Levin (1985) in his phenomenal *The Body's Recollection of Being*, speaks of depth "ancestral" embodiment:

The "unconscious," which in Jung's depth psychology is called "collective," can in fact be articulated very well in terms of the body's primordial and archaic attunement; its automatic and always already functioning intentionalities; its generous endowment of inherent dispositions and propensities; its latent, and sometimes involuntary perceptivities; its implicit structures of pre-understandings; and its always accessible felt sense, however inchoate and untutored, of what is basically good, basically true and basically beautiful (p. 171).

To repeat the final paragraph; in the aftermath of egoic death:

They could hear the silence and they came to sit in a circle in the clearing and talk forest talk and sing forest songs sometimes deep into the starry night. Over the years the mushroom's coat seemed to grow and change. When you looked at it, it was as if you could see twinkling stars, flashing feathers, orange sunsets, purple clouds, forest flowers, butterfly wings, silver moonlight, Taniwha's red, ruby eyes and yes ... even RAINBOWS

Thus, the mushroom recovers his original rootedness to the Ground. Nevertheless, the frog's skin is still with us, but transformed; there is an ego, but this ego is open, for connection with the heart of *mater* requires our *personhood* which is not a given but must be won. The mushroom is crowned by the presences of nature. Here, wrote Heron (1992), the "imaginal mind is engaged in bestowing perceptual forms [and] feeling is the attunement to it which brings alive the presences of the world" (pp. 99–100). We recall the frog was always talking—a talking-head—whereas in the final act, the personhood of the mushroom is permeated by a more silent presence, though communicative and feeling-toned: he's connected, and he knows it.

The power of feeling is evident in relationship not only with other persons but also with rocks, trees, animals, and the rest of nature. When the alienating screen of language is transcended, then through feeling we participate in a world of presences. Each with its distinctive signature, its utterance, its way of declaring being (Heron, 1992, p. 36).

Finally, the gestures that flow from the Ground through the mushroom who *is* now the localized representative of the Ground. That communicative *wink* from the Moon to the praying Mushroom; then from the helping Taniwha, transmitted to the Mushroom while looking into the Face of Death; is then transmitted to the forest companions and to you gentle reader; "he would just smile and wink" carries, "*a body of feeling whose gestures are gestures of love*" for to become a person is to take upon oneself, "the careful work of eros" (Levin, 1985, p. 148).

Eros and the Tree of Life

I complete my storytelling with the *eros* in the eco-psychoanalytic work of Freya Mathews (e.g., 2003) whose communicative panpsychism puts the *careful work of eros* and *the art of encounter*—as the means of knowing the world, Biblically speaking, at the center of epistemology and experiential inquiry, and with it, the cultivation of an *erotic attitude to life*. Furthermore, her orientation is very much a participatory one. She wrote,

The form of panpsychism I have been exploring is highly participatory however, and ecological (and more) in its normative implications. Indeed, this kind of participatory relationship with a communicative reality may be seen as the very basis of many kinds of traditional societies, and I use the term "ontopoetics" to denote the practice of such communicative engagement with reality. (Personal communication, 2015)¹⁸

Mathew's (2003) panpsychism while "deeply counter to the philosophical and practical mindset of modernity ... is familiar to us through certain persistent narrative forms, notably that of the fairytale which still enjoys surprising currency in contemporary society" (p. 8). Thus, it may be that my fairytale had been orienting me toward a kind of panpsychic subjectivity—a non-hierarchical egalitarian, open, dialogical, *way of approaching the world*.

Mathews engaged with the Biblical myth of Genesis and the Tree of Life to re-imagine our species evolution and individuation, and the frightening wages, not of sin, but of attaining self-consciousness, basically, a shift from animal to human awareness occurs and here—at this crucial moment—we become acutely aware of our vulnerability and our mortality:

Eating of the Tree of Knowledge would thus seem to represent a developmental shift from un(self)-consciousness—the preindividuated state with our ontological source—to self-consciousness, and hence our individual or separate existence (Mathews, 2003, p. 94). Becoming individuated then is to fall from the omnipotent "participation mystique" of primal un(self)-consciousness into the

anxiety and fragility of individual self-consciousness (p. 94).

