Ending the Thirst...

A Meditation Manual for Health Promotion -

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Foreword and Acknowledgments

Over the years, I've received inestimable help from many people. Too many to mention all their names here. Especially many people who asked me for advice, and who have to remain anonymous, taught me very much. It was a personal honour to come so close to the depths of their lives. I am indebted to Nigel Barrett for his advice during the various editions of the original text on the English language. Iris Lafaille and Herbert Tombeur especially gave further support. Their remarks and suggestions have been of great help for this publication. I am also very grateful to all my teachers, trainers and colleagues from whose wisdom I could learn. Especially I want to thank Luc Debaene, Jan van Dixhoorn, Roger Evans, Joan Evans, Stephen Fulder, Nick Hedley, Hennie Hiemstra, Rieke Lathouwers, Jo Lebeer, Peter Mielants, Rudy Rijke, Lisette Scholl, Hugo Stuer, Eva Titus, Joke de Vries and Georges Wollants. And I would like to thank all those who co-operated by offering a piece of their experience for publication in this book.

The poems of Margot Bickel and Hermann Hesse are reprinted with permission of Herder, Suhrkamp and Parallax Press.

Chapter 5 "Questions and Answers" contains additional information in a loose interview-style. I've chosen this literary style, not only because it's easy to read, but also because an interview offers the best opportunity to express some ideas which cannot be fully elaborated in the text, but which are of interest for the reader.

In congruence with my ideas expressed in Chapter 5, "god" is spelled without a capital, and "Mystery" and all archetypical symbols in capitals. In this way the latter are distinguished from all references to external objects.
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Health Promotion is a new branch to the tree of the health sciences. It has developed tremendously during the last decades. The strategy of the World Health Organisation, well-known under its title "Health for All by the Year 2000", was a major impetus to its development. The scientific foundation needed to sustain the many ideas which health promotion wants to realise, is called elsewhere the development of "a new science of health" (Lafaille & Fulder 1992). In this kind of thinking the notion of healthy lifestyle is very important. There is ever growing scientific evidence which clearly points out that - in a direct or indirect way - lifestyle plays an important role in the occurrence of many diseases. This view is generally accepted at the moment. Also accepted is that health can be improved by lifestyle changes. However, there is still a lot of discussion about its influence on specific illnesses, in what kind of concrete situations they can be applied and what kind of advice is most appropriate.

Healthy lifestyle programs are concrete instruments which can improve the health of individuals. They consist of integrated bodies of knowledge, information, attitudes, prescriptions for behaviour and skills, focused at promoting the health of the person who applies the program. They ask for an appropriate didactic to transfer them easily to people. They should also take into account the uniqueness of every individual (Ingrosso 1993). Healthy lifestyle programs combine experiential knowledge and scientific knowledge.

Healthy lifestyle programs are applicable to a wide range of topics. I will mention here: nutrition, personal hygiene and care for the body, relaxation, breathing, bodily posture and movement, meaning in life and transpersonal values, emotional awareness, etc.

Healthy lifestyle programs show what people can do by themselves and in the immediate environment to promote their health or the health of their relatives and friends. This does not mean that they neglect the importance of structural changes (ecological policy, reduction of stress at the worksite, distribution of labour, etc.) but that one does not have to wait until these changes occur to care for your own health. Individual and structural approaches are necessarily complementary.

Meditation has a special place within the realm of healthy lifestyle programs. Together with e.g. relaxation exercises, breathing techniques, body awareness, emotional awareness and the care for constructive social relationships, it is a powerful tool to ameliorate your mental and psychosomatic health. In Western societies the majority of all illnesses consist of psychic and psychosomatic disorders. Meditation is a very practical and easily applied method to preserve your mental health.
Personal experiences and emotions are taken seriously and placed into an appropriate frame of reference. If sometimes strong emotional releases appear, they remain in general very manageable. Herein they greatly differ with some psychotherapeutic treatment methods which are often not suited to use in self care situations. Meditation is always at hand, wherever you are.

In this book meditation is used as a tool to promote your health. This means coping with the common daily problems everybody has to face. Of course, meditation can also be used as a supportive and complementary technique for people who are under medical treatment or who are in therapy. I have seen many people who have benefited greatly from using meditation in such a complementary way. Nevertheless, much more experience is needed in these cases before concrete guidelines can be established. It will further be clear that if you use meditation complementary to therapy or treatment, then speaking openly with your doctor or therapist about it is the best way to do this. I am convinced that here lies an area with great potential for development. I strongly believe that in the future meditation will be generally accepted as an instrument and will belong to the standard procedures of all medical care (Lafaille 1984a). Nevertheless, much more scientific research is needed to develop its full potential for medical treatment. No matter how promising the results of meditation may be, you always need to be cautious and not overoptimistic, nor exaggerate its results or harbour unrealistic expectations. Sometimes this happens. That is a pity. In my view the application of meditation demands a critical attitude.

Meditation should not only be applied when you have health problems. You can also use meditation to clarify decisions, intensify experiences and to search for solutions to all kinds of daily life problems (where can I find an appropriate house? how do I handle a conflict with my boss? how can I increase my income? etc.). Meditation is, first of all, a specific way of focusing your consciousness. It is in general not a treatment method, but a method to maximalize the inborn potentials of your consciousness.

Beyond the meditation method that I will present here, lies a certain world view. It stresses the individual, free choice and your own responsibility. Everybody has the right to do with his/her life what s/he really wants. This includes the domain of health and illness. Blockages to this personal free choice have to be removed as much as possible. This implies that the maximalisation of the self care potential, personal empowerment, is a main target.

Striving for meaning in life, happiness and personal development are important elements of a healthy lifestyle. The meditation method as presented here is oriented towards a moderate and harmonious form of happiness. The aim is to liberate yourself of inner tensions and conflicts and to stimulate inner growth. In general then more space is made for intense feelings of happiness and love. I am not a proponent of a system of health promotion which propagates a new set of rules, prescriptions and obligations. Such a system will often lead to the reverse of the desired effect. It is possible that such systems of health promotion may bolster social disciplining rather than positively influence your health (Crawford 1977 & 1980).
Health and illness should not be disconnected from their existential meaning. They are sometimes, but generally not the result of mere chance. They always affect the inner experiences of the person. Respect for natural life processes is essential. In contrast to the usage in western culture, the proposed method does not aim to repress "negative" emotions (such as pain, sorrow, despair, etc.), but to integrate them in your life. They can be used as important information about the situation you are living in. Integration creates an inner space for growth.

By using this meditation method a basic attitude of open dynamic equilibrium is promoted and brought into development. Open for changes in your life. Dynamic means here: able to give a vital response to these changes. It means a certain "way of standing in life", oriented to insight in the relationship between consciousness, experience of reality and behaviour; but at the same time of its relativity. It aims to develop a point of reflection, called the "inner observer" through which it becomes possible to really live your life freely and reach a substantial level of health.

How to apply the proposed meditation method? The method that I will present here is goal oriented and uses images and symbols as an art of dialogue with deeper layers of yourself. In this respect there is a big difference with certain forms of religious meditation. The aim is health promotion. If you have other goals with meditation, I suggest you consult other sources. The program presented here functions as a map. It shows you various paths, between which you can choose. It is quite impossible to visit the whole described country. To taste for yourself what is needed, what is supportive and what is not, what is troublesome, is essential when working with these kinds of exercises. This cannot be stressed enough. To find this free inner place of choice, of care for your own inner growth, of trust in yourself and your own intuitions is maybe the most important gain of meditating regularly. Become aware that there really are choices in your life and that you can make these freely. To find the inner capacity to do this, is one of our main targets.

How did I come to interest myself in meditation? Of course, it has strong roots in my own biography. An obligatory retreat with a Catholic high school brought me early in my life into contact with some eastern forms of meditation. At sixteen I did my first yoga exercises with the help of a, at that time in catholic circles, well-known handbook of the Benedictine monk Déchanet (1961). In this book eastern meditation was explored in some detail and adapted to Christianity.

Later, at the end of the seventies, when I was severely troubled by a neurological eye ailment (nystagmus) for which no classical medical treatment could be found, I floated back through different detours to meditation. Meditation did not cure this ailment, but helped me to overcome many difficulties while coping with the distortions of the equilibrium system which accompany this illness. Besides this, I can honestly say, meditation has enriched my life in many other respects.

From this time on, I continued to deepen my insight into meditation methods, including the scientific side. I followed various courses and training. Very influential were some years of training at
the London Institute of Psychosynthesis. An appointment at the Institute of Family Medicine at the Antwerp University offered me the opportunity to study some medical aspects of meditation. Contact with many colleagues and friends at the Institute, all family doctors or psychotherapists, brought me further insight into the value of meditation for the life process. I had some colleagues who used meditation enthusiastically in their GP practice. Advantages and disadvantages were discussed between colleagues, effects evaluated, literature exchanged, sometimes new exercises explored together. Through the years I got involved in various ways with people who were in a deep crisis, were confronted with a severe illness or suffered from certain societal conditions. In regard to the last point, I want to mention my contacts and work in Magdeburg (in the former East Germany) and Nablus (Palestine). These work experiences brought me to the conclusion that meditation can be used very effectively in coping with the effects of social change and that it can even be an excellent instrument to initiate social change. Because so many people asked me to teach meditation to them, I decided to write this book. It grew out of practice. By composing a systematic introduction to this field, I hope to have found the best way to transmit my knowledge to others. In every respect this knowledge is limited and obviously coloured by my own experiences and developments in life. This is also meant as an invitation for you as a reader to consult other sources and deepen your insight via courses and reading. Meditation as a tool for health promotion is still in an early stage of development. Exchanging experiences can have important functions. Courses or training are not the only possibilities. Bringing people informally together to talk about their meditation is a very cheap and meaningful way to gather knowledge and exchange information. The proposed method is perfectly suited for these kinds of self-help groups.

This book consists, besides the introduction, of three parts which can be read separately. The first part is a practical guide in learning how to meditate. Many exercises are given to make the text highly practical, as well as to help you to develop your own exercises. The first part caters to as large a group of readers as possible. No prior knowledge of meditation is required.

Information is also given about the applicability of meditation for those people with severe problems. It is not the intention to give a complete description of all elements that are needed to solve these kinds of problems, but only to give a general orientation about how meditation can be used in such cases. How meditation can improve health and well-being.

The last part gives general background information about the presented method. It is scholarly orientated and therefore written in a different style. It is complementary to the first part. Knowledge of theoretical background allows a better understanding of practice.

The middle part consists of illustration material. My experience with students has taught me that it can be quite difficult conveying to beginners what meditation is all about, what experience they can expect, and where it may lead. This part might be seen as a bridge linking the theoretical and the practical, and coupled with the language of poetry invites you to enter the wonderful world of meditation.
Meditation for health promotion

2.1. Meditation for what?

I once read a wonderful eastern poem, but unfortunately I am unable to trace the original text. It went like this. At the creation of the world, the gods met to discuss where they should hide the deepest secret of man, namely the secret of his divine nature. One god said: let us conceal the deepest self of man on the highest mountain. No, some other gods said, because the first thing man will do is climb that highest mountain and steal the secret. Then another god said: let us put it down in the deepest point in the ocean. No, the other gods said, because he will also explore all the depths of the seas. And so the discussion went on. Then a god said: let us put the secret very, very deep inside man himself, he will never take a look there. And all the other gods agreed with that.

Meditation can be used for many purposes (e.g. religious-spiritual, therapeutic, relaxation, personal growth, health promotion, the development of creative powers, and so on), but always one feature is consistent, namely that it brings you in contact with deeper layers of your Self. In this article, I will concentrate on meditation as a tool for consciousness raising, creative development, personal growth, problem solving and self-knowledge. In much of the literature, you will find information concerning religious forms of meditation, but my experience in this field is very scarce. Therefore I will not expand on this theme. Much of this literature doesn’t attract me and seems to me to be very mystifying. Elsewhere, I have warned against the danger of absolute power games (Lafaille 1989). Meditation first of all directs development toward what is called "the inner observer" or "the Self". Other names which refer to the same phenomenon are "the detached inner observer", "the witness"(Gurdjieff), "the point of creative indifference"(Perls), "the center of the cyclone"(John Lilly), "the watcher on the hill", "the steersman", "the (film)producer", etc. (Van Iersel 1982). The observer is not the object he is observing, nor the content of his observation. He is a pure potentiality, the Self. From this position of Self, observation of reality is undiluted and the mobilisation of will unfettered. Meditation is a very powerful instrument, but certain conditions must be met for its application in self-help and self-care.

Can anyone meditate? In principle the answer has to be a positive yes, although for some (limited categories of) people certain conditions have to be met. The first category consists of people who are unable to create images. There are a great many differences between people, nevertheless the great majority of us are able to create images. Some people, however, come into deeper contact with their meditative consciousness via hearing or their body (automatic writing, dancing, etc.) rather than mental images. Just as there are different forms of memory, so people differ in the form and intensity of the sensory channel they can use to make contact with their meditative powers. Some people can use various paths, while others have extremely one-sided capabilities. For
this last category of people, it might be a better option to look to paths other than the one drawn here. They can explore body work, dance (Dervish dance, sacred dance), etc.

The second category consists of people who lack autonomy or who are experiencing very distorted inner patterns. For them, it would be better to meditate under psychotherapeutical guidance.

- Very suggestible people or people who have a "natural tendency" to live more in a fantasy world than in reality, can look to professional guidance. They have to be careful and avoid whenever possible their tendency to confuse reality with fantasy. The counter balance of a guide might be very helpful for them.

- A certain category of chronic depressive individuals have difficulty creating images. This is a symptom of their problems: they are blocked and cannot create their own future. They have the tendency to take up a negative attitude towards their life and the situation they are living in. It is better not to force yourself to create images. It is better in that instance to look for other ways to ameliorate your situation and try to cut the vicious circles you are in.

- People whose imagination is overactive or people who have too intensive invasive images (e.g. hallucinations). Meditation can be helpful here when you use limited and directed working frames (see below). Therefore, it is strongly recommended here, that meditation is undertaken only with the guidance of an experienced therapist. To speed up the inner images further is senseless. It would be advisable to first come to rest in other ways.

A third category are people with specific ailments or diseases (e.g. terminal patients). Here I would suggest caution when you have only very limited experience with meditation. To look for a good and experienced guide is the best option. A special case to be singled out here is epilepsy, because image producing techniques can induce seizures (Leuner 1980; Dunki et.al. 1992). The reason for this is not fully understood. Psychological mechanisms may be involved. Conferring with the treating doctor is recommended, and therapeutical guidance during the first stages might be advised.

Some further tips and remarks concerning the text and the given meditation exercises:

- Beginners might have many advantages if they learn to meditate with the guidance of a more experienced teacher. Remember the eastern wisdom: "if you are ready, the master is there".
- It is worthwhile jotting down some notes after every exercise. If you fill in a meditation diary, you will notice after awhile definite lines of development.
- All meditations start with disidentification (see below). Beginners will benefit most by performing the complete exercise. After a time, you can shorten this part of your meditation. For stylistic reasons I have skipped the disidentification part in all exercises. Instead I ask the reader to add this to every given meditation.
- At the beginning of a meditation you can enhance your effort by making an appeal to all your senses. For example, if you are standing on a meadow, you can ask yourself: What do I see? What do I hear? What do I smell? What do I taste? How am I experiencing my body? Look around you, to the sky, to the meadow, it's borders and beyond.
- Don't be afraid of meditation. Your consciousness is your deepest friend. It will never leave you. It is always there. Trust it. Your consciousness contains healing capacities. When things are too
sensitive or painful, or if your are not able to cope with it, your consciousness will give you the right signals. Follow them. If necessary, ask for advice.

- Don't do exercises of too exotic a nature in the first two years. In the literature and also in the advertisements for certain meditation courses, you will find the inducement to open avenues into so called "paranormal" abilities, do multiple meditations (the creation of different images simultaneously), etc. Even though there is the possibility that they are selling illusions, it is very important to have a high degree of inner equilibrium, to have enough inner grounding before you embark onto this kind of meditation. It might also be relevant to pause here, ask yourself, what is my intention in exploring this avenue? Is normal life not rich enough?

- In eastern meditation traditions (yoga, Zen, Sufi, etc.) it is often stressed that attention has to be given to your body when you commence meditation. Some schools even require one or more years of preparation by bodily exercise. This might be going a little too far, but it is a good thing to give some attention to the body. It is a good counterbalance against tendencies of "being in the air". To live high in the sky is definitely not the aim of meditation. It is very important to find your inner roots, gain a sense of inner space and abandon inner blockages. Bodily exercise intensifies contact with everyday reality.

- Don't meditate alone when you are very confused. First try to achieve an inner tranquillity and space by other means.

- Certain meditations can cause very powerful emotional reactions. As far as possible, I will pinpoint this in the text. It is recommended that these exercises be done with the help of a guide or somebody else who can give you some support when it is needed (e.g. a friend).

- The described exercises are endorsed for adults. I don't have sufficient information to discuss their suitability for children. I would suggest caution in that instance. Life is long enough... It seems better to me to wait until maturity is reached. As an adult you have enough time and opportunity to become aware of and reframe past experiences.

What is the best bodily posture when meditating? Preference has to be given to an erect posture. When you are very tired (too tired to sit upright), you can meditate while lying down, but you will be less active and by conditional reflex have the tendency to go into sleep-like phenomena. To protect you against stimuli from your surroundings, and aid your relaxation, you can try putting a cloth on your eyes. Screening your eyes is a major technique to quiet the visual part of your brain.

### 2.2. Meditation for beginners

This paragraph is written for those who have never meditated before. For the first few weeks of your meditation experience, try to remain on this level. Perhaps you can deepen your insight by studying some of the publications I have mentioned in the reference list. For more experienced meditators, this paragraph might be considered as a reminder, and as an explicitation of my position regarding meditation.

#### 2.1.1. Becoming empty

Becoming empty is a major aim of meditation. There are several types of exercises to reach emp-
tiness. Daily practice of those exercises over a period of weeks will certainly have a deep influence on you. Spontaneous, positive side-effects include a renewed sense of order in your inner world and a fresh ability to observe clearly the movement of your consciousness. A first exercise is called **dis-identification**. You can improvise variants from this single exercise. The exercise heightens your ability to connect and differentiate between your body, your emotions and your thoughts, and that part inside you where there is still no identification. By experiencing this subtle difference again and again, you also experience an inner space, an opportunity for freedom, of transcending your problems. This might be a vital experience, especially when you have the tendency to be overrun by negative emotions or sensations.

This is the exercise:

* * *

**Meditation 1** - [Possibly, to begin with, you can use calming activities, such as music and relaxation exercise.] Close your eyes. Be aware of your breathing without interfering. Do nothing, simply let it be, don't interfere. Everything that happens is good (as long as you don't try to control or interfere).

* * *

Then go to your body and the sensations within your body. Make a tour, an overview: how does your head feel? your back? how does it feel sitting on the chair? is there some tension? how do your feet feel? where do they touch the ground? etc. Feel the sensations. Be aware of them for awhile. And then, let them go. Dis-identify with them. Become aware of this experience by saying to yourself: "I have a body, but I am not my body. I am more than my body".

* * *

Then watch your emotions, feelings and sentiments. What do you feel at this moment? Or try to remember the feelings you had through the day: when awakening, during breakfast, etc. Were you happy, angry, depressed, excited, confused? Do you feel pain or discomfort? Let all these feelings pass through your inner eye. And let them go after a while. Affirm this to yourself by saying: "I have emotions, but I am not my emotions, I am more than my emotions".

* * *

Then focus on your thoughts. Do you have thoughts at this moment? Or remember those you had today. See them pass through your mind’s eye without interference. A long river of thoughts. They come and go, come and go...Watch them as they really are: merely thoughts. Then let go of these thoughts. Become aware of this by saying: "I have thoughts, but I am not my thoughts, I am more than my thoughts.”

* * *

In principle, you are now detached from your bodily sensations, emotions and thoughts. Remain for a while in this empty space. Be aware of this emptiness.

* * *

And then, to your own rhythm, in your own time, open your eyes again.
At the beginning this exercise is not always easy to do. You may find it difficult to detach yourself from thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations. Keep trying. If you are occupied by your feelings, try to let them go. Ask these feelings why it is so difficult to detach from them? Another difficulty that might arise is the mingling of thoughts and feelings. Your consciousness is full of emotions, but you think they are thoughts, and vice versa. Don’t expect immediate results. Be patient and trust in yourself. Try to do this exercise once a day. After a few weeks you will become attuned to changes, however subtle. Everytime you complete this exercise, you learn more and become a little more experienced.

On rare occasions I have seen people leave their body during this exercise. They saw themselves from a place outside their body, from the viewpoint of another. The creation of such departure phenomena is certainly not the aim of this basic exercise. This kind of experience is a survival reaction which appears when you are severely threatened e.g. when someone threatens you with a gun, or in a case of rape. The leaving of your body is then meaningful. But later, these involved emotions have to be remembered, dealt with and worked through. So it should not be an aim to train yourself to produce this kind of survival response. The use of this kind of mechanism to evoke so called ‘spiritual’ experiences, is certainly not something the beginner has to strive for.

Some beginners have a problem reaching emptiness using the dis-identification exercise, or feel it to be very difficult. For them there are other alternatives. Sometimes it can be helpful to begin with classical relaxation exercises (they too can lead you away from busy thinking!), eventually you can use them as a direct introduction to the meditation. Another alternative is to meditate using the following classical eastern meditation method:

**Exercise 2 - The classical eastern meditation method.**

Close your eyes. Focus your attention on your breathing without any intention of influencing it. If you are distracted either by the inner or the outer world, try gently to bring your attention back to your breathing. Don’t strain! Each time your attention wanders, just try again. Try to practice this exercise with a tender attitude towards yourself. Carry on for at least five minutes.

In general, you may practice this exercise as long as you want. Eastern meditation schools demand from their novices continuously practice of several days, with only short breaks every hour. Such a severe meditation discipline is, however, absolutely unnecessary for beginners. Practice everyday. An increase in the duration of the sitting to fifteen minutes a day is more than enough!

A variation on the eastern method is the following exercise:
**Exercise 3 - Name all distractions.**

*Close your eyes. Watch your breathing. Especially try to direct your attention towards the deepest point of your breathing, down in your abdomen. Feel the space there. Watch now where your attention goes. If your attention floats away from following your breath, become aware of this by recognising what is happening, and repeat it several times. If your attention climbs up to your eyes, say then to yourself “eyes, eyes, eyes,...”, if you drift away in your thoughts, then say “thoughts, thoughts, thoughts, ...” or “head, head, head,...”, if your attention is caught by some pain in your body, then say “pain, pain, pain,...”, etc.*

This is a variation that is strongly recommended, it will certainly deepen your meditation.

In this last exercise you try very consciously to remain in what is classically called your Hara. The Hara is an energy centre which lies approximately one palm beyond your navel. My Japanese friend Shin Terayama taught me how this energy centre can be used to test if someone really meditates, or not. For this test you need another person to help you. The person who meditates, Person A, first tries to think while in the meditation posture (see before). Person B then pulls person A's shoulder sideways. Very easily Person A will fall aside. If Person A is now meditating and becomes aware of his breathing and of his Hara, it will be quite impossible for Person B to let A fall aside. If B uses more force, then A will tend to move over completely, instead of falling sideways. If you are uncertain if you meditate well, you could consider using this little trick to test yourself.

2.2.2. Allowing inner images to appear

If you can perform the disidentification exercise, add the following one:

**Meditation 4 -** Firstly, do the disidentification exercise until you are in the position of the inner observer. Then let an image or symbol of something that is beautiful or valuable appear to you. A flower, or a castle or a garden, etc. Try to hold this image in your inner eye for awhile. The exercise has to feel good to you, if not, it is better to stop.

If you are working without a guide or teacher, during the first month it is advised that you avoid confronting problems which emerge during your meditation. Certainly you can use meditation to seek out solutions or to cope with difficult situations, but it is better to strengthen other abilities before tackling such questions. It is better to wait, and use meditation for problem solving only when you have clearly understood the basic principles, and have enough experience to benefit from them. If your problems are pressing during this time, look to other solutions.
2.3. Basic attitude for meditation

What you gain from meditation really depends on the attitude you carry into the meditation with you. Meditation requires a basic attitude of receptiveness, openness, accepting everything that comes, rejecting or condemning nothing. All inner images (whatever they might represent, from anxieties to demons) are good. They are vehicles of communication with the unconscious. Appreciate your images and symbols, but look at them neutrally - as information, they are neither good nor bad. They are simple there. Just as you learned in the disidentification exercise: be the untouched observer of your inner world.

