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MYSTIC CONSCIOUSNESS
NEW PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

We all know that a beautiful poem, when 'translated' into straightforward language, loses many of its dimensions. The poem flattens out and becomes rather banal. Mystical literature is rife with poetry. In their attempts to express the inexpressible the mystics do their best to widen their verbal dress, using imagery, metaphors, paradoxes, and neologisms. A considerable part of mystical language aims at referring back to mystical experience. The scholar analyses these texts. In order to understand the mystical states of consciousness the texts refer to we are bound to have tools. A psychologist of religion searches for psychological tools. The model suggested is a combination of Cognitive psychology and depth psychology. The latter provides us with the partly unconscious primary process cognition, while the former offers a multi-dimensional model of cognitive activity called 'Interacting Cognitive Subsystems' (ICS), usually depicted as the secondary process, i.e. our rational self. These two complementary theoretical perspectives are applied to the analysis of both historical and contemporary examples of mystical experience. Questions asked include: What can the scholar learn about mystical consciousness by studying texts of the mystics? What kinds of verbal expression refer to the inexpressible experience of the divine? Part of the answer is contained in the following verbal phenomena: syncretism, flexibility, neologisms, and metaphors.

Keywords: cognitive activity, flexibility, metaphor, mystics, neologism

1. Introduction

The psychological study of mystic consciousness is confronted with a fundamental problem: mystics refer to their experiences of the inexpressible by using texts, that is, to the extent that they communicate at all. However, a verbal description of the experience is like a finger pointing to the moon. Another way of looking at the problem is that the relation between an experience and its verbal interpretation can be compared to a dream and its verbal narrative. What we need to do, then, is to find a method similar to that used by interpreters of dreams.

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It is my intention to present such a model, or perhaps models. Let me state from the outset that it is my sincere conviction that models, however complex, cannot grasp the complexity of the experience. But if you are a psychologist of religion that is what you are supposed to do. Mystic experiences, just like dreams or nightmares, differ from verbal reports, which can never capture the full complexity of the states referred to. Just like the interpreter of dreams we will have to try to understand the cognitive processes involved. What we need, to start with, is a multidimensional model of a human as a cognitive being.

In recent years quite a few models of so-called dual processing have been presented within Cognitive psychology. Below is an example of dual processing [1].

1.1. A dual-processing model: cognitive-experiential self-theory (CEST)

1.1.1. Rational System Experiential System

1. Deliberative, analytical	1. Automatic, rapid, effortless
2. Medium of language	2. Holistic, nonverbal form
3. Relatively affect-free	3. Intimate affects, highly compelling
4. High-level abstractions	4. Crude, concrete conceptions
5. Brief evolutionary history	5. Long evolutionary history

I do not think, however, that Cognitive psychology is sufficient in order to analyze mystic consciousness, unless unconscious processes are included as a type of information processing. To mention just one example: the work of Antonio R. Damasio [2, 3] and others have pointed to the importance of emotion for cognition. In this paper I will present cognitive processes separately. After that I will try to combine a cognitive model with a model from depth psychology. Finally, I will address the problem of operationalization; in other words, how the model can be applied to the analysis of mystic experience.

But first of all, let us read a poem written by the German medieval mystic, Mechthild of Magdeburg. This is an example of a text referring to mystic experience. The mystic often chooses poetry as a better medium than prose. I will then 'translate' the same poem into more straightforward language. How does that influence our reading of the poem?

"The sweet dew of the eternal Trinity
gushed forth from the fountain of the everlasting Godhead
into the flower of the chosen maid;
and the fruit of this flower is an immortal God
and a mortal man and a living hope of eternal life.
And our redeemer became a Bridegroom.
The bride became exhilarated at the sight of this noble countenance." [4]

Now the more straightforward wording of these lines, which can go like this:

The Trinity without beginning
gushed semen from its eternal source
into the chosen maid
who gave birth to an immortal God
who simultaneously is a mortal man
who can give us eternal life.
And our redeemer became a Bridegroom.
When the maid saw his face she became involved.

Poetry can give rise to another kind of understanding as compared with simple phrases. Poetry can give us associations, imagery, emotions, etc. The sum total of a poem is, in other words, more than the number of specific words. In addition, if we listen to the poem read by a skilful actor, then we will also be influenced by intonation, pauses, facial expression, and body language. A psychological understanding of these two kinds of reading requires a model for different types of cognitive activity.

