

THE YOGA OF EMBODIMENT

by
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I certify that I have read this paper and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a product for the degree of Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology.

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Abstract

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By Jane Dobson

As Eastern forms of yoga continue to gain popularity in the Western world, people flock to yoga studios in droves to practice series of poses-- bending twisting, contorting, inverting, and studying more about the predecessors of their art: most probably, BKS Iyengar and Pattabhi Jois. There is no doubt that yoga practice can be exhilarating, challenging, and highly rewarding. However, after years of study, the author wonders whether such “systems” and “schools” of yoga, such as Iyengar, Astanga, and Power Yoga, work to perpetuate the mind/body split that lies at the basis of many contemporary physical and psychological conditions.

In this paper, she asks the question: What is the yoga of embodiment? What is the practice that encourages one to truly inhabit and live within the musculature of his/her own body? Instead of continuing to repress feeling in the body and to disown uncomfortable parts and places through rigorous, driven, and addictive practices, the author believes that the practice of yoga *could* be about the fulfillment of a God-given potential: to live one’s life in a fully embodied manner, connected at once to the earth, to the stars, and, ultimately, to the power of our individual instincts.

“The Yoga of Embodiment” describes a journey into body consciousness in which the feeling in the musculature of the body is re-awakened. Using the myth of Inanna as a template for the process, this thesis reviews a body of literature that conceptualizes illness, disease, and death as initiatory callings into a blessed process. By

understanding suffering from this perspective, an individual may be liberated from a victim-oriented psychology to embrace the process of embodiment.

Inanna is called to the underworld in mourning. She is killed by her dark sister Ereshkigal, and then, re-awakened with new life. In this paper, it is the author's intention to illustrate a psychologically-oriented yogic process of descent and embodiment which emphasizes the concept of surrender and offers the possibility that one may discover and become attuned, with the energy of the subtle body.

This thesis is dedicated to my brother, Jonathan--
for encouraging my courage.

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Natural Music

by *Robinson Jeffers*

*The old voice of the ocean, the bird-chatter of little rivers
(Winter has given them gold for silver
To stain their water and bladed green for brown to line their
banks)
From different throats intone one language.
So I believe if we were strong enough to listen without
Divisions of desire and terror
To the storm of the sick nations, the rage of the hunger-smitten
cities,
Those voices also would be found
Clean as a child's; or like some girl's breathing who dances
alone
By the ocean shore, dreaming of lovers.*

(1925, pp.232)

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Resting inside an existence ruled by the eternal paradoxes of light and dark, good and evil, truth and lie, man and woman, a human life is challenged to hold the tension of the opposites inside the container of human form. Rather than leading a lopsided life that sways either toward the dark, lusty, and indulgent hemisphere of earthly matter, or the light, airy, and detached hemisphere of spirit, a human being must learn to stand firm inside the nature of paradox. Just as Jesus Christ remained steadfast and devoted to the conflict that promised his death, so too will any human who shares in the destiny of ushering forth a new consciousness: one that has the ability to unite the opposing forces of nature in a divine and sacred plane of love.

The Yoga of Embodiment is an approach to movement re-education that works with the concept of blending dualities within the body. By working to recognize the interplay between the conscious and unconscious mind within the fluid body, the practice encourages students to lend attention to the continual dialogue that exists between body and mind, awareness and action. As students begin to relate to the smallest level of sensation within the body, they begin to discover an intimate, almost microscopic, experience of the body. From this level, all tissues and fluids--including each and every cell--are experienced as intelligent manifestations of consciousness. When the light of consciousness is urged into the dense form of the physical body, students begin to gain

awareness of each part of their bodies while simultaneously becoming aware *with* each part.

Guiding Purpose

The guiding purpose of this work is to discuss and explore a therapeutic process of working with the body that draws on knowledge of Eastern forms of yoga, while remaining rooted in the history and tradition of a depth psychology born of the West. The study includes both cognitive and experiential learning of the body systems—gross movement, yogic postures, alignment, form; skeleton, muscles, fascia, skin, organs; breath, sensation, and the dynamics of perception. What I have chosen to call the Yoga of Embodiment works to forge “man’s creative confrontation with the opposites” (Jung, 1965, p.31) by engaging Eastern and Western disciplines within the fabric of the human body.

During the early part of the twentieth century, Carl G. Jung, a man whose life initiated a new era in cultural history, reckoned with a fundamental characteristic of Western society: the absence of a containing myth, and therefore, the absence of meaning. Over the course of years, Jung (1965) would realize, embody, and espouse the dawning of a new myth for modern man:

Man’s task is...to become conscious of the contents that press upward from the unconscious. Neither should he persist in his unconsciousness nor remain identical with the unconscious elements of his being, thus evading his destiny, which is to create more and more consciousness. As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being. It may even be assumed that just as the unconscious affects us, so the increase in our consciousness affects the unconscious. (pp. 326)

Working to integrate unconscious images derived from the language of dreams towards union with the personal ego, Jung aimed to achieve the product of a *coniunctio*—or, the

realization of Self born from the practice of fusing pairs of opposites. Jung believed man's prime destiny to be the creation of consciousness, a powerful and mysterious substance that could only be likened to the kind of golden Philosopher's Stone crafted, once upon a time, in the ancient vessels of alchemy (Edinger, 1984).

Extrapolating from the concept of Jung's new myth, I have chosen to work with the leaden-fabric of the human body as the *prima materia* for some process of transformation. Working within the realm of the human body, my intention is to assist the development of a practice that aims to integrate the body's subtle energies into the dark, cold, unfeeling, and often unconscious areas of being. As a coniunctio between energy and matter is born within the body, an individual may begin to experience the essence of some Philosopher's Stone: a substantial feeling that life has been revived and re-connected to the cyclical mysteries of nature itself. Such an awakening lends toward the restoration of instinct, intuition, and sensuality--all aspects of the Feminine psyche that have long been cast into the recesses of psyche.

Learning to move into the act of feeling on a cellular level, individuals may discover another way to connect with the healing energy and transformative power in their own psyches. Daring to understand illness, disease, and death as part of psyche's realm, an individual may begin to experience the body itself in the light of the dream. Instead of ignoring physical experience and sensation or scurrying about to find allopathic treatments to hush and quell physical suffering, an individual may begin to realize the miraculous dialogue that is taking place inside their body. In order to "cure" symptoms produced by the mind-body split, an individual must be "curious" about listening to voice of the subtle body.

Area of Interest

During the course of this thesis, I have chosen to use the ancient Sumerian myth of Inanna as a template, reference, and point of illustration for the psychological and physical metamorphosis that occurs when an individual chooses to take the necessary steps in order to gain residency in the home of the body. In this thesis, the mythical figure of Inanna is our guide. Step by step, the wandering goddess of fertility, war, and sexual love, heeds her decision to pay a visit to her dark sister in the underworld. Sacrificing her most cherished possessions at seven descending gates, Inanna abides the laws of the underworld and moves courageously toward the knowledge of compassion and love.

As Inanna encounters the fragmented parts of herself in the meeting of her dark sister Ereshkigal, she awakens to the miracle of her true essence and power. Connected now to some instinctual and intuitive feminine quality, Inanna arrives in the image of wholeness; She awakens the sleeping energy of consciousness in her body and becomes a living manifestation of psyche. Though the myth of Inanna dates back to the third millennium B.C., it continues to survive and to permeate every culture through variations of countless tales, stories, and works of art (Perera, 1981). In this thesis, I suggest that the myth of Inanna is alive and working inside the blood and bone of our very own bodies.

The subject of this thesis is a direct outpouring of personal experience. As a person who has spent a considerable portion of time in hospitals, clinics, and consulting rooms trying to gain some sort of understanding about the physical pain and swollen tissue that periodically visited my body, I have learned to pay close attention to the

energy working inside my own form. In essence, I have participated in a long process of sickness and revival.

In 1981, when I was six-years-old, I was diagnosed with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis, an auto-immune condition that targeted my ankles and my eyes. In response to the idea of pending blindness and ruined joints, I began a regimen of aspirin and cortisone shots that made me feel miserable, sad, and much too experienced for my age. One day, after months of being a good and tolerant patient, I broke. I was seven-years-old when I locked myself in the bathroom and experienced a terrifying expression of madness and rage. That day, I made the decision to flush my medication down the toilet and to deal with the natural course of my disease. Determined to live differently from those people who spent their time complaining in the boring and sterile echo-chambers of waiting rooms, I began to wonder how I might deal with the fact that my body was hurting, without becoming completely identified with my pain. Within six months, my symptoms went into remission.

Years later, as a freshman in college, my symptoms began to re-emerge. This time, I was determined to understand the message of my body. Instead of continuing to push myself as an athlete and long-distance runner, I signed up for my first yoga class and settled into an extremely quieting and methodical practice. My first yoga teacher was a swami from India who led a bi-weekly class for the same five students in the gigantic aerobics room of the Georgetown athletic center. Because the room was designed with obnoxious fluorescent lighting, our teacher taught class in pitch darkness. I will never forget the profound experience of emerging from his two-hour-long classes.

In that room, I began to experience the physical sensation of peace, a feeling that ennobled me to accept my own pain and to live within its parameters.

Soon after my college graduation, I moved to New York City and searched for a yoga class that would provide me with a similar experience. Instead of finding what I needed, I learned a whole new and sophisticated vocabulary. I learned that the practice of yoga was divided into sects and schools: Iyengar, Astanga, Kundalini, Bikram and Power Yoga. During each new practice, I was gifted with some information, fact, or experience regarding anatomy, fitness, and form. However, I did not emerge from any of these classes with a feeling of being connected to my body. After many futile attempts to connect with different teachers and practices, I began to challenge myself toward the development of my own practice of yoga.

From my experience, I have developed The Yoga of Embodiment, a practice that emphasizes the act of surrender and understands yoga as a kinetic process that involves every living cell. In this practice, the rational mind falls away, allowing itself to be instructed by the soul in the body. Working in this way, Westerners may begin to experience how the beautiful and forceful yogic movements may be used to liberate bodily experience, facilitate organic healing, and urge matter toward consciousness. Rather than focusing on the exterior aesthetics of a pose, practitioners may begin to discover, and become attuned with the energy of the subtle body. Ultimately, the practice of yoga itself becomes a ritual enactment that supports a cultural process of emerging consciousness: the delicate process of individuation.

Throughout the course of this thesis, I suggest that we begin to work with the human body in the same way we might work in the realm of dreams. We may begin by

asking questions such as: *Where is this pain taking me? Where does the energy want to move? Or, if there is no pain, is there feeling? And, how can I get these unconscious parts of my body to feel? The bottoms of my feet? My left kidney? The tops of my ears when I'm breathing?* Perhaps it is time for the soul to be discovered in the realm of warm-blooded earthiness, in the consciousness of blood.

Inspiring the field of depth psychology, revolutionary thinkers Carl Jung and James Hillman have proposed that illness, disease, and death (just like dreams and the imagination) are revelations of psyche. From this perspective, each symptom is understood as a whisper from the soul that, if clearly understood, can lead toward liberation and healing. As I appreciate the intellectual aspect of psychology's revelations, I am more interested in creating a space where individuals are supported and encouraged to explore—and experience—the language of their unique symptoms.

In this thesis, I outline a practice that aims to guide individuals in the art of embodiment. By understanding physical pain as a call that beckons our attention and begs us to surrender, I have embraced psyche's invitation to move into the dark places where the opportunity for acceptance--and embodiment--exists. Perhaps, as the goddess Inanna has modeled, the process of descent into pain, suffering, and discomfort may deliver an individual with some knowledge of psyche's tendency towards self-healing. The Yoga of Embodiment, then, is an attempt to understand how the ancient myth of Inanna has worked, and is working, within in the substance of our very own bodies.

