

INTERVENTIONS

Mental Imagery: The Language of Spirit

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DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

This article defines the intimate relationship that exists between mental imagery and the Western spiritual tradition. In the latter, the image process represents a central spiritual practice of all three religious traditions that sprang from their parent source, monotheism. In addition, the application of imaginal practice which was, and still is, used as a therapeutic technique to help resolve daily problems in living, is discussed. The multifaceted meanings of mental imagery and its connection to spiritual life are then spelled out. For the Western spiritual tradition, mental imagery represents a unique and seminal technique that stands as the centerpiece for Western spiritual practice. One of its unique attributes is that it can be applied as a therapeutic method to deal with the problems of everyday life. Also, mental imagery can be used to bring the devotee to self-transformation and self-realization.¹⁻⁴

In beginning to understand the relationship of mental imagery to spirituality, it is helpful to define spiritual and mental imagery. The term *spiritual* means essentially the presence, influence, and priority of invisibility in our visible world, this latter world we call objective material reality. We become connected to Spirit if we accept the truth of this unknown existence, so much so that we pledge ourselves of allegiance with this higher intangible reality and accept its governance in/over our lives, even though it is not apprehensible by our five senses in this material time-space dimensional existence.

Once we accept the truth and reality of invisible forces directing our lives, we are ready to receive the knowledge available to us that is stored and dealt to us through this invisible agency. In keeping with this possibility of receiving knowledge unrelated to that which we perceive in the visible world through our five senses, understanding of a spiritual precept may be in order as an orienting point. In the Judaic and Christian traditions, this precept states that we are “made in the image and likeness of God” (Genesis 1:26); the term *God* meaning the greatest and most concrete of all beings out of which we are born. Made in this mirrored reflection, we holographically—the part contains the whole—have within us all the knowledge of our existence as human beings, such knowledge that we are capable of accessing by turning our attention inward to do so. The tool given to us to do this is called *imagination*, and the knowledge that is sent to us comes by way of an inner communication called *mental image*.

The function of imagination is to act as an inner light, one that turns our attention inward to the realm of the holy, which we also call the “unknown,” “sacred,” and “mysterious,” amongst other designations. It is here where mental imagery waits to manifest itself when light pierces this darkness to call forth knowledge of our existence, individually and collectively. It is embedded in that hieroglyphic form called *mental image*. This existent, actually having no spatial referent, is also called *imaginal*, making imagination a level of reality that is as real as waking life. In the ancient Western spiritual tradition, this light penetrating the dark (as stated in Genesis when God said, “Let there be light”) formlessness is stimulated to give forth what it houses, which in this biblical case was the created world unfolded over the course of seven days.

Imagination, then, is perceived as a sense organ, an inner light, a level of reality, and can be used for self-healing and self-realization. We now come full circle to the point alluded to above about receiving invisibly-generated knowledge. We receive it through the inner revelatory language called *image*. Just as verbal expression is the major external communicative form in our socially-shared world, so mental imagery is the internal language, what can be termed the *natural language* of inner life. In the ancient world of the West, which has been the main source for of our imaginal experience, a method and practice that has been passed down to us in an unbroken chain of transmission for at least four to five millennia is the way of imagination. In the Islamic world, a beautiful phrase was coined to describe the function of image —“the intelligence of the heart.” In fact, in the monotheistic spiritual system, the heart is given a pre-

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eminent position, and is viewed as the organizer and director of the brain.⁵ Besides Islam's reference to "intelligence of the heart," there is the "sacred heart" of Jesus in Christianity, and the 749 references to the heart in the Bible (164 references in the New Testament), and no references at all to the brain in either document. In Christianity, one can find manuals of mental imagery practice by St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Hildegard of Bingen, and St. Teresa of Avila. In Judaism, the whole spectrum of spiritual imagination has been adumbrated in Professor Elliot Wolfson's significant compendium, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism*.⁶