What you have to avoid is the use of meditation as a method of self control. When doing this, you are directing your images from the point of view of your so called strong will. For many reasons, this is inappropriate. First of all, you create a dualism, a split between your strong Ego and the unconscious part of yourself. Sooner or later, you will have to deal with that. Secondly, you close yourself to significant information and processes which are present inside you, even if you are unaware of them. Thirdly, this controlling attitude is reinforcing your Ego and Mind. Very often, solutions seem to appear when free from the influence of your Ego and Mind.

Another important point is that you be patient with yourself. Often it is not immediately evident what the content of a certain meditation means to you. Continue with meditation, but with patience and trust. Slowly, what is happening within you will become clearer. Keep in touch with your own intuition and interpretation of inner images. Keep this in mind as a holy principle when asking advice of guides, teachers or gurus. Your own intuition is the touchstone of everything.

The meditation method as presented here is one which aims to maximize freedom during meditation. All exercises create a context in which you can fill in everything with a free hand. Working within a context is meaningful because a context awakens archetypal forces. Meaning, forces which are operating in everybody and to which everybody necessarily has to relate (e.g. love and power, the oedipal triangle, etc.; see further below) because they refer to basic existential features of life. By setting a context, you awaken these forces inside yourself. When they are present, you can explore how you relate to them, or how you want to relate to them. With respect to content setting, a context remains empty (a fish can be every fish, a castle can refer to a lot of things, etc.). You decide by yourself what solid content you observe during your meditation. Remember, a meditation might carry you to other places besides those implied by the context. Allow this, it might be significant information. Furthermore, a context can be used to direct your consciousness toward specific questions or solutions to problems. Trust that what you need most in life will come to you.

Hundreds of meditation exercises are possible. If you want to consult the literature, you will find many described. How do you deal with this weight of information? How do you choose new meditations? As a basis for your choice, you can best select according to your own developmental processes. What occupies you? What do you need? If you know, you can browse through the literature to find meditations which are harmonious with your needs of the moment. Try them out. After
more practice, you will be able to create by yourself meditations which support you in your process. Don't be too impatient if you don't immediately find what you are looking for: a certain amount of running around is part of your quest.

How often should you meditate? This is a difficult question. If you are working through something, two or three times a day might be appropriate. When in a calm period, once every two or three days may be more than sufficient. It is very important to stay in close contact with your inner rhythm. For beginners, this might be a little different. It might prove very helpful to use a tighter regime, e.g. ten minutes a day until you have a fine sense of yourself.

2.4. The interpretation of images

The method presented here uses images. The next question being, how should you interpret these images. Since the pansexual failure of Freud, we know that one has to be very careful with the interpretation of images - certainly by an outsider. Symbols can be very individual. According to my experience with meditation, the interpretation is seldom a big problem. Very often you know immediately, you feel intuitively the meaning of a certain image. If this is not the case, you can call back the image, talk with it, put it in a different context until the image explains itself. Further, you can use one of the recognized methods of interpretation. A very helpful one is the method developed by Georges Wollants:

Wollants (Wollants & Lafaille 1985) proposal is to interpret a meditation by it's central dynamic. Meaning, the central theme as it develops throughout the meditation, the developmental process, the underlying motivation. The dynamic has to be differentiated from the summary. The dynamic refers to the symbolic language and the structure of what is told. The summary is only a short overview of the content on a less profound level. E.g., a meditation about calamities and disasters which you survive (summary), might have as it's dynamic that you momentarily live in a situation of much external resistance, but pass through and mature by it; it will all be alright in the end.

Beginners benefit by using a certain method. What is interesting with this method is that you don't concentrate on one image (what does a bicycle mean? for example), but that you focus on dynamics, the movement in the meditation. Later, as experience learns, you can go on without the help of an instrument. Everything will come smoothly then.
2.5. Meditation for advanced practitioners

I mean by advanced practitioners all those who have mastered the basic techniques as explained in the second paragraph and can carry them out without difficulties. In general this will be the case after some weeks of practice. The next series of meditations (see below) are for these advanced students; although it is certainly not the aim that you do them one after the other. Choose a certain theme and try to work it out, knowing that there are a lot of interconnections with other themes. The developmental process implied by the described exercises takes at least 2 or 3 years. Don’t speed yourself up! Meditation has everything to do with being in relationship to what there is, and has nothing to do with the development of a kind of “superpersonality” who has gone through everything. This is a wrong track. ‘Streber’-types (ambitious types) have to be careful here!

2.5.1. The dynamics of consciousness

Before making a start with the exercises, it is worthwhile to be aware of some general dynamics of consciousness and to make some remarks:

- Consciousness spontaneously shows a rhythm of opening and closing itself. The movement of opening and closing causes irritation, discomfort, pain. If you do a lot of exercises which open your consciousness more and more, then you will also experience the pain and even minor psychosomatic complaints when closing it. If you want to practice intensively, you have to keep this clearly in mind.

- Meditation quite evidently has to be related to the life cycle. Young people are busy with the building of a relationship or the desire for a child. Later, difficulties in relationships, new partner choices, or distraction with becoming older might be at the core of your attention. It is good to be aware of this.

- Meditation is directed towards synthesis, not to create or stimulate dualism in you. A dialogue between the different parts of yourself (e.g. subpersonalities; see below) is proposed to optimize the cooperation between them, to unify them.

- Meditation aims to integrate pain in your life, not to suppress it. As is explained below, this requires a circumspect attitude, you have to take good care of yourself.

- Meditation brings you into contact with yourself, other persons and the wider world outside of you. Allow the mystery, try to come into connection with it. Don’t try to understand it further. The mystery is beyond control, it is the unknown and the unknowable. By trying to understand it too much, you are changing it, reducing it to the level of your mind. As will be explained below, you can better use your mind for other things.

- In an early state, life is mainly directed towards the development of the Ego. This is good and necessary because it serves survival. Once this is achieved, a change comes to the surface - the contact with your deeper Self. Meditation is especially helpful for this second process.

- By meditation you are able to make clearer choices, take more responsibility for what is happening to you. It also invites you to make your choices based more on universal values, rather than on individual-centered values which serve personal interests. Universal values such as: love, honesty, humanness, justice, etc. Once you have deeply experienced the importance of these values for yourself, you will be much more aware about values than seems the current trend in
society. In some cases this may lead to opposition and conflicts. Also you will have to learn to cope with the selfishness and heartlessness of other people.

- Don’t think that meditation will bring you happiness and nothing else. Very often this illusion is propagated by gurus. It is a ruse to bind you to their person and their group. Meditation is a consciousness raising technique. This implies awareness of good and bad things, of positive and negative feelings, of power and powerlessness, of happiness but also of pain and distress. You become more aware, more intense, you see better the problems and steer by that. But it will never be easy. Accept the river of life: good and bad alternate in rhythms, like low and high tide. Don’t create division inside you, accept everything, but accept everything consciously. The big river is directed to wholeness, happiness and depth. Look at difficulties as teaching situations. Consider the following too. Often it is impossible to change the circumstances, but you can always change yourself or your attitude. This freedom always belongs to you. If you climb a mountain, you have to accept that you might become exhausted, sit down, waiting for new energy to come, hold onto the side, keep trying, but once you are at the top: the overview, the exaltation! The climbing is one whole, all moments belong to it. Not only the reaching of the top. They are all one.

2.5.2. Explore your values

Humans are value creating beings. You cannot exist as a human being without values. Some values you may not be aware of having, others may not be appropriate to you. With mediation you can deal more consciously with values, take more responsibility for them. Meditating upon your values is mostly very pleasant: it makes you aware, powerful, alert.

**Meditation 5-** Close your eyes. Imagine your values. Make a symbol of them. What does this mean to you? What do you experience while in contact with this? Identify yourself further and wrap this symbol around you as you would do with a blanket. How does this feel?

**Meditation 6-** See yourself as a flower (e.g. a rose or a lily). Follow the evolution of this plant. The seed that strikes root in the ground. Rising up through the earth. Become big and flourish. Let the flower flourish.

**Meditation 7-** Picture yourself as a tree. Feel your roots reaching deep into the earth. Feel how your trunk holds strong in the blowing wind. Feel your swaying branches and your rushing leaves. Look around you. What do you see?

**Meditation 8 -** Try to make contact with the love inside you. Feel this energy, feel this experience. Stay awhile with this experience. Confirm this experience for yourself with the

*Example of such a meditation:* “I am entering a Japanese temple. In the middle on a low lying cushion lies a mineral with double fraction. Double rays radiate from it. By looking through this mineral, I can see things beyond the reality of everyday life.”
Interpretation of the person himself  "I am seeking for spirituality. This crystal symbolizes the teacher who helps me to find my way.".

2.5.3. Explore you inner needs

The fulfilment of needs is very important to all human beings. Our survival is dependent upon it. The fulfilment of needs is embedded in a dynamic of complex equilibria. From the one side it is impossible to fulfil all your needs (there will be always more needs than opportunities!), but from the other side you will have problems if not enough of these are fulfilled.

![Diagram showing the relationship between Detachment/Let Go, Dynamic Equilibrium, Activity, Permanent Deprivation, and Greediness/terrifying child.]

Figure 1. Differences in attitude towards the fulfilment of needs.

This double structure implies that you have to be able to detach yourself from certain needs, but be able to mobilize enough forces to fulfil certain others. It is a question of flexible and balanced equilibrium. If people remain unfulfilled too long, it may be they have adopted an inner pattern of detachment from their needs (in order to avoid pain). At the moment this pattern comes into existence, it may be a good adaptation mechanism, but very often, when the objective situation has changed, this pattern remains and causes a lot of problems. In this paragraph, I will present a series of exercises by which you can widen your behavioural alternatives and which might be helpful in seeking a better equilibrium.

Meditation 9 - A preparatory exercise. Write down "I need...". Make a list of everything that comes up into your mind through answering this question. Group the answers in categories which are meaningful to you. What do you see?
Meditation 10 - This second exercise is an open meditation. Open yourself to images which show you what your needs are. What do you need? What can bring you happiness? Make symbols of these needs (e.g. a degree = knowledge = a diamond; a new boy- or girlfriend = love = a lily). Try to find out what you can do in practical terms to fulfil these needs.

Meditation 11 - The third exercise links your needs to the life processes operating in you. Let all the activities of the last three weeks pass. What occupied you? What was easy? What provoked resistance? First try to remember all the events of the last three weeks. Then try to look to a deeper level: what values were trying to express themselves in your life? Do you see lines of development? Are there connections with major themes in your life? Possibly make a symbol if such a line of value is discovered. Visualize your near future in the second part of this exercise. What do you need to further realize the lines or values you discovered in the first part of the exercise? What do you need to realize happiness in your life? Try to imagine everything as clearly and practically as possible.

If it is possible for you, discuss the results of this exercise with another person, someone who will ask you again and again to make everything more and more concrete (inclusive: appointments, dates, etc.). According to my experience, people know very well what they need, but they fail at this stage of concretion to come to fulfilment. Confrontation with another person, may bring you beyond this dead end. This is a good exercise to do regularly e.g. every month with another person who helps you.

Meditation 12 - Imagine that you possess a magic stick which enables you to fulfil all your needs. And which enables you also to bring other people in contact with this without asking (or even demanding) to fulfil them. What do you see? How does this feel?

Meditation 13 - Make an overview of your needs. Let them pass before you as a river. Then ask yourself the following question: “Am I willing to take responsibility for my needs?” What is your choice? And how does this feel?

Meditation 14 - Close your eyes. See yourself as a little child sitting on your own lap. How does this feel? Feel the bond between you. Is there an exchange of energy? Look how you behave towards this child. Look deep into the eyes of the child. Try to hold this contact for some moments. What do you experience?

Meditation 15 - See yourself successively at your birth, at the age of 5 years, 10 years, 15 years and so on until you reach your present self. Look at your different values at all these ages. How many of them have been realized? What were your needs? Were they fulfilled?
Which ones were, which ones were not? To what was this related? Do these mechanisms still play a part? What can you do to change this?

_Meditation 16 -_ See yourself walking in a forest with your little child next to you. You walk through the forest and slowly the forest becomes sparser. At a distance you see people around a campfire. You go to them. Look at what happens to the child.

_Meditation 17 -_ Exploration of the relationship of the little child with other sub-personalities. Here many exercises are possible. I will only give one. The reader can very easily compose similar exercises. This kind of exercise is very important because our sub-personalities might block the fulfilment of certain needs. A dialogue is then needed between this sub-personality, the needy child and your free self, in order to re-open a good co-operation between the different parts inside you.

**Exercise.** Use three chairs which you put in a triangle. On every chair a different part of you is sitting. Put your free Self at the central place (the observer of the dis-identification-exercise), the little child at the left and at the right side an inner parent-figure or other authoritative sub-personality. Close your eyes now and look how the little child behaves towards this authoritative figure: is it allowed to be what it is? Does it receive understanding? Or is it rejected and have no space to be there? To make things clear, you can change seats to identify yourself better with a certain sub-personality.

_Meditation 18 -_ Recall the family in which you were raised. Remember your position in that family. Identify yourself with the child you were then. As a child you see your father before you. How was your relation with him then? What was your attitude then? What did you need then from your father? To what extent did you receive what you needed? See your mother before you, and after that, continue with every other member of your family. What do you discover about this child? Are there things unresolved, things for which you can take responsibility now?

A discussion about the exploration of your needs is not complete without saying something about a certain unconscious projection mechanism because it is so often operable and disturbs human relationships. I have already explained how needs are easily repressed but remain a negative force in the unconscious. When this happens, you project this need onto other people. You hope to force him/her s/he to fulfil your needs. Sometimes this enforcement or manipulation goes too far. The terrifying child awakes. Just as a little child who doesn’t want to go to bed, starts crying or becomes angry in order to enforce its need to stay out of bed, you also try as an adult to manipulate your environment to serve your interests. Emotional manipulation then is a favourite strategy.
The problem now is that this is not very clear to the A-partner in a relationship, because otherwise there would be no unconscious pattern. You put forward that reality is “just like that” (so the little child becomes a terrifying child or even a little dictator).

Example. An elderly mother has difficulty coping with her loneliness. She misses her deceased husband, but never discusses this with her children, because this is very painful for her. She needs contact, company, but is unable to work through all these feelings and let them go. The pain of being alone in life. Then when her children come for a visit, she asks them to come back sooner. She complains that they don’t love her enough. She develops various somatic complaints in order to bring her children around her.

The only real solution is to become aware of the repression of these feelings, understand the underlying needs, and learn to cope with this in a conscious way. This implies accepting the shock of letting go of a very meaningful need. Accepting that other people don’t exist for the fulfilment of your needs.

This pattern of (unconscious) need-manipulation frequently occurs in partner relationships. In some cases it is the basis of severe conflicts, painful struggles, distortions and divorce. Especially, when unconscious patterns are involved which have to do with deep-felt shortages of love (father- or mother ties; see below) and when these are projected on the partner. This inner dynamic is always seeking new requirements, and is emotionally struggled for, although the partner is excluded from entering this emotional realm. The emotional needs of A will - because of this dynamic - always remain unfulfilled. Many love relationships end like this in real tragedy - for all partners involved.

Figure 2. The mechanism of need projection.
There is never a winner in such latent power struggles. Both partners become victims of the same unconscious pattern.

2.5.4. Explore the relationship between inner forces

Consciousness can be conceived as an energy field. Its qualities appear very often as polarities: warm-cold, anger-sorrow, love-power, openness-closedness, etc. It always concerns the same energy which somehow moves in another direction. Meditation aims to explore these energetic qualities in yourself and connect them in harmony. To make you aware that you have choices and that you can choose in which direction you steer energy. A series of meditations is given to explore the polarities of love and power, but similar exercises can be done for all kinds of polarities, also to explore the relationship between sub-personalities (see below).

**Meditation 19** - See a vessel before you. Hold it in your hands. What is its quality? What is your relationship with this vessel?

**Meditation 20** - See a sword before you. Take it in your hand. How does this feel? What are you going to do with it?

**Meditation 21** - Preparatory exercise. What are the symbols of love and power for you?

**Meditation 22** - For many persons a vessel and a sword symbolises love and power. But if meditation 19 offered you other symbols, please use them in the next exercise. Close your eyes and take a step to the left. Hold the vessel (or your individual symbol) in your hands. What do you experience? Then go back to your starting position. Now take a step to the right. Hold your sword. What do you experience now? Go back to your starting position and repeat the exercise five times. Then stay on your starting position and hold the vessel in your left hand and the sword in your right hand. Realize that these are two of your polar qualities and that in reality you can choose every time which one you want to use. You are free to choose.

2.5.5. The exploration of sub-personalities

As I explained before, the field of our consciousness contains many polarities. Some of these have such crystallization and autonomy that they can be considered sub-personalities. Sometimes you might have images about them spontaneously. By meditating you can explore them systematically, connecting images and figures to these polarities (e.g. in dreams). This facilitates understanding of these polarities. Examples are:
• the needy child • the authoritative father
• the inner woman • the inner man
• the Don Juan • the seducing woman
• the top-dog • the under-dog
• the mystic • the pragmatist

This is only a very limited list that can easily be expanded if needed. These sub-personalities are very personal, but appear in a lot of people. They may also change during your life. For instance, their names may change, or the image of it. Some will come more to the foreground, others will move to the background (e.g. the lover will give space to the father). Also differences occur in how intensely you identify with them. If you don’t acknowledge certain sub-personalities, or if you repress them (the needy child for example), then they will influence you from unconscious realms.

Meditation 23 - Preparatory exercise. Which sub-personalities have you already discovered inside you?

Meditation 24 - This meditation seeks to meet your inner man or woman. See yourself on a meadow. In the distance, at the other side of the meadow, you see a man coming towards you. Go to him. Observe him well. What does he say to you? What do you feel? Is there an exchange of energy? Talk to him. Ask any question that comes into your mind.

Meditation 25 - This is an important exercise, because it can help you to solve many problems. It is the search for your inner wise man or woman. Here I will explain the example of finding the wise man. For the wise woman it is the same. Climb a mountain. At a certain point you see a little house, a kind of hermitage. Your inner wise man lives there. Go inside and ask to speak with him. Ask all the questions that occupy you at the moment. Wait for an answer and then turn back, down the mountain. Besides what the wise man said to you, it is also important to remember what you encountered on your way.

2.5.6. Resolving father- and mother ties

(Unconscious) love shortages can be a source of unhappiness and are often linked to inner patterns which attract a lot of misery from the outside world to you. (Unconscious) father- or mother ties are very often its basis. Father and mother love are for anyone the first love experiences. They are intense and longlasting. They are not only very concrete, but also archetypal of nature and serve survival functions. The child attaches itself to father or mother, even if they don’t love it. Sometimes substitutions for father or mother are chosen. Inevitably no father or mother love can fulfil all the needs of a child. Pain as a consequence emerges from this shortage. Everybody must deal with this inevitable imperfection. Usually this evolution progresses spontaneously, without deep rup-
Nevertheless, there are always deep feelings involved in this process because the emotional bond is so strong and intense (e.g. look to what happens on the first day of school for a child, or at the death of a parent).

However, when a child is rejected by his father and/or mother a deep feeling of being rejected is superimposed on this normal pain. This is very painful to experience and difficult to cope with. Anger, sadness and psychosomatic complaints manifest themselves. Repression to the unconsciousness creates the illusion that nothing is at stake. Very often it takes years before these inner wounds are healed. These patterns of rejection are often transposed generation by generation, this means that father or mother, because they were rejected themselves and were unable to heal their inner wounds, hurt their children in their turn. Projection mechanisms then start to operate. Very often (unconsciously) you seek a partner congruent to this inner pattern. A partner who is unable to open him/herself enough to you, or even (consciously or unconsciously) rejects you. The mutual bond in this kind of relationship might be very intense. In spite of a lot of misery, it is very difficult for one partner to let the other go. This is very visible in tragic form such as violent or SM-relationships. An inability to love, although this is precisely what is sought after so intensly. A subtler kind of violence is more common: “Certainly I love you, but I am in love with another”, or “I can only love you under certain conditions (namely when you change, if you don’t behave like that, etc.).” Not able to heal your inner pain, also means that you cannot open yourself to your love partner. Sometimes many personal crises are necessary to discover conclusively that this inner pattern plays such an important role in your life. The following meditation exercises might be helpful to you in becoming aware of these deeper structures in your consciousness. These kind of meditations can elicit very strong emotional responses. Take care to cushion yourself in suitable conditions in which to carry out these exercises (e.g. carry them out with a friend; see also 2.1).

**Meditation 26** - Imagine your father (mother). Be aware of the effect this has on you. Do an exchange of feelings appear? Which feelings? After this part of the exercise, try to feel your love for your father (mother). Does a shift of energy appear? What happens? When this love energy is blocked, try to enter into a dialogue with your father. Try to find out precisely why you are closed to him.

**Meditation 27** - Try to feel the kind of love energy you have experienced in Meditation 24 in relation to your mother. Try to feel it intensely. Then see what happens when your father comes into your mind, enter the relationship. What happens then? Is there a change in the quality of energy? If so, in what direction? Obviously, this exercise can be done in the reverse order - start with your father, and let your mother come in. This exercise represents the Oedipal triangle (father-mother-child) and is a very powerful instrument in discovering the source of this deprivation of love feeling.

**Meditation 28** - Imagine an ideal father (mother) who gives you all the love you deserve. What happens then? How does such love feel? Does it influence your life? Would you have done other things? Then, let this inner figure take care of you, cherish you, hug you, and say
Two more additions are worth mentioning:
- When two people fall in love, these patterns often appear. Here a fundamental dynamic of consciousness is involved: when you open yourself, as in the case of falling in love, then you open completely, and unsolved problems may come to the surface. As such this is very beautiful: love contains healing forces. And if you can really let it go, you become literally “enlightened”, free of the weight of the past. Unfortunately this doesn’t necessarily lead to a happy-end. Projection mechanisms are interfering and may be very resistant. In serious cases deep crises may appear. Unfortunately, these crises are very often inadequately interpreted, because there is a lack of dissemination of knowledge.
- Patterns of being rejected can emerge in a mother’s womb. Very recently, it was discovered that already the embryo communicates with the mother (Krühl 1989), is connected with her energetically (Goodwin 1993) and that contact with the mother is influencing the development of the brain (Doman 1979a and b). The old theory that in your pre-natal life you only lead a passive existence has to be revised. Therefore, the possibility of pre-natal influences have to be taken seriously. Rebirthing techniques may give you insight into such inner patterns, but concrete exercises are beyond the scope of this book. Consult the specialised literature. Rebirthing, it must be noted, can be applied and explored better with the help of a guide or therapist.

During the process of accepting your deprivation of love feeling, you might notice that you are very lonely. Try to make this loneliness an object of meditation. And accept this feeling, without being swept away by sorrow. In an existential sense, you are alone. You will always be. Be aware of this. Accept it: it is your cosmic position.

If you have done enough of the exercises in the first series, and your intuition tells you that you have experienced the deprivation deep enough, then in a second series of exercises you can try to reconcile yourself with the past. I present an exercise with your father, but similarly you can do the exercise with your mother.

Meditation 29 - Imagine your father. Look back over your life: remember all the good things you received from him. Review thereafter all difficult experiences with him. The pain he gave you, the anger, the sadness, the powerlessness... Take your time to let everything come into your mind’s eye. Become aware how all these things (the good and the bad) have contributed to your development. How they made you strong, gave you insights into the deep realms of life, brought you closer to yourself, etc. Become aware that he helped you a lot in your inner growth. And forgive him for all the shortages of love, his authority, his lack of sensitivity for you as you have experienced all this through him... Let this awareness of forgiveness enter very deep into
To inform you further about the processes involved when you decide to work on your inner love relations, I can recommend: *He, She and The Psychology of Romantic Love* by Robert Johnson (1977a and b; 1987), *The Search of the Beloved* by Jean Houston (1989), *Siddharta* by Hermann Hesse (1980), *Henry and June and Incest* by Anais Nin (1992, 1993). Also *Tantra, Spirituality and Sex* by Shree Rajneesh (1980a) can be supportive e.g. to become aware that in love relations, first of all, your own capacity to love manifests itself. Many times, this evident fact is mistakenly put aside because you are so pre-occupied with your partner, your being in love. Meditation 6 might be helpful here too.

**2.5.7. Who am I?**

A classic question in meditation. And not an easy one. Here I will mention some meditations which might be helpful in bringing you closer to an answer.