The model as presented below can also shed light on a diversity of mystical techniques or spiritual exercises, as well as the kind of experiences they might possibly lead to. We are dealing with complex processes; capturing them is a delicate task for the psychologist of religion. That is why we need to extend or integrate cognitive psychology with depth psychology. We should not forget, however, that the object of our study is texts, written by mystics in order to describe their experiences and reflections on them.

As mentioned, it is obvious that verbal expressions used by mystics are referring to states of mind which are all but verbal! But what we have are almost exclusively verbal reports. These reports show attempts to widen the verbal dress, which appears to be too narrow for the mystic. Using an abundance of paradoxes, metaphors, neologisms, poetry, and verbal syncretism, the mystic tries to express the inexpressible. What is needed, then, is a model of analysis which enables us to reach levels of consciousness beyond the written or spoken word. It is my conviction that the basis for such a model must be a multi-dimensional view of personality, including elements from depth psychology. Although depth psychology is usually excluded from the agenda of the cognitive psychologist, I think we cannot do without this dimension. A holistic understanding of human psychological functioning must include preconscious and unconscious mechanisms. The object of this article is to suggest such a model.

I want to stress, however, that there are many models. Let me show you another one, which I still think is useful (organismic model).

2. Two assumptions

The line of argument is based on two assumptions. The first one is that the most fruitful starting point is a general systems approach. Systems are defined as "complexes of elements standing in interaction" [5, 6]. In his trailblazing study from 1968 the biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy refers to a number of

psychologists and psychiatrists connecting with a systems approach. Some of them were Henry Murray and Gordon W. Allport within personality psychology; Jean Piaget and Heinz Werner in developmental psychology; Abraham Maslow in humanistic psychology; and Silvano Arieti and Carl Rogers in Psychiatry and psychotherapy [5, p. 205].

Human personality can be regarded as a system in the above mentioned sense. For several decades I have based my thinking on such an approach, attempting to bridge the gap between Cognitive psychology and depth psychology.

The second assumption pertains to Developmental psychology. Among its proponents one finds psychologists who base their theorizing on an organismic-holistic view on development. Such a view is fundamental for one of the most well-known developmental psychologists of the 20th century. I am referring to Heinz Werner (1890-1964), born in Austria, but eventually working in the United States. According to this view, "Every behavioral act, whether outward bodily movement or internalized cognitive operation, gains its significance and status in terms of its role in the overall functioning of the organism." [7] In addition to this, Werner advocates the teleological principle that the organism is intentional, its activity is directed. The overall goal of the organism is to survive as a biological and psychological being in a complex environment.

Werner interlaces the organismic-holistic view of humanity with a developmental perspective. Wherever there is development, he states, one can observe that "it proceeds from a state of relative globality and lack of differentiation to a state of increasing differentiation, articulation, and hierarchic integration" [8].

Supported by other scholars, one could possibly object that Werner, as well as other developmental psychologists, for example Piaget, do not include aspects from depth psychology. In other words, there is something lacking in the organismic model of Werner [9]. It is the goal of this article to propose an attempt to combine cognitive aspects of development with psychodynamic factors. In this way the organismic model can be developed into an even more holistic view, here headlined as the marriage between Ego and Id.

3. Depth psychology - Id-oriented cognitive processes and religious experience

The concept of cognition can refer to a number of different processes, for example perception, concept formation, learning, memory, and problem-solving. It can also comprise emotional experiences, so-called 'hot cognition'. In addition, one can include unconscious or preconscious processes, or even primary process mentation [10]. The psychoanalytic distinction between primary and secondary process cognition is, in fact, another example of dual processing. Primary process activity is related to early development, and is characterized by displacement, condensation, and symbolization, a free flow of imagery and thoughts [11, 12]. The secondary process is our rational thought.

We must reach beyond the classical Freudian view of development, expressed by him in the famous words "Wo Es war, soll Ich werden", where Id was, there Ego shall come into being. To make the unconscious conscious is not enough. "It is the transference between them that makes a human life, that makes a life human." [12, 13] Loewald is in agreement with many other psychoanalytically oriented scholars when he states that the development from Id to Ego does not follow a straight line, or 'a movement further and further away from Id'. The Freudian view that the rational Ego should not be contaminated by our irrational Id is countered by Loewald and others. Instead they emphasize that the Id and its processes and contents is continually with us and reminds us of its existence. It would be a severe loss if we were to lose contact with it.