The heart has always been connected with emotional life and is commonly acknowledged as the seat of love (and lust) in Western history, art, literature, and poetry. In this context, the image offers the direct link to the emotional realm. It is a known characteristic of mental imagery activity that strong emotional responses are easily and readily evoked during such experience. The image process bypasses the habitual verbal and logical functions of everyday living and goes directly to "the heart of the matter." I think it is fair to claim that image is the language of emotion given form. Image is the mental analogy to the emotional state. The term *mental imagery* has many definitions, including:

- the natural language of inner life
- the true language of the mind
- the unconditional language
- the language of truth
- a belief system given form
- the language of no-time
- the language of freedom
- the universally-shared social language of the world
- the language of resurrection
- the language of prayer
- the language of symbol
- the intelligence of the heart
- emotion made visible
- the holographic language
- the stimulus for inner and outer movement, such movement being synonymous with life
- the language of the vertical dimension that is the axis of spirit/freedom.

In extending our definition of spiritual as "invisible" (and mental imagery as its language), we might ask, "by what channel do these images travel to reach our consciousness?" Our answer is mind. Mind is the inner information superhighway which carries these image vehicles that are always present in consciousness. They are not generally available in the forefront of everyday active consciousness, but become readily available via techniques of the method called *imagination*. These techniques are familiar to us as a variety of mental imagery experiences called by various names, depending on with which school of imagery process

one is affiliated. In my own school of education (The American Institute for Mental Imagery), we use processes called "short exercises," "guided exercises," and "waking dream experience." Regardless of terminology, our focus is on the inner language, which can now be termed "the true language of the mind."

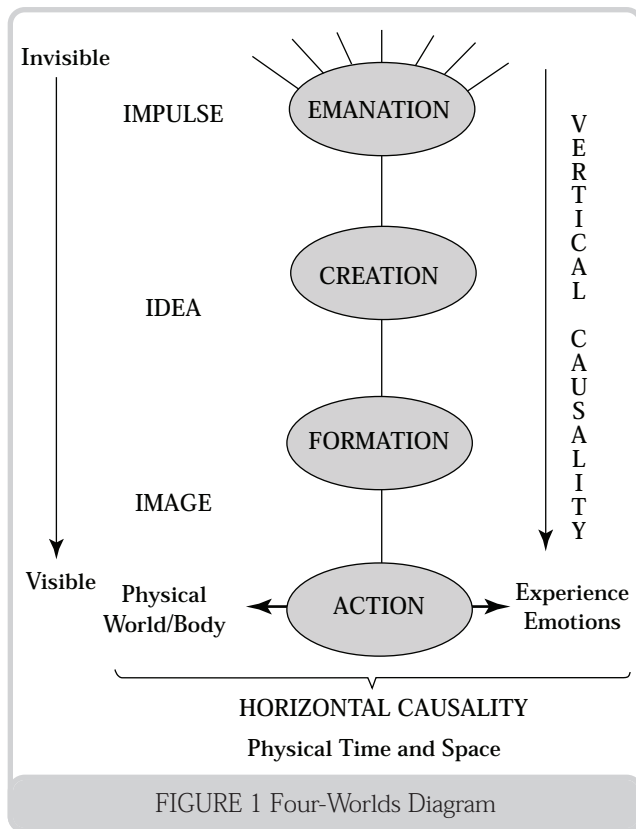
This spiritual understanding shows the direct effect(s) of invisibility on the visible world. The mind is the link between the two. The visible world also includes the physical body, which obviously includes the brain. As such, the brain is in mind, and two fields that study this invisible function have emerged over the past 200 years: psychology and psychiatry. By the end of the 20th century, psychiatry became a handmaiden to physical medicine, and has become relegated to a field of inquiry concerning biochemistry and genetics. Now it is ending up primarily as a pill-dispensing profession that is no longer really interested in that invisible phenomenon called mind, which was its original venue.

A similar fate has occurred in psychology, where this study took on the position held by modern science that the mind is located in the brain. How could it be otherwise when the material life is regarded as the creator of all? Here the brain as a material/physical organ is understood to be the producer and generator of all activity. Not so, though, for those who subscribe to a spiritual understanding of what reality is, what truth means, between visible and invisible reality. The brain conveys information from the invisible world to the visible one in/by its own language form called *image*. These images are eventually mediated through the right cerebral hemisphere, which acts as a storage depot for them and can be activated as memory or information messages communicated to the rest of our "biomental beingness" to carry out behavior and action in this time-space reality called the "world."