*Meditation 30* - This meditation is borrowed from Houston (1982: 56-57). Explore your body by meditation. Start with your feet: are they pointing forward or inclined, how do they make contact with the ground, how does the weight of your body on them feel etc. Then slowly go upwards, and ask similar questions to gain a very clear inner picture of yourself. Imagine your body as you ideally want how it to look. Try to describe as many details as you can: its earlobes, its hair, etc. Hold this image of your ideal body. Now imagine that this ideal body stands just before you, at some inches distance, with it's back to you. Now jump into it (And remember: if it doesn’t feel too good, you can always jump back). What do you experience? How does it feel? Imagine it again, still more precisely. Adapt it, change it according to your first experiences with it. Then walk around with it. Also go outdoors. What happens then? What do your friends and acquaintances say?

*Meditation 31* - See yourself in a mirror. Naked. What strikes you about your body? Explore it completely: Hands, feet, legs, etc. Take enough time and attention to do this. Then open your eyes and draw it on paper. What strikes you? Did you skip parts? Enlarge? Did you change anything? Why? To what is this connected?

*Meditation 32* - Create by meditation a symbolic story about yourself, a fairy tale if you want. Once upon a time ... [fill it in, and allow the story to tell itself]. Nevertheless, be aware that it is your own story. Write it down. Do you have further questions about the story? What are the main themes? What kind of polarities do you see? Do you see ruptures, growth stages in your lifeline?
2.5.8. Meditation for problem solving and creativity processes

Meditations are very appropriate for creativity processes in general and for problem solving more specifically. Two aspects are then important. By awakening your meditative consciousness, you not only call in your cognitive capacities, but your imagination and consciousness too. Your search capacities are maximized. Therefore it is necessary that you meditate with an open frame, because you are entering the unknown in full consciousness. Create a free space, in which you allow your creative abilities to fill in the content.

The most famous meditations here are opening hidden doors, entering and exploring caves, traveling to other planets, etc. Hereafter, I will present such a meditation, but you can use the plot to make various similar meditations by yourself. Another example is to visit all kinds of people and ask them for advice (e.g. Einstein, the Nobel prize winner in medicine, Gorbachov, etc.).

*Meditation 33 - Close your eyes. You are in a meadow. In the distance you can see a river. Follow that river until you find the entrance to a cave. Enter this cave. Go through an underground network. Suddenly you see a door, beyond which you will find a solution for your problem. Open this door. What do you see?*

2.5.9. Contemplating nature

Making contact with nature isn't, in a technical sense, a meditation. However, these experiences can be quite similar. One could say that certain experiences with nature are “spontaneous meditations”.

If you engage in meditation, a regular and intense contact with nature is recommended. Select beautiful environments: a big forest, a hill, a mountain, a path along a river, etc. Try to concentrate as much as possible on nature, instead of being occupied (as usual) with your inner world. Make use of all your senses: smell, taste, sound, sight, etc. Smell a flower, touch the bark of a tree, filter the sand of the beach through your fingers, etc. Reside for awhile in a beautiful place: let its beauty enchant you.

Urban life reduces contact with nature — and you have to be careful not to become completely cut off. Therefore this tendency needs compensation. A (small) garden, flowers and plants inside the house, evening walks, etc. are opportunities to cultivate a little of that contact. When planning your holidays, try to use the time to experience nature again. It will refresh you.

Your contact with nature can be intensified by meditation. Here are a few suggestions:
Meditation 34 — Close your eyes. Listen to the sounds of the environment. Is there one that strikes you in particular? Focus on it. Remain for awhile with this sound.

Meditation 35 — The same as Meditation 34 but use a smell.

Meditation 36 — Close your eyes. Try to remember the landscape in front of you. Concentrate on its colours.

Meditation 37 — Sit down near the water (river, lake, sea). Look at the water; Pay attention to where in your body your react to this view. Where in your body do you feel this water?

Meditation 38 — This is an exercise to be carried out at night, when it’s cloudless. Look at the moon. How do you feel while looking at the moon? Where does your body respond? Then close your eyes. Feel the light of the moon shining on your face. How does this feel?

Meditation 39 — You can carry out a similar exercise with the sun. But never look directly into the sun with your eyes open! This can damage your eyes irreversibly. Close your eyes. Feel how the sun shines on your face. Stay with that experience. How does this feel?

These types of meditations open your senses. Now and then you can experiment with them. It definitely is not the intention to try and replace contact with nature itself with such meditations. However, they may help you to deepen the normal experience: they open up all the sensory channels inside yourself. Enjoy it.

2.6. Some special topics

2.6.1. Crises

Crises are very often the precursor of important transformations in your life, and often you only see the positive side later. First of all, feelings of tension, discomfort, pain and anxieties show themselves and you experience meaninglessness. Very often psychosomatic complaints express themselves. It is important to accept a crisis as a meaningful part of your biography and resist becoming a victim of it by allowing yourself to be dominated by (too strong) feelings. Crises very often seem to originate from the outside, but you will discover via meditation that they have a lot to do with transformations of your inner Self. What often makes them so difficult and persistent is that inner, unconscious and growth impeding patterns manifest themselves, and must be let go of before you can find healing. From my own experience, and from the experience of many others, I know that it is often very troublesome when such patterns start to react. Often, you come into conflict with the people around you (you first of all point to your surroundings as agents of unhappiness, and only very slowly discover that you are yourself at the core and the main determinant).
Various theoretical models are available, which offer you insights in the processes involved in a crisis. I only mention here the victim-participator model, the BPM-model and the feminine principle (see Lafaille 1995). The principle in all these exercises is always the same: a frame is offered which implies a strong movement (transition, passage, transformation, death and rebirth, etc.) and at the symbolic level there is reference to all the archetypal forces which are involved in all major transformations in life. In general you will have to learn to let go your Mind-control on reality (the masculine principle) and entrust to the much deeper processes of life (feminine principle). Just as in the birth process, the new only appears while going into unknown depths, this is also true for the development of consciousness. The only difference being that in your life many times you experience deep transformations of consciousness. Quite a lot of exercises are available to support you and help you deal with a crisis. Some of them might generate intense emotional reaction, and therefore it is recommended that you do them with a guide. To give at least some orientation, I mention a few exercises which might elicit reactions of less severity.

**Meditation 40** - Death meditations symbolise the process of dying of the old Ego and show you what the next stage of your life might look like. Obviously, a basic requirement for these meditations is that they don't make you anxious, because otherwise it is better not to use them.

**Exercise.** See yourself lying on the beach. You are deceased. You are laid out. You are lifted up by four women who carry you to the sea. They lay you down in the sea. Look where you are floating to. What happens further?

**Meditation 41** - Death and rebirth. Here for example you can use the Phoenix-myth. Or see yourself as a caterpillar, which very slowly transforms into a butterfly. Where is the butterfly flying to? What does he encounter?

**Meditation 42** - See yourself floating in a river. Surrounded by water. The river becomes wider. The water is moving faster. How does the floating feel? How does the current feel? The power of the river? The dragging along? Where are you going?

**Meditation 43** - See yourself on a boat that leaves the harbour for the open sea. You are the steersman, the captain. How does it feel to hold the helm? See yourself sailing over the sea. Suddenly, a storm comes up. It becomes worse and worse. Do you decide to go back or not? What do you do? After the storm, you sail to a desert island. Disembark on the island. What do you see, what do you meet?

Music which might be supportive for this exercise is My Island by Nana Mouskouri (e.g. which can be found on her CD "Popular Artist Best Series ‘Nana Mouskouri’").

**Meditation 44** - The bearer of chaos is often symbolically represented as a witch. Go and visit your witch in a little house on a mountain. Ask her why you are in a crisis, and if she can give any suggestions to help you through it.
2.6.2. Pain and Sorrow

Pain can originate from different sources, but always there is an experience of pain. It is worthwhile to look at your pain from different perspectives. Sometimes there is a simple means to solve your pain, in other cases it might take days or months, and a deeper level of self-disclosure is required. Pain is an experience which is always very intrusive: she occupies you, motivates you to seek urgent solutions. Here, I will expand on how you can explore your pain from the perspective of inner dynamics. The most frequently occurring and culturally socialized reaction to pain is to divide your inner world into two parts: the happy, cheerful or healthy state at the one hand and the painful, unintended part at the other. In the case of pain, which is totally different from anger, sadness or love, for example, there occurs no discharge or catharsis when you go deeper into it. It becomes more and more painful to penetrate into your pain. So you can explore it, but do so in a moderate way. Pain refers to your boundaries, and is in a certain sense the experience of these boundaries itself. You cannot go through it. You can explore the boundaries, accept them, ask them what meaning(s) they have for you. By doing that, your pain will become more gentle, will not disrupt your daily life so much as before - and at last will reveal itself as the healer deep inside yourself. Pain always refers to something else. It is very important to accept pain as a basic quality of your consciousness, as meaningful for you in your life. The point is to relate softly and gently to yourself and your pain (e.g. relieve the pain a little bit by self massage) and to try to discover the deeper meaning and the connection between the (inner) pain and your inner development at this stage in your life. Pain implies that the unity of your consciousness is disrupted; although we are often not very aware of this.

The experience of Hildegard of Bingen, a mystic of the eleventh century and a universal scholar who was far ahead of her time, may help you discover still another aspect of pain. In her case, pain always preceded her mystic visions. Pain thus is the preparatory stage of opening yourself.

"It is notable that her somatic and psychic suffering increases at these moments when she feels herself imposed to fulfil her high mission: to become aware of what she perceives during her visions, to write them down and to share these utmost inner and deeply touching experiences with others. It seems as if she would like to withdraw herself at these moments from the responsibility which burdens her by her voyance. And thus, at the same time, to withdraw herself from the responsibility of recovery. Healing is for her more than mere restoration. It is at the end a gain of ground for which she has to fight and take the risk. Healing is something which she is afraid of, but that enriches her when she musters the courage to share with others her deepest "science". In this respect, her special gifts have contradictory effects: they undermine her so that she can become even more powerful. This is also the way in which she experiences herself, when she - again - succeeds in following her vocation and conquering her pain, to recover from the somatic disease and to become clear with herself 'such as water that has caused an inundation by storm-winds, me too, I regained my forces. Such as someone who returned to his homeland after a long travel, can become aware of what he really owns'. [...] The pushing power on which everything in this process is founded, is the will. And also the will is for Hildegard a fire that cooks everything as in a furnace. The will is a light which enlightens
If pain indicates a stage of transition towards another, new state of consciousness, then one could evaluate the pain either from the preliminary stage, or from the third stage, in which the change has already happened. Pain/illness is from this point of view a stage of preparation: a necessary transformation of the body in order to receive a new consciousness or even generate it. Pain thus becomes a sign of Hope.

A large series of excellent meditations about pain, you can find in Rijke (1984a). The following exercises are borrowed from that publication.

**Meditation 45** - Preparatory exercise 1. Remember times where you experienced great pain, and other moments of lesser pain. Become aware of the differences. What happened just before the pain? How did it disappear? How did the transition occur? What is your attitude during these periods of pain and of lesser pain? Is there a difference? Is there a difference in your attitude towards life?

**Meditation 46** - Preparatory exercise 2. Write down what your ideas and mind constructs are regarding your pain. What do you see as its causes? Write down your experience of pain in words or with symbols. Describe the different feelings of sadness, anger, anxiety, etc. Investigate your anxieties. What locations frighten you? What is the worst thing that can happen to you? How does your body feel during periods of pain?

**Meditation 47** - Preparatory exercise 3. What advantages do you gain from your pain? What role does pain play in your relationships?

**Meditation 48** - Experience your pain and make a symbol of it. How does this symbol feel? What does it say to you? What message reveals it? Take notes.

**Meditation 49** - Become aware of your body as a whole. See it as a rock along the sea. Then become that rock and experience how this feels. How does it feel to be a rock, with its shape, its coves, its eventual caves and caverns, etc. Become aware that the sun shines on you. Then make contact with your pain when the sea splashes against you. How is the sea at this moment (quiet or stormy)? Do you only experience the sea at your borders or also in the creeks or eventual caves and caverns? Become more and more aware of the pain which is...
there and see if you can let the pain be there as a rock, without having or willing anything done about it. Then go as an observator to seek for the core of the pain and take your time to experience this. Ask yourself what is the essence of the pain at this moment, and also be aware of the sun which is shining on the rock and the sea which penetrates all the creeks caves and caverns.

2.6.3. Guilt feelings

Guilt feelings evidently emerge as the result of negligent and erroneous behaviour. In this instance they are meaningful, they enable you to adjust and offer an opportunity to realize your imperfections. Guilt feelings nevertheless can arise from quite different sources, and can be very persistent and very disturbing for the person who experiences them. They might e.g. emerge as a result of power processes. The induction of guilt feelings is a very effective way to exert social control. Many religions make use of induction of guilt. Very often it is used in combination with very restricted sexual morals (e.g. Christianity or Islam, but other ideologies like Chinese communism also use sexual restrictions as a tool for social control). Guilt feelings can also emerge as the result of inner destructive patterns (self-rejection) or a too weak ego-development (e.g. which expresses itself as a permanent need for approval and attention by other people). Some people suffer from guilt feelings because they don't create borders or because their borders are too flimsy. They allow too much permeability. Also love strategies can play an important role (see before). It will be clear that if you suffer (too) much from guilt feelings, you will have to work on yourself in different ways (develop a stronger self-image, increase your self-esteem, cope with love shortages, etc.). Here, I give only a limited series of exercises which work directly upon guilt feelings.

Meditation 50 - You can do an exercise to return guilt feelings to the people they originally came from. Put all your guilt feelings in a bag, and throw this back to those people who have tried to give you these feelings. Repeat this exercise again and again, until they disappear.

Meditation 51 - Put in your meditations a barrage/wall/impermeable shield between yourself and relevant others. The intention is that you learn to protect yourself against induction of feelings from others. The inner world generates enough of it's own emotional turbulence, and can do without the negative feelings of others! This seems to be a good exercise to practice everyday - until it helps.

Meditation 52 - It often occurs that deep inside yourself a rejected subpersonality is active which weakens you with guilt feelings. You could try to find this subpersonality and ask s/he about this. S/he possesses knowledge about these guilt feelings. Why are you rejected by him/her? What are his/her aims? What does s/he need to become strong and happy?

Out of the Asian meditation tradition stems another exercise to help cope with guilt feelings. Here guilt feelings are the direct focus of meditation and you are invited to transform them energetically. If you succeed, it will bring a deep release. Practice regularly, each time
choosing a particular guilt feeling as an object.

Meditation 53 - 1) Recall a certain guilt feeling in your consciousness. Look at it, be aware what it does to you.

2) Explore the positive value beneath it. E.g. behind the statement “I feel guilty about my inability to educate my daughter properly” may lay “it’s important for me to be a good, caring mother”. The most important part of this exercise consists in the energetic transformation toward the hidden, underlying value.

3) Become aware of this value. Make a symbol of it. Explore how this value affects you (how does your body, your belly, your heart react? Do you feel energy flowing?)

4) Ask yourself the question “Do I want to give deeper expression to this value in my life? What is your choice? Do you want to take up more responsibility for it, now you discovered how important this value is to you?

5) Explore what you can do on a practical level. Use your mind to find concrete pathways which avoid guilt feeling (or feelings of powerlessness).

2.6.4. Anger

Using meditation methods in the case of anger demands a very differentiated treatment. In my opinion meditation is not the most appropriate tool when trying to cope with anger. Anger is in general a kind of warning signal that you have to take action in relationship to other people. Taking appropriate measures is then in general the most effective way to deal with this emotion. Anger is a mobilising force. Action the most appropriate answer.

Many people consider anger to be a problematic feeling. Some societies or social groups have social codes intended to suppress anger. There are several reasons for this. Anger can be seen as hindering the smooth functioning of society. Also, it’s easier for authorities to rule people who don’t express their anger. Anger then is considered to be a form of countervailing power. Other societies enjoy the expression of anger. It’s very common for example in some Southern European countries to see people having tirades in public, which nobody is concerned about, while the same situation in more Northern countries would have people calling the police. It’s important to see that there’s a tendency toward controlling a certain behaviour, to control the underlying emotion itself. This is, in my opinion, an intolerable extension of social control. In fact emotions are neutral: they give information about the situation in which a person finds him/herself. Emotions as such can never harm, it’s the resulting behaviour which does that. Of course, problems may be experienced if your way of dealing with anger contradicts the social rules of the group in which you participate. In such a case you can look for ways to adapt, or decide to leave the group because it’s codes don’t suit your personality. This can mean making a difficult decision.

Sometimes anger is suppressed, and when this continues over time, it can become a problem. Expressing your aggression by knocking on something, by shouting, or simply by becoming aware of this feeling, are all relevant methods in coping with this.
Of course, meditation can be used to cope with anger, but you have to be very cautious to do this in the right way. Meditation should never be used as an escape from the feeling, and prevent you taking appropriate measures. It should definitely not be used as a “magic staff” to dissipate the anger. I know people who in this way have caused serious problems for themselves. There are better ways.

Meditation can be used as a tool to help you get in touch with your anger. The following exercise for example may help you with this.

**Exercise 54**

Close your eyes. Feel your anger. Where do you feel anger in your body? In your belly? Your back? Your arms? Your legs and feet? Allow the feeling to be where it is. Feel its energy. Enjoy this. Remain with it for awhile. Does it change?

It’s very important to make a clear difference between your emotion and the behaviour you have to develop as an answer to this emotional signal. As everybody knows, merely following your anger, or simply living it out, are not adequate responses, and can bring you a lot of trouble. Sometimes you will have to wait until the feeling has faded away a little, before engaging in any action.

Sometimes it’s wise to ask advice of others in order to decide what’s the best response to the situation that makes you angry. An extreme example may make things more clear. If I receive an unfair tax assessment, anger may be an appropriate emotional response. Writing a sharp letter, in which I severely blame the tax inspector, will have little effect at all, and will perhaps cause even more problems. However, I should take action. I have to protest, and eventually point out the mistake that the tax officer has made. Familiarising myself with the legal procedures that can be followed, is a good first step toward clearing up the situation. My anger can mobilise the necessary energy to carry out all these actions, but blind rage will definitely damage my own interests. Meditation can be helpful in making this distinction clear in your mind. After having felt the anger, it can be apt to let it go (a little bit). The exercises for becoming empty in paragraph 2.2.1. are useful for this. Some inner distance from the emotion creates inner space, the freedom and wisdom to listen to the feeling, without becoming the victim of it.

Sometimes even all this is insufficient. Some people are just not able to control their anger, or their reactions are so extreme, that anger really becomes a problem for them. In such cases it is good to visualise an image of your anger, and look at the dynamic this image shows you. If you symbolise your anger as a lion, and if this lion eats you up, then clearly a negative pattern is operating. Do the exercise for as long as it is necessary to establish a constructive relationship with the lion. E.g. until he defends you, protects you, keeps danger far away from you. Self-rejection, exaggerated personal drive, unsolved father- or mother ties and - projections are some
examples of patterns that can be operating here. In these cases professional guidance is the easiest way to get rid of them.

**Exercise 55**
First do exercise 54. Continue as follows. Visualise a symbol of your anger. Feel the energetic qualities of this symbol. What does this symbol tell you? Ask it to reveal its dynamic. If the images start to develop a structure, to tell a kind of story, continue with it for a couple of days.

Meditation exercises 19-22 are often very valuable here. Frequently people put themselves into a dilemma about whether to choose between a hard-hearted anger or an immersion into love. A dilemma which leads to impossible positions. These exercises help you to come out of such a deadlock.

It's also important to see that, if such a dilemma is operating inside you, the other party has no option except reacting in a binary way too. If you show anger disconnected from love, you put your partner in a position that s/he has no other option except escalating anger. Showing your power potential, the choices you make, together with expressing respect and the direction where love indeed can be given, very often open up the relationship in a good way. Although this cannot be treated as a universal principle. There are conflicts between people that sometimes find no solution. This is reality too. S/he who pretends to be able to solve every problem, puts him/herself in a divine position and creates for him/herself an illusion. Such a position, as logic itself already explains, cannot be taken by human beings. Conflicts and pain belong to human existence. They sometimes have to be accepted as they are. Even if you would like things to be different. Meditation is not a magic rod to turn anger into love, and conflicts into harmony. It is rather a means to substantially reduce pain and conflict, minimise its effects and learn how to cope better with them.

It's also valuable to consider anger as a multi-layered phenomenon. In a linear graph:

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>anger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pain - being hurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>love</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

*Figure 3. The relationship between anger, pain and love.*

Underneath anger lies pain, being hurt. Under that, the love potential that has been touched. This is only a model — in reality these levels alternate, mix up, are connected, sometimes they are even simultaneously present — but it is a very useful model in looking at how to cope with your own anger and that of another person. It can be used as a guide to look at your own feelings of being hurt. In
relationship to another person, you have three choices: either you communicate with his/her anger, or even respond to anger with anger, or you try to communicate on one of the two deeper layers. According to my experience, this very often de-escalates the conflict. Putting everything in a graph, you have the following three options:

```
  A
    anger
    pain-being hurt
    love
  B
```

Figure 4 Anger, pain and love and human conflict.

You should always be aware of the possibility that anger can be related to pain from the past. When someone is really damaged by negative experiences in the past, and the pain remains unsolved deep at his/her inside, it can always appear again in similar circumstances. Sometimes this is not easy to detect, but you can always take it into account as a possible source.

It is also important to realize the difference between anger and violence. Violence is inflicting severe (irreversible) injury to another person, e.g. physically (like breaking an arm) or mentally (like raping someone). Anger refers to (an expression) of an inner state, which may be unpleasant for other people, but which doesn’t cause any (irreversible) injuries. Society has to take measures to protect people against violence. Sometimes these are insufficient, or completely lacking.

In general holding yourself to certain rules when dealing with this emotion can reduce the risk of exploding conflicts. In another publication I deal with this at length (Lafaille, forthcoming). Here I only mention:

1. Always speak in the "I"-form. E.g. "I'm angry, because...“ instead of "you are a...". This prevents projections and hurting remarks. In the "I"-form almost everything can be said.
2. Try to be aware of underlying sensitivities, if you talk with someone who is angry with you. Honour this underlying emotion. E.g. “I see that you feel hurt, but...”. This gives space.
3. Never focus your anger on people, but on a persons behaviour. First of all, it guarantees that you remain close to reality. Your being disturbed stems from certain activities. Secondly, it is unacceptable that you condemn a person as a total being, i.e. all their feelings, experiences, qualities, etc. On what principle could such a right be based? Anger is a very intense emotion, and has the tendency to colour completely the reality you perceive, especially the person that elicits your anger. Projection mechanisms are operating then. Often these are quite innocent. Sometimes, however, it is useful to look at them in depth.
4. Try as hard as you can to continue the communication. Often parties leave each other, and the anger spreads insidiously in their heads, without any concrete link to the other person. They are not even there, but it just goes on and on! This type of “inner escalation” impedes the finding of constructive solutions. Avoid this as much as you can!

5. Very often feelings of anger are quite distant from reality. Try to explain what in your view really happened and how misunderstandings have influenced the differences in views.

6. Need manipulation may play a part in anger. Try to communicate in a honest, correct manner what you perceive, and invite others to put the manipulation game aside. This is a basic rule in treating your fellow men/women with respect. This doesn’t mean that s/he simply takes over your perspective, but it is an important element in “purifying the air” in relationships.

7. In all circumstances everyone has an absolute freedom to determine what s/he does with his/her anger (with the exception of violent reactions). To call on another to take up responsibility for avoiding certain extreme reactions or to de-escalate the situation to a certain extent, may be the beginning of finding a way out of a conflict in which a lot of emotional energy has been invested.

8. Sometimes it is very useful to express your anger when you are completely alone. To beat on a cushion, to bang on the floor, to cleave wood, etc. are approved methods. Accompanying shouting can let flow the feeling more intensively through you. Becoming aware of the feeling when alone, may help you to discover what exactly is at hand and make you more relaxed when meeting again those who made you so angry.

9. In the social realm in general an endless series of choices are available. Anger indeed mobilises energy, but by focusing on this emotion the view on alternatives usually decreases. To give this feeling time until it fades a little bit, etc. may enlarge the range of alternatives that you see. And help you cope more freely with the feeling itself.

10. There can be a manifold of reasons for becoming angry. This is little stressed in the psychological literature. Sometimes really intolerable situations occur, in which only anger can bring rescue. For example you can speak of “holy rage”, when in power games between people the respect for others and the principle of humanity is violated to such an extent, that only by mobilising a maximum of power can justice be restored. Sometimes aggression is necessary in order to survive. Also in some cultures anger is demanded, just to get things done. There are large differences in this respect between cultures and subcultures.