Rationale

In 1957, Carl Jung warned that twentieth century Western civilization had entered a stage of tremendous upheaval characterized by “a metamorphosis of the gods” (p.132). Such a time, he said, comparable only to the birth of Christ, would challenge progeny to engage with unexpressed aspects of themselves, of others, and of the collective image of God (deVries, 1985). When asked about the possibility of avoiding atomic warfare and the death of civilization during this time of global fragmentation, Jung stated,

I think it depends on how many people can stand the tension of the opposites in themselves. If enough can, I think we shall just escape the worst. But if not, and there is an atomic war, our civilization will perish, as so many civilizations have perished before, but on a much larger scale. (cited in Hannah, 1938, pp.8)

In effect, holding the tension of the opposites—Jung’s term for the conflict experienced by the ego in its encounter with the unconscious--is an increasingly important element for psychotherapists, body-workers, healers and yogis to model. Despite the importance of this work, however, the mind-body split continues to prevail in even the most depth-oriented therapies of Western culture. While psyche’s symbolic realm is honored and explored in rooms of analysis, the instinctual life of the body is often neglected.

As the popularization and commercialization of Eastern forms of yoga continues to grow in cabbage-patch-like proportions in America, one can only assume that people believe that the practice of yoga may provide one of the necessary outlets for somatic experience. And in some cases, it may. However, as a long-time practitioner of yoga, I have come to understand that--more often than not--such practices work to perpetuate the split that characterizes Western civilization. Yogis pose before us, holding strenuous and exacting positions for long stretches of time. What they often neglect to consider,

however, is the source of such achievement—the deep well-pool of energy that supports their effort.

Regarding the practice of yoga, Jung (1996) is quoted as concluding that “in the course of the centuries the West will produce its own yoga, and it will be on the basis laid down by Christianity” (pp. xx). Writes Jung (1957),

Growing acquaintance with the spiritual East should be no more to us than the symbolical expression of the fact that we are entering into connection with the elements in ourselves which are still strange to us. Denial of our own historical premises would be sheer folly and would be the best way to bring about another deracination. Only by standing firmly on our own soil can we assimilate the spirit of the East. (p.128)

In this thesis, I am interested in exploring the development of a practice rooted in Western psychological thought that works to awaken a keen sensitivity to the language of the subtle body.

We may be seeing the beginnings of a reintegration of our culture, a new possibility of the unity of consciousness. If so, it will not be on the basis of any new orthodoxy, either religious or scientific. Such a new integration will be based on the rejection of all univocal understandings of reality, of all identifications of one conception of reality itself. It will recognize the multiplicity of the human spirit, and the necessity to translate constantly between different scientific and imaginative vocabularies. It will recognize the human proclivity to fall comfortably into some single literal interpretation of the world and therefore the necessity to be continuously open to rebirth in a new heaven and a new earth. It will recognize that in both scientific and religious culture all we have finally are symbols, but that there is an enormous difference between the dead letter and the living word.

*Robert Bellah
(1970, pp.358)*

CHAPTER II INWARDS, DOWNWARDS, & THROUGH

Think about the story a body might tell about a lifetime, without words. Maybe the story would unfold like a wave of sensation through a vast sea of infinitely colored feelings and absences. Or, from the outside, it might rush by like a silent film with time through the course and cycles of the birthmark, the circumcision, the haircut, the surgical wound, the expansion, the transformation, and the decay. Without qualifying words, rational explanations, or spinning dialogues, the body might tell a bare story, stripped down towards the truth of where it has been and what has been its course.

In this loud world of external existence, I find myself wanting, somehow, to keep remembering that we keep forgetting to tell these beautiful stories. We can't hear them any way, we think, as we ramble on to the drugstore for our prescriptions. Words cannot reach the place where these stories are born. And we tell this to the doctor when he asks for the fifth sample of blood, and we give it. Words cannot reach these places and yet, the stories unfold in unfathomable shapes--like the shape of one's life.

In this chapter, I will review the research of Marion Woodman, Dennis Slattery, Angela Farmer, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, Carl Jung, Stanislov Grof, and other contributors to the subject of embodiment. By exploring current revelations and practices in the respective fields of depth psychology and Western yoga, it is my intention to illuminate a place--inside the experiential body--where the two disciplines meet.

Inwards

I have a friend who has always wanted to write a book. The other day, he told me: *You know, I think I want to write and then I walk into a bookstore and I see all these thousands of books and I think: Why does the world need another one?* My friend's thought caused me to remember a special class we had at Pacifica: One evening, Dr. Cindy Carter-Liggett brought her friend and mentor, a Native American healer named Bear Watcher, to class as a guest. Bear Watcher was a powerful and fascinating presence. He didn't have much to say with his smile, except: "Don't get lost in your words." The truth was that he didn't need to say *anything* to convey his message: The mere presence of his body just sitting before us, told a beautiful story. Bear Watcher lived inside his body. He was embodied, and he didn't get lost in his words (Carter-Liggett, 2000).

The Body of Metaphor

The Yoga of Embodiment is about opening the dense matter of the human body to the light of consciousness so that it may bear, contain, and unite nature's dualities: namely, the opposing realms of psyche and soma. As Bear Watcher exemplified to our class, the art of healing is not an intellectual idea derived from circles upon circles of dead words. It is more like an artistic practice--the practice of becoming alive within the fabric of one's own body, a practice of embodiment. In order to penetrate the dark, dull, and weighty realm of the sluggish and pained unconscious body, feeling must find a way to be sensed. It must find a way, as blood found a way, to move, circulate, and pulse through the very cells of being (Carter-Liggett, 2000).

Once connected to feeling, the body resonates with the pulse of life. We have all touched this experience. As a culture, we find it by going to the movies, listening to music, reading novels, and engaging in relationships. An outstanding film, for example, might have the effect of drawing our attention in such a profound way that we dissolve into a continuous moment, losing all sense of time. By completely engaging with the charge of the content, we are moved. But oftentimes, when the show is over, we return to regular lives that lack mobility and inspiration: For many people, it is not a common experience to nurture the sensational force of consciousness from the experience of their own bodies.

Marion Woodman, a wise Jungian analyst, has made significant contributions to the study of movement and embodiment. According to Woodman, there is a consciousness inside the matter of the human body that wants to be released (Woodman, 1991). The only way to awaken this consciousness, suggests Woodman, is to open the body to the power of metaphor--to the images that move, change, and thrive with life. In a book titled Conscious Femininity (1993), Woodman explains that the word “metaphor” is derived from the Latin word meaning “to transform” (pp.58). Moving to penetrate mental, imaginative, and emotional levels simultaneously, the metaphor acts as a powerful symbol of healing. Through it, an incident is brought to consciousness, and made to exist in the soul. Painting, dancing, writing, reading, imagining, and *all* forms of spontaneous creation evoke the body’s metaphorical imagination. Woodman (1993) writes,

My answer is that the real food of the soul is metaphor. The whole world of dreams is a metaphorical, symbolic one. Religion is based on symbol. Art, music, poetry, the whole creative world—the world of the soul—is based on it. (p.27)

Instead of relying on external manifestations of metaphor to inspire imaginative and emotional levels, the Yoga of Embodiment challenges students to inhabit the living metaphor, or “transformer,” that exists within the fabric of each student’s personal somatic experience. By learning to listen to the body at the level of experience and sensation, students may begin to observe the very source of movement that works on an unconscious level to inform functions of mind and body. In other words, during the study of embodiment, students practice the art of *being* with the minute experience that travels along an extending continuum towards consciousness, effecting body systems, personal relationships, family, society, and eventually, world community.

In *The Wounded Body* (2000), Dennis Slattery, a professor at Pacifica Graduate Institute, asks readers to recognize the symbolic power of the physical body. Perhaps, suggests Slattery, this is what the canon of Western literature has been asking of readers for centuries: to surrender to the images presented by Homer, Sophocles, Shakespeare, Melville, and Morrison--and to be moved, transformed, and inspired towards one’s own embodiment. By exploring the role of the wounded body through the history of Western literature, Slattery illuminates how the possibility for movement, change, transition, and healing occurs only when a character’s body is penetrated and affected on a cellular—physical, emotional, and spiritual—level. According to Slattery, the history of Western literature has been urging civilization towards understanding the body as an aperture “into invisible presences that can only be imagined through the flesh” (p.9).

Working to evoke the soul of the body and the phenomenology of woundedness, Slattery uncovers the “poetic sense of flesh” (2000, p.9)— an imaginal sort of tissue that exists somewhere between psyche and soma. From a literary perspective, the author

reads the body in the same way he might read a poem or a dream—the body as an image of “depth and surface, deep mysterious interiors and often codified exteriors” (p.10). By way of metaphor and poetics, Slattery entertains an energetic and vital sense of the body that yogis often recognize as “the subtle body” or “sukshma-sharira” (Fuerstein, 1996, p.120).

In exploring the practice of the Yoga of Embodiment, I share Professor Slattery’s fascination with the mysterious function of the subtle body. Instead of continuing to develop intellectual ideas about the body’s language and poetics, however, I work to drop into the body’s experience, where I am continually learning to follow present sensations and feelings. In other words, instead of *reading* the body and its metaphors, I am interested in *living* the body, and living *in* the body.

For example, instead of maintaining an objective relationship to physical pain, I am interested in how the wound might function to penetrate the realm of the subtle body. By entering into the pain, rather than medicating or resisting it, an individual may open to a new way of being present and incarnated in the world:

To be wounded is to be pushed off the straight, fixed, and predictable path of certainty and thrown into ambiguity, or onto the circuitous path, and into the unseen or foreseen. One begins to wobble, to wander, and perhaps even to wonder not only about one’s present condition but also about one’s origins....one’s vision may clear, one’s perception sharpens, and one may grasp for the first time what James Hillman describes in *The Soul’s Code* as that “innate image” that lies at the heart of the acorn that is me, that defines my heritage and my destiny. (Slattery, 2000, p.13)

Once experienced as the horrifying enemy, the wounded body may be realized as a gift, a kind of angel. From this perspective, the body itself gains a metaphorical quality: it arrives as a symbolic expression of the soul or psyche.

Through an analysis of Tolstoy's The Death of Ivan Illich (1981), Slattery addresses the process of embodiment that Ivan Illich undergoes through the act of being wounded. Illich, a cluttered man obsessed with fixing things, touching things, and improving his material lot in the world, is called to surrender to a most terrible illness that threatens every aspect of his systematic life. As the wound itself transforms from a bruise to an illness to a full-fledged disease process, Illich is forced to relinquish his literal understanding of life in order to surrender to a deeper, psychological dimension. In order to receive the miracle of kindness and compassion delivered through Illich's servant Gerasim, Illich must bridge the distance he has created between himself and the world of things. As he begins to experience the world through the metaphor of his disease, Illich's heart opens: he begins to realize that his greatest possession, all along, is in his woundedness. Once Illich begins to reckon with the subtle body, his consciousness is transformed. Rather than obsessively touching and arranging things, Illich learns to be touched, to receive, and to give care. He begins to see all the things of the world as part of himself (Slattery, 2000).

Through a study of the wounded body in literature, Slattery (2000) illuminates the genius of the literary artist: to exemplify the transformative function and creative potential of the wounded body. The Yoga of Embodiment, then, is an everyday practice that works to bring this understanding of the subtle and symbolic body to life. The point is to engage the body's sensations as they exist in the present moment, regardless of whether they are positive or negative. In doing so, the practice becomes an inquiry into how an intellectual understanding of Eastern philosophy or Western psychology may be translated into life. By moving to embrace, endure, and accept physical pain and

suffering, the practice works to unite the opposing realms of physical and spiritual experience in the flesh. Ultimately, the Yoga of Embodiment is the practice of surrendering to the movement, or dialogue, of existence.

Initiation & The Wound

In a civilization where the energy of spirit is divided from the substance of matter, the task of living in relationship to the body has been pushed to the wayside and forgotten. Because feeling does not easily penetrate the body's dense matter, genuine conflict between matter and spirit remains in the unconscious, where it is likely to manifest in some concretized somatic form (Woodman, 1982). While doctors, surgeons, and myriads of health practitioners promise to root out and to fix the menacing problems, Western people maintain the habit of nurturing an objective relationship to the body--and the pervasive problem of the psyche-soma split persists. Psychoanalyst Charles Ponce (1983) observes,

Our Western concern with health has tended to become an almost spiritual and fashionable affair. The vehicle of this spiritualization has become our new myth, psychology. What I experience in our countless conferences, workshops and books on health is a new Evangelical Christianization, an aestheticism of disease that all too often equates healthiness with good psychology, soul with a psychological thing called psyche, almost never addressing itself to the body as carrier of this precious thing. (p.21)

What, then, constitutes a healthy body and a healthy psychological approach to the body?