When evaluating imagery, one must understand that this inner phenomenon is a language—a picture language. Of course, a picture language is not foreign to our understanding as we are familiar with Egyptian hieroglyphics (one of the few forms of communication where the art and the language are one). So it is that this internal language is analogous to that external one, the former I have termed "the hieroglyphs of the mind."

In order to make this hieroglyphic language—and as hieroglyphics they have, embedded in them, a stunning plethora of information about us that requires our ability to decipher them in the same way the hieroglyphic language of ancient Egypt required a deciphering tool to unlock its stored data (the Rosetta Stone)—come to the forefront of consciousness, we need only turn our attention to it.³ Of significance here for practitioners of this technique is the educational necessity to alert people that images do exist, are genuine, bear the truth about ourselves, can show us new directions for behavior, help us decondition ourselves from destructive habits, show us new possibilities and options for living, behaving, and relating differently in the world.

One point to note here, from the spiritual perspective, is that we don't speak of an unconscious. That is a psychological term that has no particular relevance in spiritual terminology. For spirit, everything is in consciousness, either overtly, brightly perceived in the immediacy of one's attention, or held in a "dimly lit corner" of consciousness, needing only to have light shed on it to have it reveal itself in the spotlight of consciousness. The light that is shed is called *imagination*. It is the inner laser beam of sensory perception that shines into what we call "storehouse consciousness,"⁷ which is the repository of images; what I might term the "matrix reality." Through our act of will—of which attention is a function—we can discover images and/or we may take images that appear, deconstruct them, reshape them, or reverse them to create a new image form. This imagery language then provides instruction for us as to how to function/act in everyday life; it shows us new avenues and pathways for behavior and ways to change habits, seen inwardly, then actualized outwardly into time-space. So-called "negative" images then have the quality of pushing us toward damaging behavior, as the image actually gives direction to our physical action. When images are transformed to their "positive" quality, they will likewise encourage constructive physical behavior. The image is the mediator, in spiritual understanding, between inner-held thoughts, ideas, and beliefs, and outer-expressed action, physicalization, and experience. Figure 1 depicts this process quite well, as it is understood in the Western spiritual tradition.



From the Western spiritual direction tradition, Figure 1 represents the view of creation as beginning from invisible realities that give birth to or engender our physical reality, the time-space dimension in which we live. There is an intermediate world between our inner impulse and its outward expression as physical experience, otherwise known as the world of action or the world of experience. Thus, our inner thoughts, ideas, and beliefs are translated at first into thought-forms called images—three-dimensional pictures, yet without volume or mass, called "absolute matter" in the Sufi or Islamic mystical tradition. Then, these images supply an energy that prompts us to translate them into action or lived experience in the world.

We are always first seeing inwardly before we act. To get up from our chair and walk requires that we first see the possibility in the inner forum of consciousness before the outer action takes place. It is as though the mental action precedes the physical. The "rehearsal" is done mentally before concretizing it physically. A prime analogous example of how it works is the tightrope walker. He will not take a step onto the high wire unless he first sees himself on the other side having actually accomplished the deed. In fact, such practice is now commonly used among athletes who imagine themselves accomplishing an athletic skill before physically enacting it.

This understanding gives primacy to the image as the governor of behavior, and thereby places the mind at/in the forefront of importance in the genesis of our life experience. I believe this framework helps to restore the mind to its preeminent position that was abolished when it was split off from its physical connection more than 400 years ago (with the shift in Western thought that made only the physical meaningful and the yardstick by which all events were measured).