How does this happen? Mathews suggested that while in the Garden, Adam and Eve evolve self-awareness through their sexual partnership, "through the device of the snake" and "via mutual responsiveness that is dramatized as sexual intimacy" (p. 94). Adam and Eve, she said, "come to experience themselves as *subjects*, distinct loci of subjectivity" (p. 94) through playful sexual encounters they beget intimacy, self-awareness, feelings, desire ... intersubjectivity. The attainment of "dialogical sex, is the crossing of a threshold to a new stage of consciousness" (p. 94). Our *nakedness* is our subjectivity and we *cover up*, moreover, our *nakedness* brings choice, deception, self-direction, judgment, control, protection, manipulation—behaviors impossible in the undifferentiated Garden.

Now we begin to grasp our "susceptibility to a devastating array of thwartings, losses and afflictions" and when we begin to exercise judgement as to what is good and what is bad—then we are eating from the *Tree of Good and Evil*. And, as we split the world through judgment, so are we banished from the Garden, for, "the Garden is the acceptance of the undifferentiated self and world entire, without evaluation." Thus, Adam and Eve "die" to the Edenic estate. Through sexual activity we are "particularly open to the possibility of intersubjective encounter. So when Adam comes to know—really know—Eve, his wife, they both begin to cover up. They decline to continue to make themselves available to the universe, and retreat from the transpersonal forces of life" (p. 96). In fear and loathing, we reject and repress our erotic-participatory bodies, "the consequence of the attainment of self-consciousness is, thus, according to the story, *repression*: a flight from the body, and ultimately from sensuous erotic engagement with the world" (p. 96). However, Mathews has a distinct use of term *eros*. It is, according to her, the seeking and contacting the subjectivity, the interiority—of *mater*. She wrote: "If the term *eros* may be used to describe instances of intersubjective, rather than merely sensuous, contact, then we can say that *appetite* is transformed into *eros* via panpsychist awareness—of the interiority of nature" (p. 60).

According to the Mathews (2003), there is here another way yet to interpret the encounter with *The Tree of Life* and that is the way of *eros*, beyond the amniotic immersion in the original Garden. "Eros, however, affords a very different experience of the life force. Since *eros* is a *function of encounter*, it presupposes individuation ... the energy that accrues from encounter is the energy of arousal activation, potentiation. Through contact with another, the individual subject is awakened to her own palpability and potency" (p. 99). However, the Old God bars our way and stops our access to the Tree of Life ... but why? He cannot tolerate the erotic attitude wherein "desire for others rather than merely for one's own self-preservation" is the *real desire* ... "she is not seeking *fulfilment*—she is seeking *them*, and that is why her contact is fulfilling ... she tolerates vulnerability because it is a condition for encounter" (p. 99).¹⁹

The fundamental desire of the individuated self, traumatized by its discovery of its own vulnerability and mortality, is not, for others, but for its own security. He accordingly blocks the way to the Tree of Life, and ordains that we commit ourselves, first and foremost to ourselves ... that we endure the uncomfortable strictures of repression rather than yield to the endangering invitation of our senses, and that we subordinate others to our will rather than allow our nakedness to flower under another's gaze (Mathews, 2003, p. 100)

Mathews (2003) wrote:

God recognizes that that if Adam and Eve embarked on a career of encounter after achieving individuation and self-consciousness, they would undo the conditions of hierarchical order, subsequently enacted in the relation of man to woman and humanity to nature, based on God's exclusive rule over Creation. Here perhaps lies the cryptic meaning of God's fear of Adam and Eve becoming "as gods themselves." "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life, and live forever: therefore, the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence

he was taken." God is here guarding his own authority, as divine patriarch, and ruler of the universe; a species of being that had achieved self-consciousness and yet overcome their fear of their own extinction would establish an order of intersubjectivity that would invalidate the hierarchical order based on the individual will-to-control that God himself personifies (p. 100).