11. Very often anger is part of an interaction chain in which the tension is mutually expressed. Becoming aware of these interaction patterns opens possibilities to de-escalate. Often too, people who become victims of a power game, are blamed because they expressed their anger. This is very nasty, and the umpteenth move to gain power. Conflicts that move in that direction, can become very annoying. Respect for the anger of the other then is not present. Sometimes only stepping out of the relationship, can bring enough protection. Some people are so addicted to their power games, and need these games so much for their own (hidden) needs, that one of the involved parties alone is not able to change the nature of these games. Only awareness can help here, but so often those who try to make others aware are only looked upon from the power perspective itself... This can mean the presence of a self repeating mindset, which is unwilling to open. Without a basic form of honesty, and a minimum of openness for self-reflection, no way will be discovered. No matter how regrettable it may be, self- protec-
tion then becomes the only thing you can do.

12. Still another important point is that you can reduce the amount of anger by accepting radically the right of another person to be totally different from you. The other is free to be what s/he wants — including being angry with you. Defending your own reality, your own view upon the world, plays an important role in anger. Putting into perspective your own reality, recognising the fundamental right of another person to create their own reality, and not being (unconsciously) threatened by that, may create a blissful climate of tolerance, which can affect people in a preventive and healing way.

Knowledge and skills to treat conflicts in a constructive manner are still scarce in our societies. It’s worthwhile to invest in this, in order to magnify your ability to relate to other people. Dealing with conflicts in a constructive way, can only bring you forward in your life.

The energetic and existential sources of the fire of anger are similar to those of happiness, love or sadness.

Emotions don’t have to be justified. They are only there.

I would call this an elementary human right:
the allowance to have any feeling, that rises up inside you and belongs to you. Why not?

...?

What can be discussed however, is the best way to express these emotions in the social realm.

You always have the right to express your anger about something or about somebody.
What can be considered is how you can express your anger in a “civilised”, not damaging way.
Expressing your anger may create a gateway too so that the other person takes away — as a kind of caring for you — the (real or imaginative) source of your anger.
People create for each other a murderers' den, when they measure each other by ideal models.

... 

Ideals block as much as they mobilise.

2.6.5. Meditation and erotics

Meditation can be used in various ways to intensify your erotic life. First of all, the letting go of all inner projective mechanisms can make you feel more free and open for your partner. Also, you might become more sensitive as meditation is a good tool to develop your sensitivities (e.g. see Brooks 1974, Houston 1982, Scholl 1978). Last but not least, there is a special branch in the eastern yoga-tradition, Tantra, which has developed erotics to a subtle and sophisticated love art and uses erotic life as a vehicle to make contact with the sublime and transpersonal levels in life. Douglas and Slinger (1991) give a complete overview and refer to a wealth of valuable literature. All this information cannot be discussed here - it would be better to read the book by yourself. It contains a bulk of information, suggestions and exercises which, if you explore them critically, can enrich your life tremendously.

2.7. What can you do when you have very serious problems?

Problems are a normal part of life. What would life be without them? How dull? However, such insight doesn't help you at all when you are confronted with serious problems. Even more, you will likely see it as a sign of not being understood. You then become so occupied with your problems that it seems as if nothing else exists or is valuable to you. It might even seem as if you have lost control, as if your problems take over. You are overwhelmed, or at least, there is a tendency towards this. What can you do? And how can meditation help you then? Firstly, I will make some general remarks and then discuss two special issues.

What can you do in general?

• Protect yourself. If you experience serious problems, then you have to take good care of yourself. This, first of all, implies that you put aside everything that is superfluous. You limit yourself to everything that is very urgent, and take care of what demands an immediate solution. This also implies that you create enough space to be alone with yourself, and have a chance to relax and think things over. Listening to music, walking, etc. can be helpful. Lastly, asking for advice is a good kind of self-protection.
• Try to get some distance from your problems, although they threaten to overwhelm you. Aim to
create enough inner space for giving birth to new solutions.

- Promote your inner balance. It is very important to give enough attention to the other poles, namely the pole without problems: cherish and pamper yourself, be kind to yourself, do many things you like to do. Very often you are so attached to your problems, that you are unable to explore other dimensions. This might create loops without ends.

- Try to have confidence in yourself. It might be very difficult to be confident during a interval of problems. But this is what you really need: the deep trust that everything will be all right. Give enough attention to this point in your meditations.

- Try to develop insight into your problems by watching them from the position of the inner observer. During crises you are mostly attracted by negative feelings. That serves certain functions, but this might mean that it will take some time before you find an objective solution. Try to limit the mixture of emotions and solutions. Often, this principle might help: "to do nothing, until everything has become clear to you." It is a kind of self-protection which prevents you looking to the outer world for solutions which are mere reflections of your emotional tensions of the moment.

- Mobilise your wisdom. Realise that a victim-attitude will bring no real solutions (see before). As I mentioned before, you can always ask an inner wise man or woman for advice.

- Meaning. Crises mostly demand the creation of new meaning. Try to actively seek and build up new meaning. This prevents a drifting away in the very painful direction of being completely caught by your problems. You will discover very soon that your problems have a lot to do with a lack of meaning in life. Try to find out by meditating what can help you find meaning at this moment in your life.

Meditation can be very supportive for people with severe problems, but in general much more is needed than meditation alone. Don't expect miracles of meditation, it is merely a tool.

2.7.1. For people who hear voices

For a long time, it was thought that hearing voices was a certain signal of serious psychiatric disorder. Very recently, scientific research showed that there is a large group of healthy people who hear voices (1/3 against 2/3; research of Prof. Romme of the RU Limburg). Very often (according to a scientific estimation, in 70% of the cases) these voices emerge as the result of traumatic experiences like an accident, a removal, a divorce, the death of a beloved person, etc. Quite often, voices appear in adultery (75%). A large majority of people who hear voices react negatively to them. These voices have a deep impact on life. In approximately half of these cases, the voices tell that they have to exert control over the person and (sometimes) that one has to obey them. This is quite a large group. The content of what the voices say is clearly related to the life history of the person. When you hear voices and when this disturbs you, the following suggestions may be helpful (see also Riemersma 1982).

- In general, it is usual to look at voices as isolated phenomena, instead of what they are a reaction to. In fact, a lot of power is ascribed to them. Why attach so much importance to them? During a disidentification exercise, you can put them between your emotions and your thoughts, and become aware that you are able to let them go. They may disturb you intensely, but with each
encounter you can let them go a little bit more. Try it, as long as you are not too overwhelmed by them. Don’t give up, but be gentle with them. One day they may lose their power over you.

Also consider the following. These voices bring you into contact with unconscious forces inside you, and invite you to change quite drastically your current habits. If they serve such positive functions (via a bypass which brings you a lot of trouble, anxieties and misery - of course, but nevertheless...), why not treat them with a little friendship? What for instance, happens if you tell them that you are grateful for their positive contribution to your life? Have you tried such an inner dialogue? You have such a rich unconscious, which is so actively engaged in a search for healing to become a more whole, integrated person. Why do you omit to say “thank you” to this part of yourself?

- You could also try to find a subpersonality who holds some control over the voices.
- You could try to talk directly with these “voices”. Very often they are “guilt voices”. Ask them what they need, what they intend, and what you have to do to bring them onto your side. Why are they not constructive?

2.7.2. Feelings and thoughts about longing to die (tendencies to commit suicide)

It has to be said very clearly and frankly, that I recognize the fundamental right that a person has to end his/her life. People who want to prevent disgraceful tortures, or go through unbearable illnesses. I recognize that such situations can lead to the decision of suicide. Who am I to judge them negatively? Nevertheless, these situations tend to be rare. You can also observe e.g. that in concentration camps or in other severe circumstances of war; although logically speaking there would be good reasons to commit suicide, suicide rates under these conditions were actually quite low (Bettelheim 1960). Obviously, the desire to live remains stronger than the experience of suffering. Survival is a very powerful force in the human being.

A clear distinction has to be made between suicidal thoughts and feelings, attempts to carry out this act and a completed suicide. These three phenomena have to be treated in a separate way.

Suicidal thoughts and feelings frequently occur. Everybody has them at one time or another, in degrees varying from the flippant to the intense. They appear in periods of existential change. Also they can grow on the ground of longlasting depressive feelings. Our culture in general has nearly developed certain adequate avenues in dealing with them. Therefore, many people suffer unnecessarily. Two things are important.

Suicidal thoughts are often a symptom indicating a stage of transition, in which you have to let go of old ideas, mind constructs, images about your own life and self-images and replace them with new ones. Thoughts and feelings are dialectically related. Therefore, what follows can be applied to both of them. Feelings are often more apparent, especially the depressive ones (e.g. “I can’t bear this any longer!”) but under this emotional surface, mind constructs are active which refuse to relinquish their hold on particular circumstances (e.g. acceptance of a forthcoming divorce, an approaching dismissal, etc.). Mind constructs about yourself: e.g. I am somebody else. Sometimes these mind constructs obstruct a move forward to another stage in life, and there is a resistance
to letting go of them. Often too much emotional energy has been invested in them. You are so involved with them... It might seem preferable to die rather than let go of these images of 'your' reality. If this is the case, it's worthwhile exploring how and where these frozen images or feelings are operating inside yourself. Meditation might then be helpful in allowing you to escape their grip, to create new images and meaning in life.

At the symbolic (and spiritual) level death means: change, existential transformation. Suicidal tendencies mean then that the old wants to die, the old Ego is leaving, and that a transformation of the Self is emerging. Very often this is misunderstood because you are so preoccupied with your feelings and emotions. Nevertheless, looking from the perspective of the symbolic level, there is no reason to be worried. Our culture neglects to educate people in coping appropriately with these kinds of situations. Care givers may focus too much on the emotional side of things, or try to convince by argument, which in some cases might prove counter productive because it generates guilt feelings. The spiral of negative feelings may be forced further by this, pushing you that much deeper into it's clutches. A much better way is that taken on the symbolic path (see below).

Sometimes suicidal tendencies or even suicide attempts appear during periods of confusion. In principle, confusion of the brain (and the "Mind") serves a useful function, esp. to generate new images. But sometimes the confusion is so strong and lasting that no spontaneous healing occurs. A similar effect can sometimes be seen in, say, a repetitive dream - the dream (or confusion) comes back again and again until the underlying problems are solved. The reason for this is that disturbing inner patterns are operating. E.g. self-hate or unsolved trauma experiences (like incest) and the related emotions which are difficult to cope with. They are repressed and then start a kind of underground life. Confusion is the result of these inner (neurotic) patterns and prevents you from finding a way out of the turmoil. The problems then are situated on double or multiple levels. It will be clear that in these kinds of cases long term therapy is necessary. In general, in all such cases guidance of a qualified professional is recommended. Care must be taken that meditation is not a cause of inner loops tightening on themselves even more (e.g. by increasing a tendency toward self rejection). Meditation should break through them. Never use meditation as self-hypnosis e.g. to suppress sadness. This won't work, and will push you further than ever away from a solution.

Can meditation help you to understand suicidal feelings? In general, this question can be answered positively, although meditation alone will not always be enough. Earlier, I referred to situations requiring professional guidance. Meditation contains many possibilities. Of course, you can try to solve the appearing problems in the standard way (see problem solution and creativity earlier). You can also try to transform your self-image. For example, by imagining a new picture of yourself, someone who is able to conquer all problems. You can focus on this directly by making an overview of all the values you have held in the different periods of your life. You can then draw lines and investigate which values will still be important for you in the future. In all these situations it is important to stress the counter pole of depressive feelings and search for new meaning. In case of more persistent suicidal tendencies you can consider help via the "death meditations". The structure of these meditations is very simple: you see yourself dying and follow what happens. As far as I know, these meditations are not dangerous as such. Nevertheless, I am not advocating they be
carried out alone. Some help, even if it is limited to a talk afterwards, would be appropriate. This kind of meditation is more direct and confrontational, nevertheless there is no absolute guarantee that it will bring you the solutions you are looking for. What must be avoided is meditation "backfiring" in any way and becoming the cause of yet more inner chaos. There is always a way out. But very often, you block yourself from finding an exit.

2.8. Two emergency kits

Sometimes severe problems occur in life. Sometimes they are there, you suffer and despair and don't know what to do. Sometimes a doctor or a therapist is not available, but you've the feeling that you urgently need help. What can you do? Out of practice grows the following two procedures to handle difficult situations. Many people have already benefited from them. One has been developed for cases of (vague, difficult to handle) psychosomatic complaints or psychic problems”, the other one for cases of relational problems.

2.8.1. Emergency programme for psychic or psychosomatic problems

When the emotional turmoil inside you is so overwhelming, or the complaints so persistent and painful, yet at the same time unclear, the following suggestions (which may be called "Emergency programme for psychic or psychosomatic complaints" or a "First Aid for Psychic Problems") perhaps may help you. It's a series of exercises - not meant as a therapy in the classical sense of the word but as a kind of fast way to find some relief, some inner space, and detect some harmless complaints that may have very disturbing psychological effects, which can be treated in a very simple way. These exercises put a safety net around you, which can bridge difficult hours or days. They create some space in which you can search for solutions for the underlying causes, with or without professional guidance.

Another important reason why it's valuable to try out this Emergency Programme at an early stage when problems arise, is that it's still a quite common pattern that people with psychic or psychosomatic complaints encounter along the way. After many months or even years of traditional medical treatment, at last they find an expert who can offer some relatively simple techniques which bring real solutions. Such a search for medical or therapeutical solutions can for example look as follows:

psychosomatic complaints $\rightarrow$ GP $\rightarrow$ medicaments $\rightarrow$ insufficient results
$\rightarrow$ psychotherapy $\rightarrow$ relaxation exercises

In my opinion, the care giving system should avoid these long chains of searching for solutions, and should always start with effective simple self-care techniques which can bring so much relief.

Besides that, another consideration should be mentioned. From e.g. therapy of severe, difficult to treat traumas as in cases of holocaust patients, it is known that if there's openness in the family and the pain is shared, a lot of psychotherapy can be avoided. Here too, such an inverse approach is proposed. Teaching families to talk with each other about problems, seems to be a simple, but effec-
tive preventive tool to avoid difficult psychological problems. This Emergency Programme makes a certain offer. Evidently, other elements can be added to the list. It can be carried out in co-operation with family members or friends.

In all cases of severe problems professional advice is always recommended. Sharing of experiences with your partner, friends or fellow-sufferer(s) is a general advice which needs no further explanation.

Emergency Programme I for psychosomatic complaints or psychic disturbances

1. Start with the breathing exercise of Appendix 2. It's a combination of breathing and relaxation which avoids any possibility of hyperventilation. Blockages of the breath or changes in its rhythm can cause you a lot of problems (anxieties, tiredness, lack of energy, dizziness, etc.). Read Appendix 1 to inform you about the hyperventilation phenomenon. The aim of this exercise is the restoration of the natural breathing pattern. Carry out this exercise daily for ± 15 minutes. If you are hindered by insomnia, you can carry it out right before going to bed.

2. Try to relax yourself. When you are quite nervous, exercise may help to relax you — it may also help with insomnia. Take long walks, eventually jog or ride a bicycle. Relaxation exercises, if you can carry them out without difficulties, can also be supportive. They restore the natural equilibrium, and help to keep some distance from emotions. They are an instrument to take measures earlier to prevent feelings of discomfort. Eventually complement exercise with sauna, massage, hot baths (joyful, rather passive forms of relaxation) etc.

3. Becoming empty by meditation. Creating distance by meditation possibly strengthens you and gives you hope that you will overcome the problems. If neither meditations, nor relaxation exercises help you, then eventually you can ask yourself if there is anywhere where you feel safe? Where you can leave behind some of your problems. Then go to this place. Letting go (a little bit) is often a better choice than allowing it to plague you with an endless turmoil of thoughts and feelings.

4. If you have a tendency to become confused, then grounding exercises are very important. Here follow some suggestions:
   - Put your naked feet on the ground. Feel the contact between you and the earth. Remain for awhile with this experience. Stay with naked feet on the ground. Feel gravity and how it works on your body, passing through your feet and into the ground.
   - It's important during meditations to go to the "hara"-point (see 2.2.1.). Follow the breath movement, and concentrate on the deep ending point of it, down in your belly, instead of remaining with your attention in your head (where perhaps everything is turning around in overactivity).
   - Concentrate on your pelvis. Feel the solidity of your body, focus your attention in this place (in combat sports this is a necessary preparation for the fight — otherwise you are beaten in a minute).

5. Don't forget: in general sharing your problems with someone is one of the best ways to deal with them!

Try each of these suggestions out. Repeat the successful ones as much as necessary. If an exercise doesn't lead to the intended result, try it again after a couple of hours. Sometimes it works. But never force yourself!

These exercises may lead to an adequate self-diagnosis and/or a restoration of the natural rhythms in
the body. After having reached a more relaxed basic feeling, eventually underlying problems may be taken up. The exercises mentioned above are complementary: they relate to other levels, and influence other parts of the organism.

If the overwhelming force of your problems is eased enough, you can try the following suggestions and add them to the programme:

- Use meditation to make a symbol of your problems. Also use a symbol for a solution. Let these symbols appear every day at least once. They stimulate the unconscious to find solutions.
- Use Meditation exercise 33 (going inside a cage and finding a solution beyond a door) to explore eventual solutions. Repeat this exercise once a day until a clear way out appears.

The EMERGENCY PROGRAMME above is supportive to every kind of therapy, including the taking in of medicaments, tranquillisers or sleeping pills. Of course, you need to ask for advice when the normal reactions to the exercises don't follow (more rest, satisfaction, insight, warmth, etc.). As a general rule everyone will benefit from such an EMERGENCY PROGRAMME - some very rare exceptions excluded.

2.8.2. Emergency programme for relational problems

Relational conflicts can swallow a lot of energy. Meditation may be helpful to mobilise extra energy. Partner conflicts, as in a divorce, always means deep changes. Your life may be transformed. These conflicts always imply a lot of emotional strife. With meditation you can cope more consciously with them, you can create more clear insight, make appropriate choices, and perhaps compensate or correct something.

Emergency Programme II for relational problems

1. If you have strong psychic or psychosomatic reactions because of a certain situation, add Emergency Programme I to your programme.
2. Become empty. Thereafter do the following exercise: see yourself walking along a road. Where are you going? What happens during the trip?
3. Be aware that a crisis period is a stage of transition. You cannot predict what will happen to-morrow. It could become better. Or it could become worse. You don't know. Try to achieve an attitude of acceptance to everything that comes. Try to be just in the moment. Negative feelings reflect the situation in which you are in, but they aren't oracles foretelling your future. Strive for an attitude of positive acceptance of what is happening — let the feelings of discomfort be, but don't let them dominate you.
4. Carry out Meditation exercises 19-22. This exercise has already helped many people. Mobilising power and a good balance between power and love are necessary for achieving solutions. Sometimes people have severe difficulties in making a connection with their power. Conversely, intense hate feelings can be softened by making contact with the love energies inside yourself.
5. In a case of divorce, it sometimes happens that you have problems because it feels as if no one loves
you. Meditation exercise 8 can be used in this instance. It's important to be aware that there's
always love inside yourself, which you can always tap into. Also your love for your partner doesn't
disappear because the two of you split up. The heart is a vast reservoir of love energy.

6. Try to hold yourself during the conflict to a strict distinction between the person and his/her
behaviour that is disapproved of. Talk as much as you can in the "I" form.

7. (Need)Projections can be very annoying and undermining. Evidently, because of the conflict the
balance of needs can become changed. Fighting then arises in order to hold onto "what belongs to
me" — at least that's how it feels. This energy mobilised by defending one's own needs can be a
very strong force in human conflicts. Sometimes it may be difficult to do anything about it, other
than showing very clearly your borders, and closing yourself off a little bit. However, you can
always indicate when you see what is happening, and invite your partner to become flexible, more
free in dealing with his/her own needs, and with the conflict in general.

8. The advice of people outside the conflict is always recommended. They can show you solutions
which don't enter the mind of you or your partner(s) in the conflict, and they are not so emotionally
engaged which brings a certain matter-of-factness in searching for solutions. S/he who thinks s/he
can solve everything alone, limit him/herself enormously.

At lastly consider this: difficult moments belong to life. They mean change, the letting go of the old,
and the entrance of the new. Seeking meaning in life during periods when everything is fine, is an
important condition in helping to come through difficult periods. Searching for meaning, contact with
the spiritual, may in these difficult periods be very supportive for relief. Little "rituals", such as
listening to music, candle light or a wood fire, reading poems, etc. can be helpful in reaching out to
forces that at first glance are hidden, but which are perhaps influencing certain events in your life
more than you realize. Coming closer to these forces — if this is possible — may have a healing power
as such.

2.9. Conclusion

This Chapter was oriented towards the practise of meditation itself. It contains a long series of
suggestions for exercises. Start slowly, there's no need at all to rush things too much. Life is long
enough to experience all the benefits of meditation. By the practise of meditation itself you build up
experience. In general the meditations themselves show you the way to go. They contain a lot of
wisdom.

Regularly meditating brings you into contact with life forces deep inside yourself. Healing is often a
natural result of this contact. It can all be quite effortless. Most of the time a limited self-concept
blocks the road to a deeper and more long-lasting happiness and healing of inner wounds. Trust in life
is an important issue. Life is there ...for you.
As a kind of illustration to the text, I have added some poems, quotations, personal testimonies, etc. In my experience, it is sometimes quite difficult to explain to beginners exactly what meditation is. Shared experience and use of practical descriptions are, I think, the best way to refer to the inner world which can be explored by meditation. They evoke the deeper layers of existence. Unless I mention otherwise, all the texts are written by myself.

The material of this Chapter is ordered along the main concepts and themes of this book. Here is an overview:
- Beginning with Meditation
- Love
- Closeness
- Consciousness and Awareness
- Subpersonalities
- Meaning and Human Values
- The Opening of the Heart
- Contact with the Mystery
- Erotic Life
- Inner Development
- Pain and Transformation
- Facing Power and "Evil"
• Beginning with Meditation •
Since October 1997, I have suffered from headache, a blocked nose and blocked ears. In my childhood, I had suffered from high fevers, but this seemed different somehow, especially taking into consideration the time of the year. At first, I thought that this problem was caused by the dusty installation of a new toilet and bathroom into my house. I paid a visit to my doctor and he gave me some pills and a nasal spray to tackle the presumed infection of my sinuses. This therapy helped, but did not solve the problem.

During talks in 1998 with a friend, an expert in meditation, I mentioned my health problem, and the fact that the only thing that helped was a high dose of pills etc. He suggested meditation sessions. Initially, I was sceptical and I said I would consider it. A few months later, when my friend convinced me that the technique was very simple, we sat together and he coached me over two or three sessions of meditation. I felt better: my headaches disappeared and I could breath quite normally.

But six months later, in autumn 1998, my problem reappeared again. I saw a specialist and after a number of examinations at both her office and in the hospital, she gave me more pills and a breathing facilitator (machine). As the problem decreased, but still remained, she suggested an operation: the intrenal septum, that narrow connection between the nose and ears, should be widened.

I told my friend about my persistent health problem and the operation proposal. He said that any operation would be irreparable and that I should consider it carefully, and perhaps explore other alternatives first. My friend suggested the following alternatives: Turkish baths, homeopathy and meditation. I followed his advice. I discovered that a steam bath helped. One night, after a dozen weekly baths, I visited at my friends house and we started to meditate again.

Shortly afterward, in early 1999, I suddenly realised that my "sinus" problem was related to both the weather and to my sorrow: not only rain and wind, but tears as well. Then, I remembered back to September 1997 when a friend told me that she was seriously ill. I was very sad and upset about this. As she needed permanent therapy, we did not meet again for a year. The therapy then ceased briefly and in September 1998 she went back to work. But in October 1998, she told me that she was in therapy again. Sometimes I wept. I dreamt about her three times. I had known her for some time and her charisma has had a great impact on me. I missed her and our talks.
Finally, at the end of the winter, my friend helped me further down the road of meditation. It ended in an image of fire and ardour. The next day, when I woke up, my nose and the part of my face between the eyes started to flutter. It felt like a relaxation. I have felt better ever since.

(Herbert Tombeur)
• Love •
I begin this little work through love
with love in love,
because love can set on fire
through words.

(Anonymous)

I don’t long for another joy, I don’t wish another sweet,
no other happiness or desire,
than rest besides my soul’s bride.