The id, the unconscious modes and contents of human experience, should remain available. If they are in danger of being unavailable – no matter what state of perfection our 'intellect' may have reached – or if there is danger of no longer responding to them, *it is our task as historical beings to resume our history making by finding a way back to them so that they may be transformed*, and away from a frozen ego [12, p. 22; 13; 14].

In another writing Loewald reminds us of Heinz Werner's view of human development. The dynamic unconsciousness, a concept Loewald usually calls the Id, "may become integrated into a higher form of mental organization, or organized within a hierarchy of differentiated levels of mentation" [12, p. 13, 19]. This integration is what we may call the marriage of Ego and Id.

All this not only means that we carry our different ages with us, so to speak, but that we should take responsibility for them and integrate earlier unconscious forms of experience with our more developed self. "To be an adult", Loewald writes, "means that; it does not mean leaving the child in us behind [12, p. 21]. (The good marriage between Ego and Id has also been observed by other authors too [15-22].) In other words, Loewald and a considerable number of psychoanalytically oriented scholars have reached beyond the earlier position that the actualization of earlier psychic functioning is to be understood as a regression in the service of the ego. We are not dealing with regression but with progression or reconstruction within a more developed self, a kind of reciprocity in the development of Id and Ego. Loewald's reformulation of the primary process in more positive terms, James W. Jones writes: "enables him to appreciate religion in ways that Freud – with his totally negative view of the primary process – never could" [23].

All these thoughts about what we have called the fruitful union of Ego and Id are evidently relevant to the study not only of religious experience – especially those of an intense kind – but also of creativity. As far as intense religious experience is concerned, I have in earlier studies of visions in contemporary Sweden tried to show that religious visions, which usually arise in situations of life crisis, can be interpreted psychologically as primary process directed autosymbolic representations, chosen by the synthetic function of the ego in order to establish homeostasis [24-26]. It is striking that the content of

religious visions fits so well into life situations of disorder; the vision answers to the needs of the visionary. The vision immediately establishes order in chaos; it 'shapes' the conflict – and solves it! In other words, religious visions, or object representations like Jesus, Muhammad, the Goddess Kali, or angels, are symbolic representations of order that counter chaos. Harmony has again been established. Chaos lives next to God, the poet says.

My theoretical reflections on religious visions are in harmony with the position of Loewald. According to him there are links between primary process mentation and religious experience. Or, in more precise terms, religious experience can be regarded as a result of the fruitful dialectical interplay between primary and secondary process cognition, an interplay between the irrational Id and the rational Ego. This type of consciousness is a result of increasing differentiation and integration, if we wish to use the terminology of Werner. It is the true meaning of the word *conscire*, knowing together [12, p. 41, 57, 65].

Psychological development can be seen as a double spiral, consisting of the Ego and the Id, which can mutually enrich each other. Without integrating processes of the Id we become 'less' human. If we do not make use of our total capacities, the result is a kind of psychological atrophy. But if we acknowledge the fruitful encounter between Ego and Id, Loewald writes, "then we may be at a point where psychoanalysis can begin to contribute in its own way to the understanding of religious experience, instead of ignoring or rejecting its genuine validity or treating it as a mark of human immaturity" [12, p. 73].

In his work on sublimation Loewald returns to the capacity of the primary process to create unity in a world of multiplicity. He now touches upon the meaning of the symbol in order to re-establish this unity: "the experience of unity is restored, or at least evoked, in the form of symbolic linkage" [27]. Symbols are links to the primary process. Religious symbols and experiences are neither a pure product of the unconscious nor a result of our rational consciousness. They are influenced by both ways of functioning – the marriage of Ego and Id. Religious experience, so Loewald states, can carry with it "a mourning of lost original oneness and a celebration of oneness regained" [27].