We are condemned, she said, through repression of eros, to "an existence without access to the Tree of Life" (Mathews, 2003, p. 103). Then comes a less repressive solution via the myth of Jesus Christ who after submitting to the symbolic extremity of suffering and death on the cross—rises—and is "absorbed is into the existence of the One" (p. 104). Jesus offers himself as a bridge and an intermediary between the material *Many* and the transcendental *One* (God). "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Through Jesus, we are rescued from the exile corporeal life represents, and reintegrated into a higher spiritual Unity" (Mathews, 2003, p. 104). Sayeth Mathews, "There is thus no death, absolutely, and *no net loss of subjectivity*." Through Christ, not only are we "retrieved from the exile Genesis consigned us and the disciplines of repression" (p. 106), but, by merging with the Father or Divine Oneness (before the fall). we remove ourselves from our individual locus of subjectivity and its shaky vulnerability. Therefore, Mathews suggested "Jesus might be seen as leading us back into the un(self)-consciousness of the original garden" (p. 107). With Jesus, we "shall not want" (Psalm 23) *but the world goes wanting*.

Thus, the *unitive approach* enjoys salvific symbiosis with Source, where there is "no separation" or "no-self" (Hindu and Buddhist religions also have versions of voiding the erotic self and desire) leaving no mortal remainder. Nevertheless, the unitive approach is far more sophisticated than the *repressive approach*—a path of control, protection and manipulation which is defensively closed and relates to others as objects—both strategies turn-away from the path of *intersubjective congress*. The former consigns subjectivity to the void—the latter avoids by denying the subjectivity of the other and thus objectifying the world and its particulars

(Mathews, 2003, pp. 113–114). The path of eros in relational inquiry lies between these two narcissistic modes of consciousness (Lahood, 2010, 2013, 2016, 2019).

Eating the Fruit

Throughout this storytelling, we have touched on three basic ways of recovering the participatory mind. The first is through Grof's methods following Tarnas (1992; Bache 2019). The second is attuning to the participatory ground that is always and already at the heart of our embodiment (Heron, 1992; Reason, 1994; Levin, 1985). The third way is the poetry of the world (Mathews, 2003, Cheetham, 2005, McDermott, 2007). The fourth is the way of relationality, encounter, and contacting a world beyond our materialistic assumptions, bias, representations and repressions (see Lahood, 2019).

I have been engaged in cooperative participatory research since the early 90s (Heron & Lahood, 2007). In 2010 I wrote a paper on *relational spirituality* outlining seven relationships that emerged in a long-term participatory inquiry (Lahood, 2019). The final three relationships are intentionally transpersonal, participatory, and relational. The sixth relationship is now envisioned as the *eco-erotic relationship* (Lahood, 2013, 2019). We take an I-thou stance in an affectionate relationship with the subjectivity of the world, and an intersubjective communion with the presences of the world.

In 2013 a Gestalt journal carried an account of our eco-erotic inquiry into communication with the bird-world (a very successful outing with a great deal of contact with birds including actual physical contact, symbolic, and dreams. What I think of as *Gestalt Informed Co-active Relational Inquiry* is practiced in a non-hierarchical peer group whose intention is to recover healthy relationships; the reparative, collaborative, authentic, eco-erotic and theophanic (Lahood, 2010), through experiments and action cycles eventually abiding in sacred relationship. The agenda is to de-repress the relational-participatory modes of presence and become present to the world; and deepen that relationship with Others through contemplative rituals and to rejoice therein.²⁰

However, the same repression, the same recoil from reaching-out that keeps the world at bay also keeps Others at bay. Repression is a fragmentation of the psyche; a cataclysm that interrupts our reaching for the Other. This becomes a fixed, repeating, pattern and if we are *unaware* it can become an emotional imbalance elusive and impervious to change. The rigidified recoil that passes as everyday contacting (the socialized interaction) is indicative of relational dysfunctions. The work we do with Other persons opens us to them "as Them" and the world at large "as a world" freed from projections, assumptions and distorted frames of reference. Co-Inquiry is therefore a process of disclosure—of bringing what is hidden into the open.