For helping to bridge the connection between spirituality and mental image, it is useful to describe the characteristics of mental image that connect it intimately to spirituality. In this regard, we might look at the image's symbolic function, and its inherent qualities that put it in the domain of spirit: evanescence, instantaneity, and negentropic reversibility. (Negentropy is the absence of decay.) The meaning of *symbol* means bringing or throwing (*bol*) together (*sym*). Thus, symbol means a bringing together, as an image, two realms of existence: invisible and visible. It is the interface between the two, conveying the invisible to our perceptual organs, while pointing us at the same time toward some invisible existent. This latter element may be a quality (not quantity) of life. For instance, the lion may be the symbol of courage, the dove the symbol of peace. Here courage and peace make themselves known to us while pointing to these characteristics at the same time. I parenthesized "quantity" above, having in mind the mistake Freud made in substituting sign for symbol and making us believe one was the other. For example, he said a rifle was the symbol of a penis. No! A rifle may be a sign for penis (one concrete quantifiable object

standing for another concrete quantifiable object), but not a symbol for a penis. As symbols, they may be seen as such for the quality of power or masculinity. The misconception of sign for symbol led Freud into elevating a particular physical object into an ascendant position to serve his psychological theory and to turn that object into a statue of Baal, whereby all other objects having certain related characteristics, ie, length, erectility, stiffness (rods, staffs, fishing poles, rifles, etc.), “bow down” before this supposedly more important and meaningful object called “penis.” The special quality of mental imagery is its function as a language of unconditional life. The main thrust of spiritual practice is to reverse our habitual conditioned life to one of unconditionality. To be conditioned is to be dependent on something or someone else in our horizontal, habitual daily reality for one’s survival. That dependency carries with it many ramifications, the descriptions of which go beyond the scope of this paper.

However, focus can be directed toward one element relevant to mental imagery. In psychology in general, and in the practice of mental imagery in particular, as it has been unfortunately grafted onto psychological understanding and psychological interpretation, the primary tendency is to think associatively. Associative thought is what is applied to give meaning to one’s experience. For instance, Freud wrote in his *Interpretation of Dreams*⁸ that the “real” meaning of a dream lies in the verbal associations brought to it. He called this image language, that is dream, “primary process thinking” (psychotic), which had to be translated and transposed to secondary process thinking (logical, rational) by the process of association, to make sense of the images, for it is only then that the dream experience has any value or real meaning. The dream image, therefore, had no intrinsic worth. Its value became measured by the “sensible” thoughts to which it was attached. Failing to understand the true phenomenological, he misunderstood its clear revelatory nature once one learned to read this true language of the mind. [Note 1]

Associations, such as “this reminds me of...,” are part of a dependent, contingent, conditional way of thinking—where one always has to be aware of “this reminds me of...” Of course, such thinking serves as the hallmark of a causally-based system such as psychology where explanations, in whatever way they are postulated, equal inner child, abused child, adult children of alcoholics, post-traumatic stress, etc. These explanations serve as causal events having effect on one’s adult behavior. In contrast, mental imagery is an unconditional language. Its value is inherent in its appearance. It requires no other attachment or association to account for the information and revelatory knowledge it is passing on to us. To make it into an associative language is to demean and devalue it, much as Freud did over a century ago. [Note 2]

For spiritual life, mental imagery serves as the unconditional language par excellence for those seeking the Western path, where there have been many representatives of this

active approach. In Islam, there is the great Sufi master Ibn Arabi, whose path was the imaginal and has been chronicled in Professor Henry Corbin’s masterful work, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*.⁹