(Bredero)
Look at my hand
   completely open
   filled only with its own warmth

Join me
   in this softness
   of life
My Beloved One

You are so much more, than I could dream of
So much more than I can bear
So much more...

If my eyes were plucked out, I would still see you
If my ears were blocked up, I would still hear you
And even without feet, I would still come to you
Without a mouth, I would whisper to you
If my arms were cut off, I would carry you on my heart
If my heart were squeezed, then my brain would beat for you
And if my skull burst, then I would ferry you in my blood

O, my love
My loved one...
Transcending Love

If you want
    I will bear you in my arms when
    you die
    I will take care of you
    protect you, be soft and gentle to you
    kiss your lips
    whispering always, I love you

If you want
    I will live longer
    I will carry the pain of seeing you leave
    all the tears
    the sorrow of so many, many beautiful moments

I will break my heart into pieces for you
and come to join you on the other side of the dark river

If you want
    I will always be with you

If you want
    we can travel together through all the heavens
After miles and miles of desert
After visiting all the holy places
After climbing the highest mountains
Drinking from the purest fountains
Bathing in Sinai’s wells
After burning my skin under the hottest sun
After watching the stars before sleeping
Walking by the moon on heavy stones
I returned quickly to Cairo
Falling into no-thing-ness

Like a camel longing for grain
Like a bedouin longing for water
Like the moon longing for the sea
I am longing to put my head on your belly
Beautiful

If you weren't so beautiful
I could continue
on my solitary way
and I wouldn't care
if you weren't so beautiful

but you open the sky
make me think about
mythical landscapes
Van Gogh sunshine
and everything that's
desirable in this
spinning, dazzling
circus of corrosion
rushing past
day after day

you make me pause
amid all the angst
the metal and the
concrete smiles,
remind me

If you weren't so beautiful
you wouldn't give me
the urge to step
out of the shadows
if you weren't so beautiful.

(Nigel Barrett)
• Closeness •
The inner child's world

Imagine you
had just stayed in your mother's womb
your whole life
until now
and you convinced
yourself that you were living in the best of all worlds.
But suddenly, one day, you got a glimpse
of the outside world.
Would you come out? Would you join us?
• Consciousness • Awareness •
The window determines how much light enters the house, even if the moon's radiance fills the east and the west.

(Rumi)
The Well

the desert
starving - thirsting - starving - thirsting
the heat
the blazing of the sand
the sun everywhere
penetrating everything

wandering through nothingness
days and days away
surrounded only by my own emptiness
the magic of the landscape

hours, days later this little fountain found
which satiates me, refreshes me again
at last ending the thirst
reconciling me with the elements
restoring the trust
although, it is without substance
Step by step you leave tracks
disappearing again
they are not important

only for you, has your path importance
the tracks remain
in you alone

you are everything for yourself
that's all there is
further is nothingness

learning this love
teachings of the desert

(Margot Bickel)
Emptiness

I welcome you
deep inside me
stirring all those hidden places
blowing away the dust of my past
from my toes to my crown

Let me become air
so that I can fly like a bird

Let me become earth
so that I can become solid as a rock

Let me become water
so that I can visit the depths

Let me become fire
so that I can illuminate my centre
• Subpersonalities •
My old wise man kissed me. At my question why I became so ill, felt so depressed for so many years, he answered that it was necessary. That it was the only way for me to come to self-disclosure. That you are only able to experience powerlessness by taking your power away. That you can only become powerful if you unify the qualities of love and power. That I had to be patient. That everything would turn out alright. But my old wise man wasn't allowed to reveal a time and a place. I had to trust.

*        *

I am turning around in vicious circles, and cannot break through them. Recently, I have discovered patterns in myself which "catch" me, and I have become very active in trying to overcome them. To let them go. It's a very difficult and painful process replete with fears and despair, but leads to new pathways and a discovery of profound dimensions in myself which I was never aware of. Sometimes I wish that I could leave everything behind me! To be liberated of my own past, the learned patterns, the feelings of discomfort. Free of...to become free for. Looking at how things are running in my life - it is something which seems to push itself forward, it demands attention. I cannot get around it. Sometimes this seems to be positive, sometimes it disturbs me in doing what I want to do at the moment. I have learned a lot during this period, and continue to learn.

*        *

How do I experience myself?
An intense rest.
As on a high mountain.
Looking at my life
with mildness
a sense of
it is just
what it is.
The Witch

I went to the mountain where the Wise Man lived to find the Witch. I decided to climb the mountain from the other side. This side was completely different. There was no covering and everything looked more angular, with sharp points everywhere. I climbed up a path cut into the mountainside. Then I stood on a small peak. I shouted “witch” and saw her come flying toward me on her broom. She flew by me and because of the rush of air, I fell from my peak. I only just managed to cling to the edge. I walked a little further on to where there was a ridge and sat down, my legs above the abyss. The Witch glided down before me on her broom. I looked at her. She had a steeple-crowned hat on her head and a long, sharp nose. She wore clothes of Autumn colours, and a skirt with rust-coloured fringes.

But the abyss beneath us was very unpleasant. I told her that this location was not very congenial and asked if we could continue our talk down on the ground. She turned her broom and motioned that I should mount it. Then we zoomed downwards. We stood on a plateau.

I explained that I needed her help. I asked if she would co-operate with me, instead of acting against me. The Witch stood beside her broom and took off her hat. She had reddish brown curly hair and a very common face. She began to fade away. When I'd first seen her she had looked rather plump, but as my explanation proceeded, she contracted to a line and suddenly disappeared.

I called her, but she didn't return. She hadn't said a word the whole time. But she had left her broom behind. I wondered if I could use it. First I looked around for another way off the plateau. As it became clear that there was none, I decided to use the broom nevertheless. Hoping for the best, I floated very serenely over the top of the mountain, and then descended. I could see the little hut of the Wise Man along the way.

When I had returned to my starting point, I dismounted. I expected the broom to disappear too, just like the Witch. But the broom remained on the ground. I picked it up, and it became smaller and smaller, until a tiny broom lay in my right hand. I closed my hand and felt the energy inside my fist. This was very freakish and chaotic. When I opened my hand again, the broom was still there. The Witch had given me her broom.

(Iris)
The Wise Man

First I did a meditation with symbols. I saw a compass, but it kept changing its direction. Afterwards, I went for advice to my Wise Man. I used the witchbroom to go to his little hut up on the Mountain. He sat in the lotus position on the floor and was wearing the red robe of a Buddhist monk. We had a nice talk. I asked him what the meaning of the symbol was. I told him that I was looking for something, but that I couldn’t find it. He told me that I had already found it, that it was present deep inside myself, and that therefore the compass was unable to point to it. I left with a very warm feeling inside.

(Iris)

The Inner Scientist

I went on my broom to the Scientist. I landed right on the doorstep of a large complex, made the broom smaller and put it in a necklace around my neck. I entered. The Scientist walked towards me. This person looked very different from the one I had expected. First of all it was a woman. She wore very big glasses and a white coat. When she turned away and beckoned me to follow, I saw that she had a braid. She walked ahead of me to the end of the corridor. When the door opened I saw a telescope. She was therefore an astronomer. She beckoned me to look through the telescope, which I did, but I couldn’t see anything. When I told her this, she excused herself with embarrassment and took off the top of the tube. Surprised, I said that anyhow I wouldn’t be able to see anything, because it was still light. And immediately darkness set in. A complete starry sky could be seen. I looked once again through the ocular, but still couldn’t see anything. Then gradually it became quiet. A warm silence surrounded me. I folded on myself until I took on the shape of a ball. In my cocoon of silence, I floated between the stars, which I could observe just now for the first time. I felt how they radiated warmth and surrounded me with their energy.

(Iris)
On obsession and sub-personalities.

Assignment - Imagine myself as both successful and unsuccessful, and then have the two incarnations meet and talk to each other.

I had difficulty trying to work on these meditation suggestions. I found myself pondering the questions: what is successful? Am I unsuccessful now? Would I be successful if I were rich and in a stable relationship? Just what is success? I never really got beyond these questions. Trying to imagine The Witch, and then asking her for advice, I found impossible. I felt I was trying to invent a character, rather than tapping into a sub-personality that was already there. Maybe I just haven't progressed enough with meditation?

I did come up with one interesting meditation. I had been obsessed by a woman for some months, who I'll call simply S., and I imagined S. and what I wanted from her, that is, for her to fill the void, and take away all my loneliness and insecurity and fear, imagined that she gave me all she could possibly give, spent every day with me, gave me her time, her love, everything I could possibly want. And I asked myself - would I then feel like a whole person? I thought about this over the course of the day and concluded that no, I'd still feel fear and a certain emptiness, so if that was what I wanted from her, I would never get it. Yet when I sat in meditation a few days later, and asked the same question, (could S. give me all this? would my life be complete with her in it?), the answer immediately popped into my head, yes! So either I didn't go deep enough into it, or I'm confused.

I struggle against a real resistance to meditation at the moment. I endeavour to sit each morning for half an hour or so, sometimes with success and other times not. A friend suggested to me that an 'Inner Critic' is working inside me. This makes great sense, and resonates inside me. I would say 'The Inner Critic' is the huge shadow over my life, not just during meditation, but generally as well. I've been aware of it changing lately. I've always been someone with a great awareness of other people looking at me (this in a negative way) but recently this has all but vanished. There seem to be substantial, yet subtle changes occurring. This is probably due to a combination of things. My obsession with S. has forced me into a re-examination of 'self'. After the misery of last year, this year is blooming into brightness.

I shift the focus of my meditations. I have always resisted the 'imagination' in meditation. I have always focused my mind somewhere at my centre, seeking some emptiness, rather than trying to conjure images and (sub) personalities. I have shifted my focus from my 'middle' to my 'head', and find myself tapping into previously obscured images. I see an old woman in front of me, beckoning me forward. We are in a tunnel made of bricks that seems perfectly round, almost like a well tipped on its side. The old woman is walking in front of me, turning to me constantly and urging me forward. I feel resistance to following her, yet I do, stopping now and again, moving on falteringly. I wonder where she is leading me? I reach no conclusion about this meditation. I am continuing my meditations with this shift of focus.
Luctor et emergo
I wrestle and put myself on my feet.

About half a year after my divorce, now five years ago, some inner stagnation appeared, which was elicited by two forces which seem to operate against each other.

While jogging with my dog along the meadows, with my attention oriented towards my inside, I became aware that two personalities are living inside me. One stands with both feet on the ground and wants to live, while the other already has one foot in the grave and doesn't want to live. Sometimes I am one and sometimes I am the other.

After my arrival at my workplace, where I can easily make contact with my inner world, I start to look inside myself. I close my eyes. Over the period of an hour, I carry out four short meditations of five minutes each (all collected and reported here in the First Meditation), and receive the following images and experiences.

First meditation.
I go with my attention towards the image of my two personalities to see who they are. One is Peace, the other War. Peace is a beautiful lady who knows what she wants, gets up early in the morning, is cheerful and follows life in its natural flow. War is a wild shrew, with an over-simplified attitude, who wants to destroy everything that is lovely and peaceful. She smells of wounds, pieces of flesh hang around her. She has become an animal, nothing human can be seen anymore. My two personalities now stand next to each other.

Thereafter I open my eyes. I reflect on the meditation. It becomes clear to me that Peace and War are each other's opposite. Later that day, I realise that Peace is neither human. She is almost an angel.
It touches me. I feel life around my heart. This is true, that’s me. This is going on inside myself. I decide to carry it with me without giving it further special consideration. I continue with my work. I feel that the energy continues to operate in my body. In my throat I feel sadness. I leave it there as it is, without changing it or attempting to intervene.

Second Meditation.
I close my eyes and call Peace.
She answers roughly “That’s not me. You just suppose, without asking anything”.
Now I become silent and feel cut down to size. I experience energy in my whole body.
In my legs and feet.
She clearly puts both my feet on the ground.
“Who are you then?” I ask her.
“Come back to me, if you really want to know,” she answers.
“I want to know,” I say.
“I’m Mary, do you remember, that creature who you detest so much. I thwart you as much as I can. I’ll make life hell for you, because this is what you deserve.”
Then, I open my eyes.

I notice that this meditation experience confuses me. At the same time, I feel energy flowing through my legs and remain consciously for awhile in that posture.

Third Meditation.
Again I close my eyes. My attention shifts now towards War.
“War, who are you?” I ask. I feel that I want to know. I experience more modesty in my “being”. An
image appears of a Wounded Fighter, flaccid and tired.
"I want to die," he says, "this is no life." His tiredness can be felt, sadness, as well as love, much love
indeed.
"I feel so much love," I tell the Wounded Fighter and then he looks at me.
"This I was always looking for," he replies.
"It is just there," he stutters, right before he dies.
While opening my eyes, I resolve in the coming days to give the Wounded Fighter a dignified burial.
Somewhere I know that such a ritual is important. Intentionally I remain for a couple of minutes with
this experience and let it penetrate all my cells. I tell all my cells: the Wounded Fighter is dead and
love simply is there, just feel it.

After I've made some notes about these meditations, I immediately continue with the following medi-
tation.

Fourth Meditation.
I close my eyes.
"Mary, who are you," I ask.
"I'm Hate, I'm the Witch. Everytime that you think you have your life under control, I turn it
upside down again," she hisses.
"I know all edges, all places, everything you are afraid of, I'll catch you. Possessed by evil, a dragon
with seven faces. You will not exterminate me like that. I can take on every form. You definitely know
that."
And then, suddenly, I see through it.
"I want to be your apprentice, is that possible? I acknowledge that you are so powerful, I want to
go along with you."
And then it becomes quiet.

For the first time I'm aware that I carry love for her. That my fighting has stopped. Where will
she carry me? What will we go through now? I experience unexplored opportunities. Unknown
rapidity's. I go home curiously. How will this turn out?

Four days later.
I awake with a headache. I decide to start the day with a meditation.

Fifth Meditation.
I close my eyes and experience how my breathing deepens, and then feel for the first time how
tensed and furious I am inside. Slowly I become more relaxed. The Wounded Fighter lies in the
opened coffin. People stand all around it. My husband, my ex-husband, close family and friends. The
person in the coffin is alive! Is the Wounded Fighter then not dead? Suddenly a new figure stands
besides the mourners at the funeral. A beautiful woman, uncomplicated with a relaxed and cheerful
radiation. She wears around her waist a sword that glitters in the sun. I ask her who she is. She turns
her face in my direction, looks at me and says: "I am the Wounded Woman". I experience how my
whole body is wounded, but at the same time full of love and gratitude. I feel it all the way to the
Just at that moment my husband kisses me 'awake'. I'm touched by this present and remain with everything that I'm aware of in my body. Pain, love, astonishment, poignancy, vigour. It's all there. I say to my partner very softly that I'm meditating and that I want to finish the meditation.

*Fluently the meditation continues, bringing a wave of love, surprise, and gratitude.* The Wounded Woman is surrounded by her loved ones. She touches her husband, and there's also contact with her ex-husband. All other people are connected to this event. The Wounded Woman is there, all feel love now, pain, presence. We are standing together surrounded by beautiful nature. There's space for everything.

What I experience is that I can take a breath. Totally. This is always a signal for me that I can grasp some part of reality, that it has become 'free'. That I can accept it, that it is like it is, without blockage. I feel gratitude.

Before life starts on Saturday, I decide first to make some notes about my meditations on the computer. Now and then my eight year old (step)son presses against me with his 'fiddle string' tickling his face. He looks at what I'm doing. "Are you almost ready?" And if I'm ready for it! Some moments later, we begin the first of our competition, two rounds of running! I feel myself 'vulnerable new', 'new born and whole'.

By chance?

Last week I phoned to my ex-husband (which seldom happens, because he doesn't appreciate this very much). He told me just on his initiative, that it would be worthwhile to explain some things to me. Why he did what he did. But not on the phone. I'm astonished, happy. Deep inside me, I have always nursed
the hope that this would happen. Waiting for it made me impatient sad. Now I experience that there is a real mutual concern and more and more openness. Never have I come so close to this pain as in this meditation, as I realise some days afterwards.

Four days later.
I live now all days with the Wounded Woman. More aware of myself and of the pain. It looks as if I am changing, become more beautiful. I am free of longing to leave. Accepting everything that there is. This way I can be more available for everyone. I've more overview, I'm more peaceful at moments when otherwise I reacted like a fury. I decide to proceed this way very consciously.

Apprenticeship to the Witch.
I recognise that I'm at my best when I 'rush'. Sometimes I can do a lot in a very short time, in sequences which are only clear to me. It looks as if much "hoo-ha" falls away and I work out and tell things straight. It happens without much power, and without losses of energy. On the contrary, a lot of power is mobilised and liberated. In such moments I look up, twinkle and say to the Witch 'there we go again!'.

In a very short time a lot of things seem to have become clearer. I decide to make contact with the Wounded Woman and the Witch inside myself more often.

I realise that my life in the short term becomes more strange. I look different, I behave in a different way. New, you could say. I feel the need to dress me differently, to change my hairstyle. All of this over a period of just a couple of days. I receive reactions like: you suddenly seem to have become another person, how pretty! And this is how it feels. I let more of myself come to the surface. My true self. Nobody knows better than me, how badly I was blocked. It is typical how this works. I fight less against everything that goes wrong, but give more attention to the value itself of what happens and how it happens. It opens up new perspectives. New and old contacts in another fashion. Funny! My energy comes back again. This evening it happened that for the first time I just could be myself. I did many things — just in a simple way.

I can imagine that people cannot understand this. When you've lost yourself for a very long time, and you can't behave anymore in a normal, simple way, it is of inestimable value to be able to do so again! To-morrow I want to finish this series of meditations with a meeting between the Wounded Woman and the Witch and ask them if there's something left to tell me.

This evening during a walk with our dogs through the forest, I asked my husband if he has noticed anything different in himself over the last days. He told me that he hasn't noticed any difference. However, he notices a big difference between us. Perhaps it comes from me and this influences him in its turn? We leave it like that. It's too vulnerable a subject to talk too much about now. It can be felt and we enjoy it.

The next morning.
I wake up at six o'clock in the morning. Grateful. Aye, I think, I'm back again and my body is filled with gratitude. Quickly I go to the toilet and realise that I've still one complete hour before the alarm goes off. I lay down next to my husband and enjoy our being together purely for what it is. Then I roll back into my own place and close my eyes in order to meditate.

_Sixth Meditation._
Immediately images appear, a whole series: insights, connections, questions. About my life, my work, the co-operation with people, friends, new contacts. Love. Love is the key word, the essence. It is, as if I arrived in a new country, and perceive so much simultaneously that I cannot decide where to begin. It's all equally fruitful, privileged, exciting. Overwhelmingly simple. Normally I become rather restless from that, but for one reason or another it's now necessary and possible to contain it all, without necessity to comprehend everything. I don't need to consciously do something with it, it may be there merely as it is. I'm standing there as an Interesting Traveller.

The Wounded Woman and the Witch have given me a new personality. That's the way it feels. The Interesting Traveller. I'm happy with this part, I'd lost it completely and want to continue developing my relationship with it very consciously.

(Marion van den Waardenberg)
• Meaning and Human Values •
as long as

as long as you don't reach the bottom
as long as you don't jump deep inside
you will never find

only by risking
almost everything
everyday
can the richness of life be found
• The Opening of the Heart •
The heart is the only temple which is big enough to encompass god.

(Henry Marcel)
Peace of Soul

As long as you strive for happiness
you are not ready for it,
even if you long for it with your deepest heart.

Only then, when you give up all desires,
let go every aim or passion,
and even forget happiness' name.

Then the flow of life doesn't touch your heart anymore,
and peace of soul is reached.

(Hermann Hesse)
• Contact with the Mystery •
Desert Experiences

Can I love something which is strong enough to kill me?
Can I love something which I cannot suppress?
Can I love something which eludes understanding?
Can I love something which I will never possess?
Can I love something which I can only obey?
I would like to share with you an exploration of a child's discovery of God - her renunciation of that knowledge - and the slow and difficult way back to God's love. The child is me.

I was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A. I am the first of nine children in my family. My father was then in medical school. My mother was 18 years old and not at all prepared to have a child that soon. What I know of my first years of life is that they were difficult. I wasn't given the chance to feel loved and secure in this world. My body and heart were frightened and alone.

So for me, it isn't surprising that my first memory of the world is of crawling under a green and loving bush. This felt to me like a mother's protection, a loving, comforting presence. As my childhood went by, my deepest connection was with the earth - it's soil, plants, trees and animals. The love I felt flowing to me from them was as dependable and real as the smell of a rose. I learned to quiet myself and breath in their essence, knowing them for who they are, and becoming one with them. The earth was truly my loving mother.

When I was seven years old, an uncle came to visit my family in Chicago. I was overjoyed to see him, and as he played with me I entered that joy to such a depth that I had a moment of what I now call a powerful spiritual experience. I went into a total realization that life is joy. That the essence of being a human being is being in joy. This knowledge became my foundation of knowing what I deserved and what I wanted in life. But when I looked for that knowledge in other people and in the world I didn't find it, and I knew we were all being cheated. Cheated of the lives we were born to live.

My next powerful spiritual experience came when I was about 14 years old. I was riding on a bus, noticing the different people. All of a sudden, I fell into a different space, all encompassing, where nothing is divided - and I knew that all people are the same - that they and I are one and the same. When I came back it was with the realization of the depth of suffering we all share, and with a burning desire to lessen that suffering.

It was around this time that I discovered that there was a place on the top of my head that could be unscrewed. When I unscrewed it, an enormous rush of love would come through and it would fill my whole body with love. I realized that this love was God.

By the time I was 18 years old, and finished high school, I knew I was on earth to find joy, and to
I decided to look for adventure and went with a group of youth to a kibbutz in Israel. During that year in Israel, I learned what really happened in the holocaust. I could find no inner framework to handle the emotional pain and horror that I felt. So in my anger and grief that human beings could behave in such a way to other human beings, I blamed God for allowing this to happen. I decided that either there was no God, or if there was and he allowed this to happen - I didn’t want to be connected to him. This is when I closed the connection to God on the top of my head.

However, I did continue my loving connection to earth and this became my source of inner strength and refuge.

I decided to live in Israel, hoping that I could help build there a society that was loving and just. My first years were lonely and hard and led me into making the wrong choice of a marriage partner. As time went by it became harder to find my inner peace and to connect to my earth and grasses and trees. I became depressed and lost my energy - barely being able to physically function.

I may have tried to desert God, but God didn’t desert me. In my early forties, I was ending a weeks vacation at the sea. The sunset was coming and I found a private place to watch it from it’s beginning to it’s end.

As the sunset began, and it was full of splendid colours, I sat opening all my senses to take in its beauty. With a great longing I was pulled to unite with its mystery and wonder. I felt myself reaching out, losing myself, becoming one with the awesome beauty. There came a moment of fear, of some border to be crossed. It was a multisecond of choice where I consciously decided to ignore the fear and to continue uniting with the sunset. At that moment, I again entirely disappeared as a separate me. This time I experienced something that truly has no real concepts in language - but if I try to put it in words, it was being in the entire oneness of all - the experience that there is no time, but that all time, future and past, exists simultaneously present and forever. That there is no space or separate objects but that all exists together always as one in a total perfection of love and joy. When I came back to what is evidently an illusion, of my separate self, I truly knew that there is no need for fear or suffering, as we exist always and forever in pure perfection.

After my experience of uniting with the sunset, I had a series of what I call “visions” over the period of a few years. I call them visions because they aren’t like daydreams or fantasies, where I feel in some way that I’m directing the experiences I’m feeling, but in the vision I feel I’m being held, sometimes against my will, in an experience that’s being directed by the unfolding of the experience itself - something outside of myself. These visions are also very vivid emotionally and visually and have great meaning for my life.

My most meaningful vision occurred when I was listening, connecting to music at a workshop. I suddenly felt transported to a different place and heard the trumpeting of shofars⁸. I realised the shofars were calling from the “wailing wall” in Jerusalem (a wall left standing from the second temple, where it’s said your prayers directly reach the heart of God). They were sending out a call to
gather in Jews from all generations - to come to mourn the dying of the Jewish soul (to me this means that the "Jewish soul" which is based on "love thy neighbour as thyself" is dying from the behaviour of the Jewish people in Israel toward the Palestinians whom they have conquered.)

I saw Jews dressed in black, coming in their multitudes to the wailing wall. As I watched they formed an enormous circle. They put their hands on each others shoulders and their arms began going up and down. It looked like wings flapping. Gradually the whole circle started lifting up into the air and I realised that the answer to this terrible tragedy was supposed to appear in the middle of the circle.