Gestalt practice was developed by Dick Price at Esalen; he used the Gestalt method, not for psychotherapy, but for spiritual or community ends. *Gestalt practice* pays exquisite attention to awareness of the body but also to the flexions; the *way we turn away, how we bend ourselves out of shape, where we contort our awareness and our relations.* In Gestalt these were called *deflection, introjection, retroflection, projection* the subtle, out-of-awareness, turning away from real, open, unguarded and vulnerable contacting. In psychoanalysis these flexions would be called *repression*.

There is the cultivation, in relational inquiry, of a special kind of Buberian subjectivity (I-thou) or *subject to subject* with nature (Mathews, 2003); which can only be achieved on the slender way between a subjectivity that *objectifies* the world (e.g., Western materialistic Science) an (I-it) and a subjectivity that *subjectifies* or disappears the world and the person (found in religious traditions and new age spiritualism) or (No-I or I-Only), we could also add the problem of narcissism (I-I-I) which applies to either extreme pole. Either way, the personhood of world goes unmet. I propose the Taniwha is the wrathful face of the world overlooked, unmet, unloved, and relegated to the hell of objectified and inert matter. Here is a summary of the ways in which our inquiry allows us to eat from the Tree of Life:

- It is a collaborative venture; there is an agreement to work together which means dealing with the

human condition openly and reflexively. This cannot be approached at all superficially as these defences are as old as Adam and Eve.

- Selection: unless one has the *holy desire* there is not much point in joining the inquiry as the goals differ from traditional religious-spiritual goals (and therapeutic goals for that matter).
- We are meeting; neither objectifying/manipulating or merging with the world.
- We agree to co-create a relatively non-defensive research environment by working with and giving feedback around unaware projections, transferences, merging and collusion.
- It is a *peer group* meaning it is equal and non-hierarchical—all roles are subordinate to the peer principle, e.g., roles of teacher and student do not mean necessarily an unequal relation—each have valid information about what is for them.
- It is democratic in that we vote on directions taken while being guided by the participant's feelings in open negotiation with others.
- Leadership becomes holonomic: somewhere in the system, in someone's voice, is the entelechy or genius of the group.
- Feelings, preferences, needs and desire are all contact-encounter functions.
- The research is *with* not *on* a subject. Kings and Sovereigns have subjects, old paradigm researchers have subjects—in new paradigm research we re-search our own subjectivity with others so engaged.
- Authority rests with the person, but that authority must be tempered by *critical subjectivity*.
- Critical subjectivity is reflexivity—not taking what we think and feel as ultimate truth and being prepared to strive for greater freedom from our agonized history.
- Inquiry is about our human experience and the bias, prejudice, past events and present tensions that shape our experience.
- It is participatory both in practical in terms of action, decision making, planning and reflection (everyone is involved), and it enacts a participatory epistemology (the worldview discussed in this paper)

- Multiple ways of knowing: dialogue, dance, theatre, silence, poetry, storytelling, ritual, eco-yoga, mandala drawing, and so forth.
- Various healing methods, balancing, somatic, breathing and therapeutic techniques maybe called upon during a longterm inquiry as ways of knowing or as ways of opening.
- The inquiry is learning a community—learning about the reality of the group as it is happening in the here and now.
- It is a method that must be learned and put into practice so that it becomes a valid version of the above.
- We begin by evoking and embodying a feeling of *relative* unity—this feeling guides what we say and do.
- It holds an understanding that inquiry from an alienated or fragmented position only leads to fragmentation and destruction.
- Each inquirer is responsible, within our holy handshake, to be aware of their state, alienated or unified, open or closed, hidden or visible.
- There is no requirement to be always and always charismatic, always in the heart, always open—the only requirement is to be self-reflexive enough to recognize whether we are open or closed, or somewhere in between.
- The community is available for peer support and engagement; being curious, questioning, clarifying, empathetic, supportive, challenging, occasionally confronting, loving and humorous.