Because the ravages of illness, disease, and death endure, perhaps it is time to re-vision the concept of health. Redefined, health may be understood in the way that individuals engage the symptoms, images, and feelings offered in the fabric of the body. Such a dialectic is fortified by the dialogue, or the dance, that we engender with our very

own cells. Imagining the healthy body, Jungian analyst Clarissa Pinkola Estes (1995) writes,

At the most basic level—the breast, the belly, anywhere there is skin, anywhere there are neurons to transmit feeling—the issue is not what shape, what size, what color, what age, but does it feel, does it work as it is meant to, can we respond, do we feel a range, a spectrum of feeling? Is it afraid, paralyzed by pain or fear, anesthetized by old trauma, or does it have its own music, is it listening, like Baubo, through the belly, is it looking with its many ways of seeing? (p.205)

Through many modes of communication, the body's energy offers up a rhythmic language, and waits, patiently, for our communion.

Carl G. Jung believed that the various symptoms and neurosis produced by the human body were, in fact, messages from the psyche (Woodman, 1980). Arriving at once, and accompanied by some unspeakable numinous quality, such physical manifestations seemed to reveal the presence of the gods. “Our gods,” says Jung (1983), “inasmuch as they are not just conscious abstraction, are mere germs, or functions. The divine thing in us functions as neuroses of the stomach, or of the colon, or bladder—simply the disturbances of the underworld” (p.30). In effect, according to Jung, the gods have moved into the body to take the guise of disease, defect, or deformity: “Zeus no longer rules Olympus but the solar plexus, and produces curious specimens for the doctor's consulting room” (p.37).

Such specimens, so prevalent in the modern world, are vital, foundational aspects in the stories that unfold the personal myths of individuals. More than an unfortunate occurrence or event, body woundedness may be understood as a sign of the gods moving within us. The symptoms appear with a divine purpose: to shape the destiny of an individual and to become a cornerstone of that person's history (Slattery, 2000).

In her work with women suffering illness and disease, Marion Woodman (1993) acknowledges the divine power of the wound, “The body swells up and says, ‘Come down into my healing waters and I’ll give you the symbols which will make it possible for you to go out into a new life, into a new cycle.’”(p.18). Understanding the body itself as a symbol incarnate, Woodman sees the swollen form filling with the waters of the unconscious, preparing itself to reveal a healing image. Woodman’s work is a testament to the fact that the substance of the body, like the dream, is a form able to bear and birth psyche’s images.

Drawing from Woodman’s insights, *The Yoga of Embodiment* is a practice that weaves a continuing dialogue between conscious and unconscious aspects of one’s mind and body. As students explore the roots of unknowing in the physical body, the presence of physical discomfort and uneasiness may be re-visioned. By shifting and alternating between listening and expressive roles of the body, a creative process unfolds: The wounded body becomes a portal for divine knowing, and an opportunity to gather intelligence from a cellular level. From this perspective, the wound introduces itself as a rite of initiation into a deeper and wider conception of what it is to be human, and to be embodied.

Perhaps, suggests Slattery (2000), the wound is there to shake us up, to challenge our course, and to force us towards the choice of consciousness. Endowed with some godly power, the wound functions to move us inward, toward the realization and fulfillment of destiny. Clarissa Pinkola Estes (1992) defines the rite of initiation as “the process by which we turn from our natural inclination to remain unconscious to decide that, whatever it takes—suffering, striving, enduring—we will pursue conscious union

with the deeper mind, the wild Self” (p.411). Even though we haven’t a clue about where the thing is leading us, or where it wants to go, we must begin to trust psyche’s offering. “Willy-nilly we are moving toward the Unknown,” writes Henry Miller (1941), an author who works from and towards a place of embodiment, “and the sooner and readier we give ourselves up to the experience, the better it will be for us”(p.46).

In an essay titled “Wisdom of the Heart” (1941), Miller pays tribute to psychoanalyst E. Graham Howe, a man who was able to expose the secret of health and balance “by example” (p.32). Recognizing man’s tendency to fixate on the concept of escape from ailments at all costs, Miller explains Howe’s genius in exposing mankind’s ultimate folly: “To imagine that we are going to be saved by outside intervention, whether in the shape of an analyst, a dictator, a savior, or even a God!” (p.35). Basing his practice on the oriental art of jujitsu, Howe worked to understand that each horrific obstacle could be used, in fact, as an indispensable aid. “The method,” writes Miller, “is as applicable to what we call disease, or death or evil, as it is to a bullying adversary. The secret of it lies in the recognition that force can be directed as well as feared—more, that everything can be converted to good or evil, profit or loss, according to one’s attitude” (p.35). The wound is the open door.

On some level, the wounded body initiates an individual into a symbolic understanding of the conflict suffered through Christ. As Jesus Christ exemplified to Western civilization, it is through the place of wounding that an individual begins to experience the resonance of compassion and connectivity. Through the aperture of the wound, human beings begin to nurture an essence that encompasses all of life and insists “that the process of growing down deep into who we are to become requires a continual

bruising, scarring, and marking of who we are presently, so that the fullness of our embodied being may find itself fully revealed in the world in its relation with others.”

(Slattery, 2000, p.19)

As the body begins to integrate the impact of experience—the numbing pain, the hours spent in hospitals, the violating surgeries-- it comes to know itself as special, or uniquely formed by individual experience. In time, the wounded body may be accepted as a gift, a god or a goddess speaking through the metaphorical language of flesh-tones and urging one toward the miracle of embodied life. Ultimately, the act of listening to the messages of the wounded body opens an entire new way of being present to the world:

Once you come into contact with the pain of your own body and its devastation, you become more aware of the ravages of nature. You also recognize the agony of others who are not living in their bodies. You can see the body twisting and turning and trying to send up messages. (Woodman, 1993, p.21)

By surrendering to the abyss of pain, an individual begins to live with the miracle of compassion.

The Art of Unequivocal Surrender

Typically, modern man has developed a habit of dancing around physiological and psychological sores. He applies the medical, analytical, literal salve to places of pain, and keeps moving about and around, avoiding the way *through and in* at all costs. Rather than looking at the wounded place as a door, portal, or holographic place of entry where one is granted the opportunity to participate in a relationship with some world that is other, man prefers to hold on to his rational cause and effect approach to medicine and healing. However, as healers, thinkers, writers, readers, artists, and people who listen to the psyche’s message begin to see the mortal wound as an opening place and a site of

initiation, Western culture moves towards the realization of a wholly new perception—one that hears the echoes of an ancient Greek healing practice based on the art of surrender.

Asklepian Dreaming

In ancient Greece, a deity named Asklepius reigned over the enterprise of healing in the Mediterranean world for almost two thousand years--from about 1300 B.C.E. through 500 C.E. Fathered by Apollo, the god of truth, medicine, and music, and mothered by a loving mortal, Asklepius was known for walking among human beings with utmost kindness. Like Jesus Christ, he healed the afflicted and brought hope to all who believed in him (Meier, 1967).

For eight-hundred years, priest-physicians of Asklepius roamed the land and organized over three-hundred holistic healing temples based on the practices of sacred medicine and dream incubation. Called by the onset of illness or disease, afflicted individuals would make pilgrimages to divine temples where they would restore themselves with theatre, art, psychotherapy, baths, and body-work. Then, when the time was right, they would enter a small cave and partake in “the sleep of god.” Within the confines of strict isolation, supplicants would rest, sleep, fast, and pray--waiting for a visitation from Asklepius himself (Meier, 1967).

Inside the temples, sickness, pain and disease were understood as divine visitations of grace. Healing was not a matter of cause and effect, but an art of perception: The god who incurred the wound and the god who provided the healing were one in the same. Individuals agreed to endure the “sleep of gods” because they believed that they were heeding Asklepius’ “call.” Until Asklepius arrived with some image of healing,

afflicted individuals maintained their steadfast rituals of prayer and meditation. Because of their patient diligence, the divine power of Asklepius came to the earth and traveled among all afflicted human beings in order to restore wholeness, health, and wisdom (Meier, 1967).

Redeeming the Body

Asklepian dream incubation was partially successful in the ancient world because supplicants were able to surrender to their instincts: Trusting in the presence of Asklepius, they endured lonesome journeys and achieved the promise of healing. However, with the dawning of technology, science, and allopathic medicine, the powerful rites of the ancient world became lost to modern culture.

In a lecture titled “Holding the tension of the Opposites” (1991), Marion Woodman addresses how modern individuals have become estranged from the nature of instincts. When instinctual life has been damaged, suggests Woodman, “the psyche may be producing healing images but the instinctual energy cannot connect to the image” (p.86). Though an individual might be able to gain some intellectual understanding about the cause of his/her unique wounding through the symbolic language offered in dreams, the understanding will not aid in the process of healing until it is received and assimilated by the body.

From years of personal experience with fostering a relationship with the unconscious born of somatic form, Woodman has learned that the body--the place where instincts are born--is the ultimate receptacle and container for the process of healing. Throughout the collection of her work, Woodman continues to provide illustration for the deep rift that continues to isolate spirit from body and prevent the individual from

partaking in the creative and instinctual realm of embodied life. Pondering the root of disembodiment, Woodman (1983) observes,

Many people don't want to be human; they'd rather live on idealization and perfection. They don't want to take responsibility for their lives because it's much easier to fly off into spirit and try to live out an archetypal dream. Psychologically we call this inflation and the only end is to crash down to earth—or to recover earth—through depression or illness. (p.19)

Surrendering to the place of pain, suffering, defeat, and misfortune, is more than an intellectual idea for the pondering of academics and psychoanalysts. Nonetheless, analytical work often tends to focus on dream interpretation and mythological content, leaving the life and reality of the experiential body in darkness. In recent years, pioneering work in the field of yoga and depth psychology has focused on retrieving the neglected body.

In his book Yoga: The Poetry of the Body (2002), yoga enthusiast Rodney Yee addresses the problem of mind-centered therapy and offers an approach to healing that is dependent on the experiential body. After twenty-five years of exploring the applications of yoga practice, Yee has recognized the alchemical effects inhabiting the body on a cellular level. For Yee, regular therapeutic practices fall short because “unless people are actually making an alchemical change in their bodies, literally beginning to deconstruct the neurological patterns that exist in the body, then I don't think just the awareness of something necessarily defuses it” (p.205). As a teacher, Rodney understands the body as a collection of the past that is ripe with kinetic memory. In order to change the patterns of neurological memory that lock individuals into certain ruts of behavior, Rodney encourages students to “get into the cellular body” because “it frees you of those connections, so you're not wired the same way anymore” (p.206). With a background

the austere discipline of Iyengar yoga, Yee has worked to integrate an original and personal experience into his practice. His work is certainly a study for the field of embodiment.

In order to liberate a cellular experience of the body, Rodney Yee teaches students to move their attention into the places in the body that hold the most resistance, and to surrender their attention. Rodney asserts that because such areas pose so much difficulty and discomfort, they are undoubtedly the places that will offer the greatest release. In meeting the very feeling of resistance to dis-ease on a physical level, a practitioner has the opportunity to live the difficulty—to stick with it, stay with it, and thereby manifest changes on a cellular level (Yee, 2002). By moving into the body's experience of fear and pain, a practitioner develops the ability to accept the smallest sensations, and to move into a sense of peace. As a teacher, Rodney recognizes the inherent opportunity of pain: By surrendering to its presence, a student may learn a way to engage a wholly new dialogue, or rhythm.

The Yoga of Embodiment is a practice that remembers the ancient Greek healing rites of Asklepius. The object of this acausal and perhaps irrational approach to healing is to arrive with some image that the soul is presenting for recognition. As individuals begin to recognize and honor the body as a receptacle for healing, they learn to receive information and experience on a cellular level, and a transformative process is set into motion. Instead of evoking philosophical or intellectual changes, The Yoga of Embodiment is a practice in the art of manifesting change in actuality. Jungian analyst Robert Stein (1976) observes, “The aim, therefore, is not to combat the disease as in

allopathic medicine, but to establish a connection, i.e. a right relationship to the divine power” (p.66).