All of a sudden I heard the word "Shekhinah" (I didn't know at the time but this is the word given to the female energy of God). I saw and felt an enormous light energy of love fill the center of the circle. I was lifted up into the center of that enormous, tender, compassionate love. I felt myself dissolving, dissolving until I was like drops of pink liquid love, raining love that healed souls, all over the land of Israel. The Shekhinah had come to save the Jewish soul.

Since that time of connection, I have slowly come back to myself. I and my husband separated. I went on a years spiritual journey around the world. I have learned energy healing, Mahayana Buddhism, meditation and other forms of spiritual expression and development. I am a psychotherapist, specializing in the healing of the inner child. My desire to heal suffering and bring the experience of the loving One into existence in the world, has also led me to organize spiritual dialogue workshops between Palestinians and Israelis.

I wish to share one of the experiences of my spirit which fuelled my need to work with Palestinians. On my journey around the world, I was in Thailand, participating in a 10 day workshop of silent meditation. One morning the teacher there asked us to bring into our meditation an experience of "moral shame". As I connected to this feeling, I was thrown inside me into a pit of unbearable, burning, consuming pain. I felt the agony and screams for help coming from the throats of the Palestinian people - saw their children's souls being thrown into experiences of hate and fear, violence and helplessness. And beside them I saw Israeli youth, pure young men twisted and thrown into unbearable positions of hate and violence, fear and self-loathing. And at that silent meditation retreat I began screaming - unable to contain the knowledge of such suffering, of so many souls of such potential beauty and purity, being destroyed, violated, consumed by this occupation, by this conflict we are all drowning in. And so to save my own soul, I am now helping Israelis and Palestinians come together in dialogue - to know the mutuality of their suffering, to know the oneness and beauty of their souls - and to work together to save our peoples.

An ancient Bodi tree in Bali also wishes to share his message: "Only strong roots give freedom to the branches in the sky".

(Marcia Kreisel)
Desert Tanka

Nights in the desert
enlightened by the Moon
awake fears of life.
Where shall I be to-morrow?
Will I die among the sand?
• Inner Development •
Any life can be lived,
as long as one doesn't lose oneself,
everything can be lost,
when one remains the same.

( Goethe)
Opening a long forgotten door.

Here is just a short report about a series of meditations which have helped me to solve serious problems with which I have been struggling for some time. Of course, I needed more than just these meditations alone, but they helped me out of a serious crisis which has lasted many years.

The meditation assignment was this: You possess a key which will give you entrance to the solution to your problems. Take it in your hand and see what happens.

I did this meditation over a period of several days. And successively the following images appeared.

First day.
I don't see any entrance. What does the key look like? He looks solid, antique and fits into an "old" lock. I can't open this lock.

Second day.
Nothing comes, no images at all.

Third day.
At first I see the lock again. Afterwards I see that the key fits into a vagina. I realize that for the past few years I have not permitted myself to indulge in erotic fantasies anymore.

It became clear after this meditation why I have avoided relationships, in order to avoid pain and suffering. In the past, all my intimate relationships have gone wrong. So I preferred to close down completely. I recognise this now as an expression of a lack of love for myself. I would like to change this and allow myself again to feel these emotions again.

Fourth day.
Again an image of this vagina. I explore what's inside. An image comes up from a warm, humid cave. The walls are partly hidden by a veils, behind which are openings. What's behind these veils?

I don't meditate for two days on this. But in that period it became clear that the veils were covering up my past. And that they have to do with a refusal to see certain projections, which are operating in my life and which have their source in a shortage of love. It also became clear the role they play in the type of deep confusion which has disturbed my life so often. Periods of confusion which have brought me so many times to the edge of life, and from which I could never find my way out on my own.
Seventh day.
The veils become more transparent. They are covering a little wooden door which gives entrance to a house. It gives a Southern impression.

For the moment I don't know what's behind this door. I changed the subject of the meditations and worked instead on the projections which came up on the fourth day. Later perhaps I would like to do a meditation about the door which gives entrance to this Southern house.

My experience is that these exercises brought about in a very simple and organic way important changes in my life. They made me happier and more energetic. I did these meditations more than two months ago. I now have plans to work again (part-time) after many years of inactivity.

(Ann)
Icarus

There are always people who reach for the sun.
Their number is not large,
the flight on high is lonely and insecure.
The trusted, familiar, and defined, falls away.
The sounds of applause, but also of admonitions
and warnings do not penetrate here.
Yet again and again there are those who go.
In the stories that are being told about them, often the moment comes
when, as it is said, they do not end well.
As with Icarus, their wings are scorched; the wax that held
the feathers together lets loose.
Thus practical sense in the end
always carries its point.
But what the tale does not touch upon – because to the story-teller
it remains hidden – is that which Icarus has gained
during his journey on high: the all-pervading experience
of the light, of becoming one with it, and the recognition
of the light in one’s own Self.
And what the story conceals, is the torch that Icarus thus becomes,
the light-bringer that he is for others, a reminder
of freedom and its divine origin.

Icarus has a deep experience, an experience that does not let him
loose any more: the intense, unearthly warmth
of the sun, that is at once light and clarity,
that brings into vibration all that is massive,
opens it up and dilutes it.
Icarus dares to follow his desire,
the desires that drives him near
this salutary source of movement, growth and life.
He drops everything that keeps him busy, and begins to work.
He makes himself wings that will carry him. And also he divests himself
of all the burdens, of all the weight that keeps him on the ground.
He gathers strength, and the intention
that will help him not to be distracted on his long journey.
Thus he transforms, while still standing with his feet on the ground.
He lets go of his old Self and its attachments. The work is hard;
the further he progresses, the lighter it becomes.
Spreading his wings and rising from the earth
is not a great difficulty anymore, but rather a way of obeying
everything that has now come into being within himself.
The flight is the answer, coming of its own accord, to all that he has become.

The worldly storyteller sees him go and does not understand him.
Blinded by the shining sunlight
into which Icarus disappears, he turns away.
With his hands before his eyes
he concocts the end of the story.
He draws the only logical conclusion that he knows.
But forgets that the image of Icarus' rise
has brought something into movement that will not stop anymore.

Because it touches upon a seed that each of us bears in himself.

(Herman Coenen)
• Erotic Life •
beauty
  please come in
  with every breath
  come deeper
  and deeper into my body

soft invader
  please defeat me
  transform all my anger and fear
  and let my soul blossom
Kiss Tanka

give me a long kiss
visit my soul with your breath
let your fire open
the hidden doors of my heart
a bliss of warm tenderness
the belly dancer

exhausted from the shivering of the camels
the long road through the desert
my eyes inflamed by the sun
my skin scorched
I return to the sea
the white sand and the coolness of the water

during the sluggish evening
I found you in the garden of the tavern
full of dreams and fires

you smell of jasmines, dates and fruit
your adornments shake the earth
vibrations rage through your body
your veils
a whirlwind
of jasmine and mint
your wildness
a collision of stars
the birth of the universe
your glances
  glowing sandal wood
shameless
they intoxicate my eye

the moon smiles at you and her light runs over your curves
in your hips sway fiery stars
the sun heats your abdomen
existence gazes at you admiring your movements
like kisses my looks linger over your body

dance, dance, o dance, you flower of the night
tempt me with your smells
swirl me off in your fluttering hands
sweep me away in the swinging of your belly

thousands of children are touched,
awakened, dragged to earth
attracted by endless cycles
of femininity

your belly is the centre of the universe
ultimate home
celestial gate

with you I want to leave behind
the sun, the thirst, my dried bile
ornamented goddess
evening flower
descended to earth to carry me away
Pain and Transformation
I believe in the sun
  even if she doesn't shine
I believe in love
  even if I don't feel her
I believe in god
  even if I don't see him

(Anonymous)

Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the conviction that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.

(Vaclav Havel)

Does the pain of love have reason to exist, other than finding the source of healing within yourself?

(Goethe)

Your pain is as deep as your love.
Pain of Life

Life isn't just a fairy tale
and endless pleasure.

Life provokes suffering.
Being wounded by so many things.
But deep inside those wounds
the right way is shown.
Wounds can be healed
if you want
if you listen to
the hidden source of life at its inside.

I'm prepared to heal your wounds,
to listen to your pain.
I'll hold you.
Trust me.
I'm at your side.
I'll never leave you.
The Rose and the Water-lily

One day
the rose said to the water-lily:
you are not a real flower.
You’ve no red colour.
You don’t smell as sweet as I do.
You don’t reach out for the sun.
You’re lazily lying on the water.

The water-lily replied:
A flower is feminine.
You are not feminine.
You are standing upright,
because of your arrogance.
Your thorns are aggressive like a man.
Your odour invades,
even if people don’t want it.
You have no softness.
No tender opening, but impatience.
You cannot surrender to the water,
as I do.
The sun is not that important,
but the water is.

Who is right?
Who is wrong?
Transformation

The past is left behind.
Collapsed into thousands of pieces.
The connection is gone, broken down.
The earth trembles,
houses lose their form,
flooded by water.
Patterns without coherence,
whirling points,
random distributions, total chaos.

But from depths unknown
the new is already rising,
growing,
forming.
Points search for a new order,
structure themselves as crystals,
connect again.
Lines stretch to a new future.

Death smiles on.
Overwhelms me with fear.
A vile wrestler,
without compassion.
My mind fails to recognise,
runs wild.
Endless gyrations and obscure pains.
No understanding.
My body leaves no way out:
chains me to the earth
- held by boundaries -
haunts me through time.
The mask of death seduces,
lures me in his black arms.

But look: surrendering is a gate.
The mask falls, smashes,
a new landscape: before me.
The water washed clean,
everything renewed, repainted.
• Facing Power and "Evil" •
Bloodshed

The gunfire blew
his head off. I looked at
the inside of his body.
The red blood: a smothering
volcano yielding
to its destiny.

It seemed as if only
hot love was inside.
Where's the soldier?
Why all the violence?
Another love lost.
Bleeding Souls

They took everything: my photographs, my poems, my friends, my children, my freedom. Years and years in prison.

Captured in the moment. No future, no past. Forced my back against the wall. No way out. No other choice: surrender or realize, truly, my humanity. Abandon revenge. Find courage to carry the pain. Confront the oppressor without compromises.

My soul bleeds. No understanding. No contact with the spirit. My heart looks for love in people. It gives itself away. Bleeding to death.
Death on the Mountains

Look, they burnt all the olive trees.
Yes, my son, they did.
They live on a black mountain.
They killed all life around them.
They show us the cruelty of their hate.
Their heart is dark
as death itself.

God gave them the freedom to live out their rage.
They cannot stop it.
They enjoy the blindness of their blazing hate.

Look at this freedom.
Look at god's mildness.
They are not even punished.
It belongs to the deepest mysteries of life.

We cannot stop them, my son.
We don't have the power to do that.

We suffer,
indeed, we suffer, my son.
But in this suffering you can discover
that your heart is still alive.
Where are you?

God, where are you?

They burned my home.
Broke my bones.
Killed my wife.
Raped my daughters.
My son is in the army
obeying orders to kill enemies.

Where are you?

I'm calling you day and night,
but I receive nothing but silence.

All holy scriptures say you are
omnipresent,
but I'm unable to find you.

Where are you?

My throat is choked by an invisible hand.
My eyes burn from crying.

I've knocked on the walls,
stamped on the floor.
Blamed him, tried to provoke reaction.
Still no answer comes.

Where are you?
Theoretical Background

4.1. Introduction

In this Chapter I will expand on a major source of inspiration for the Chapter on meditation, namely Psychosynthesis and Ecological Medicine. However, it should be stressed that this is not the only source. Other schools in the tradition of humanistic psychology (like Gestalt and NLP), as well as various eastern traditions also had considerable influence. This section is included because it gives the reader some necessary background information which may be of help to him/her on a practical level. Psychosynthesis and Ecological Medicine focus on developmental processes of consciousness. Their insights are based upon therapeutical experience, as well as on scientific research. They put forward the hypothesis that health and illness are part of deep, inner processes which are beyond the scope of normal observation. These processes operate on a very deep, profound level. Insightful choices will play a crucial role in preserving your health. The relationship between health and illness can only be understood properly with a frame of reference which enables the study of these inner processes.

4.2. The development of the Ego and the Self: the layered model of Psychosynthesis.

Psychosynthesis has developed a model of personality which is both an explanatory model and an idealtypical description of a growth process. This basic model is the so-called “egg” of Roberto Assagioli (1888-1974), and is presented here in a reduced and simplified form:

According to psychosynthesis, one can observe in human life a certain development (under certain
conditions): first an individual develops his/her personality ("I" or "Ego") which he/she needs to be visible in the world. The "Ego" identifies itself with body, emotions and mind (or parts of it). For psychosynthesis the "Ego" is a projection in the Mind of the Self. The Self is the deepest identity of a person, which can also be called the soul. In human life an inner process appears which displaces the core of existence from the "Ego" to this deeper "Self". This has been experienced by many people. This development exhibits different stages during its transition, which represent very profound transformations in the person (Kaplun 1989). The distinctive features of such transformation are not only of toddler to schoolchild, from child to pubescent, from adolescent to adult, and further to middle age and old age, but always (idealtypically) changes to the deeper structure of the person. In this natural process of transformation many times psychosomatic disorders play an important role (see below); and going through such an inner transformation process is seen as becoming more healthy.

Figure 6. The development of human consciousness.

For psychosynthesis, the ultimate aim of personality development, is a deeper contact with and the inner growth of the "Self". Crises phenomena, psychosomatic disorders and illnesses are part of and reflect this more profound process of inner transformation and are dialectically related. The Ego/Self, as I said before, can identify itself with the body, emotions or thoughts. Between these three elements there is permanent dialectic e.g. emotions are influencing thoughts, thoughts are influencing emotions, etc. It is a process of interplay or interdependence.

4.3. Multiple (sub)personalities

Apart from the vertical process described above, there is also an horizontal level of identification. As I explained already, a prime quality of consciousness is its potential for identification. Consciousness
is conceived as a very complex field of energy. Forces (love, power, etc.), subpersonalities, inner processes etc. are distinguished. They all represent identification potentials. I will focus here on subpersonalities because they are of great importance for the understanding of individual behaviour in relation to health. Some subpersonalities are general (archetypical, if I want to use that concept here) of character because they can be found in everybody, such as:
- the "needy" child
- the inner wise man or woman
- the inner father, the inner mother
- the inner man, the inner woman.
Others are personal and unique. E.g. a priest figure, a lovely woman or a famous person might function as a subpersonality in a certain individual and influence his/her consciousness and behaviour. You can become aware of these subpersonalities and their effects by meditative techniques. You can also explore the energetic forces between different subpersonalities and try to integrate conflicting energies.

4.4. Crises and transformations in life

Crises and transformations belong to life, are inseparable from it. On the level of experience, crises and transformations cause feelings of discomfort, meaningless, anxiety, fear and pain. In general, people don’t like these feelings. Dealing adequately with crises implies an ability to ‘include’ these ‘negative’ feelings in your life, to accept them as a constituent part of your life, and not to be an enemy or a victim of them. The daily experience of many people proves that this is not an easy task. Often the heart of their suffering is a lack of meaning in life. It is a natural process: their feelings express their stage of transition. Crises represent a broken unity of consciousness. The unity of a person can be broken by external and internal forces. On the most general level one can say that consciousness develops as a permanent succession of unity and differentiation (= the breakdown of unity):

![Diagram](image)

Figure 7. The process in development of consciousness

In every crisis, the unity of consciousness is disrupted (by divorce, separation, rejection, not being accepted, isolation, choosing an idiosyncratic path in life, an inability to feel loved, etc.), although
this often remains unconscious.

In this stage of transition, somatization may appear as an expression of the situation of the moment, as well as a pathway to a new stage of consciousness. As is commonly known, bodily experiences express the unconscious. When you listen carefully to his/her own body, this can be a vehicle to personal growth. In general pain (which is according to psychosynthesis the experience of closedness, distortion of consciousness) functions here as a motor and guide to complete the process of personal growth. Permanent ignorance of the meaning of pain can cause its chronicity; and can even be dangerous. These more general principles can be made more concrete when they are applied to biographical processes. Although most of the time, the feelings related to this transition are defined as negative experiences, they serve a positive function, namely to receive a new consciousness. Biographical processes are seldom uni-linear, usually following a pattern of swings from tranquillity to turbulence (periods of transition).

4.5. The victim/participator model

Another dynamic, which is analogous to the transformation process mentioned above, is the growth process from victim to participator. Most people live their life as a puppet, rather passively, more or less dictated by norms and values of others, the culture or society. This kind of integration can be thoroughly shaken when something happens, such as infliction of a lingering disease, or the loss of a loved one, or of a job, or any kind of disaster. This is the victim stage. People endure the events and circumstances. It is a time to grieve and mourn, to look for shelter and consolation. Sometime afterwards, people come to realize that something has to be done about it. A normal reaction at first is to try to eliminate the cause of the discomfort, to fight the circumstances (stage of the fighter). Anything can be fought against: the disease, the symptoms, the society, groups in society, etc. Sometimes this works, a great many times it does not. At some time there comes the awareness that maybe the problem ought to be looked at differently. Underlying causes are now searched for, ways to get out, looking for creative solutions, taking up responsibility. The explorer is now evolving. A new kind of integration is finally found when a new meaning is given, a new way of being, of looking at the problems or the world. Then there is feeling of participating fully in life, of being in charge of one's life, regardless of unfortunate circumstances.
Figure 8. *Inner biography*. In the victim stage an influence, felt to come from outside (be it a disease, loss, circumstance...), disturbs the inner harmony. In the fighter stage, one tries to eliminate this disturbing influence. In the explorer stage, one reaches out to new creative ways of being. In the stage of participator, one takes up responsibility for one’s own life and others’ lives, perhaps finding new directions and purposes of being (adapted from R. Rijke 1984).

This model is very useful for the understanding and treatment of illnesses. Some meaningful synchronicity has been observed between the onset of diseases, and the onset of feelings of disintegration, which always preceded the diseases in time, and synchronicity between an inner growth process (in the course of which decisions play an important part) and a sense of health (Lafaille & Lebeer 1991).

4.6. The BPM-model

The BPM-model has been formulated by Stanislas Grof (1985). B.P.M. means Basic Perinatal Matrices. He uses the process of birth as a prototype, an ideal type of archetypical energetic processes. It is a model which is based on the experience of human energies in the development of consciousness. This model has been further elaborated, extended and applied in different fields by different collaborators of the London Institute of Psychosynthesis. I give here a very short version:
4.7. The feminine principle

Psychosynthesis subscribes to the hypothesis of the androgyne structure of consciousness. Both parts of consciousness are conceived as two distinct basic forces - principles - operating in the whole reign of consciousness: the masculine and the feminine principle (Evans, 1983). An analogous development as reflected in the BPM-model is found back in the interplay between the masculine and the feminine principles. This model uses strong metaphorical symbols (subpersonalities) to define its stages: the Witch - the Virgin - the Mother.
In the development of the feminine principle the following stages can be distinguished:
- **The Witch** who disturbs symbiotic unity and is the bearer of chaos. The Witch serves the survival of the species and can give life (birth) but also cause death.
- After the chaos, the **Virgin** appears. She creates an island of rest within the chaos in which the new consciousness can arise.
- This new consciousness is nurtured by **the Mother**.

The masculine principle can also cause a distortion in symbiotic unity (as might be experienced in Oedipal triangular relationships), can bring differentiation. Simultaneously, it can at the same time block the feminine intuitive and emotional flux by boundaries in the Mind.

These stages correspond with inner sub-personalities. Interferences with Oedipal energies can cause severe problems (As in the case of a woman who is not able to identify with her inner mother because of a disturbed relationship with her real mother. She may have problems nurturing herself and her needs).
4.8. Where does meditation lead in terms of personal growth?

Ken Wilber describes in his inspiring book (Wilber 1981) the process of development of consciousness as a succeeding removal of borders inside yourself in order to reach "wholeness" (unity of consciousness). In this unity of consciousness a person expands the borders of his/her self-identity to such an extent that s/he can encompass the whole universe. During this experience all borders come crashing down, there's no inner-outer divide anymore and as a consequence no borders can be drawn. These borders have been constructed by yourself under the influence of culture, and these have to be removed according to Wilber, in order to achieve infinitude.

Although the construction of borders is a personal matter, he nevertheless distinguishes the following classes:

- the skin-border: self/non-self: the inner-outer world
- the border between body and your self-image (ego)
- the border between parts of the ego: persona (those parts which are accepted, offering a very limited self-image) and shadow (those parts which are not accepted).

In case the experience of the individual transcends the self/non-self border, Wilber speaks about transpersonal experiences. These can be specific oriented or encompass everything. An all-encompassing transpersonal experience, is called wholeness (consciousness of unity). S/he who experiences this is connected with the totality of reality.

Being able to construct borders, means that there are various levels of identity. Wilber speaks of a spectrum of consciousness. The following stages are distinguished:

1. the persona level (persona-shadow)
2. the ego-level (body-ego)
3. the total organism (inner-outer world)
4. transpersonal stage
5. consciousness of unity.

The development goes in general from stage 1 to stage 5. It doesn't matter if you conceive of them as climbing or descending. Wilber usually speaks of them as descending. Every level of the spectrum has its own characteristics, symptoms and opportunities. They express the dominant identification of the personal identity with a certain level. These levels of consciousness can also be used to distinguish therapeutical schools from one another. The construction of borders implies the induction of certain conflicts within consciousness. Every school is oriented towards a certain type of conflict between these inner domains. In scheme:
Wilber lets the border line at the end of the spectrum become paint in the domain of the transpersonal. This line disappears completely on the level of unity of consciousness, because then no borders exist and the self and the non-self become one "harmonious whole".

This vision of Ken Wilber is interesting, but in practice it can lead to a distorted view of where meditation can lead. This would be regrettable. I assume, however, that he had no intention to do that. Let's look first of all at his conception of unity of consciousness. This sounds very paradisaical. I don't know anyone who lives in such a heavenly state. It is definitely not a permanent state. People interested who want to use meditation to reach such a state, will become deceived. They should be very cautious not to use this view as an escape mechanism for running away from reality, or even worse become dependent upon a meditation teacher (guru) who preaches that such a heavenly state can be reached. Granted, I know a few people who have had exceptional peak experiences, which one could call a kind of unity of consciousness. But after this peak experience each of them continued to wrestle with problems situated on "lower" levels in the terms of Wilber. A peak experience
offers no guarantee against problems: it's merely an experience nestled beside other experiences, which may offer you some consolation during difficult periods, but won't protect you from the everyday difficulties we must all encounter in life. With that I arrive at a second point of critique concerning the model of Wilber. The linear picture suggests something which cannot be found in reality. Development never follows a straight line, and never a pattern of simple stages.

Therefore I want to propose a model which is more in accordance with the daily experience of meditation practitioners. The human being necessarily holds several relationships with him/herself and the environment. The most important ones are (a) a relationship with oneself, (b) a relationship with one's own body, (b) a relationship with one's own inner depths (the unconscious), (d) a relationship with other people, and (e) a relationship with meaning, the spiritual (the Great Mystery of Life) or the transpersonal.

Regarding the relationship with oneself, the building up of a self-image (Ego) which is crucial for the steering of consciousness, is very important because it serves survival functions. For each of us there is a tendency to identify "the reality of being a person" completely with this self-image (which is a kind of over-identification). This creates inner borders which may obstruct personal development. The relationship with emotions, with the dynamics of inner images, and with what traditionally is called "the unconscious" then becomes problematic.

During the spontaneous development of a person in general some areas grow disproportionately, while others are neglected. The current culture and especially the education system has an important influence on this. And of course certain people and life events.

Human growth can now consist of a further exploration of all these relationships and the potentials they have to ameliorate your life. Removing borders is one of these possibilities. Meditation can be an important tool in this respect. Every exploration of a new ground or blocked area means a benefit in terms of inner growth. You become more "whole". You can work simultaneously on several levels, or concentrate on a specific domain (e.g. to ameliorate the relationship with your body by dancing). There are no models which can tell you concretely what is best for you. There are examples which may attract you, of course. In choosing between alternatives you will have to rely heavily on your intuition. Practice itself (including getting blocked) will point you in the direction you need to go.

In scheme:
Human growth should not be measured by an ideal ("unity of consciousness", or other ideals like "the intellectual", "the photo model", or "the successful businessman"), but by what precedes. Do you feel the need to advance in your life? And are you able to remove disturbing hindrances?