4. Ego-oriented processes and religious experience

Within mainstream psychology one can notice a growing awareness of the complexity of cognition. It has become rather common to speak about so-called rational or cold cognition and emotional or hot cognition. In addition, one cannot exclude impressions of bodily and motor processes. In order to understand this complex activity, we need a more differentiated view of humans as interpretive and meaning seeking beings. Within cognitive psychology there is a certain measure of consensus concerning the need of a multi-dimensional perspective of humans as cognitive and emotional beings [28]. (In this article the author presents several multi-dimensional models of the relation between cognition and emotion. Leventhal & Scherer have suggested three dimensions: (1) a sensori-

motor level, (2) a schematic level, integrating the first mentioned level in image-like prototypes, i.e. generalized schemata of emotional situations, and (3) a conceptual level, i.e. memory structures, organized in propositions. These three dimensions are *hierarchically* organized. An additional model is called SPAARS – 'Schematic, Propositional, Analogical and Associative Representation Systems'.)

The most holistic model being used in the context of the psychology of religion has been suggested by the English psychologist Fraser Watts, who relies on the work of John D. Teasdale and Philip J. Barnard [29]. The model is called 'Interacting Cognitive Subsystems' (ICS), a label which indicates that these scholars relate to a general systems approach. There are nine interacting subsystems. The first three are related to *sensory and proprioceptive codes*, i.e. acoustic, visual, and body state data. Two subsystems are at an intermediate level, handling information pertaining to linguistic units, the morphonolexical subsystem, and object codes. The authors label them as *structural description codes*. In addition, there are two *effector codes*, articulatory and limb. The two most important and fundamental systems are called the propositional subsystem and the implicational subsystem. Both are *meaning codes*, the first one related to semantic space and the latter to holistic 'senses' of knowing.

The propositional system pertains to semantic relations, a rather specific kind of coding, a 'knowing that'. It is a serial kind of coding. The connotation is close to the objects that the words refer to and therefore propositional codes are easy to grasp. They arise as generalizations of speech-and-object codes, related to visual objects and their relations. The meaning of the word 'above', for example, is a generalization of a number of experiences of spatial relations between objects [29, p. 53].

The implicational system is characterized by holistic, intuitive knowledge. From a developmental perspective it must be presumed that this system, phylogenetically speaking, is the older one, while propositional meanings have developed later as a result of differentiation [30]. Its meaning giving elements are more general or schematic. Instead of serial processing, the implicational subsystem functions with parallel processing. There is also a link to bodily and emotional states. Implicational schemata are the most comprising representations within this multi-level cognitive model. Elements from lower sensory levels are integrated with higher propositional meaning, and both into a more complex structure – the implicational subsystem.

Implicational code captures very high-level regularities in the world, the body, and the 'mind'. The mental entities constructed at this level can be seen as *schematic* models of experience. These schematic models represent a holistic level of meaning. It is difficult to convey this sense of meaning adequately by language since the fairly direct relationship between words and related semantic entities and relations that exist at the propositional level no longer holds at the level of implicational meaning [29, p. 54].

It is obvious that the whole model reminds us of Werner's definition of psychological development, quoted above: wherever there is development, it proceeds from a state of relative globality and lack of differentiation to a state of increasing differentiation, articulation, and hierarchic integration.

However, there is a paradox embedded in this line of reasoning. On the one hand the implicational subsystem is assumed to be phylogenetically older, but on the other hand it is suggested that it is the most holistic and developed way of creating meaning. How can these two seemingly opposing statements be united? The answer is easy from the viewpoint of Loewald and Werner: during the course of development, the older system is enriched by its later derivatives! Just like the relation between the primary and secondary processes, as described above, there is a certain reciprocity in the development of the implicational and propositional systems. We discuss this aspect in more detail later.

As we all know, implicational meaning comprises more than propositional meaning. Consider this example [29, p. 54ff]. One person says to someone else: 'Try again'. The propositional meaning is fairly clear; it means 'I want you to try again'. Further propositional meaning can, of course, be added. The person saying these two words may be a little girl who wants her father to save her beloved pet that has fallen down a well. Or the words could be uttered by an employer, who for the tenth time wants his employee to get the books balanced. If we add sensory elements, such as voice tone, facial expressions, and other types of non-verbal communication, then we create variations of implicational meaning, which in a holistic way captures the totality of meaning.