As an unconditional language, mental images are not subject to the contamination, distortions, and misconceptions that are rife in the relative, conditional world, as well as in the language—essentially logic—that is used to navigate through those murky waters. Logic is not truth, but a semblance of truth, while the unconditional world is the world of truth. When we are in unconditionality, we are also in the realm of freedom—spiritually-based freedom. Spirit, truth, freedom, and unconditionality are all intimately connected in this absolute framework based in love and divine law, which we allow to govern our lives. To proceed in this direction is to reach forward and undertake a practice toward Spirit. Image is the language of truth and freedom. It is the language of our absolute condition, not subject to the relative whims and conveniences of those institutions of power (theology, military, politics, business, natural science, education, media, advertising) whose business it is to wield power over us physically, mentally, and socially to dominate and subjugate us. In relation to the unconditional nature of image, we can regard the imaginal realm as an ontological reality, a storehouse consciousness, a true existent, which is the repository for mental images. The term *imaginal* is taken from the Islamic mystical tradition of Sufism to indicate this in-between world that exists between a non-apprehendable invisible reality and our visible reality. This reality is the entryway into the different world of the invisible, known in the Western tradition as the *sacer*. The *sacer* is the world of darkness (the unknown, night, dream, death, danger, the unfamiliar, the holy, the sacred, the unconditional) into which the spiritual seeker must plunge to find freedom. It is the world that informs our everyday visible/physical reality. So it is, then, that the ancient prophets, highlighted by the prophet Ezekiel, described their descent into this wondrous region through a process which we call, in contemporary life, “waking dream.”¹ The waking-dream state is a distinct level of consciousness, as well as a real realm of existence, that is an in-between state of consciousness between sleeping and waking (called “hypnopompic”), having its own unique characteristics that distinguish it even from the hypnotic and meditational states.¹⁰

Mental imagery should not, therefore, be put under the umbrella of psychology. To graft it onto a psychological system disparages its true intent, adulterates it, and trivializes it, which is what I see happening to this “intelligence of the heart.” It is a phenomenology of spirit and gives its direction for changing habits, finding new options for living, ways to create our new reality, and direction for leading an unconditional life. In short, it shows us the way toward attaining spiritual freedom. It is the language of freedom.

Mental imagery is the language of invisibility made visible. I am predicating my thesis on the supposition that an

invisible reality exists. One of the cardinal tenets of spiritual doctrine is the existence and reality of invisibility, which may be divided into different levels of reality and may be populated by beings such as angels, archangels, cherubim, and seraphim. Mental imagery is the language of the instant; what can otherwise be called the “language of no-time.” Being of the instant and operating in the no-time zone, images are experienced as the presence of the Present, which stimulates the movement we experience as life.

This no-time zone is, at the same time, a language of verticality which has no time extension in our time-space lived existence of physical life on this planet. [Note 3] Yet, its appearance has immense impact and influence on our time-space life. Its very nature speaks to that fact. Having no volume or mass—yet being three-dimensional in form—this no-time zone has no inherent characteristics that give it duration; it merely comes and goes. It appears and disappears, yet is visible to inner perception and just as easily is gone to invisibility. Its evanescent quality is apparent to most everyone as a quality of the night dream. One might experience the most vivid and intense dream, then wake up, find that the images have disappeared completely, and be unable to recall even a shred of the event.

Speaking of duration, this concept is a function of time that is created by volume and mass. Hence, the image process functionally reverses time, collapses time, as it were, to the instant. If time is reversed, then entropy is reversed automatically. This “law” of imagery follows, in parallel fashion, the physical laws of natural science given to us by Isaac Newton: the movement of the arrow of time from past→present→future equals entropy. Entropy means breakdown, decay, decomposition, eventuating in dissolution, death, disappearance. To reverse time is to reverse entropy. This movement of time signifies duration. All physical matter, that is, what is solely physical in nature, is subject to decay, disorganization, and decomposition. If time can be stilled, or reversed, then entropy can be stopped. Human beings are not solely physical organisms, so we have the capacity inherent in our being to reverse time and become negentropic. [Note 4] This means greater order, complexity, organization, wholeness, and unity. All purely physical systems are closed, meaning there is a finite amount of energy and matter, one being connected to the other in a constant interchange. All closed systems are subject to decay and, eventually, disappearance. In contrast, we humans are more than physical. As such, we are open systems with infinite possibilities. Mental imagery is, likewise, an unlimited process of possibilities conforming perfectly to an ever-radiating openness. In this way, it conforms to one significant characteristic of an open system in that it doesn’t decay or decompose, which means there is no death. No time, reverse time, negentropy, and open system = no death. Death itself is a function that comes with the process of aging and decay. To reverse time is to reverse the aging/decaying process so that life is constantly sustained.