Over the years I have found myself contemplating different moments in the story and to this day, if I see butterfly, I am sure to bow to it—just to be on the safe side. I am aware of my propensity to produce a fragmented frog nature. I now have a Taniwha tattooed on my right forearm (below the scar tissue) to remind me of that spirit, *and* of the human propensity for inflation and alienation. I have found, through the vehicles of a new paradigm research (plant medicines; holotropic breathing; cooperative inquiry; Gestalt practice; and relational inquiry, and there are other methods not named here), a way of being more intimate with the world. There is a gradual movement toward a way of being in the world that approximates a kind of *participatory*

eco-eroticism as a prayer or contemplation, but also as an ontological choice. I can, at times, speak a poetic kind of speech while recollecting the ground that somehow gives me a felt sense of being *clothed in the world*—a coat of many colors and a marked affinity with birds and bees. This mutual eco-embrace, perhaps akin to Merleau-Ponty's "flesh of the world" which indicated "an elemental power that that has had no name in the history of Western philosophy" (cited in Abram 1996, p. 66). There is, said Abram, "a dynamic presence that confronts us and draws us into relation. We conceptually immobilize or objectivity the phenomenon only by absenting ourselves from that relation" (Abram, p. 56). I am no longer *always* forgetting or compulsively repressing my sensual involvement with the presence of nature; and that is the basis of *relational inquiry*—*seeking a relationship with the world*. And that was the transcendently monstrous, and humanly weighty, Gift of the Taniwha's Wink.

Notes

1. This story may serve as an unusual form of transpersonal-perinatal data supporting and confirming, in some modest way, Grof's research. I was at the time of the event a *naïve inquirer*, so naïve in fact, I had no idea that I was inquiring. It was several years after the event that Grof's work became known to me and what this story was containing and revealing. At the end of the review process of this paper I received a copy of *Psyche Unbound: Essays in the Honor of Stanislav Grof* (2022) the late Ralf Metzner observed that "Stanislav Grof has made groundbreaking contributions in three areas of modern psychology: psychotherapy with LSD and other psychedelics; the impact of birth patterns on subsequent psychological development, including psychopathology and psychedelic experiences; and the understanding of how transformative realizations can emerge out of crises experiences when birth patterns are taken into account." With these words Metzner (2022) has captured the orientation of the following analysis. Grof's "central theoretical contribution, or perhaps I should say

'discovery,'" wrote Metzner, "namely, the four-fold sequence of 'basic perinatal matrixes' and the impact of this formulation in understanding psychedelic states" (p. 53).

2. It has been suggested that Gestalt practice has much in common with Constantine Stanislavsky's acting method (Narango, 1993). The famous Russian dramatist promoted "the art of experiencing" (over "representation") whereby the actor mobilized less controllable, less conscious emotions using spontaneous gestures or actions, responding directly and immediately. Gestalt practice inherited its dramaturgical facet from Jacob Moreno, the dramatist who developed both group therapy and psychodrama. Moreno believed *spontaneity* and *creativity* to be transpersonal or cosmic principles holding the appropriate enaction of these primary energies were absolutely central to wellness and healing.
3. I would like to acknowledge an old friend of mine Joseph McKechnie who has spent many hours since 1986 in spirited conversation regarding the frog and the mushroom story (and its sequel, *The Dragon and The Mermaid*). Joe shared several synchronistic moments, initiatory dreams and a miracle or two around the story and has been a source of social support, depth dialogue and meaning making.
4. Freya Mathews (2003) cited Norman O. Brown's account of repression in the work of Dorothy Dinnerstein (1976) where "repression is linked to suffering. To undergo repression is to push out of consciousness the treacherous experience of the vulnerable body," and therefore, in Dinnerstein's words, "the erotic attitude to reality" (p. 199; I came across this intriguing phrase when studying childbirth). Brown (1959) also noted Sandor Ferenczi's earlier term, "the erotic sense of reality" and in Spinoza *conatus* was a drive to self-perfection (and the ultimate human desire was for union with totality of nature; *Deus Sive Natura* God and Nature as interchangeable (pp. 46–47). Mathews took it all to a new level as we shall see—for her the ultimate desire and goal for *eros* is seeking intersubjective communion not just with persons but with the person of

the world in a "subject [to] subject dialogue" (p.172). This is not mere anthropocentrism, as Christopher Bamford wrote in his study of Orphism, "there stands behind phenomena, on the other side of them and us, something that is of the same nature as humanity." . . . Whatever that nature or subjectivity is it is shared and I will call the moments of intersubjective communion *Perfect Nature* because I do not think it possible that such a communion be sustained if we have a compulsively objectifying mind or conversely a subjectifying mind.