The Wisdom of Acceptance

Throughout his career as a writer, Henry Miller worked to promulgate this essential act of surrender to the abyss of pain and suffering. In my opinion, Miller’s work is psychological: the author wrote from his own hard-won experience. In Wisdom of the Heart (1961) Miller understands the act of true discipline as the ability to recognize “the duality of life” and to “accept the negative” (p.44). In relation to sickness and disease, Miller announces a world in which both the doctor and the patient have been eliminated by “accepting the disease itself rather than the medicine or the mediator” (p.36).

It is the idea of the *positive* acceptance of pain that enables a person to convert “the static defensive life” (Miller, 1961, p.32) into a dance based on the rhythm of give and take, ebb and flow, light and dark, life and death. Miller writes, “The acceptance of the situation, any situation, brings about a flow, a rhythmic impulse towards self-expression” (p.32). Thus, the choice to surrender to the horrid and ugly wound becomes the defining moment for the possibility of motion, and for the creation of a unique, inspired individual. Like the Asklepian-worshipping Greeks, Henry Miller understands the essence of healing as an act of re-visioning and incorporating the objects of fear and loathing by way of conscious surrender. Stein (1976) observes,

The symbolic healing attitude toward disease becomes identical with the religious attitude. Now the vital question is no longer, ‘How can I find relief from my suffering and rid myself from of this terrible sickness?’ but ‘What is it that the God within my soul is wanting of me? How can I discover the intentionality behind the mystery of my illness so that I may hopefully be cured?’ What does God want; not what do I want? (p.72).

In order to access the tremendous energy that exists at the point of the wound, an individual must cease the habit of escape. Pulling oneself from that repetitious pattern of denial and fear, the individual may begin to understand the wound as a turning point, a voice that beckons one to become the very thing that has been resisted, repressed, and avoided (Slattery, 2000). As the wound begs us to “drop deeper into the depths of ourselves to ponder the strange relationship of strength and weakness, success and failure, good and evil” (p.16), it implores us to recognize the inherent law of life symbolized by the crucifixion: that life’s composition rests on a plane of straining duality.

Knowing this, the individual has no alternate choice but to accept the negative, and to embody the conflict. Ultimately, a person must begin to accept, and to feel, the slow pulse that exists within the place of wounding—a rhythm that reflects the motion of the earth. Says Woodman (1983), “You have to feel that slowing down, you have to quiet the soul, and you have to surrender, because eventually you have to face the fact that you are not God and you cannot control your life” (p.28).

Downwards

Psychoanalyst Robert Stein (1973) articulates that psychoanalysis itself has betrayed the soul by perpetuating the split between mind and body: From its inception, psychoanalysis has been ruled and dominated by a mind-centered, Cartesian metaphysics. Although Carl Jung embraced instinctual life, reflected upon the body, and disclosed Freud’s antipathy to the instinctual world (Tarnas, 2000), he still viewed the instincts as the “partie inferieure” and the psyche as the “partie superieure” (Jung, 1928,

p.412). Even in Jung's exploration of active imagination, the power of spontaneous, creative play within the body itself— dance—is avoided.

Just recently, within the last fifty years, the analytical community has motioned to incorporate work with the human body itself into analytical practice. As a growing number of Western psychotherapists, healers, and body-workers have come to realize, it is time for psychology to acknowledge the body and to include somatic interventions such as movement, touch, and breathing into their therapeutic practices. Perhaps this has a little something to do with the fact that women (and the feminine aspect of psyche) have found their way into the field of psychology.

As individuals work to become attuned to the subtle and inherent meaning offered in the fabric of the body, the body itself is transformed towards eloquence, sensitivity, and self-respect (Woodman, 1991). In her wise way, Marion Woodman (1983) hints about the rewards of moving downwards to work with the often dark and unconscious realm of the body:

When the body is fully open, we can trust our own feelings and actions; they anchor us in an inner home. The body protects and guides us—its symptoms are the signposts that reconnect us to our own lost soul. (p.21)

Woodman encourages analysts to awaken a conscious intelligence born through the very cells of the body.

Yoga of The West

The word 'yoga' is derived from the Sanskrit word yuj, meaning to bind, join, yoke, or attach "all the powers of the body, mind and soul to God" (Iyengar, 1976, pp.20). Traditionally, the Eastern form of yoga is a disciplined practice that utilizes breath, asana, and the visual imagery of the chakra system in order to connect with God.

However, because the Eastern conception of God, and of the body, is entirely different from the understanding born of Western culture, it would be silly to presume that yoga, as practiced in the Eastern tradition would move us toward consciousness. Rather, for the sake of consciousness, Western culture must develop a practice of yoga that emanates from its own cultural history.

In order to usher in a new consciousness, Westerners might consider and reflect upon their own sorrow-laden hero—not Ganesh, not the Buddha, but Jesus Christ himself— as they roll out their yoga mats and give attention to the realm of breath and body. Carl Jung (1962) writes,

Imitation of Christ might well be understood in a deeper way. It might be taken as the duty to give reality to one's deepest conviction, always the fullest expression of individual temperament, with the same courage and the same self-sacrifice shown by Jesus. (p.134)

Thus, the movement toward higher human consciousness, as modeled by Christ, begs for the courage of individuals to embody and express the bare miracle of unique being.

With the growing interest in Eastern forms of yoga in the West, it has become evident that Western culture is hungering to acknowledge, include, and recognize the container of the physical body. However, Westerners will not achieve the desired goal of 'yoking' body to spirit if it continues to understand "yoga" literally, as it has understood disease literally. And here is what I see: thousands of Americans hurrying to yoga class, quarreling over floor space, and working for hours to achieve the perfect pose. Instead of using the imagination to understand the meaning and message of yoga, Westerners are understanding the practice in a literal way. Woodman (1983) observes, "The Eastern sages knew about the relationship of symbols to the body. You can see it in their description of the chakras. But in our culture, there is a failure of imagination" (p.16).

Look at the yoga pose itself. Probably, it represents some symbol of nature and the life of the instincts: for example, the downward dog, the tree, the bird of paradise. If we apply imagination to the body's contortions, we might begin to see the metaphor. We might begin to consider: *We are practicing for hours to create the perfect waking dog, the balancing tree, the beautiful bird of paradise trapped inside our hearts.. Could this really be about perfecting the pose itself, or might there a message being delivered through our bodies?* Some yogis in the Western world are beginning to teach a practice that works to forge a connection between the instinctual body and the mind. By bringing imagination into the practice, yoga practice can become an exercise for the imagination, as we imagine ourselves dissolving into the essence of poses.

Angela Farmer is one woman-yogi who, after years of committing to the study of a traditional, Eastern method of yoga began to embrace the deeper truth. "Though I was being recognized, honored, and celebrated for mastering the poses in a way of perfect execution," said Angela, "I was continuing to feel unsatisfied and unfulfilled at the core" (Farmer, 2000). After years of manipulating and twisting her body in hopes of divine revelation or an experience of feeling at home in her body, Farmer made a conscious decision to stop trying to achieve. Instead of continuing in this way of *doing* and *achieving*, Angela decided to drop *down and in* to the silence of her body to listen to truth that dwelled inside. Tired from being instructed and corrected from the outside, Angela Farmer began to explore a question she had been harboring in her soul for decades: *What is yoga?*

Like Marion Woodman, and other healers mentioned throughout the course of this thesis, Angela Farmer used the substance of her own unique experience--and of her own

truth--to inform her work. Instead of continuing to teach a rigid and masculine-oriented form of Iyengar yoga, she began to imagine a practice of yoga inspired by feminine qualities, such as sensuality, intuition, and soul (Farmer, 2001). Breaking from the community and tradition of Iyengar yoga, Farmer decided to follow the image offered up through the material of her own body: a flowing and ecstatic yogini. Forging a connection between her knowledge of Western psychology and Eastern philosophy, Angela Farmer began to experience how psychological phenomena of repression, inflation, unconsciousness, and disembodiment are experienced in the body on a cellular and energetic level (Farmer, 2001).

Without the support of her familiar community, Farmer was moved to teach a new understanding of yoga—one that honors the deep energies of the subtle body. Relinquishing a method born of sheer will power and form, Farmer encouraged her students to move into the experience of the body's energy and to reconnect to the life force that empowers and thrives. Angela encourages her students to follow body sensations, and to use these subtle energies to access yogic posture. Instead of teaching her students to willfully move into poses, she asks students to explore the internal body for places where energy might be blocked or repressed. Then, Angela guides her students toward the experience of unleashing this energy through breath work and yoga technique (Farmer, 2001).

As the body moves to surrender to its dark and unconscious matter, the will power that has been sustaining life begins to break, and an individual may be overwhelmed with feelings and sensations that are overwhelmingly painful, dark, excruciating, and death-like. Marion Woodman (1983) notes that the act of surrendering to the death-aspect of

embodied life is a task that merely begins on a personal level “because ultimately, the death wish is a psychological fact that must also be realized on a global scale” (p.13). Whether on a personal or collective level, the trajectory toward embodied life is bound to move through some experience of death and stagnation during which the psyche experiences itself as jailed and trapped in the reality of illness, disease, or addiction. Psyche, counsels Woodman, “is waiting for the strength to activate the muladhara area, where the real life force is” (p.109).

Anita Greene (1984), a Jungian psychoanalyst practicing in New York, believes that body experience and sensory awareness can help many analysands “contact archetypal levels of energy and image that have previously been blocked or negativized” (p.17). Like Jung, Greene understands the individuation process as an alchemical process in which the body releases its own innate images for the process of transformation. Through her bodily oriented analytic approach, Greene observes that the unconscious will begin to release spontaneous healing images when the body begins to surrender, and to trust its instinctual nature. As individuals learn to let go of defenses, they will often begin to dream of images that are natural, sensual, or wild. Such a dream often delivers the very image that the soul has been seeking to entertain, and to integrate (Woodman, 1991).

The movement toward embodied consciousness is reflected in the collective god-images that appear in the dreams of those people who are practicing some form of the Yoga of Embodiment (Woodman, 1991). Such contemporary dream images often reveal a more sexual image of God, one which suggests that we are moving toward the knowledge of a God of Love who is both physical and spiritual: a god with the capacity

to honor both realms of sensuality and spirituality (deVries, 1985). In addition to these more sexual images of god, psychoanalyst James Spiegelman (1970) observes that people's dreams are beginning to unfold images of the Goddess. Woodman (1991) would agree that this feminine archetype and her attendant imagery ushers forth a new mode of consciousness, one that demands a way of individuation through the struggles of relationships, the ailments of the body, and through non-verbal forms of expression.

Through such emerging images of divinity, a culture's desire to nourish the body's need for expression, movement, and embodiment becomes evident on a collective level. As we work to join unconscious places in the body with conscious knowing, Jung's prophetic wisdom continues to echo and encourage us onward:

When the great swing has taken an individual into the world of symbolic mysteries, nothing comes of it, nothing can come of it, unless it has been associated with the earth, unless it has happened when that individual was in the body...And so individuation can only take place if you first return to the body, to your earth, only then does it become true. (1928, p.251)

In order for healing to occur on any level, the body must be sensitive enough to receive, or to feel, the subtleties of experience. Only then can an individual begin to move (or be moved) in a conscious way with psyche's most powerful images.

Authentic Movement

According to Carl Jung, the archetypes are innate potential patterns that constellate in an individual's psyche and shape a person's behaviors, perceptions, and drives. Through the impact of his own personal confrontations with the unconscious, Jung evolved the Freudian, biographical understanding of the unconscious towards a "holy grail of the inner quest," the revelation of the encompassing archetypes in all their power and complexity (Tarnas, 2000, p.424). By comprehending one's personal

relationship to the range of archetypes, Jung discerned a way for analysands to gather meaning about their general modes of being in the world. According to Jung, if human instinct determines human action on a gross and primary level, then archetypes could be understood as the “self-portraits of instinct” (Jung, 1919, p.277).

Jung’s revelation for the field of psychology was uncovered from his own exploration into the archetypal world upon his break with Freud in 1913. Completely disoriented and distraught, Jung attempted to find analytical solutions for his suffering, but his attempts were in vain. Soon, the psychologist began to realize that “there was nothing to be done except play childish games” (1961, p.174). Despite his resistance to surrender to complete irrationality, Jung found himself opening to an imaginal process. For hours and days, he would sit by his lake with a pile of stones, simply following his impulses to build and to form anything and everything that occurred to him. Through this process of imaginative play, Jung was flooded with fantasies, memories, and images that clarified his thoughts and presented meaning.