Therefore, the function of mental imagery is as a sustainer and maintainer of life, consistent with our recognition that the image realm is an integral part of that universal source of life, called Zoe (from the Greek word), which supplies the nutrient energy of the cosmos for our life here on earth. The existence of these images gives us the opportunity to learn about and access the information that this invisible region has to offer us. To expand on this point, I think it may be useful to offer a pertinent diagram that gives a beginning understanding as to how to connect mental imagery and spirituality. I refer here to a process developed over 50 years ago by a Hungarian physicist named Denis Gabor, for which he won the Nobel Prize—holography (See Figure 2).

A number of spiritual principles that are pertinent to/for the imagery process seem to be embedded here. One principle is “the part contains the whole.” This is a most important point. The individual image holds vast amounts of information about one’s life. With practice, one can learn to read the

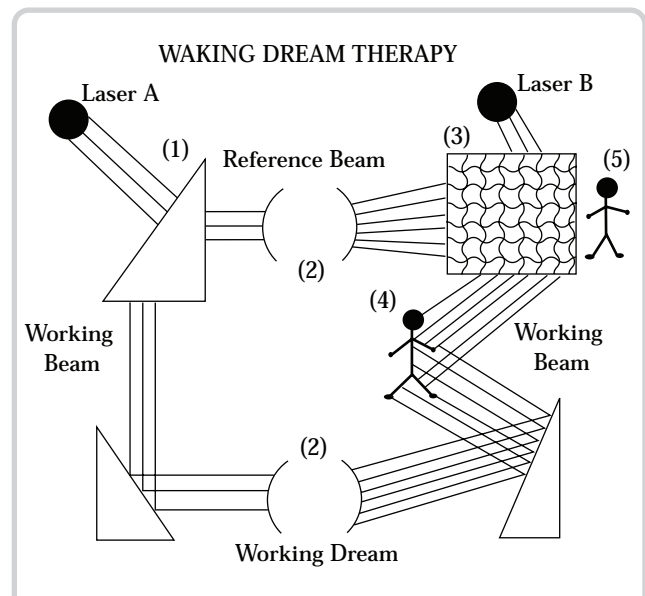


FIGURE 2 Hologram (Lensless Photography)

Working Beam

A laser beam (laser A), or any other coherent sensory source, is fired through a semi-mirror (1). The resulting beam is deflected in two directions. One beam, called the reference beam, registers directly on a photographic plate (3) after going through a lens (2), which merely serves to widen the beam. The other beam, called the working beam, is deflected off additional semi-mirrors while going through a lens (2), merely serving to widen the beam. This beam hits an object in space—say a human being (4)—and the beam is then deflected to the photographic plate where it meets the reference beam and is registered also as a swirl of energy or interference pattern. If a laser (laser B) is fired at the photographic plate what will occur is that behind the plate will appear the image of the human being three-dimensionally suspended in space (5). If the plate were broken into fragments and a laser fired at any one fragment, the three-dimensional image would appear suspended in space but less distinct. Thus, the part CONTAINS the whole. The universe is felt to be holographic by a number of physicists working in the area of subatomic and quantum physics who feel that this paradigm is more explanatory of events in microscopic reality.

story of the life of the person held in the image. The intuitive function is stimulated by attending to this process, and the picture of the person's life comes to the fore in consciousness. Reading images is a revelatory function. A second principle is that there exists a storehouse consciousness wherein resides the knowledge of oneself waiting to be accessed. This repository is accessed by an inward turning of the senses that allies with an inner sixth sense, called imagination, to find this inner reality and shed light there to elicit the information that comes to us as image. This inner light is also known as inspiration. The process of imagery is also a revelatory event, thus:

- invisibility = spirituality
- imagination = sense organ, inner light, level of reality
- storehouse consciousness = place of revealed knowledge (stored in/as image)
- Mental imagery =
 - natural language of inner life
 - true language of the mind (the hieroglyphics of the mind)
 - symbol function acting as the bridge between invisible and visible realities. The symbol makes the invisible visible, while pointing us toward, eg, drawing our attention to, the invisible.