5. I acknowledge my use of the term "Taniwha" is from Maori culture and might be seen as cultural appropriation. Mitigating factors: my mother's middle name is *Amokura* (little red bird) and it was given to her before she was born by a Maori friend of my grandmother on my mother's side. His children had been lost in the war. My father grew up in Gisborne speaking Maori. Something very like Taniwha have appeared to me in subsequent psilocybin sessions, giving a blessing through dance like postures, tongue rolling out, head to one side, with one arm palm open to the sky the other downward to the ground—and at a time of a very serious crisis I became the Taniwha and went hunting in a potent dream (here in Australia). Witi Ihimaera, author of *The Whale Rider*, has said that he has a female (guardian) Taniwha named Hine Te Ariki. I wonder if it is possible for Taniwha to adopt pakeha?
6. I sit here pondering the one marble incident at 10 p.m. Thursday evening Feb 11, 2021, and I am wondering about the other marble. Donna, as I recall, told me there were two marbles. I have "The Witcher" on in the background and an actor shouts, at that moment, "have you perhaps lost a marble?" And I have to laugh at the accuracy. "Lost your marbles," plural, is the normative use of the expression. I call such moments, "God winking at me."
7. Granted, my myth was written sometime before the current outbreak in interest in psychoactive healing and exploration. It would be fascinating if psychoactive rituals become so prevalent as to have a noticeable effect on the rise of Western diseases such as alcoholism, anorexia nervosa,

and bipolar disorder, among other culture specific maladies.

8. A shamanic emergence on film: There is one more bit of data I should add with regard to The Frog and The Mushroom. A few days before the accident a large group of friends in New Zealand—about 50 of us, were involved in making a home movie in Super 8. We called our production group Bro-vision. We made a camp of driftwood and we all dressed up in possum skins and painted our faces and bodies (the film was called The Adventures of Bro-magnon). A hang-glider was launched off the beach with a couple of cameras lashed it (pterodactyl-cam we called it.) And we had a pot, quite a big pot of magic mushroom tea, called the *cosmotron* simmering on the embers of a large fire and we drank from it and started filming. There were lots of cavemen and women running about and kids and young family's generally having a blast and picnic. All were dressed in skins and feathers, body paint and shells. I only had a mouthful of the potion we also called "HuHu juice" because I had my son with me.

There was a sequence we did vaguely plan and went like this. I was to be a designated "witchdoctor" and so had a cows pelvis bone strapped to my head (they looked like moose antlers) loin cloth of leather pelts, red paint like a skeleton, and we had built this sea monster (a taniwha I guess in retrospect) in the days before. Our film set was on a deserted Hokio beach, West Coast.

There is a film sequence (BPM1) where we are dancing around the fire drinking the HuHu juice; next (BPM2) I am filmed alone on the beach and I get stuck in the sand, ankle deep, then knee deep. Then we filmed the sea getting higher and higher (by wading out and taking shots a bit like making an animated cartoon. So, it looked like the tide coming in and rising nearly over my head; (BPM3) I was meant to be scared making gestures of fear when the sea monster enters the frame; and they push it toward me as if it were attacking me (because in the story line I had eaten a live HuHu grub (which angered the Gods) and the monster more or less eats

me. We had fashioned a rubber glove filled with red paint and as the monster is killing me the blood spurted out. I am seen struggling with it splashing around, there is blood everywhere and I go under and die. Then (BPM4) the witchdoctor is resurrected with the other bro-magnon cavemen running and skipping down the beach dancing to the B52s who were popular then. So, it is as if the archetype of the shamanic death-rebirth was in the air and we created and filmed an impromptu shamanic crises; then two days later I went through the window in that terrifying accident because I was being pursued by the train and death and I "bodied forth" that story the next day.