Every subsystem has its own code. The 'cognitive architecture' of the system as a whole allows for both serial and parallel processing of information. Information from one subsystem can be transformed into the code of another subsystem. A second basic way of handling information is the copy process, which is to create an exact copy of all information and store it in the memory of the specific subsystem. Every subsystem has its own memory store. However, the same event can be stored in different subsystems. So, for example, an upsetting interpersonal encounter can be encoded and stored in parallel in sensory codes (sound, light), in perceptual codes (visual objects, speech components), in a semantic, propositional code, and in an integrative, schematic, implicational code. The last mentioned code "captures prototypical features of the situation corresponding to generic aspects of experience extracted from previous episodes. Implicational code might represent, for example, the schematic model related to the prototypical 'argument with person I care for but who does not understand me' theme." [29, p. 55]

Implicational codes are more than the sum total of propositional meanings. This is clearly the case when we read poetry. "The impact of a poem depends on the combined, integrated effect of a complex of propositional meanings together with sensory contributions from the actual sounds of the words, the rhymes and meters with which they are spoken, and the visual imagery evoked." [29, p. 572] Implicational meaning can, of course, also be mediated by other arts, for example painting, music, and drama.

Let us now relate the two meanings systems to the world of religion. It is obvious that implicational meaning is part and parcel of the spiritual traditions within world religion. One example is the habit of transmitting tradition with the aid of story telling, so common in Zen-Buddhism and Sufism. In the world of religion aspects such as aesthetics, ethics, and metaphysics are brought together in a holistic way. The use of metaphors is commonplace. The word 'light', for example, can in a Christian context mean several things: God as the source of light, the light of understanding, of good conduct, etc. [30].

Within the mystical traditions of the world religions it is often stated that intense experiences of the presence of God are ineffable. Some scholars are of the opinion that this attitude is a social construction, a learned aspect [31]. But within the framework of the multi-dimensional cognitive system being discussed, "the claim that religious experience is ineffable makes perfectly good sense. Ineffable experiences are presumably those that arise in the implicational system, and are encoded there. The sense of ineffability arises from the difficulty of translating a certain core of implicational meaning into any other code." [30, p. 185]

It goes without saying that there is a substantial portion of propositional meaning in the world of religion. Religious cognition, Watts states, often consists of a coordination of the two systems [30]. A certain system can, however, take a dominant position. In the case of theological texts, propositional meaning is predominating, while implicational meaning characterizes texts pertaining to contemplative traditions. An example of reciprocity between the systems is, I think, when a person in meditation or prayer feels the presence of God at implicational level and then communicates the experience in a letter to a friend, i.e. at a propositional level. Meditation is a good example of a religious activity which can bring about changes in the cognitive subsystems. According to Teasdale and his collaborators, the Buddhist technique called 'mindfulness' can lead to an integration of subsystems [32]. But there are other effects of practicing meditation. One could be that practice in meditation leads to the shutting down of certain subsystems, those that handle verbal information; in other words the morphonolexical and articulatory systems. It might well be, Watts continues, that shutting down articulation thus may "lead to a temporal emphasis on implicational rather than propositional meanings, which may be linked to a degree of separation between the subsystems. There is the possibility that meditation leads to the two systems being partially dissociated for a period of time in what might be regarded as an altered state of consciousness." In any case, Watts concludes, theology, like all other academic disciplines, is formulated in propositional code, while a substantial part of religious language contains holistic, implicational meaning [30, p. 187].

Let me push this issue just a little bit further. Could this line of reasoning shed new light on issues such as the fundamentalist controversy, the problem whether the Bible should be interpreted literally or metaphorically? Are these different attitudes towards Scripture related to certain personality traits? Perhaps it is reasonable to assume that human beings also differ in their capacity to think

propositionally or implicationally. It is obvious, for example, that not all people love poetry, or understand metaphors or verbal imagery. I think that this problem can be discussed in more detail with the support of psychodynamic theory.

5. Integration – ICS and psychodynamic theory

The model presented above of interacting cognitive subsystems is clearly based on a systems approach. The interrelation of the nine subsystems shows, for example, how cognition and emotion are related. According to its founders, the model "claims to provide a comprehensive conceptual framework within which, in principle, accounts of all aspects of information processing can be developed" [29, p. 61].