Jung’s practice of symbolic play turned out to be the beginning of the deep psychological process that we have come to know as “active imagination” (Pallaro, 1999, p.305)—the art of creating consciousness between the individual and the archetype. Through spontaneous play that in an artistic medium such as painting, drawing, writing, and building, Jung developed a method for individuals to approach archetypal realms of consciousness. In turn, he began to unfold an understanding of depth psychology—a practice of self-discovery that recognizes the primacy of psyche and the imagination.

At the outset of Jung’s exploration, the use of dance and movement as active imagination was largely undeveloped by Jung and subsequent analysts. It was not until

the late 1950s when Mary Whitehouse, a dancer educated by Martha Graham, engaged in Jungian analysis and began to develop an approach to movement born from a source in the psyche. Whitehouse (1979) describes her practice of “Authentic Movement” as the “moment when the ego gives up control, stops choosing, stops exerting demands, and allows the Self to take over moving the physical body as it will. It is the moment of unpremeditated surrender that cannot be explained, repeated exactly, sought for, or tried out” (p.57).

The Yoga of Embodiment is a practice that is deeply rooted in the pioneering work of Authentic Movement. Based on the assumption that the mind and body are in constant reciprocal interaction, Authentic Movement forges a union between images born of the unconscious and the body, as the receptacle of experience. Entertaining the spontaneous energy of the body, then, is like a meditation of active imagination in sensory or sensation terms, just as painting is an act of active imagination in visual terms (Chodorow, 1984).

Influenced by Jung, and by Whitehouse, a movement of twentieth century dancers was compelled to use movement to reconcile psyche’s archetypal realm with the body. Contemplating the origins of movement, dancers Trudi Schoop, Janet Adler, and Joan Chodorow worked to access the silent, invisible, and unformed aspects of human nature. Authentic Movement, as such, is the art of unfolding motion from the core:

Where does movement come from? It originates in...a specific inner impulse having the quality of sensation. This impulse leads outward into space so that movement becomes visible as physical action. Following the inner sensation, allowing the impulse to take the form of physical action is active imagination in movement; just as following the visual image is active imagination in phantasy. It is here that the most dramatic psychophysical connections are made available to consciousness. (Whitehouse, 1963, p.3)

Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, founder of The School for Body-Mind Centering, is another woman who has made significant contributions to the field of embodiment. Cohen's Body-Mind Centering outlines a framework for studying the complexity of the living, moving body in all aspects of life. By watching the movement of the body and shifting awareness between observing and embodying, students observe the movement of the mind as a physical form with inherent intelligence, right down to the cellular level. The work allows for a spontaneous and open perception of the bodily mind. From this fresh perception that involves immersion and expression between conscious and unconscious realms, students receive feedback that nourishes a dialogue between the conscious and unconscious mind-body. The work moves students towards the realization of the fully embodied, creative, and cognizant Self (Cohen, 1993).

In her work as a Jungian analyst, Marion Woodman utilizes a similar approach to movement, along with bodywork, to help women suffering from eating disorders and addictions reconnect with the energies of the body that have been repressed. Woodman (1991) describes, "We are trying to connect with the shadow energies chained in the dungeons of our dreams" (p.136). Violently, such energies have been delivered to consciousness in some painful or distorted form—neuroses, body symptoms or nightmarish dreams. Says Woodman (1991), "We push all the parts of ourselves that we don't like into our bodies: our greed, jealousy, our lust. All the darkness we don't want to accept, we push into the muscles, bones and heart" (p.137).

According to Woodman, most people who show up for analysis report feeling completely estranged from their bodies. They have spent lifetimes experiencing their own physicality as dark, cumbersome, and loathsome. In order to release the barrier that

separates them from rejoicing in creative, instinctual life, Woodman (1991) encourages analysts to recall positive healing symbols from dreams, and to “breathe” them into the parts of their bodies that feel deadened or “black” (p.136). Woodman describes the process:

Powerful energies are locked in our bodies. Eventually they rebel, usually in illness...As soon as the person puts an image there, it starts to transform...The energy starts to move, light comes into that area. I don't think we've begun to touch the power of imagery in the body. (p.137)

As the image connects with the life force, it begins to assume healing power. Woodman observes that the transformation of the image *in the body* is the key to initiating a deep and profound process of healing.

Drawing from the research of Marion Woodman, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, and the school of Authentic Movement, The Yoga of Embodiment works to unfold a dialogue between the conscious and unconscious mind in order to create a fluid body-mind continuum. As students work to shift awareness between conscious and unconscious perspectives within the continuum, they learn to participate in a creative awakening that frees mind, emotion, and spirit.

Between the Opposites

With the development of depth psychology, a field that recognizes the biological and physical aspects of human nature, it is clear that Western culture is beginning to evolve away from the Cartesian conception of human nature that has dominated Western thought. The Western world's newfound interest in somatics, combined with pioneering work in the field of depth psychology, has forged the possibility of union between psyche and soma. As mind, body, and dream are approached from this soul-centered perspective, the act of healing becomes, in the manner of the ancient Greeks, a rite of

passage—a rebirth ritual in which one is turned back to the god in one’s own soul who has the power to both wound and heal.

Perhaps more than in any other way of working with the unconscious, the healer who works with the body of individuals affected by painful and terminal disease is confronted by the body’s close relationship to the death-side of the archetypal dimension. In this work, consciousness is all too-easily lost in the chaos of overwhelming pain and fear. However, if the wounded, sick, or dying individual can be guided to enter an imaginal relationship with some image, or archetypal rendering of the body’s agony, the death archetype may well present another face. The disease may or may not improve, but energy and meaning will flow back into the stricken person’s life--through the open portal of the wound.

Unfolding the Feminine

Many writers, analysts, and body-workers reviewed for the work of this thesis emphasize that it is the image of the repressed archetype of the Feminine which is demanding our attention and calling us to heed the wound of the psyche-soma split. Excluded from the life of the soul for two thousand years, the Goddess is finally returning to bring the feminine secrets of existence--including instinct, intuition, emotion, sensuality, and soul—to consciousness. Demanding redemption and inclusion, the archetype of the Goddess demands the ego to surrender in order to redeem her magnificence from the chambers of repression (Whitmont, 1997).

In her workshops entitled ‘Substance, Soul, Sensuality, and Surrender,’ Angela Farmer encourages yoga practitioners to find places in the body that may feel like death, but are really just “dying for expression” (Farmer, 2001). Acknowledging the parts of the

body that are blocked, stuck, or riddled with pain, Farmer (2000) reminds her students, “If you are on a journey to get back to the core, you have to go places that cause you discomfort.” Angela Farmer asks students to use the sense of the body and the sense of movement to become familiar with the body’s subtle language. With careful attention, students begin to understand that the body remembers, that there is memory and feeling lodged in the joints, the muscles, and the cells themselves.

Through her practice of yoga, Farmer (2000) understands a new kind of individuating ego—one that dares to encounter the shadows in the invisible underworld of physical experience. The fruit of the labor is born when the connection is made between the container of the body and the energy derived from the psyche’s most repressive chambers. Only then, teaches Farmer, can the individual return to earthly life with the ability to feel, and to embody, the magnificent, ennobling, and empowering energies of feminine consciousness.

Upon meeting the archetype of the repressed feminine, an individual is faced with the task of appeasing her rage, and integrating her presence. Marion Woodman has encountered the wrath of the feminine archetype as she uses body and breath work to therapeutically move individuals toward consciousness. Woodman (1994) notes that the “outraged fury of the Goddess” (p.36) is becoming manifest: “Many people are becoming conscious enough to recognize that there is a difference between their personal anger in their intimate relationships, and the transpersonal rage that erupts from the archetypal level, the level on which the Goddess enters” (p.36). Thus, the archetypal Goddess continues to express her message on a collective level:

I think that the situation of our planet, our Mother Earth—the earthquakes, overpopulation, the destruction of the rainforest—are perils forcing us to a new

consciousness of what matter is. It's not just black nothingness, opaque. There is energy within trying to be released. I think ordinary human beings are now waking up to see what is in their own matter, their own bodies, in terms of the larger consciousness in all matter. I call it the feminine side of God—God in matter. Matter as metaphor of the goddess. (Woodman, 1983, p.96)

As the Goddess is realized on both personal and collective levels, an overwhelming amount of momentous energy is released and awakened.

In the following passage, Carl Jung (1936) describes the awakening of the kundalini serpent as witnessed through the practice of Eastern yoga: an experience that seems undeniably similar to the awakening of the archetypal feminine of Western psychology:

It is as if the Kundalini in its movement upward were pulling us up with it, as if we were part of that movement, particularly in the beginning. It is true that we *are* a part, because we are then that which contains the gods; they are germs in us, germs in the muladhara, and when they begin to move they have the effect of an earthquake which naturally shakes us, and even shakes our houses down. (p.27)

Thus, it is through the experience of a vital, life-altering energy born in the body, that the Eastern practice of yoga meets the Western understanding of psychology, and the Yoga of Embodiment emerges.

Biological Reconciliation & Rebirth

Stanislav Grof, a Harvard-educated psychiatrist with a Freudian background, is one Western doctor who has gained access to the vital energies involved in the process of human transformation. Most significantly, Grof has contributed to the understanding of the origins of the psyche-soma problem, and the matrix where this tear may be reconciled. His work is a testament to the idea that, upon surrendering to abysmal pain of woundedness, a way *through* will, inevitably, arrive (Grof, 2000). Grof's research has

proved that by entering into the chaos of the subtle-physical body, the experience of rebirth, and the power of healing, may be achieved.

During his career as a psychoanalyst, Grof observed thousands of case studies where subjects induced unconscious processes through the use of intense holotropic breath work and psychoactive substances such as LSD. In each case, subjects engaged in deeply layered explorations of the unconscious in the course of which there was an encounter with a “pivotal sequence of experiences of great complexity and intensity” (Tarnas, 2000, p.426). Ultimately, as such events were endured and integrated, subjects moved back towards earlier and earlier biological and infantile experiences until, at some point, they entered into an “an intense engagement with the process of biological birth” saturated by “a distinct archetypal sequence of considerable numinous power” (p.426).

Individuals involved in Grof’s work reported a momentous experience, the likes of which they could never have imagined beforehand. Though each individual recounted unique nuances within the defining experience, the over-arching structure of events was held in common:

Grof found a visible a distinct sequence—which moved from an initial condition of undifferentiated unity with the maternal womb, to an experience of sudden fall and separation from that primal orgasmic unity, to a highly charged life-and-death struggle with the contacting uterus and the birth canal, and culminating in an experience of complete annihilation. This was followed almost immediately by an experience of sudden unexpected global liberation, which was typically perceived not only as physical birth but also as spiritual rebirth, with the two mysteriously intermixed. (Tarnas, 2000, p.426)

In essence, Grof’s work realizes Jung’s archetypal perspective on a cellular level while forging a synthesis with Freud’s biographical, biological perspective. In the place where archetypal and biological perspectives meet, a whirlwind of energy emerges and

new life awakes (Grof, 2000). Thus, Grof's work introduces a surge of energy to the prospects of psychology: the experience of rebirth.

Grof's subjects have illuminated the idea that in order to establish psychological healing, spiritual liberation, and a sense of re-connectivity to the universe, one must be willing to bear the most treacherous and excruciating agonies. Instead of avoiding the birth canal altogether, subjects must be willing to undergo "unbearable constriction and pressure, extreme narrowing of mental horizons, a sense of hopeless alienation and the ultimate meaningless of life, a feeling of going irrevocably insane, and finally a shattering experiential encounter with death" (Tarnas, 2000, p. 426). Subjects must be willing to surrender to this pain, to endure it, and ultimately, to pass through it.

The lesson gained from Grof's research lies in the metaphor learned through his psychological achievements: by re-creating the instance where spirit meets flesh, a new energy is born. However, since most people are not compelled to test Grof's hypothesis by personally engaging in LSD-therapy, I propose a less-violent, body-oriented practice that works toward the union of matter and spirit, the Yoga of Embodiment. Perhaps, as clients take the time to meditate upon their physical bodies, they may be able to explore the resistance that they harbor towards particular places of pain. As they begin to dialogue with these places and become curious, they may engage in the opportunity to actually *feel* what is occurring inside the body. By approaching the body in this way, a client has little choice but to *be* with the pain and endure it--until it either resolves or dissolves in its own right.