9. <https://www.marlboroughonline.co.nz/marlborough/information/natural-history/fungi/amanita-muscaria>
10. The story here is a narrative handed down to me by my grandmother.
11. Tangata Whenua means "people of the land."
12. The English word *taboo* comes from Polynesian *tapu* which came through Captain Cook.
13. From a Grofian perspective Te Kooti had been traumatized (buried alive) by his father; colonized and oppressed by The Crown; wrongly imprisoned for several years and had Biblically inspired visions of an Angel of War. These phenomena are characteristic of what Grof calls a coex system: a system of condensed experience combining perinatal, biographical and transpersonal material that have similar emotional aspect. His war on the settlement was *utu* meaning revenge.
14. BPM: Basic Perinatal Matrix. Throughout this paper I have referred to Grof's perinatal-archetypal sequence in various ways because of what I perceive to be a neat fit. Nevertheless, Chris Bache suggests (and Grof apparently agrees) that the term "perinatal" overly roots the archetypal sequence in the biological birth process which may be not always be quite accurate because some death-rebirth sequences appear not to include the perinatal dimension (Bache, 2019, p. 138). In my myth's case there is no overt perinatal symbolism, yet, it does seem to follow the perinatal stencil with great

accuracy from BPM 1 to BPM 4 replete with egoic death—it follows the perinatal *pattern*. But then I always understood Grof to be saying that the perinatal dimension was itself only a layer of a multidimensional archetypal process. My story may indicate a return to cosmogenesis and the beginning of things. And if so does cosmogenesis, the birth of Creation, potentially resonate with female birth-giving and perinatal patterning?

15. Jungian Edward Edinger wrote that the ego-self-identity is in a state of active inflation and its heroic acts will meet with "rejection; wounding and dismemberment." That seems to be the theme here; the frog is heroic and wonderous in his own mind and truly inflated by the Ground which calls fourth its rejection. The fantail, the forest friends, the Moon and the Taniwha all reject the frog and what follows is dismemberment; followed by eventual wholeness—only to become inflated once again. And this is par for the course for individuation, conversion and metanoia do not happen once but many times—it is no mistake that the frog is inflated—it is an integral part of the spiritual journey. We rise and fall and hopefully we learn.
16. This gives Barfield's *"final" participation* a more open ended orientation.
17. This story of a coat of many colors was a precursor and harbinger of a theophanic event that is best read through the prophetic or Abrahamic tradition (see Lahood, 2015).
18. I should mention that when commenting on my paper, *In the Footsteps of the Prophets: From Black Light to Green Angel* (2015), which I had sent her in deep appreciation of her book, Mathews, in a personal communication, found a similar resonance between my cosmology and ontology and her panpsychism. I should also mention the *self-initiation* (and The Mushroom and Frog Story) getting the treatment here, was the precursor to a prophetic encounter with two worlds simultaneously; Deus Sive Natura. The first was a cosmic world, utterly transcendent, made of colored lights, a Garden of Truth, The Water of Life, and meeting an Angel cum Jesus-like being (with whom I had an erotic-charismatic encounter) in what appeared to be a bliss-filled

heavenly estate—*prior* to creation. The Being and I were exactly the same and my half of the Angel-Twin then "fell" back into the earthy world as if becoming all the forms: a realization, that the world was made up of the subjectivity of God and that it was the explicate version of an implicate potential. That *mater* was in fact filled with the light and mind of spirit—I insist that the experience was that of a bi-unity not a total merger. Or rather there was an absolute Unity and absolute blessed distinction enfolded in a seamless unity. Creation as a spatializing event was a "fall" into Relation. This event was as Healing and Loving and cosmically Satisfying as the accident was frightening, confusing and humiliating. I now see the Angel-world encounter as a meeting with the anima mundi or the soul of the world and I believe the imagery in the Mushroom and Frog was the template for this encounter—and the same conatus, intelligence, genius, entelechy, guardian angel, perfect nature (seems to have been guiding the whole spiritual emergence. The Rainbow image in the gnostic vision carried me from this "material" world—to the imaginal (after Corbin) world of the world soul, a rainbow bridge, *a rainbow of desire*. I thank Freya Mathews for the "desire" in the title. In her writing the cosmic-self (One) desires we (the Many), and we come into being, and we, in our human condition, desire one another, nature and the cosmic self. Desire becomes us! Buried in the heart is a rainbow of sacred desires seeking to breakout of repression and its alternative merged absorption and *meet*.