I have taken this statement *ad notam* and intend in these final notes to attempt an integration of the two models. Let me state from the outset that I think that the relation between Loewald's psychodynamic view and interacting cognitive subsystems is complementary. The defenders of the multi-level cognitive model are cognitive psychologists, some of them with a link to neurology. It is my conviction, however, that a fuller understanding of cognition can be reached when traditional cognitive psychology takes psychodynamic theory seriously – and *vice versa* of course. Let us start with a comparison between the two perspectives.

First of all, both approaches share a general systems approach as proposed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, an approach which has been adopted by a great number of psychologists. The different aspects of psychodynamic cognition, i.e. primary and secondary processes, as well as the nine subsystems in the cognitive model, are good examples of *a complex of elements in mutual interaction*.

Secondly, they seem to share a common basis in Werner's definition of psychological development, which says that development "proceeds from a state of relative globality and lack of differentiation to a state of increasing differentiation, articulation, and hierarchic integration" [8, p. 126]. In the case of interacting cognitive subsystems there is development from an assumed earlier stage of implicational code, a differentiation into propositional code, and a new integration of both subsystems. In the psychodynamic model of Loewald, and similar models presented by other scholars, we do encounter the distinction between the earlier functioning of primary process cognition, the later development of secondary process, and its integration.

A third similarity, closely related to the second one, pertains to the interrelationship between the subsystems, whether Loewald's psychodynamics or interacting cognitive subsystems. Phylogenetically speaking, both the primary process and the implicational subsystem are assumed to be older than the secondary process, respectively propositional meaning. In addition, the mutuality between primary-secondary process cognition and propositional-implicational meaning leads to new levels of meaning and integration.

I do think, however, that the concept of the dynamic unconsciousness and its primary process mentation, as defined by Loewald, deepens our understanding of the implicational subsystem. The main characteristic of this process is condensation, which, according to Loewald, is relevant to the mystic's experience of *nunc stance*, the abiding now. During this timeless moment, "temporal and other articulating differentiations are dissolved or become condensed into oneness" [27, p. 65]. Other characteristics include emotionally charged imagery and plastic representation.

However, we do have a problem, I think, with terminology in the psychodynamic model. Loewald, as we have noticed above, attaches to Freudian concepts, but re-interprets him in an almost non-recognizable way. This easily leads to misunderstandings. The concepts primary and secondary in the Freudian frame are a result of *linear* thinking. But they are used by Loewald and others in a rather *cyclical* way. The two kinds of cognition are similar to a double spiral, interlinked at every level. This means that primary process thinking at the level of a three year old child is different from primary process cognition in the adult. Some scholars have proposed a new terminology for what Silvano Arieti [21] has called "the magic synthesis" – the tertiary process.

I do think that religious visions are a result of the interplay between Ego and Id, an integration of the two main systems, both within cognitive psychology and psychodynamics, a 'magic synthesis' creating order in chaos.

A final question is how we can operationalize this wider model – actually a result of increasing differentiation and integration – in order to reach a fuller understanding of mystical experience. We have already noticed that the aspect of ineffability is related to the assumption that mystical experience is at an implicational level and therefore cannot adequately be grasped at a propositional level. The mystic does his or her utmost to stretch the limits of language by using paradoxes, metaphors, similes, stories, poetry, and the like. In other words, the intense experience of divine presence leaves traces in the mystic's verbal attempts to express the inexpressible.

I think there is a relevant analogy in the psychology of creativity. The Swedish psychologist Marianne Jeffmar [33-35] has studied the relation between creative insight and its verbal expression. Since she connects with both Werner and a general systems approach she fits exceptionally well into this discussion. The creative person, she writes, has an ability to combine imaginative processes with so-called ductive processes, comprising both deduction and induction. The third process in her model, called 'Ways of Cognitive Action' (WOCA), is the annotative process. Annotative processes are the most dependent on the environment, while imaginative processes are the least dependent on the environment. In between she places the abstract and analytical ductive processes. Imaginative processes appear to be the equivalent of the primary process in psychoanalysis, while the other two cognitive styles are related to the rational secondary process [27, p. 65].