Light on Matter

The Yoga of Embodiment is a practice that encourages the union between spirit and matter, mind and body. As individuals become conscious of the vital energy that courses through their bodies, they begin to acknowledge the existence of wisdom in matter. Such wisdom is like alchemist's gold; it is a substance--called consciousness--that is released from the dark matter of the body through the workings of metaphor and the movement of imagination. As negativity is expressed and released from the density of cells, an individual begins to experience "the calm, rich wisdom of the conscious body" (Woodman, 1985, p.36). Infused with consciousness, the body is no longer experienced as "a heap of dark flesh" (Woodman, 1990, p.36). Like a revelation, it opens for the reception of spirit, functioning to contain the conjunction between psyche and soma where genuine love is born.

By surrendering to the "call" of the wound, a wounded individual begins to hear the rhythmic voice of some particular wounding. Habits and patterns of regular normative life begin to fall away and the voice of the natural, intuitive body has the opportunity to emerge from the body's density. Woodman (1983) articulates the process:

As I go deeper... I realize that the voice that says, 'I am unlovable' is in the cells. Therefore it's at the cellular level that the transformation has to take place....I think that matter—the Latin word for mother, the body—wants to become conscious, wants to release light from the density of matter. (p.134)

Thus, through the process of woundedness, the opportunity for consciousness is born. And in order for spirit to re-unite with matter, an individual must become open and conscious enough to receive spirit. However slowly and circuitously the physical consciousness manifests, once it is experienced in the cells of the body, it provides a

“basis of knowing that gives confidence and total support to the ego” (Woodman, 1985, p.198).

Ultimately, the coniunctio between spirit and matter coalesces into an experience of divine love. The embodied individual comes to understand that the world is, in fact, composed of the same elements as the body. To be embodied means to accomplish the task of filling oneself with the spirit of love, rather than the force of willed power. The act requires that one surrenders to the eternal essence (from the Latin verb ‘esse’— to be), allowing it to enter and effect the cells of the body, then, moving to experience the outer external world through the body’s senses—seeing, tasting, hearing, smelling, touching....and moving. One begins to emerge from an intuitive, and connected, core.

Henry Miller (1961) describes the deep well of love that directs, inspires, and draws forth our move toward consciousness:

To act intuitively one must obey the deeper law of love, which is based on absolute tolerance, the law that suffers or permits things to be as they are. Real love is never perplexed, never qualifies, never rejects, never demands. It replenishes, by grace of restoring unlimited circulation....It is life illumined. (p.45)

How should we be able to forget those ancient myths that are at the beginning of all peoples, the myths about dragons that at the last moment turn into princesses; perhaps all the dragons of our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us once beautiful and brave. Perhaps everything terrible is in its deepest being something helpless that wants help from us.

*Rainer Maria Rilke
(1963, p.54)*

CHAPTER III THE YOGA OF EMBODIMENT

As the Feminine aspect of psyche gains conscious recognition, Western culture moves toward the development of its own practice of yoga—one that recognizes the mortal human body, both fragile and divine, as the vehicle of connection between conscious and unconscious realms. Gaining awareness of the body's vital energy, one comes to realize that depression, confusion, fear, hatred, disease, and love are, in fact, cellular experiences of consciousness. Thus, the individuation process can essentially be observed in the fabric of human form.

The myth of Inanna opens one's imagination to the prospect that a matrix exists whereby the opposing disciplines of Western psychology and Eastern philosophy, mind and body, swirl together to create a whirlwind of transformative energy. Jungian psychology holds that where opposing poles of energy are pulled together, energy itself is transformed and an entirely new consciousness-- a third element--will emerge. Such a psychological challenge to consciousness is certainly yogic by nature: an individual must commit to stay within the strain of the internal conflict in order to realize the healing function of the psyche. Instead of letting go to assuage the stress, an individual must stand firm within the tornado-like matrix where the conflict itself works to stretch the container of the individual ego. Once broad and flexible enough to embrace the straining dualities, the individual is able to transcend the conflict and move toward the realization of wholeness, or Self.

In this section of my paper I work to understand the practice of yoga—The Yoga of Embodiment--that is beginning to unfold in Western culture. First, by returning to the ancient myth of Inanna, I uncover a yogic process born of Western thought: In the story of Inanna, the process of individuation is observed as a whole body experience, one that requires an individual to descend into the far-reaches of experience in order to make peace with the ugly, painful, and violent aspects of human nature. By way of endurance, surrender, and acceptance, Inanna is re-born into civilized life with a cellular connection to primordial nature.

Secondly, I propose that the current obsession with the practice of Eastern yoga in the West is, in fact, the emerging shape of a newfound ritual container for the process of descent and individuation. In other words, as the body is acknowledged as an expression of the process of individuation, Western culture is developing a need--as ancient civilization experienced a need— to practice and nurture a connection with nature and the body. The ritualistic practice of yoga fulfills and contains this practice of opening, receiving, and embodying the straining forces of natural life.

Inanna's Practice

“Inanna's Descent to the Underworld,” an ancient poem rooted in 3500 B.C. Mesopotamia, provides the archetypal pattern of descent and rebirth inherent to the psychological process of individuation and embodiment. In the poem, Inanna makes a conscious choice to follow her instincts and enter the realm of the underworld. Despite the inherent danger of the journey, the goddess is compelled and determined to witness the funeral rites of Gugalanna, husband of Inanna's sister Ereshkigal. Before departing from her safe and familiar world, however, Inanna arranges for a secure release from the

deep below by instructing her trustworthy servant Ninshubur to appeal to the father gods if she does not return within three days (Murdock, 1998).

Inanna begins her descent to the netherworld and is treated according to the same age-old rites and rules that have applied to anyone who has ever braved the journey. In order to continue down towards Ereshkigal, the goddess must confront seven gatekeepers and remove one piece of her royal attire at each of the seven descending gates. Stripped of her clothes and jewels, Inanna enters in the underworld “naked and bowed low” (Murdock, 1998, p.59). Upon lifting her gaze, Inanna meets the eyes of Ereshkigal and is fixed with a piercing glare of death. Without any feeling, the dark goddess hangs Inanna’s corpse on a peg and leaves her to rot into a rancid slab of green meat (Pererra, 1981, p.3).

When three days pass and Inanna fails to return, Ninshubur solicits help from the father gods by beating on her drum and lamenting. Finally, it is Enki, the god of waters and wisdom, who hears Ninshubur’s plea and responds. From the dirt beneath his fingernails, Enki creates two sprites, Kalatura and Kurgara, who are able to slip into the netherworld and commiserate with the dark goddess. As Ereshkigal receives the genuine empathy and understanding of the sprites, she is filled with gratitude. For love of the generous beings, Erishkigal honors their request to release Inanna’s corpse from the peg and restore the goddess to life (Perera, 1981).

Revived, Inanna returns through the sevens gates and gathers her regalia. On her way, the looming presence of demons reminds her that she is not yet entirely free from the burden of the underworld. Because Inanna has initiated a process of descent, she will have to choose a substitute for her position in the netherworld. At first, Inanna is unsure

about granting such a fate to anyone. However, when the goddess discovers that her loving consort Dumuzi has not mourned her disappearance and instead, assumed her vacant throne, she demands him to be scapegoat. As she looks upon her lover with the same gaze of death that was once bestowed upon her, the demons flee from Inanna's presence. Though the goddess is released, she must now suffer the loss of her beloved to the underworld (Murdock, 1998).

The final part of the myth introduces Dumuzi's sister Geshtinanna, a woman who is so overwhelmed with love and grief for her brother, that she makes a conscious sacrifice to share Dumuzi's time in the underworld. Acting from a place of pure love, Geshtinanna agrees to participate in a continuous cycle of descent. By choosing to confront the underworld herself, she ends the violent pattern of scapegoating (Murdock, 1998).

Essentially, Inanna's descent tells the story of an individuating body—the long, arduous struggle with pain and the transformative encounter with death itself. Unlike the masculine stories of heroism and dominance that have provided a backdrop for Western thought, the myth of Inanna provides a path toward the reclamation of feminine instinct, the body, and a connection to the natural world. By applying the myth of Inanna to body/mind consciousness, Western culture may see a way of healing the split between psyche and soma, masculine and feminine, light and dark—the split that has characterized Western civilization.

In order to realize Feminine consciousness, Western culture is called to retrieve and to embody aspects of the feminine archetype that have been relegated to the unconscious for five thousand years (Perera, 1981). Instead of continuing the heavy

effort to maintain the patriarchal trend toward high-civilization, discipline, perfection, and ideals, individuals are beginning to submit to their longing for knowledge of the feminine. However, before a consciousness based on the principles of process, reverence, bodily experience, and receptivity can be realized, an individual must first reckon with the wrathful and chthonic feminine energy that has been repudiated, denied, and exiled for the sake of upholding a masculine-oriented society (Perera, 1981).

Yoking the Opposites

In the beginning of Inanna's story, the uninitiated goddess "turns her ear toward the great below" (Meador, 1994, p.46) and willingly chooses the process of descent. Like many daughters of patriarchal culture, Inanna feels disembodied, disenchanting, disempowered, and disconnected from the earth itself. No longer able to endure a life of complacency and dull accolades, Inanna chooses to engage in the yogic practice of holding the tension of the opposites. Following her quiet sense of intuition, Inanna supposes that there is more to life. Rather than thinking her way into her future, Inanna allows herself to be guided by her bodily experience.

The myth of Inanna displays the fundamental task of the process of individuation: that of holding the tension of the opposites. In the myth, Inanna, a highly civilized, culture-bearing goddess is called to leave everything familiar and comfortable in order to honor psyche's call toward wholeness. In order to realign herself with nature and the realm of the instincts, Inanna must descend into the underworld and meet her shadow-sister, Ereshkigal. As Inanna moves toward the terrible woman, the myth draws together an archetypal pattern of opposites. Inanna journeys downward, and the realms of primordial nature and civilized life are pulled toward one another with the recalcitrance

of two opposing magnetic force fields. Thus, Inanna's task can be understood as a yogic practice: the goddess moves toward the embodiment of dynamic opposites. Like Jesus Christ, Inanna accepts her fate and opens herself for the opportunity to embody the whole truth of her existence.

The Yoga of Embodiment is an extremely difficult task that demands discipline, vigilance, and fortitude. Simultaneously, the work is delicate, requiring an eye of non-judgment, acceptance, and love. Because the forces are great, one can easily fall from balance with a moment's slack. However, as all the body's resources are tapped to hold the pose of equilibrium, the deeper laws of being rise up in an offering of support. The accomplishment of such a task appears in the metaphor of a yogi's body: She is strong and supple, posed and moving, gross and intricate. Yoking the principles of opposition, the yogi becomes privy to a source-pool of energy. The pose holds her.

As Inanna descends toward Ereshkigal, she works to understand the inherent duality of life, and to accept the negative aspects therein. Along the way, Inanna engages in the practice of true discipline. Marion Woodman (1991) offers, "Discipline is quite a lovely word. It comes from the same root as disciple, and it means seeing yourself through the eyes of the teacher who loves you" (p.141). For Inanna, the courage to move downward is derived from the goddess' faith in Ninshubur, the trusting servant who promises to secure Inanna's release from the underworld. Likewise, modern men and women may find strength and support in the reverberating voices of gurus, teachers, or therapists. At some point along the journey, however, the voice of the teacher becomes internalized in the body, and is no longer attributed to an external character.

Finally, the voice of the teacher is recognized as the patient and loving essence that resides quietly and eternally within (Murdock, 1998).

As the body moves to embrace the conflict of embodiment, the individuating ego has no choice but to depend on the wise guidance of the teacher, the voice of intuition. As the layers of defense and protection are stripped away, the voice of the teacher is finally recognized as the one thing that is constant and true. Sourcing itself from the very cells of the body, this new consciousness delivers an illuminated and vital sense of love to the body. Connected at once to nature and to the realm of instincts, an individual comes to know the miracle of connectivity between all living things.