19. There is plenty of sexual arousal or erotic symbolism in the story, therefore it might be possible that the Taniwha represents Freud's repressed infantile sexuality but again that may be way too pedestrian. Contradicting Freud, Jung believed the most powerful libidinous drive was toward spirit. Further, Ferrer and Sherman (2007) suggest "the mystic's imagination are thoroughly embodied and quite possibly erotic in nature" (p. 41). Grof (1985) has commented on the erotic complexion that spiritual unfolding seems to have, "the deep involvement of sexual energy in the psychological death-rebirth

process" (p. 204) and Washburn (1995) spoke of *polymorphous sensuality* related to the final stages of regeneration in spirit where the instinctual powers once centered on genital organization have become more diffused throughout the whole body enlivening the whole system.

In the myth I believe what is being *de-repressed* from the Ground was *eros* and with it the relational and participatory modes of being; the repressed desire for nature and others; or in other words *the erotic attitude to life*. First visible and in the serpentine Taniwha (possibly a symbolic variant of kundalini energies) but then more delightfully with the presences of nature and presence as such.

Without a doubt, the daemon in my tale is a "sexy-beast" full of *joie de vivre*, a weird, wild, wondrous, wisdom □ potentized by the Ground/*Mother*. He has an erect penis in my drawings of the Taniwha, as did the precolonial Maori carvings (emasculated by Christian missionaries). Perhaps my myth is a simply an artistic rendition of the rapture of sexual orgasm and its little death. The mushroom is a mimetic image of an erect penis and the frog in European folklore is widely acquainted with the regenerative vagina and lunar powers (Pallua, 2019). Myths are multivalent and, while not figural in my analysis erotic-instinctual energies are surely abiding in the myth's imagery.

20. Briefly, there is, I suggest, a strong relationship between the 'participatory turn' (after Ferrer, 2002) and Grof's research. In 2007 I was invited to edit a special edition for Revision on participatory spirituality and wrote in the introduction "I believe the three authors who ushered the participatory worldview into transpersonal theory most cogently are Richard Tarnas (1991), John Heron (1998) and Jorge Ferrer (2002). Of these seminal works, Ferrer's careful attention to the internal structure of transpersonal theory has been pivotal in tipping the transpersonal movement further into its [participatory turn]" (Lahood, 2007). However, it is notable that all three authors have built on Grof's research to construct their own maps, models

and metaphors in the study of transpersonal participatory consciousness. I might be useful to note that Ferrer's deconstruction of perennialism, his participatory revision, and indeed, the whole second act of his excellent book rests entirely on the anomalous experiences and events drawn from Grof's research (see Ferrer 2002).

There is an overt relationship between Tarnas participatory thought and Grof's perinatal discoveries as outlined throughout this paper (see Tarnas, 1991). Finally in *Sacred Science* (1998) Heron's participatory map of the spiritual terrain (1998) fields many categories commensurate with Grof's phenomenology. He also presents Grof's method as being "on the threshold" (1998, p. 59) of a participatory co-operative inquiry. Which, I find remarkable, given, "both psychedelic and holotropic self-exploration grew out of clinical work with psychiatric patients and efforts to find more effective ways of helping them" (Grof, 2008, p. 250). Whereas cooperative inquiry grew out of mutual gazing exercises with co-counsellors (Heron, 1996, p.1) with, presumably, some emotional skills. Relational co-inquiry (Lahood, 2010, 2019) outlined in this section is therefore a synthesis of Grof, cooperative inquiry and gestalt practice.

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