A third principle is that we are holograms; ie, we are made in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26). With reference to this latter point, what Dr Gabor was attempting to replicate was the creation of the world as it appeared at the beginning of Genesis. In Genesis, there was a storehouse consciousness called "tovu and bohu," meaning formlessness or chaos. There was also light, as in "let there be light"; and so, in Dr Gabor's work, there was laser light. Light penetrates the formlessness in both instances and, in both instances, creation of three-dimensional representations called images is evoked, be they solids (as exist in this physical and exterior world) or "absolute matter" (as they exist in our immaterial inner world). We humans are such three-dimensional forms, possessing both outer and inner form functions. That is, we are images of God and we can image, "image" here used in the active sense as a verb. Like God, we can cast a light (which we call *imagination*) inwardly, and elicit from our storehouse consciousness a creation; such activity being a holy act emulating what God did during creation. We are not the same as the Absolute One Mind, but we can and do use our mind to participate individually and collectively with the One Mind.

For practical purposes evoking or capturing images has therapeutic effects, educational effects, and diagnostic effects. This inner language presents ways for us to fix our lives; to find cures (physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, morally, creatively, etc.) for ailments. In this respect, this inner language shows us new ways, new possibilities, new avenues of approach to life situations, ways to change our

habits. Its educational component reveals to us the qualities, traits, and possibilities that we can fulfill. It shows us what and who we really are, just as works of art have done for us over the millennia. We look into the mirror of our inner being, and find ourselves in the images reflected there.¹

The diagnostic component gives us a clear indication of what one's situation is in life, on any of the levels mentioned just above. A practical application of this absolute and true language is its use as an inner x-ray or sonogram, or MRI, whereby we can go inward in/through imagination, scan our body, and discover exactly what is happening there. Yes, one picture is worth a thousand words. The following exercises are examples of what I have found quite useful for this purpose.

THE LAKE OF HEALTH

Close your eyes. Breathe out three times and see yourself high up in the Andes at a lake that is at 8,000 feet. Tell the lake that you want to know the state of your health and that you want it to reveal your outer and inner body to you. Then look into the crystal-clear quiet water, and see yourself inside and out. (If you are healthy, you will characteristically see a golden color, pure pink, blue, or green. If you are ill, a gray, black, or bluish pink may appear at the site of the disturbance.) Then breathe out and open your eyes.

THE FIELD OF HEALTH

Close your eyes. Breathe out three times and see yourself as a general outside your tent, at the head of the field of your body. Your bugler is next to you. You have a large golden flag blowing in the breeze at the top of your tent. At all important points on the field of your body are other tents with flags flying and buglers stationed next to them. Have your bugler blow his bugle, and hear each bugler at each tent answer in turn. See the flags blowing at the same time and see their colors. Then breathe out and open your eyes. (If any sound is discordant, or a flag does not blow or shows a black or gray color, some change may be taking place that indicates some disturbance or illness.) I have had numerous other clinical instances where students/sufferers have "traveled" to parts of their bodies to make discoveries and to have those discoveries corroborated by physical means—diagnostic tests or surgery.

All of these phenomenological moments represent the basic spiritual principle of being in the presence of the Present, appreciating and living the now and not getting caught up in the illusions of future talk, past talk, explanations, assumptions, conclusions—graven images hatched by the mind. Future talk = illusion = future doesn't yet exist. Past talk = illusion = past is over, dead, gone; it doesn't exist unless we resuscitate it through memories of our personal past, which never reflect the reality of what happened, but rather some distorted recreation of that reality, often containing our own biases, prejudices, and preconceptions. After all, as I pointed out in the earlier Four-Worlds diagram, for spiritual life, experience does not create belief.