From the story of Inanna and Ereshkigal, we learn that it is through the place of wounding that an individual connects with the divinity of love. Working to accept and embody some abysmal pain, Inanna demonstrates how the body itself develops a new sensitivity born of compassion (a word that means “suffering with”). Once Inanna experiences the ugliness and the death that are part of her own nature, she is able to understand and perceive Ereshkigal in a new way: Inanna is no longer able to cast judgment, or stand in fear, before her sister.

According to Marion Woodman (1993), once an individual experiences the ravages of her own body, she will also become more attuned to the ravages of nature:

The situation of our planet, our Mother Earth—the earthquakes, overpopulation, the destruction of the rainforests—are perils forcing us to a new consciousness of what matter is. It’s not just black nothingness, opaque. There is an energy within trying to be released. I think ordinary human beings are now working to see what is in their own matter, their own bodies, in terms of the larger consciousness in all matter. I call it the feminine side of God—God in matter. (pp.96)

The practice of embodiment is a process of physiological sensitization that

works to harmonize individuals with inner and outer environments. Its effectiveness is determined solely by the degree to which the individual can open to the feeling dimension of life (Feuerstein, 1996).

Opening the Subtle Body

In popular psychology, the “downward spiral” or descent process is associated with strong feelings of loss, depression, tragedy, and torment. In some cases, the event is experienced as an organic process with no apparent point of beginning. Other times, the experience might be induced by illness, disease, death, or heartache. In any case, the aim is often immediate: to find a way out of the emotional rip tide as quickly as possible. Inside this dark and ominous pull, the imagination fails. Even the most creative faculties cannot discern the map that, once upon a time, guided such an original psychic process. However, for the first time in history, Main Street is equipped with a yoga studio, a homeopathic doctor, and yoga-therapy practitioner. Apparently, Western culture is embarking on the quest to explore the apertures and energies of the gross and subtle body.

By remembering the story of Inanna, Western individuals may be inspired and encouraged to continue with the exploration of their re-claimed curiosities. In the mythical world where Inanna is revered as a beautiful and all-powerful goddess, our heroine has little reason to brave the deep and ugly realm of the underworld. However, despite her own irrational motives, Inanna continues upon the downward spiral of her path. Like a caterpillar, and maybe just as slowly, Inanna senses the form of her true essence. The goddess demonstrates her courageous will to risk death for the possibility of knowing her own beauty.

Until an individual understands that the process of descent is drawing her toward the knowledge of full individual and creative vitality, the strong pull of the unconscious is experienced as the ultimate form of torment. According to Marion Woodman (1991), it is the Goddess energy that demands our attendance upon the path of descent. And, because it is the task of the individuating ego to voice Her consciousness, the process of individuation must take place on a cellular level: Spirit must be fused with the dark matter of the human form. As the Goddess demands recognition, civilization is presented with the task of opening to her presence.

The slow and methodical task of opening the body to receive may be observed in the practice of yoga. Georg Fuerstein (1996), yoga master and author of over twenty books on the subject, has described the process of yoga as an awakening of Goddess energy that results in a total revolution of one's psychosomatic being. Depending on the particulars of an individual body, it may take years of concentration and study to release the hamstrings, open the hips, or drop the shoulders. In the meantime, suggests Feuerstein, an individual is practicing to relinquish ego attachments and learned perceptions: He/she is working to enter into the feeling dimension of life. Only when the hindrances of an ego-dominant lifestyle are stripped away, will an individual be able to integrate the energy that arrives when the "sleeping serpent" of Feminine energy awakens.

In her own way of practice, Inanna must pause and tend to her physical body at seven gates along her journey toward Ereshkigal. At each gate, Inanna relinquishes some cherished possession that has served to shield her from the bareness of her naked Self. Pulled into a confrontation with her own nakedness, Inanna arrives in the underworld

with open and clear energy centers. By sacrificing her old identity as a daughter of the patriarchy, she prepares herself to receive the intuitive and natural energies from the underworld (Meador, 1994).

On the one hand, Inanna's descent can be understood through the lens of psychoanalysis. As Inanna passes through the gates of the unconscious, she sheds the false adaptations and ego defenses that have guarded her from authentic existence, and helped her to survive in the civilized world. The jewels and robes sacrificed by Inanna might symbolize the personal complexes and identities that are broken down through the intricate work of analysis. As she descends and submits, Inanna opens herself as a vessel to be acted upon by transpersonal forces.

Simultaneously, the process of Inanna's descent conjures a likeness to the Eastern understanding of yoga. At each gate, Inanna removes an object from a chakra-center of her body, freeing the energy centers of her subtle body one by one. Jungian analyst Sylvia Brinton-Perera (1981) observes,

The seven levels of queenship lie on her body at the levels of the kundalini chakras. She wears crown, rod, or ear pendants, necklace, breast stones, gold ring or hip girdle, bracelets, and a garment of ladyship. As she divests and reinvests herself of these objects attention may have been called to the correlating chakra. She is brought down to naked muladhara—the rigid, inert material of incarnation, the bare ground of facts and bodily reality; down from the crown with its blissful uniting of opposites and cosmic consciousness into the pelvis; down to the root chakra where potential life sleeps and is restored in another paradoxical uniting of opposites. (p.61)

By the time Inanna arrives in the domain of the underworld, the goddess is “naked and bowed low” (Murdock, 1996, p.58). She has prepared her subtle body to receive the transformative encounter.

Receiving the Archetype

In the underworld, Ereshkigal asserts her power as the goddess of destruction, matter, and natural lawfulness. Ereshkigal's energies are the "elementary, retaining, conserving, grounding forces closely related to the *muladhara* chakra" (Perera, 1981, p.25) and in order to gain entry into Ereshkigal's domain, Inanna must embody this slow rhythm of dissolution and death. Inanna's encounter with Ereshkigal takes place in the eye of a matrix: in the plane of the underworld, Inanna is beaten into a piece of meat, hung on a hook to die, and then, gifted with new life that is sourced from instinctual energy. Because of her ability to receive, Inanna is restored to the full range of her energetic force, creativity and individuality.

When Ereshkigal fixes Inanna with the gaze of death, she demands the goddess to shift her center of gravity and to relinquish all forms of control. Ereshkigal exerts her wrath and shakes the bare initiate of her near-sighted vision of life, her narrow spectrum of goals, and her stilted perception of hierarchical consciousness (Meador, 1994). In her death, Inanna is made to acknowledge that, inevitably, it is Ereshkigal--the goddess of life and death--who holds the ultimate power. Dying to her old self, Inanna learns humility for Ereshkigal's power. Upon surrendering, Inanna is gifted with the essential meaning of her life: The goddess receives sight of the miraculous design of the Self archetype.

Through the act of receiving, Inanna discovers a newfound love for femaleness, and for her own femininity. Experientially, Inanna moves from an absorption in feelings of utter fear, rigidity, and anguish, to those of purity, clarity, and love. As new

consciousness radiates throughout Inanna's body, the goddess arrives at a conscious understanding of her unique psychological reality (Meador, 1994).

Meanwhile, in the underworld, the unconscious death goddess is also transformed by the overwhelming arrival of love and compassion. As Inanna hangs in putrid form upon the peg, Ereshkigal wails and weeps in her way of dark mourning and pain. Then, out of thin air (but really from the realm of Inanna's worldly life) Kalatur and Kurgarra--two sexless sprites made by the god of emotions—arrive to meet and hold Ereshkigal's pain. Rather than trying to calm or assuage her despair, the sprites simply listen to the goddess and allow her to simply *be* a puddle of sadness. Feeling heard, held, and received for the first time, Ereshkigal relaxes into pure *Being* and allows the sprites to return Inanna to life.

With the ability to discipline and contain psyche's chthonic instinctual energy through the experience of love, Inanna is able to integrate all the wisdom and energy from the realm Ereshkigal. Transformed into a goddess who can move back and forth between the realms of raw and primal nature and civilization, Inanna is released to manifest her vision in the world.

The metaphorical journey taken by Inanna may potentially be realized through the practice of yoga. Eric Schiffman, a yoga teacher based in Southern California writes, "Essentially you are working with an energy field. You are changing the energy pattern and the way your energy pattern flows" (1996, p.40). By transforming an individual's relationship to the dark and split-off energy of natural life, the practice works to revision the map of life itself. Understood in this way, the practice of yoga is much more than an

exercise in contortionism. It is a deep exploration into the prospect of becoming vitally embodied individuals.

Love Consciousness

The myth of Inanna conveys the miracle of love born from the discipline of holding together, or yoking, the forces of opposing energy. When the opposite realms of Inanna and Ereshkigal are brought together “the differentiated lunar and solar energies blend to a single fire, which, then, like a blast, ascends with the awakened kundalini into and along the central way” (Perera, 1981, p.79). When the two breaths of Inanna and Ereshkigal are fused, intertwined, and set into motion like a double-helix, a miraculous life-energy--a conscious form of love--is born. Through this love, the cells of the body are illuminated with a new light, and the individual begins to experience the fact that there *is* a consciousness in matter.

From the well-pools of mystery, such consciousness arrives on the breath to circulate throughout the musculature of the body. Moving as a connector between the deep place of mystery and the human body, the breath itself may be used as a tool to encourage the cells to open toward the miracle of love. Woodman (1991) observes, “Most of us keep our breath as shallow as possible because the eruption of feeling is too intense if we inhale deeply” (p.19). Perhaps, we are afraid to fall in the underworld. Encouraging her analysands to work with the breath, Woodman notes that breathing is a matter of receiving; therefore, it is the feminine principle incarnate.

The cycles and spans of the breath are central to the practice of yoga. According to yogic philosophy, pranayama is the science of breath that leads to the creation, distribution, and maintenance of vital energy (Iyengar, 1989). As breathing practice

feeds the cells, nerves, and organs with the intelligence and consciousness of the human system, it also works to explore the unknown aspects of energetic being. From regular practice, students often discover a particular resistance or blockage. When a student learns to work through such resistance by applying conscious attention, he/she moves closer to the experience of life's natural rhythm. By quieting the mind, breath work urges the individual body to listen to the internal guidance and insight born of the instincts (Iyengar, 1989).

Gradually, as consciousness is connected to the matter of the body, the wisdom of the subtle and energetic body is unleashed. In Descent to the Goddess (1981), Sylvia Brinton Perera asserts that, upon the meeting of Inanna and Ereshkigal, consciousness moves toward the realization of the Tantric view that “sees each chakra containing its own form of awareness, each providing a distinct perspective, all of which are to be welcomed as facets of cosmic consciousness” (p.30). In other words, Perera perceives the awakened individual as an embodiment of consciousness. The human body provides a container for the reception of spirit, and the divine energy of love is free to be released.

Yoga as Ritual

For women of the Neolithic, and possibly even Paleolithic eras, the process of descent was an inherent fact of life. Periodically, women gathered to observe, to honor, and to mediate the ebb and flow of natural life that supported human existence. In order to relate to the mysterious and powerful forces of nature, women gathered to keep vigil of the deep and silent rhythms of the earth, and of their own bodies. Ritual practice served to orient and align a culture with the transpersonal forces during periods of despair, pain, and death (Whitmont, 1997).

For the last three thousand years, many practices of ritual enactment that once served to maintain the connection between nature and human consciousness have not been popularly maintained. Though native cultures around the world honor solstices, equinoxes, and cycles of women's menses, the achievements of modern technology and material excess have functioned like shields, protecting humanity from an inevitable interaction with the forces of nature. Believing in the quest to dominate nature, a civilization has lost its sense of humility. As a result, some individuals have fallen from the balanced position of understanding themselves as both the bearers of culture and the fragile beings who are dependent on the mercy of the universe (Whitmont, 1997).

To make matters worse, and even lonelier, the loss of ritual practice has separated a culture from its vision of the mythical pattern that exists at the heart of life itself. Without a relationship to a containing myth that works to frame and guide the processes of individuation and conscious evolution, individuals too often become disoriented along the quest toward wholeness. For some, the pervasive feeling is one of being lost and lonely, completely separated and obscured from meaning. Without a guiding light, the individuating ego flounders, grappling with an amorphous and unbearable pain that does not rest because it has nothing—no foundation—in which to trust.

Without the security of a containing structure, individuals foster a tendency to react to their pain. In most cases, the concept of surrendering to the unconscious pull of pain and descent is not even entertained as an option: the abyss has been too frightening and too lonely a place. Rather than submitting to Ereshkigal, many individuals choose medication, denial, and refusal. People spend lifetimes warding off a process that is meant to restore them to true health and vibrancy.