In every model of development the awareness of "being yourself" has to be put at the core. Meditation is an appropriate instrument to conquer this freedom, to nurture and protect it.

4.9. Inner choices and freedom

Psychosynthesis stresses the importance of inner choices and freedom. According to psychosynthesis, human life is a transformation process in which people's unconscious symbiotic unity moves outwards towards consciousness, individuality and autonomy. When this is realized, space is available to transcend the boundaries of the Mind and the Ego and experience transpersonal realities (spirituality). Life is a permanent alternation of going into form (identification) and moving out (desidentification = freedom). Freedom is thus not a permanent stage, but a stage of transition. Life is directed towards very deep choices and the opening of the heart. It is a unique, spiritual journey (symbolised as "The Journey of the Hero").
Questions and Answers

There are questions which are difficult to explain in a systematic exposition, but easy to explain using an interview style. Some have to do with my (personal) experiences, some with personal taste, others with ideas still not mature enough to expose in a systematic way. Therefore, I include this Chapter as an appropriate literary form in order to impart some important aspects of meditation.

Can you tell us something about the origins of this book?

I have already explained in the Introduction the main intellectual inspiration for this book. But there was also a specific, personal reason for writing this book. Many of my friends in the past have asked for advice regarding their personal problems. They know that I have a broad knowledge of medical and psychotherapeutic techniques. Maybe I'm the type of personality that people feel they can have confidence in. I don't know, but there are definitely reasons related to my personality. Anyway, I taught them meditation. After a time, I got tired of explaining the same things again and again. So, I decided to write a text which I could give to them. It would save me a lot of time, and give a detailed explanation that was sometimes difficult to convey personally. They could take the text home and re-read it as often as they needed to. I began by putting together all the letters I had written to my friends over the years with proposals for exercises. This style of personal letter can be found in the text. The text grew. I added more, and asked for feedback from friends and colleagues. So, the text grew as a result of practice and a direct concern for the people I love. The result is that a lot of information is not as original as I might wish. I learned a lot from others, although I formulated it in my own way. I gathered together anything of importance that I have encountered during more than thirty years of practice. I wanted to give back to others all the knowledge that I once received myself.

What is the importance of meditation for health promotion?

Western culture has a strong preference toward looking for the causes of illness in the material world: chemical structures, viruses, bacteria, malfunctioning of organs, etc. This has led to a tremendous amelioration in the effectiveness of treatment methods. But it has also hidden other important aspects of illness. It has become increasingly clear that a large bulk of illnesses have a serious psychosomatic background. Besides that, nature is being controlled more and more by the human race. So, it is obvious that more and more illnesses will be man-made in the future. These two factors, increasing psychosomatic and man-made illnesses, urge us to encompass in health promotion,
instruments which ascertain psychosomatic well-being as well as offering systems which enable people to make proper choices, helping to promote certain motivations and attitudes. This is what we need if we really want to move closer to the goal of prevention. Meditation for me is a major instrument in this respect. It can be used complementary to all types of therapy or treatment, but its primary importance is as a general, but easy and comfortable way to prevent psychic problems and promote a state of at least moderate happiness and well-being.

I consider meditation as a specific art of self-reflection, as a means of exploring the inner forces and energetic qualities of your consciousness. As an instrument it is quite neutral. It can become related to several goals. One is health promotion, another one could be the religious goal of "meeting god" or "praying". In this book meditation is proposed in a secular way, related to the promotion of health. It doesn't exclude spirituality, or the transpersonal, but holds no direct relationship to a certain religion. The spiritual level is important for health promotion too because it belongs to the human realm. Health promotion in my view has to put human existence at its core.

I make a clear difference between spirituality and religion. Spirituality refers to the inner quality of a person making a connection with the Mystery, with dimensions of reality which are beyond their own person. And an honesty in exploring that connection. Spirituality is an important factor in creating meaning in life. Religion refers to the belief system of certain social groups, like churches or sects, that hold an explicit world view which includes an explanation of the nature of (a) transcendent being(s), the obligations of the human being towards that being (those beings) and what happens before and after life. Most religions are currently in a deep crisis. There are several reasons for this. As a result the spiritual needs of many people are in a vacuum. Science cannot offer any solution here as an alternative worldview, because the dominant scientific culture excludes transpersonal dimensions of life. Spiritual questions are very marginalised in the academic world.

What is your opinion about the New Age movement?

I have sympathy for a lot of initiatives within the New Age movement. It's certainly a creative force in global society. Although, I don't consider myself linked to it, with the exception of some of its music, which I like very much. The movement has also renewed medieval music and stimulated the import of eastern music into the West. But the New Age movement contains many elements about which I am very sceptical. Often it is too romantic, and creates illusions. For those who need a soft form of religion, they can find in it something to their taste. Personally, I don't think it will be the most important force in orientating and creating the future.

Do you believe in god?

Karen Armstrong (1995) wrote a very beautiful book about god. She explains very well that man is a god seeking being, a kind of "religious animal" ("homo religiosis"), but also, at the same time, how problematic the concept of god is. And there is always the serious question concerning the nature of personal experience. Do you have a direct, real experience of god? Who has? And what's the quality or status of it? Is it not just an inner image? A symbolic journey into the depth of your own
unconsciousness? Or something that is induced from outside (a belief you take over from other people)? Very often it seems to be very difficult to be honest regarding your own experience, you deny the nature of it, you exaggerate it, or you adapt to external belief systems. Meditation helps you to look at these processes. Very often, personal experiences and notions stemming from external belief systems are mixed up. I speak here only for myself: I cannot say that I have ever had an experience of god as god is classically understood in Western culture. In that sense, I have to say: no, I don’t believe in god. But this doesn’t say anything except to give a description of my personal experience at this given moment of my life. It doesn’t say anything about the future, and it doesn’t say anything about a possible being, called “god”. Jung also said that he didn’t believe, but he said that he knew. I neither believe, or know. But I have an experiential relationship with the Mystery. In Western culture this type of experience is very neglected. All Western religious traditions have turned contact with the Mystery into religion, into a systematic explanation of the Mystery to which you should surrender. What happens then is that the Mystery tends to disappear. It is a process of turning the unknown into the known. It reduces fear, that’s true. And it gives security, that’s true too. And, in a political respect it’s much easier to use the known for social control. The unknown is impossible to control, it can always change, has no stability, there’s nothing to grip onto. Instead of a relationship with the Mystery, then, a relationship with a dogma appears. By dogma I mean: when something another person - some authority - pretends to know what the Mystery is. However, the Mystery is everywhere, in all things. It’s not a question of knowing, but of opening, of connecting. If you cannot find it, make a trip to extraordinary landscapes, like mountains or the desert. Facing the vastness of uninhabited, pure nature can easily connect you with the Mystery. It unveils itself. Of that you can be sure.

Have you had such experiences yourself?

Since the beginning of the nineties, I have visited the desert several times, especially the Sinai in Egypt. But also the Sahara and the Nejev. I have walked around San Catherine with Bedouin guides in what they call “The Mountain”. It is a very large area of mountains, where Mount Moses is situated. It’s a very beautiful landscape with some Bedouin gardens, small wells, here and there some (herbal) plants, a lot of stones and sand, and above all the burning sun. I was confronted with the elements in a kind of naked form, their purity. Their uniqueness too. I slept beneath the stars, watching them for hours. This has influenced me a lot. It’s an experience, although it has no emotional content. So it’s quite difficult to explain what it is exactly…. because there’s no content to talk about. The experience of this vast emptiness brought a kind of deep happiness to me. Connection to the earth as well as to the stars. Happy to find some water to drink, after many hours of walking. I’ve written a poem about it, The Well (see Chapter 3).

What do you think about religion and its relationship to meditation?

That’s a very difficult and complicated question. I will not answer this question at length. It would demand a whole book! But I will give some remarks. I was raised in a catholic family, and was engaged intensively in catholicism until my mid twenties. I left the church gradually, because catholicism didn’t offer any solutions to the many problems I faced in life. On the contrary, it was
often part of the problem itself. Looking back, I would say that the catholic religion is, as with so many other religions, very hybrid. On the one hand it offers a culturally accepted path to guide your spirituality, to develop your personality, teaches you how to relate to other people, etc. But on the other hand, it demands a surrender to external authority, coerces you away from your personal experiences and tries to control a lot of your personal life and lifestyle. Moral obligations and induction of guilt feelings are favourite strategies in achieving such goals - which is a threat to your self-image and your well-being. Many people don’t like to admit that there are such issues to religions, because they are so attached to them. However, it will be clear that I am referring to empirical reality. Most Western religions especially like to interfere in the sexual life of people. Sexual control is not only the privilege of religions, but of all types of ideological power. E.g. even the Chinese communist party used the same means of control. There’s a lot to say about the power aspects of controlling sexuality. More than I can go into here. But here are a few crucial elements. Controlling and minimising lust and desire frustrates people. How to deal with frustration? Yes, religion offers a solution. Most religions were formed in times when the conception of children was beyond human control. It’s clear that societies of those times wanted to protect themselves against the unwanted side-effects of free love. Religion offered the necessary legitimacy. The contradiction now is that sexuality is one of the major vehicles needed in order to experience love and spirituality. What is more spiritual than an act of creation itself? Almost all biological life in the cosmos is the result of sex between living beings. The hybrid structure of many religions show itself here: they offer and promote spirituality, but at the same time forbid or block one of its major expressions.

Many people are severely damaged by their religion, especially in areas of sexuality and their relationship to authority. I myself was a victim of this. At the same time - and this is similar to the experiences of many other people - it is typical that this invasion in my personal life during childhood and adolescence was not felt as such. Such ideas were confirmed by my environment and people around me as truth itself. So naturally, you adapt yourself. It took several years of my life to liberate myself from the past. And I hope that I succeeded in finishing this process. Besides, the past cannot be re-lived, the past problems not reversed, so many valuable years wasted on a wrong track... This has taught me how important it is to include the experience of the body, and sexuality in meditation. And not use meditation as an instrument to create dualism’s, something Onfray called an “angel machine”. A kind of ghost, so-called pure consciousness, but not embodied. There is no need for such an ascetic use of meditation. It may damage your health. Moreover, every dualism should be avoided while using meditation. Your person is a whole. The aim is to encompass all. To create dialogue between the various parts, which sometimes seem to be separated or fully autonomous, but in fact are not.

Your analysis sounds very critical, even pessimistic about religions. Do you see any future for religions?

In my opinion religions will only have a future in sofar as they are able to solve the main problems they are facing. First of all there is a problem related to the multicultural character of international society. Contacts between cultures, nations, continents, etc. enable us to see more clearly the relativity of every religion. It’s impossible to assert that any of them hold the absolute truth. So there is a challenge to include, rather than exclude other points of view. Integration on meta-
levels could be a possibility. But there are perhaps more opportunities. It has to go much further than what in the Christian tradition is called the "oecumenical movement". It has to fully respect and honour fundamental differences of views. Secondly I see as an important task the liberation of spirituality from dogmatic conceptions. Or if you want a more classical way of expressing this: the mystic and the prophetic qualities have to be brought back in, and given a place at the centre of religions. And last but not least religions have to formulate solutions for power problems: the power they exert and did exert in the past themselves, and a variety of social problems like war, poverty, inequality, hidden slavery, etc. which are for millions of people a scourge. Religions play a constituent part in many of these problems (e.g. the oppression of the Palestinians), which cannot be put aside as a mere marginal phenomenon. If religions are not able to formulate realistic solutions, it will be very difficult for them to keep their own legitimacy intact.

Do you think the paranormal exists? And if so, what's its relevance for meditation?

Let me first say this: the paranormal is not important nor essential for meditation. But, this answer is too easy. There are some questions about the paranormal related to meditation and therefore they deserve an answer. For several reasons it is good when you meditate to have a clear, down-to-earth opinion about the paranormal. Too many fantastic stories about the paranormal are in circulation. I don't think it is a good idea to engage yourself in a kind of fantasy world in which so-called "extraordinary powers" are operating. Very often these stories and myths are complete bullshit. They serve to put oneself on a higher rank in the social hierarchy. When e.g. I am able to make people believe that I am clairvoyant, I gain a lot of social respect and maybe power too. I don't think that people who have really had such experiences tell them so openly to others. Why should they? It can cause a lot of trouble. And furthermore, other people wouldn't understand it thoroughly, because for understanding you need experience....

This doesn't mean that I reject the idea of the paranormal. It's only a critical warning against fantasising. There is another problem related to meditation. If you meditate regularly, you may confront experiences which normally are considered as belonging to the paranormal reign. E.g. during meditation you may visualise yourself in another life. Or you may have access to information which is difficult to rationalise, such as a premonition, or voices telling you something important, etc. If you experience things like this, don't worry about them. Try to look critically at them. Don't exaggerate their status, when you don't really know what their potential is. For example, people easily believe that experiences of past lives in meditation is proof that this past life actually existed. I think they tend to exaggerate the status of their experience. It can arise for other reasons: e.g. in a meditation about a past life, all your characteristics are free to be filled in as you want. Your consciousness may use this figure to tell you something about your inner growth process. It can be much more appropriate to use free space to become aware of these things, relate it to your current life. But this doesn't prove at all that reincarnation exists. Whether or not reincarnation exists is an open question as far as I'm concerned. I don't know. I've no experience which can proof it. Neither a contra-argument. I use the idea of reincarnation sometimes as an instrument to help open the Mind to other possibilities: imagine reincarnation exists, would you behave in the same way? What would you change? In this sense the idea can be helpful to certain people. The point is
to be critical, and to avoid building up new ideological belief systems. Meditation should let go of every belief system. Your development is reversed when you use meditation to create new beliefs.

*Is meditation not dangerous?*

As far as I know meditation as such is never dangerous, as long as you don’t close yourself off specifically for certain experiences. I know of people who have (mis)used some meditation practices for such purposes. They tried to cut themselves off from their emotions (e.g. by using mantras when a certain emotion arose). This caused severe problems for themselves and for others. Meditation in such cases becomes a kind of self-hypnosis. In the long run this will never work! Mostly people try to put aside feelings of pain and/or aggression. These emotions offer valuable information about the situation you are living in. Why should you suppress them? It’s better to look at them in a more neutral way: what are they telling you? And then use their powerful energy to change the situation, and move on in your life. Emotions always mobilise lots of energy: don’t waste this energy, but use it in a constructive way.

A separate issue which should be discussed is whether or not meditation can bring a latent crisis to the surface. It’s a difficult question, which needs further (scientific) investigation. If latent crises can be elicited by meditation, it could mean some “danger”. I think nevertheless that latent crises in general have a tendency to rise up, because you have a healing tendency inside yourself. You can only heal a latent crisis by becoming aware of it. It’s something that is already there, it’s not created by meditation. Protection against an overwhelming deep inner crisis can be ensured by avoidance of too exotic exercises, not engaging too early in long meditation sessions, and the precaution of looking for a teacher if you expect problems to arise. For beginners, it’s more a question of taking it easy for a couple of months, and simply observing what happens, watch signals of emotional phenomena that may appear. If you don’t push the process of meditation too much, it will normally remain manageable. If you push and push, don’t be astonished if the inner doors open all at once. But even then, when people don’t heed to a kind of natural wisdom, your consciousness protects itself. It’s first of all directed toward healing, it doesn’t seek out trouble. And there is a kind of inner protection: your consciousness will only reveal that which you are able to deal with. It can be an emotional experience, but you are equipped to withstand it. I have seen numerous people meditate for many years, in different periods of their life. Again and again, I have clearly seen how soft and wise consciousness is. It never intends to hurt you. I have a deep trust in it. It’s all for the good.

*What’s the difference between dreams and meditations?*

Dreams, like meditation, are a way of communicating with the unconscious. In fact, to a certain extent, you could say dreams are a kind of spontaneous meditation. There’s a long and interesting tradition of dream work. But dreams also serve other functions, such as purging the mind or imparting information concerning sleep. It’s a mixture, which sometimes makes interpretation difficult. It can also be quite difficult to remember dreams. It demands a lot of care and attention. For many people, this is not so practical.
Meditation is a much more straightforward way of communicating with the unconscious. There is less interference, you can choose a convenient time to meditate, and choose to continue with a thematic. You can work with meditations in a more goal oriented, more effective way. Many of the necessary conditions are in your own hands — you don't have to wait until something spontaneously happens as is the case with dreams. Your freedom of choice is greater. You can choose certain images, and refuse others. You can stop during a meditation and continue with the same theme later. There are many reasons for regarding meditation more highly than dream analysis. Of course, you can combine the two, if you want. You can e.g. take images from dreams as an input for meditations, or keep a dream diary and see what patterns you discover. But in general, I think, meditation methods are more appropriate and more compatible with modern life in promoting a dialogue with the unconscious.

Can meditation be used with children?

The presented method in the Manual is not intended to be used by children. I've no experience in this field. The method and the issues explained are all related to adults. Generally, I think, one has to be very cautious using meditation with children. I've never seen any reports on this, but perhaps it exists. Perhaps some people have valuable experience or an insightful vision concerning this topic. At the moment, however, I just can only advise caution. A major aim of meditation is to go beyond the Ego, to break through its dominance, and also that of the Mind. In the development of a person, this comes after a strong Ego has already been developed, which is able to defend its borders, but not before! The Ego is a survival mechanism, every person needs it. But we need to counterbalance the tendency that it has to dominate our whole being. If one starts too early with meditation exercises, it may be a serious danger to the normal, spontaneous building up of the Ego. This should not be the intention. Therefore, I would advice a respect for the natural growth process, rather than an intervention in it. Meditation for young people is also open to misuse in the context of social control. Elsewhere in this Chapter I deal with this issue. In my opinion it's irresponsible.

This question about the use of meditation in regard to children comes from good intentions, to give the best of all to children or students. But you should consider that if parents and teachers regularly meditate themselves, this will have enough beneficent influence. This indirect effect should be sufficient. Children and young people have many other opportunities to stimulate their inner life: mind-body techniques, dancing, fairy tales, rituals to deal with emotions like pain and sorrow, poetry, etc. I know some people who are very skilled in this. It would be better, I think, to stimulate this further and build up more experience in this area.

What do you think about Enlightenment?

I see enlightenment as a difficult concept. If such a state exists, you will only know it when you experience it yourself. You can pin the label "enlightenment" on every experience of deep overwhelming contact with love inside yourself. But is this what is meant in the literature by the concept? There is also a problem of power here. If I put myself in a position where I can say of myself "I experience enlightenment" or even more "I am enlightened", and if I can convince you that
you need this experience too and that I can offer you the key to it, something I have called elsewhere "an absolute power game" sets in. My advice is this: never engage in such a thing. It is not necessary at all to have a concept or goal such as enlightenment in order to meditate. After some months of practice you will know how valuable meditation is. You don't need extra arguments to prove its worth. Instead of considering religious ideas such as enlightenment, you'd better off practising meditation exercises which bring you into contact with the love deep inside yourself, and with compassion. Entering these inner realms will reveal much more, than discussing this concept.

**What is the relationship between love and sexuality, and meditation?**

Love is the most important energy in the human being and in the world. On the personal level, meditation tends to maximise your potential for loving other people. It's one of its major aims. You will discover the endless reservoir of love energy inside yourself, learn to purify this energy, and use it in a balanced way. This includes your sexuality. Giving up all dualism implies giving up an inner division between sexuality and the opening of your heart. What will slowly happen is that your feelings of happiness in an intimate love relationship will deepen and grow, and you will discover that the connection between these two forces strengthens both. So for me there is a very positive relationship between love, sexuality and meditation. It give such pleasure and satisfaction working on it.

In one of my publications, *How objective is a belly dancer? About the Seduction of Science* (Lafaille 1998), I appeal to science to focus more on the quality of love as a crucial factor in the creation of reality. I'm working further on this idea. Taking love, the protection, production and restoration of it, more seriously in human affairs and in society can represent a major new orientation for the human sciences. Maybe for the natural sciences too, but it will be more difficult to realise there. It's a complicated matter. But for the human sciences, such a shift of attention is easier to realise, and will offer new solutions to a variety of social problems. It can offer additional solutions for those problems which are dangerous to the normal functioning of society - like war, occupation or violence.

**You are a sociologist. What is the meaning of meditation for society? And is meditation not too individualistic?**

For me, meditation is complementary to social and political action. It's a serious danger to use meditation as an escape from difficult situations in society. Some people use it that way. Of course, you can use meditation as a tool for producing positive emotions and happiness. The danger is that you may become detached from reality. In the long run this is untenable and it will ruin your life in many respects. The reality is that we - always and necessarily - live in social relationships and in society. The meditation tradition in general understimates the influence of society. In many respects our personal life is a reflection of the state of society as a global system. Unemployment e.g. is not solely a problem of the feelings or the consciousness of its victims, but is the consequence of power games in society and the refusal to re-distribute wealth and income. Meditation in that sense can easily be misused as an instrument of social control. We need to reflect on that more systematically.
and formulate guidelines against misuse of meditation. This is work for the future. The only meditation book I know, which ponders a little on this, is Kornfield (1993), but much more is needed. It's my intention to work on this topic in the future.

One example of misuse. I've heard that in a school in Japan, students, as a punishment were made to meditate on their "bad" behaviour (Just as we in catholic schools had to kneel and pray to god asking for forgiveness for our mistakes). This is a clear misuse. Meditation goes to all depths of your consciousness. Therefore it should only be used in complete freedom. No authority, no teacher, no parent, nobody has the right to make you meditate if you don't choose it freely.

Society needs meditation, but in a free way. Meditation offers the opportunity to cleanse your inner world. Meditation is also a good tool for social action. You need a lot of motivation and a sense of meaning to engage in the social arena, full as it is of potential conflicts. Meditation can help renew your energy, clear away pain and negative feelings, help to find human solutions to social conflicts, and promote compassion and love instead of stagnancy and brutality. It's a task that will need much work in the future. All meditation traditions will become stronger, if they encompass thoroughly the social life within them.

In meditation the human will plays an important role. Can you expand on this?

Meditation first of all resolves a lot of inner conflict. You learn to see clearly all aspects of your inner life. Part of this involves learning how you identify yourself with certain emotions, and also how you to let go of them. This creates a space of inner freedom. It’s a space of potentialities. And it's there that the will appears: what do you choose, what do you want, and for what? Meaning is an important theme in meditation practice: "what gives meaning to me?" is an important question. The more you become aware of the deeper layers of your life, the more you come into contact with deeper meanings, the more strength you can mobilise. The more willpower. Not in relationship to a certain idea or opinion, but in relationship to existentially experienced life goals.

You talk a lot about the relationship between biography and health. Can you explain this a little bit further?

There is a growing documentation in the health sciences pointing to a relationship between health or illness and inner development. Especially in the fields of cancer research, psychosomatics and psychotherapy, many scientists are now working in this direction. I'm interested in this area of thinking because it offers a perspective on a real humanistic type of medicine, health promotion and health care. These ideas are also largely in congruence with my own life experience and the experience of people around me. Nevertheless, I regard most of these ideas as open questions, not as secure knowledge. Much more research and reflection is necessary to prove these relationships.

For the individual who wants to heal an illness, or promote his health, s/he cannot wait until scientific research shows some results. Meditation offers an easy and practical tool to explore this relationship in your own life. You can test it for yourself through the exercises described in this Manual. Just
try it, if it's important for you. Take the advantage of the doubt. A core element is a need to develop more meaning in life, to open yourself to deep love, joy and happiness, and open your heart. It's wonderful to realise that you have much greater potentials for love and happiness, than you ever thought possible before!

In regard to the scientific side, there is a blind spot in our thinking. We need a sound methodology to prove this relationship. I call this a biographical methodology. Methodology doesn't deal first of all with investigating this relationship itself, but with a pre-conditional question: how can we know that such a relationship exists. In several publications, I've already put some elements together for such a methodology. If I've the time and the resources, I will complete a book on this.

*You are a scientist, how do you see the relationship between science and meditation?*

I don't see any contradiction between science and meditation, as long as you accept that they relate to separate domains of reality. Science aims to develop a systematic and logical reconstruction of empirical reality. Meditation is an instrument to explore certain qualities of your consciousness and your inner world. Science can investigate what meditation does, try to evaluate it empirically. Try to offer alternative explanations, complementary or critically to the systematics of experience. And meditation can be a motor of creativity, of new scientific ideas or traditions. It can also offer solutions which empirical science cannot. Meditation, more than science, is directly related to personal well-being and to the development of meaning in its practitioners. It has certain advantages over science. Each needs the other. My dream is that there will come a time when there is an open dialogue and integration in both directions.