Another unique aspect of image process is what I term its “prayer function.” Prayer is a form of mental activity used to make a connection with divine presence, often referred to in popular parlance as *God*. Prayers are offered, as we know, to request divine—or invisible—intervention in our lives. In my understanding, prayers can be conceived in two ways: speaking with God or thinking with God. Verbal prayers are the most common form of which we are aware, and can be considered “speaking with God.” However, imaginal experience is an offering in its essence, acting as a supplication to ask for assistance and for healing in those instances when we may require it in our suffering, on whatever level of suffering we are going through (physical, emotional, mental, social, moral, creative, or any combination thereof). I view every image experience as a prayer sent up to invisible reality, and which may be answered or not. Whichever way it goes, I deem it always to be in my/one’s best interest. I understand that the universe gives me exactly what I need at every given moment. This is a law of Spirit. I also understand that I need to participate directly in my own evolution by actively doing my part. [Note 5]

Where does the intersection of mental imagery and spirituality take us? It takes us to the ultimate destination we can know as human beings on this Earth. I say this, knowing there is no such thing as “ultimate” since there is no end, no conclusion in God’s cosmic plan. But our purpose here, in Western spiritual terms, whether we come via a Judaic, Christian, or Islamic route, or none of the above, is the defeat of death known by the common term, *resurrection*,² which is meant to be understood as a literal or concrete fact. In spiritual life, what is written or transmitted orally is never meant metaphorically. The commentary is always meant to be concretely real. For Western spirituality, death is not the natural, oppositional, end of life. The normal “outcome” of life is life. Relative life gives way to absolute life; transient life gives way to eternal life. Life begets life eventually. So the central point of the monotheistic tradition, the progenitor of Western spirituality, as the way of One God, is resurrection. That point is carried through into the three strands that have come from it: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. As resurrection is the aim, and comes about through the unconditional practices and directions alluded to in this paper, we again find image as a royal road to resurrection. It is the language of resurrection, of eternal life, of the propagator of ceaseless movement, as of the impulse of life giving birth to life.

As the image is the royal road to life, and stands as a revelatory unconditional event, I want to make a cautionary note about not attaching it to a system based in psychology. The latter is a conditional form (eg, this causes that; that has its own language, which is not that of image). Attaching psychological meaning to “make sense” of the image reduces image to its “bare bones,” a standard function of natural science, in general, and psychology as an offshoot of natural scientific thinking, in particular. The image is a rich phenomenon in its own right that provides enriching, enhancing, enlivening

knowledge of ourselves to our lives. What I am making a case for here is learning to read the hieroglyphic language. Let it speak to you. Don’t associate to it. Take it as it reveals itself, and the picture in its fullness will become clear to you. I can state that as a guarantee. As you engage the process in this way, you will also find your intuition growing, and you will become more and more able to count on and abide by this unconditional voice of truth speaking to/through you.

Although I cannot cover, as extensively as I would wish, the multifaceted aspects of mental imagery and its relevance to the life of Spirit in the span of one paper, I hope that I have covered sufficient ground in the foregoing discussion to stimulate further interest in exploring another dimension of imaginal experience that I believe can expand the clinicians’ therapeutic interventions and beneficially affect the treatment process.

Notes

1. Phenomenology equals the experience of the present moment without requiring objective experimentation or subjective interpretation; it equals being in the presence of the present reality of the inner image language, as real as any verbal language.
2. It is interesting to note that C.G. Jung did not devalue image. In fact, he used a process of imagery called “active imagination” in working with dreams, but not as cohesively or comprehensively as I have done.
3. The term “verticality” refers to the axis of freedom that is widely and commonly used transculturally to emphasize the non-habitual unconditioned direction outside the precincts of time. Mircea Eliade, the Nobelist expert in comparative religion, has amply pointed this out in many of his writings. I might add, there are significant references to verticality in the West, eg, the Star of David, which shows the relationship between above and below or the vertical direction, the major dictum of Hermeticism: “As above, so below,” etc.
4. In the book, *The Self-Organizing Universe*, Eric Jansch describes the work of Ilya Prigogine, the physicist who won the Nobel Prize for his work on self-organizing systems, in which the term “negentropy” came to represent the opposite of entropy. He spoke of the movement from breakdown (entropy) to greater complexity and organization (negentropy).
5. This practice is not meditation and is not to be confused with it. In my view, meditation is a passive practice, and has characteristics distinctly different than imagery.³ Mental imagery—all imaginal processes—are such active possibilities.

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