

found healing can take place, both for ourselves and for the planet.

In the workshop we start by looking at the kind of new adult we want to be initiated into. What new stage of life are we entering? What will be our new characteristics? For some it may be learning to develop authority without being authoritarian. For others it may be becoming responsible out of love, not fear. For yet others it may be committing to a creative or spiritual path. These aims are written down, shared and put into the alchemical vessel. There is then a ceremony of purification of the past through the sprinkling of water. This is to clear out anything blocking the change, which might be a fear, a shame or a belief, such as the childish illusion of 'having it all' or attaining a

mythical perfection.

Then it is time to face the shadow, the underworld. A guided journey and meditation is used to take us into another level of consciousness. In that state each initiate, one at a time, is covered with a black veil and led to meet the goddess of the underworld, where they take on her role and sit on her throne for a while. Here they are taking on her wisdom and intuition as if they have 'become' her. Here they are able to answer questions from a deeper place than usual. Questions may be asked by other members of the group and by the facilitator. Finally the veil is lifted and the initiate is given a personal ritual awakening and led away to meditate while another takes their place. The group ends in a circle, with chanting and celebration.

Death, Sex and Enlightenment

Nick Totton

What links these three concepts is the theme of surrender. A lot of humanistic therapy is founded on exploring surrender, although more recently our attention has tended to focus on clients' resistance to it, and on supporting their need to protect their individuality from being overwhelmed. And quite rightly so — no one can or should surrender unless they feel safe to do so.

Surrender itself, however, remains a core therapeutic issue; a capacity to let go, to melt, to allow the ego temporarily to stop keeping track of things, is crucial to human satisfaction of every kind. What we surrender to, ultimately, is the impulses

and sensations of our own body, and as Wilhelm Reich pointed out, we often have enormous difficulty in doing this — because we experience these overwhelming bodily feelings as potential death.

The human ego is a neurotic structure. And a key aspect of the ego's neurosis is that it experiences surrender to the body — of which orgasm is the archetype — as carrying the threat of death. Reich says in *The Function of the Orgasm* that 'fear of death and dying is identical with unconscious orgasm anxiety, and the alleged death drive, the longing for disintegration, for nothingness, is the unconscious longing for the orgasmic resolution of tension'.

And what, after all, 'dies' in orgasm? Nothing but the ego, the impression of continuous self-monitoring awareness, which (if we are fortunate) temporarily disappears. For Reich, the ego is in effect structured like a symptom, in that it carries within itself the profound desire for its own dissolution: for the resolving of the state of tension which constitutes its being. At the same time, of course, the ego profoundly fears its own 'death'.

The ego originates in our self-monitoring capacity, as an internal model of bodily experience. It becomes, in most of us, an attempt to control bodily experience, to maintain a sense of oneself as a *good boy/girl* which, as Reich notes, 'originates in the muscular pushing back and holding back of faeces' — 'the prototype for repression in general'. Repression is identical with chronic muscular tension, particularly in the erogenous zones. And this tension/repression originates in the

socially conditioned project of pretending not to have the feelings and desires one has. This suppression of affect-laden muscular impulses, Reich argues, is the process which creates the neurotic ego, the illusory sense of self which is functionally identical with the muscular control of body impulses, in particular of sphincters.

It's an extraordinary paradox: surrender to the life of the body — whether as pleasure, as emotion, or as impulses to action — is so often experienced as death. And where there is paradox, there is often the potential for enlightenment. In order to live, we must be ready to die — moment by moment, the rigidity of the ego needs to let go to new, unpredictable, uncontrollable experiences. Anxiety and pleasure, terror and excitement, are so closely linked! When we feel safe enough to explore fear of death there is a great potential for relaxation; and relaxation, for me, is what therapy is all about.

Exploring Aloneness

Julian Nangle

'There is only one power that creates everything. I am part of everyone and everything. The universe is an extension of myself.' Hakim waved with his hand at the people surrounding them, speaking softly. Maloney smiled. 'You are absolutely right,' he said.

'Once you know this, once you truly know who you are, you will never feel alone.'

Gautama Chopra

On the face of it 'aloneness' might appear straightforward. One is either with someone else or one is not. Of course this is far from the reality, but one could convince oneself there was truth in it. As with anything worth its salt in life, however, aloneness, the concept of aloneness,

is a paradox. The purpose of my workshop at the 1998 AHP conference was to examine and experience this paradox: what it is to be alone; if being alone is, in fact, possible. And similarly to experience oneness, if that is possible. At birth, no. At conception it could be argued we are truly alone — but