*What kind of scientific research is necessary in regard to meditation?*

First of all, we have to document systematically precisely what happens when people meditate. From there we can learn to ameliorate our methods. We also need more insight into the variety of reactions stemming from meditation. We can then decide what exercises are appropriate for certain categories of people. We have to search for more insight in regard to each exercise, and also in regard to the steady practice of meditation over a long period of time. You must remember that there is already a serious and vast research tradition. Many topics, such as psychological effects, perceptual and cognitive abilities, effects on the metabolic and respiratory system, relaxation responses, etc., are already well evaluated (see e.g. Murphy & Donovan 1997). There are others still in need of special attention. What we especially need is more research into the health effects of meditations. What are the over-all effects in terms of prevention? Which types of meditation practice is best for which problem? How useful is it as a complement to classical treatment methods? We need disease-specific evaluation studies. We also need serious and international research into the relationship between biographical development (personal growth, inner patterns, etc.), meditation and health. This is a much neglected area, but one which is of vital importance. Most academic institutions are unwilling to invest in this. Nevertheless, in my view this type of research will yield rewarding and exciting results.
There are special topics which need more attention: (chronic) pain, confusion, meaning and health, vitality, etc. We need to look at the opportunities meditation offers in coping with emotions and the help it can give in such difficult situations as illnesses, and also its benefits in increasing the health potentials of people.

*You are engaged in peace work. How important is peace for you? And what does meditation mean in this respect?*

Peace refers to a kind of basic threshold of human life. Without peace, it is difficult for life to blossom. Without it, life demands an extraordinary investment of energy, an investment which many people are not able to mobilise. As can be seen in the case of concentration camps, a double dehumanisation process occurs. First to be imprisoned, deprived of your freedom, and secondly to be put in such conditions that you are forced to give up your moral dignity (e.g. having to steal bread from fellow prisoners in order to survive). From the point of view of health promotion, it must be stressed that war, occupation, terror, economic repression, poverty, etc. are still the main causes of early death. Finding solutions to this is the number one priority for the health sciences. Meditation can help us to be more creative in finding solutions, help us mobilise strength, power and energy, and help to cope with the variety of difficulties we face in such situations. My experiences in Israel and Palestine taught me how important meditative energy can be in transforming pain and suffering into co-operation and the rebuilding together of a new, peaceful world. It is the universal responsibility of everyone to support the powers of peace. The violent killing of people resides at the lowest level of civilisation. We should never cross this line.

*What benefits have you experienced in your own life through meditation?*

Meditation has been very valuable for me. My life would be totally different without meditation. I started meditation in a very systematic way, after a series of troublesome nystagmus attacks. Meditation was a tool to cope with the severe symptoms of that distortion of the nervous system. It helped me cope, to break away from feeling a victim of the condition. Meditation has also helped me work intensively for long periods of time, and been a great aid in dealing with social conflicts. Nevertheless, it hasn’t always been so simple. Many times my intuition has put me on the wrong track, contrary to what was unveiled by my meditations. For myself, I still see this as a problem. So far, I have found no solution for this. I try to understand what is really happening, try to find roots in myself, try to reflect on it... My critical notes in the text here and there, come from this experience. Don’t be over-enthusiastic, meditation is not a simple road to heaven! It can help bring happiness to your life, but it’s only a favourable, not a necessary condition for it. Many other things have to be considered. I have developed in the Meditation Manual a relative view on meditation. My advice is: use it, but be critical at the same time.
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Recommended Further Reading


The first book especially contains a lot of information about what meditation is and how it works. It is a good introduction. Rajneesh is a very gifted story teller. The abundance of examples can help beginners to deepen their insight. It's a pity that Rajneesh engaged himself in certain power games, and became more a guru than a real teacher.


An advanced book for meditation. Contains a lot of wisdom. It is written within the Buddhistic tradition. Kornfield gives valuable information about the relationship between meditation and psychotherapy. One of the few books which really encompasses the topic of power. He gives a lot of examples of misuse of power by teachers, and religious leaders. The book also offers wise solutions for many of the problems that can arise when you want to deepen your insight with the help of a (religious) teacher. The book contains valuable pages on pain, and on letting go of the arrogance of the Mind.


This book offers a comprehensive overview of the scientific literature on meditation. It deals with items such as: effects on the cardiovascular system, the cortical system, blood chemistry, the metabolic and respiratory system, muscle tension, skin resistance, perceptual and cognitive abilities, empathy, creativity and self-actualisation, anxiety, sleep disturbances, etc. The book contains a list of ± 1500 titles of research reports (articles and books). Besides a general introduction it contains 4 chapters, overviewing and summarising research, on the following topics: scientific studies of contemplative experience; physiological effects; behavioural effects; and subjective reports. The last chapter especially is relevant to all teachers and practitioners of meditation, because it contains important information on basic topics for practice (equanimity, energy and excitement, bliss, etc.) and a discussion of problems and negative experiences.


Wilber is a major theorist regarding consciousness rising techniques. The books offers a good overview of philosophical backgrounds and a carefully considered view on the use of meditation in the modern world. Also contains a very interesting plea to accept the complementary possibilities of all methods.

This little novel of Hesse is a delicacy. It's a brilliant original story about a person who becomes "enlightened". It's a wonderful mixture of eastern story and western conceptions. The book contains an excellent description of some major inner processes and transformations. It is written in a very symbolic style, which gives the reader the huge potential to recognize their own life in it.


Houston describes very carefully the meditation tradition which is oriented towards looking for the "inner man" (for a man) or the "inner woman" (for a woman). She also offers an excellent documentation on the links between this orientation in meditation and mysticism in East and West. Contains many valuable exercises.


Eroticism is an important part of life, and a main road to happiness. Dooglas and Slinger give a quite complete overview of the various ways to optimize your love life. The book contains dozens of meditations. There are big differences in the quality of the information. So, choose critically. I disagree with their opinion about erotics and children. For me, one has to be very carefull when dealing with the erotic life of children. Of course, it's important for children to experience love and erotic feelings, but we need much more insight into this. In many cases where this has gone wrong, people have needed long therapies to heal these wounds. Valuable book because of the extraordinary completeness of the documentation.
Robert Lafaille, Prof. Dr., is a sociologist. He gained his Ph. D. at the University for Humanist Studies in Utrecht (Holland) with a study about healthy lifestyle programs, including an empirical investigation about yoga and its health effects. He taught welfare sociology and general sociology at the University of Brabant (Holland) and was collaborator at the Centre for Family Medicine of the University of Antwerp, where he co-ordinated the activities of a unit for Research and Training in the field of healthy lifestyle programs. Was visiting professor at the University for Applied Sciences of Magdeburg during the winter semester 1994-1995 teaching Health Sciences and Health Promotion. He has edited more that 120 scientific publications in several languages.

He has been chairperson of the International Network for a Science of Health since 1988, an international network of experts in the field of health. This Network was founded at the WHO-Regional Office in Copenhagen. He is now director of the International Institute for Advanced Health Studies, a private foundation in Antwerp aiming to develop innovative research in the area of health, especially combining scientific research and human experience. Since 1996 he has been a member of the scientific advisory board of the “Centre for Qualitative Research” of the Institute for Ecological Health Care in Rotterdam (Holland).

He has a lot of experience in the development and management of courses in health promotion. Has international expertise in health research, especially in the fields of theories of health, epistemological foundations of the health sciences, empirical research (and its methodology) into lifestyle and health and the methodology of biographical research. He also has a long teaching and research experience in welfare, social problems, deviant behaviour, meditation and creativity processes, body awareness, psychosomatics of pain, self-care techniques, power processes and future research.

Since 1995 he has been engaged in a new form of peacework in Israel, consisting of dialogue groups between Israeli and Palestinians in which the topic of pain is a central issue. He was co-organiser of a workshop in Magdeburg about peace and conflict resolution as a part of “Israeli-German Dialogue” (November 1996) and co-organiser of a workshop of the Department of Psychiatry of the Military Hospital Queen Astrid in Brussels (May 1997) about “Pain in social context”.

For the past couple of years he has been writing and publishing poetry, of which several are translated. His experiences in the desert (Sinai, Egypt) have especially influenced his poetry.
Collaborating Artists

Gigi Borri was born in Parma, Italy, in 1945. For nearly 30 years he has been active in field research in Africa, Asia and the Americas, studying traditional cultures, with particular emphasis on shamanism. Among his most significant experiences were long periods spent with the Piaroa of the Orinoco basin forests (Venezuela) and with the Mentawai of Siberut island, Mentawai archipelago (Indonesia). For the last six years he has been working with Lakota spiritual people (USA). As an artist, his latest exhibitions in Italy, Switzerland and the USA have focused on visionary worlds of shamanic traditions. He is involved in the study of traditional sacred sounds and chants. He has recently published "Anime della foresta - Tracce di un mondo sciamanico" (Souls of the Forest - traces of a shamanic world) with Marsilio Editori, Venice.

Gertje Roosen (1954) is a Dutch pictorial artist (graphics). After an initial enthusiasm for painting, the last decade has seen her concentrate more on graphic work: etchings, lino's, mixed techniques, small objects, etc. Recent developments have resulted in a move toward larger sized works. She has twice been nominated for the Belgian Nolion-industry prize (for graphics). She expresses herself in a very intuitive and impulsive way. She likes to explore her inner chaos, mastering it by putting it into an artistic form.
Guus Verzellenberg (1948) is a Dutch family doctor and painter. During his student days he worked as an artist at the laboratory for Anatomy and Embryology at the University of Utrecht (Holland). He also took courses in sculpture and painting. Since 1980 he has been a member of the artists group "De Nullen" at Ledeacker in Holland. They regularly organise individual and collective expositions. Apart from his work as a GP, he is passionately engaged in drawing, painting and etching. His fascination with the creative process itself, the interaction between painter, material and object, results in mostly abstract work. In the last few years, figurative elements slipped back into his work. The images refer to feasts, landscapes, as well as to inner moods, human relationships, deep silence and sometimes spirituality.

Karel Van Der Borght (1939) was born in Haasdonk in Belgium and is bookbinder at the Institute for Higher Education of Antwerp. He successfully completed courses in bookbinding, restoration, design and gild book covering at the State Institute for Artistic Crafts in Malines. He has participated in the International seminars. He has also taught bookbinding and restoration. He is fascinated by book designs and book covers in exquisite materials (Japanese paper, leather, etc.), in half-relief and artistic inlaid work. In 1981 he received the Prize of the Province of Antwerp for Artistic Crafts-Bookbinding, in 1982 the Prize of the City of Ghent, and was in 1983 Laureate of the International Triennial of Bookbinding in Lausanne (Switzerland). Expositions in Lausanne (Switzerland), Brighton (U.K.), The Hague and Amsterdam (the Netherlands), Liège, Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent (Belgium). Some of his work has been acquired by the Museum Wittock in Brussels.
How to proceed?

Meditation is a very lonely enterprise. You close your eyes and find yourself alone, facing your inner world and its emptiness. This raises questions of motivation, and also of learning. It is possible to learn a lot from the experiences of others. Forming a mediation group can give a positive feedback of energy. Therefore, I would suggest for those who really want to engage in the presented method for any length of time, that they organise a small group to help them in their practice. This group can consist of trusted friends and peers, and need only take place once or twice a month for two hours or so. Just long enough to feel the buzz of community and shared endeavour.

For those who have a need for a real teaching program, they can contact the IIAHS and discuss possibilities for organising a course. Write to:

International Institute for Advanced Health Studies  
Kardinaal Mercierlei 26  
B- 2600 Antwerp  
Belgium  
URL: http://iiahs.wadiproducts.com
Using the exercises in professional practice

All exercises described in the Meditation Manual are produced on Word for use by caregivers in their daily practice. The system is quite similar to that used for the prescription of medicines. The GP, psychotherapist or other caregiver gives one or more exercises to the patient, who then carries them out at home. Every exercise can be printed out on a separate sheet of paper. Name, address and further information about the caregiver or the treatment procedures can be added and printed on this sheet (by adapting a template just once).

This documentation set is available on Word for Windows or Apple. Please state clearly which one you require on the order form. The price includes the reproduction rights for use in the private practice of the buyer.

Contact the International Institute for Advanced Health Studies (address on page 143) for more information.
Appendices

Appendix 1 - Hyperventilation

Hyperventilation is a change of the respiratory system in which too much carbon dioxide is exhaled (Compernolle 1981). It appears when the frequency and/or the depth of the inhalation increases by which the ventilation of air in the lungs become greater than necessary for the metabolism (Terluin 1984). In the literature there’s an ongoing discussion about whether hyperventilation is a real, causal syndrome or whether it could be better called panic (disorder). For practice this discussion is not relevant. Hyperventilation may occur occasionally (such as when blowing up an air-bed) or chronically. In the case of chronic hyperventilation one speaks of an hyperventilation syndrome, a state which is characterised by frequently recurring fits of terror. These can be very worrying for the patient and also for his environment (partner, family). Carbon dioxide plays an important role in the human body. It directly influences the functioning of the nervous system, regulates the interchange of oxygen in the blood, has a direct influence upon the respiratory regulating centre and helps to maintain the acidity of the blood at the right level. The acidity of the blood strongly influences all the chemical processes in the body, their velocity and their balance. Equilibrium in the chemical household is disturbed by hyperventilation and this might have effects on different levels: headache, heart-fluttering, terror, unclear or double sight, shivers, cramps in arms and legs, etc. This can be represented as follows:

![Feedbacks related to hyperventilation](image-url)

*Figure 12: Feedbacks related to hyperventilation.*
Main symptoms of hyperventilation are:
• tingling in the fingers, perioral or in feet
• stiffness of fingers and arms
• stiffness around the mouth
• cold or clammy hands or feet
• dizziness/light in the head
• headache
• gasping
• short of breath
• much sighing/difficult breathing/a faster and deeper breathing
• nervosity
• heart palpitations
• shivering
• tiredness
• rustling in the ears
• nausea
• sweating
• a swollen feeling in the belly
• pain in one or both arms
• pain in neck or shoulders
• stabbing pain in the chest
• closed feeling in or around the chest
• haze before one's eyes
• hazy or double sight
• the feeling of passing out
• being confused, having the feeling of losing normal contact with the environment
• anxious feelings (e.g. fear of dying, fear of insanity, fear of losing control, etc.)
• panic
• sometimes also: aggression, automutilation, phobic behaviour

Hyperventilation may evoke one or more of these symptoms. Hyperventilation often occurs immediately after or may be a delayed reaction to the following situations (Noske-Fabius s.d.; Terluin 1984):

| a. acute in case of a trauma               | physical (surgery, accident) |
| b. and/or a feeling of                     | psychic (bereavement, broken relationship) |
| c. psychosomatic stress                    | being overloaded (rightly or wrongly felt) |
|                                           | agitation                      |

Hyperventilation is characterised by the simultaneous operating of several feed-back mechanisms. The main line
is indicated in Figure 12 by a bold arrow:

- The person suffering from hyperventilation does not as a rule recognise the link between the respiratory changes and his feelings of terror, which, in turn, is a (new) cause of terror:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>increasing terror</th>
<th>accelerated breathing</th>
<th>increasing hyperventilation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>increasing symptoms</td>
<td>increasing terror</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A first mechanism of reinforcement originates:

In the case of chronic hyperventilation this leads to anticipated terror: the fear of occurring fits of terror.

- The enervation of neurological and endocrinological systems causes bodily symptoms such as acceleration of the pulse, rise in blood pressure, etc. The person can also experience these symptoms as terrifying. So a second mechanism of reinforcement appears:

| terror | neuro-endocrinical changes | bodily symptoms | terror          |

This second mechanism can in turn reinforce the first one.

- A third mechanism appears, through another of the symptoms, namely shortness of breath. If the person feels that he cannot get enough air, he starts to breathe more heavily which is the cause of hyperventilation.

By the interaction of these three reinforcing mechanisms a very simple phenomenon can turn into a completely uncontrolled fit of terror with very unpleasant phenomena throughout the whole body. Very often this is accompanied by real fear of death and of becoming crazy. In general, there’s no danger at all. But people panic. The panic is often the real problem. Fortunately the body possesses enough safety mechanisms to return itself to the normal situation, long before severe damage can be caused. Therapy can be given on each level:

- The rhythm of the natural breathing can be held or restored by breathing exercises;
- The level of carbon dioxide can be regulated with the use of a plastic bag; or even medication;
- One can learn to cope with fears and terror by psychotherapeutic techniques.

Most often, awareness of the mechanism and insight into the harmless character of the phenomenon (perhaps one of the most influential elements to counteract the panic) together with some elementary breathing techniques are sufficient to deal with it. If this is not sufficient, one should consult a doctor or therapist. The multiplicity of feed-back mechanisms offers a large variety for therapeutical intervention. One can work on the breathing, relaxation, or learn how to cope with fears of terror and panic. Further, one can use medication, or a plastic bag to regulate the level of carbon dioxide in the blood. In my experience, practising exercise of Figure 13 everyday during a couple of weeks, is very supportive.

Further suggestions in case of hyperventilation are:

- In case you carry out relaxation exercises, if you lie on your belly, it will be much easier to deepen your breathing without falling into an hyperventilation pattern.
- Carry out the exercise for breathing relaxation of Appendix 2.
- Take care to keep your nose open and unblocked. Many people who hyperventilate don’t use their nose to breath. Nose breathing slows down the ventilation of air into the lungs. Using the mouth for breathing can very easily can lead to an increase in the frequency of breathing.
- Cultivate the moments of rest between inhalation and exhalation by concentrating on it. Breath through the nose. Then let the breath pause for awhile — without locking the glottal aperture. Then slowly allow the breath out. Other ways of slowing the breath down are: humming, whistling, playing a wind instrument, or exhale on a soft -s.
- Perform strenuous activity (like stooping, lifting, going up and down stairs, riding a bike, etc.) as much as possible during slow exhalation. Never lock your breath, e.g. never squeeze the glottal aperture.
Appendix 2 - Breathing relaxation exercise

Figure 13: Posture during the breathing relaxation exercise

This exercise can best be carried out with a partner (otherwise you have to put one of your hands low on the back — see below). You sit down on a chair before a table. Put your arms crossed on a cushion, that lies on the table. Put your head down on your arms. This posture should allow you to sit comfortably and relaxed.

Your partner in this exercise puts his hands low on your back. Somewhere at the height of the end points of the lungs. If you have already had experience with breathing exercises, then the hands can be placed a little bit lower, on your pelvis. Focus your attention on the place where the hands are put on your back. Feel how the hands move together with your breathing. You will also notice that your breath becomes wider. Continue this exercise as long as you both enjoy it. Exercising over a long period of time brings a deep relaxation and encourages sleep — that stems from experience. After having carried out the exercise with a partner, you can also carry it out alone (however it will be much easier with a partner, and the effect will be deeper. It is easier to concentrate on the breath movement low at your back.) You then can put one hand on your back, and the other one on the cushion.

A variation of this exercise is to pull (with your back) against the hands of your partner. Pull only softly.

This exercise may also be very supportive for people under high pressure or for those who are going through an emotional crisis. The specific posture during this exercise excludes almost completely an undesired, eventually occurring side-effect of breathing exercises, hyperventilation (see Appendix 1). Those people mentioned before, in general also suffer from insomnia, and this exercise will have a positive effect on this.
Footnotes


Here, there is a profound difference with hypnosis which puts a clear target beforehand and attempts to imprint it. Also on this point, there is quite a difference with mantra-meditation which aims only at emptiness.

This doesn’t imply that every emotional manipulation would be based upon the described unconscious pattern. Emotional manipulation can be used very intentionally and strategically. Also emotional manipulation is cultivated within certain cultures. It is not always very clear what the precise source of this manipulation is. Nevertheless you always have to take into account the possibility of the described projection mechanism. Social groups who stimulate their members towards emotional manipulation are without doubt influencing these unconscious mechanisms. An interesting example is the following Egyptian travel report: “The pyramid of Mykerinos seemed to be closed. Before the entrance sat a guard on a slippy stone. He looked up, beaming, shook my hand and introduced himself as Farak, inviting me to climb the pyramid. We did so via the rear, through a very complicated route hampered by stones, and were within twenty metres of the top. The yellow desert shimmered around me. Under my feet the stones began to crumble. Farak turned around and told me: ‘It is forbidden to climb the pyramids’. I swallowed. ‘Some people pay me up to fifty or even a hundred pounds. Because this is unique’, I said, panting: ‘I pay you ten pounds!’ Farak insisted on more, but I refused and told him that he should have talked about the money beforehand. I warned him that if I fell down he would be responsible. After five minutes of complete silence, he started the descent and I followed. When we were back at the bottom, unharmed, he grumblingly received his money and said ‘You certainly feel a happy person now, but I don’t.’ ” (Travel report of Arnold Kerstens in Nieuwe Revue, 15 June: 1994: 26).

Miller has masterly described these kind of processes in several books (Miller 1995). If you wish to deepen your insight in these processes, these books are highly recommended.

I mean by confusion the state of mind during which contact with normal reality is disturbed, e.g. you don’t recognize people, ascribe characteristics to yourself which you don’t in fact have (e.g. ‘I can fly’) or see people or objects which aren’t there. I use confusion as a technical, neutral concept which refers to a concrete state of mind, not to an evaluation of it.

Of course, confusion can also be generated by (purely) biological causes, such as in case of serious infectious diseases, very high fever or dementia.

"Luctor et emergo" is a Latin proverb, which means "I wrestle and put myself on my feet". It’s the maxim on the blazon of the Province of Zealand (the Netherlands). A lion is fighting for his life. A symbol of the land that was flooded over, which caused many deaths. One way or another, this image always fascinated me.

A shofar is the horn of the wild ram (goat) which is blown on the Jewish day of repentence, “Yom Kippur”, when Jews ask forgiveness for their sins.
Ecological medicine (Rijke, Rijke-de Vries en De Vries, 1983: 212-213) is a psychotherapeutical school inspired by psychosynthesis, which was founded at the University of Rotterdam and later organised as an independent institute.

This model is developed by collaborators of the School of Ecological Medicine in Rotterdam. Empirical scales are developed to test these hypotheses (Lafaille 1991).

Ecological Medicine warns against hypostasing this model: it is only a model, and not reality itself. Reality is much more complex. You can go through this cycle over and over again, or skip stages. Or you can block yourself - or be blocked by the reaction of the environment - in e.g. a victim or a fighter’s stage. You can be in a different stage on different levels of consciousness. It is of utmost importance to avoid using the stages as a label in a judgmental manner. In fact, every stage has its own significance and reason to be. It is a model which can be very useful when analysing people’s lives if the model is not imposed as a theory on reality. It has rather to be used as a map in an unknown country, always with a possibility that phenomena are encountered which question the map.

The term “synchronicity” is used here not in the specific Jungian sense, but to avoid a mechanistic, causal interpretation of the relationship.

The concept of energy is very uncommon for modern men. It is denied, repressed, mystified, etc. To observe energy requires a special quality of consciousness which is not very popular, even rejected in modern society. (See Lafaille 1989).

“So, on each level of the spectrum other aspects of the world seem to be non-self, hostile and strange. On every level other processes of the universe are seen as a kind of foreigner. And as Freud once stated, every foreigner looks in principle like an enemy, every level is potentially entangled in various conflicts with several enemies. Every borderline is, again, a fight line - and the enemy is different on every level. In psychological jargon this is termed as various "symptoms" emerging from various levels." (Wilber 1981: 19-20)

In the literature it is suggested that the use of your own hands as a cap over nose and mouth is preferable to using a plastic bag. Plastic swallows itself against nose or mouth which can cause panic by itself. Besides that, you always have your hands with you.
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p. 99-100 - the belly dancer: May-June 1996 - partly inspired by a poem of an anonymous Arabic poet, as found in Dietlinde Karkutli 1994: 11-12.

p. 102 - "I believe in the sun..." : Anonymous Jewish inscription in the ghetto of Warschau - Text found by Van Overeem 1983.

p. 102 - "Hope is not the conviction..." : by Vaclav Havel (President of Czechoslovakia).

p. 102 - "Does the pain of love have reason to exist..." in Suleika in Goethe, 1952: 86.

p. 103 - Pain of Life: Antwerp, 10-9-98.

p. 104 - The Rose and the Water-lily: Antwerp, 15-10-98.

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p. 109 - Death on the Mountains: Antwerp, 25 November 1998. This poem was written as a reaction to the burning of olive trees in the Palestinian Occupied Territories by Israeli settlers. The settlers live at the top of the hills surrounding the Palestinian villages.

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