The three 'ways of cognitive action' are hypothetical constructs, Jeffmar states. This statement is, of course, just as true for the different models we have discussed above. The issue at stake now is how we can find verbal traces of them. Jeffmar's suggestion is that the three cognitive styles are mirrored in certain empirically testable sub processes [34; 35, p. 16]. Imaginative functioning is expressed in the sub process *syncretism*; ductive styles are expressed in the sub process *flexibility;* while the annotative process shows itself in *exactness*. Syncretism is defined as "(a) a disposition towards forming combinations and/or fusions of disparate concepts or elements in a confident and/or unexpected way. It is also defined as (b) a tendency not to keep apart phenomena and facts, feeling and perception. The resulting associations seem to be made without careful consideration." Flexibility is defined as "a disposition towards conscious, intellectual interpretations of phenomena and facts in (a) different, and/or (b) unexpected ways. These interpretations are of the nature of forming or testing hypotheses. Flexibility is also seen as (c) a tendency to view phenomena as well as facts as contrasts to each other." Exactness, finally, is defined as "a disposition towards literal interpretations of phenomena and facts" [33].

If, for example, a person is asked to "say something about the word darling", we can have the following kind of responses: "My darling is like a gold berry" (syncretism), or "The word 'darling' can mean different things depending on the context" (flexibility), or "A word that consists of seven letters" (exactness) [33].

Again, just as is the case with the two approaches as described above, it is the joint activity of imaginative and ductive processes that makes the creative person. In another article Jeffmar relates these two processes to the primary and secondary processes in psychoanalysis [33]. However, if there is a dominance of ductive and annotative processes, the person can be highly intelligent, but with little creativity. In the first case we encounter what I have called the marriage of Ego and Id; in the second case we recognize a bad marriage.

To the best of my judgment, the concepts of Jeffmar can be applied to the analysis of mystical texts. We are back to the point of departure. The two verbal descriptions of the presence of God by Hjalmar Ekström provide a good example of the sub process flexibility. This concept should also comprise the mystic's readiness to create neologisms. Ekström mentions concepts such as 'born out' and 'born in', used in his mystical theology in order to describe the death of personality and the rebirth in Christ consciousness [36]. Another example is Simone Weil (1909-1943) and her concept 'décréation'.

It would not be too difficult to find examples both of syncretism and flexibility in the texts of the mystics, especially in the case of so-called cataphatic experiences, for example visions and voices of a divinely interpreted world. They often show how different elements can be combined in surprising ways. Let me illustrate with just one example, again from the documents of the Swedish mystic Hjalmar Ekström. After eight years of disharmony, during which he educated himself to be a deacon and spent about four years in service,

Ekström experienced a severe existential crisis. During this period he wandered around as a kind of preacher for a year and a half. We still have his letters written to his wife when away from home. A dominating motive in these letters is the conviction of God's guidance in all walks of life. "God guides in everything, may we be secure and happy and with courage follow his paths", he wrote to his wife in October 1914. The necessities of life forced Ekström to return to the work of a deacon in the fall of 1915, a situation which must have created considerable conflict. The new position did not last long. In the spring of 1916 he requested and was granted leave of absence which lasted the rest of his life. He radically broke all ties with the diaconate and the church, which he criticized vehemently. He then took a vacation, walked alone in the woods, and to his eyes only appeared a flaming cross, and he heard a voice saying, "Hereafter the path becomes pathless". The visionary and auditory experience rendered a solution to the assumed conflict. Conviction replaced doubt – there was divine guidance after all. The lightning bolt, shaped as a cross, and the words that from now on "the path would be pathless" can clearly be described psychologically as autosymbolic representations of his need to receive an answer to his fundamental question. Even though the path would now be pathless, Ekström now knew there was still guidance. Regarded separately, the verbal and visual components appear to be unrelated. In combination, they present a powerful and convincing message, giving the life of Ekström meaning and direction.

In terms of the interacting cognitive subsystems model, Ekström's experience is at an implicational level. But this model says very little about the kind of processes being activated. This is precisely the point where cognitive psychology and psychoanalysis can be complementary. With the concept of autosymbolic representation of intrapsychic conflicts we have an additional heuristic tool in order to deepen our understanding of visionary experience.

In a future study I will present a number of contemporary and historical cases in order to test this method of analysis. It might be necessary to extend the sub processes as mentioned by Jeffmar. I have already taken a step in this direction by introducing the concepts of neologism and autosymbolic representation. Texts describing mystical experience and its interpretation in mystical theologies are all we have. Only by careful analysis of these texts can we unveil something of the possible cognitive processes that give rise to them. After all, language is the mystic's stumbling attempt to express the inexpressible.

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