Through the work of this thesis, I would like to acknowledge the re-emergence of a ritual that may work to re-establish a connection to the primacy of nature and the subtle energies inherent in human form. This is the practice of yoga: a ritualistic, ever-evolving experiment that unites individuals in the practice of holding together the opposites, connecting to breath, realizing the strengths and weaknesses of human form, observing the mysteries, and sharing revelations through the experience of community.

Unlike the rituals observed by matriarchal culture, the emerging descent rituals for twenty-first century life are concerned with fostering an individual, rather than a collective connection with the transpersonal. As James Hillman and Michael Ventura recognize in their book *A Hundred Years if Psychotherapy and the World is Getting Worse* (1992), it is time for Western civilization to nurture, express, and include elements of the individuation process through community life.

It is my experience that people need the energy and the love of other people in order to individuate, to incarnate. Jung is also quoted as saying “A human being cannot individuate on a mountain-top” (1965, p.89) True, the work toward conscious embodiment may begin in the petri dishes of analysis. But ultimately, I think, the body and its emerging energies demand attention, and desire expression in community. When depression or illness captures and possesses the body, the soul is depleted. During these times, even the voice becomes a deadened flat line: Talking is not going to help. Ereshkigal did not want to talk to the sprites. She needed to *be*—and, at the same time, she did not need to be alone. In order to heal, Ereshkigal needed the energy, and the love, of the little sprites.

According to psychoanalyst Edward Whitmont (1997), a ritual practice is most effective when it succeeds to open an individual to the experience of the subtle energies of the body. During Inanna's descent to the underworld, the goddess models the process involved in such a ritual. By relating to her physical body at each of the seven descending gates, Inanna struggles to hold the tension of the opposites, and to forge a connection with the unconscious aspects of psyche. By accepting and embodying the awkward and uncomfortable task of becoming naked, Inanna carves out a descent ritual that works to "mobilize and channel primitive and undifferentiated (potentially obsessive) energy into form" (p.242).

In modern times, the ancient myth of Inanna may be remembered and used as a guide, or a model, for the process of descent and embodiment. However, while the myth provides a sort of infrastructure for the practice, it is unlikely for the work of embodiment to become manifest without the presence of a real-life teacher. In The Power of Myth (1988), Bill Moyers asks Joseph Campbell how it is that an individual learns to live wholly and spiritually. Campbell's answer is certain: One learns to truly *live* through (a) the discipline of teachers, and (b) the practice of ritual (p.145). My experience has lead me to understand that certain teachers and individuals serve as the keepers of the ancient forms of ritual and healing.

*Every part of you has a secret language
Your hands and feet say what you've done
And every need brings in what is needed.
Pain bears its cure like a child.
Having nothing produces provisions
Ask a difficult question.
And the marvelous answer appears.*

-Rumi

(1993, p.57)

CHAPTER IV BODY STORY

At some point during the second year of my studies at Pacifica Graduate Institute, Professor Dennis Slattery (2000) warned our class, “Be careful what you write your thesis about....because it just might become manifest.” I remember feeling quite relieved that I had not chosen to write about something like cancer or deadbeat boyfriends. In some way, I knew I was bound for a title along the lines of The Yoga of Embodiment. As I sat in class, I wondered what the ultimate pose or practice would look like, and how it might evolve. In my craziest fantasy, I could never have imagined that during the months to follow I would be diagnosed with Lyme disease and moved in *this* way to embrace my own process and understanding of descent and embodiment.

For the most part of my life, I have harbored a deep longing: More than anything, I have wanted to feel perpetually alive inside my body. I believe this deep longing to connect with my own physicality was born from my experience with juvenile arthritis as a child. As I endured excruciating pain and banal routines of medicine, I turned my attention to the feeling inside the musculature of my body. Over time, I was increasingly disturbed by how estranged I felt from my body. Because of this uncomfortable feeling, I was always working to find a solution to the problem.

For years, as a long-distance runner, I gloried in the rush of endorphins that worked like drugs to deliver a sense of peace and calm throughout the cells of my body. Shortly after my daily run, however, the sweet feeling that I became so dependent on,

would inevitably subside. As the endorphins retreated, my body would revert to feeling like an unanimated piece of lead, and I would look forward to my next run. On some level, as I endured the running, I knew that this experience of feeling animated, alive, and embodied *must* have the potential to endure. Though I knew how I wanted to feel inside my body, I had no idea how to go about making this happen.

After a few years of intense running, my body rebelled. Waif-like and weak, I endured two bilateral knee surgeries and finally decided that it was time to give up my destructive habit. Following the second surgery, I enrolled in my first yoga class and began the long process of breathing into the musculature of my body and accepting the discomfort and pain that existed there. As I mentioned in Chapter I, my first experience in yoga class was transformative: It was my first engagement in a ritual practice that worked to provide a container for the process of transformation. Each week, in the same room with the same people, I was encouraged to enter the unconscious and painful areas my body.

By opening myself to the ritual of practicing yoga, I slowly learned to trust the energy of reverberating love— a phenomenon that seems to occur when people convene in a reverent and conscious way. I began to trust that this underlying sense of love would hold me as I continued upon the process of descent. It is like this: when a child develops the courage to slide down the playground slide, she wants to know that someone will be there to catch her when she lands. Without faith that a loving parent will be there when she falls, the child may resist the ride. In a similar manner, the ritual of yoga may substantiate the knowledge that love, and community, will be there as a support during the courageous journey of self-exploration, revelation, and descent.

Like my experience as a practitioner of yoga, my involvement as a class member at Pacifica Graduate Institute also encouraged me to open and surrender to the archetypal process of descent and embodiment. Each month for a two-year period, the circle of our class united in ritual form to study psychology. Though the coursework was interesting and nourishing, the real phenomenon of the educational experiment was that a group of people learned to trust the loving energy born of their own creation. Rather than trying to accomplish some intellectual feat or prove their own personhood through the structure of academia, Pacifica students worked to engage in the ritual of creating a container for *being* where true and authentic individuality and vulnerability could be explored and expressed. Again, as part of the Pacifica circle, I experienced the process of individuation on a cellular level: The more comfortable I became with my own voice, expression, and role in the group, the more comfortable I became inside my very own body.

As I engaged in rituals of opening towards the exploration of the unknown, I began to sense the possibility that I could, in fact, know that feeling of being totally alive and healthy inside my body. From my experience, I began to understand that the art of embodiment was not something to be achieved through the study of psychology or the practice of asana. What I began to feel was not an objective or intellectual epiphany, but a cellular and energetic reality that could only be realized by the courageous and continual act of trusting and letting go into the energy of love that sustains and provides a foundation for all of life. By sacrificing my familiar roles and identities, I could re-discover and re-connect with the instinctual and primal energies that are essential elements for Self realization.

Meanwhile, the process of descent began to take hold of my life. Time began to stretch into a slow rhythm. Days passed in a timeless blur and an overall sense of lethargy possessed my body. Just when I thought life might come to a complete standstill, I was invited on a journey to go to Belize. Within an hour of stepping off the plane, I met a native Rastafarian, Anthony Austin, who was literally the incarnate image of someone who is utterly and entirely alive and comfortable within his body. Anthony moved like an instrument, completely in touch with all his intuitive and instinctual capacities. He talked to the trees and the plants, and entertained relationships with the stray dogs, the birds, and the crocodiles. One day, Anthony moved gracefully through a series of yoga poses without having ever heard the word “yoga.” Needless to say, I was thoroughly fascinated with my new friend.

Upon my return to the states, I was inspired toward and committed to the exploration of the topic of Embodiment for my thesis. Little did I know, it was also committed to me. Within days, I was struck with a dramatic onset of illness. My vision became blurry, I lost short-term memory, and my knees swelled up like grapefruits. My entire body became weighted with depression and unquenchable fatigue. After two months of visiting doctors, I was diagnosed with chronic Lyme disease. Apparently, the disease had been in my system since childhood and, as the months progressed, I became a puddle of hysteria, sadness, and indescribable remorse. I’m not sure that I can find words to describe the vacuous, black-hole that I entered. I did not work, sleep, or even go outside. For months on end, as I treated myself with antibiotics, whole foods, and vitamins, I cried, and cried, and cried--fully letting go into the endless abyss of sadness. It was during this time that I found comfort in the myth of Inanna. Feeling empty and

bereft, I imagined what Inanna must have endured in the underworld as she hung from Ereshkigal's peg. I also invested some time believing in sprites.

Looking back, I'm not sure when the net of madness began to lift. Drawing strength from my closest communities-- my family, friends, and teachers, as well as my circle at Pacifica-- I began to emerge. Slowly, everything started to heal: my knees, my vision, my agony, my life. One day, I went outside for a long walk. The next thing I knew, I was moving across the country to San Francisco to live with my friends and to begin a new job at a yoga school that focuses on the medical aspects of an ancient practice.

From the course of this project, I have learned that Embodiment is the miracle that happens when an individual is able to completely surrender to the power of love and healing. I'm not sure I will ever be able to completely articulate the transformation that occurred through the portal of my own body. All I know is that my experience has changed. By fully acknowledging the negative and painful energies in my organic body, I no longer feel objective in relationship to my body. Instead, a new sensitivity, or consciousness, has awakened within the fabric of my body.

Because I understand a process of individuation that occurs on a cellular level, I envision an emerging school of yoga that focuses on supporting the life of the individual, organic body while sustaining a ritual that guides individuals toward the reality of embodiment. During the practice, students will be encouraged to enter the unconscious and unknown aspects of the subtle and energetic body. Working to know the deep rhythms of the natural and instinctual life buried in the body's substance, they will discover a grounded place--a sanctified reference for the busy days of civilized life.

Instead of focusing on a particular form or teaching, the school and its teachers shall revere--first and foremost--the miracle of an unfolding mystery: an individuating and cellular human consciousness.

At this time, I am working along with others who share the vision, to create a yoga school that offers specialized classes to benefit specific communities of people. For example, as an alternative or supplement to therapy, the school will offer classes for cancer, MS, HIV, and chronic pain patients. There will also be classes for pregnant women, adolescent girls, and senior citizens. Dozens of class ideas are possible. What is important is the central focus of the work: to create a space where individuals are taught to listen to the body in order to perceive pain, disease, or discomfort as the most supreme teacher.

I believe that the work of embodiment contributes to the field of Depth Psychology by providing a container where the principles and theories developed by Jung, Hillman, Woodman, and others, may be safely integrated and explored within the body. It is my view that the practice of yoga is an ever-evolving experiment that would graciously receive contributions from the field of Depth Psychology. As I mentioned in the beginning of this thesis, I believe that it is time for the body to be studied and understood in light of the dream. Worlds of information live inside the silence of form, awaiting some attention.

At this point, I am not sure how the vision for the yoga school will manifest. All I know is that day by day the particulars are working themselves out, so long as I remain vigilant. An hour ago, I re-discovered some encouraging words by Joseph Campbell (1988):

If you do follow your bliss you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while, waiting for you, and the life that you ought to be living is the one you are living. When you can see that, you begin to meet people who are in the field of your bliss, and they open the doors to you. I say, follow your bliss and don't be afraid, and doors will open where you didn't know they were going to be. (p.120)

And, according to Mr. B.K.S. Iyengar (1987), the author of Light in Yoga (1966), the body itself is made up of five layers: the anatomical layer, the physiological layer, the psychological layer, the intellectual level, and Bliss. Presently, I am learning to know and to embrace this delicate reality of bliss that emerges only when an individual has authentically participated in his/her own struggle for truth.

⁶⁶*To make what fate intends for me
my own intentions.”*

*-Carl Jung
(1966, p.413*

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have attempted to illustrate the process of descent that has been an integral part of psychic life since the beginning of time. It is my belief that in order to embody the new consciousness born of love, an individual must endure a long process of stripping away the defenses that have worked to protect the vulnerable core that is the very essence of being human. To engage in this kind of work, individuals need the support of a community, and a ritual, that encourages the exploration of the unknown. Such is the Yoga of Embodiment.

Through the work of this thesis, I have discovered, experientially, how the process of individuation manifests on a cellular level in the human body. By exploring the myth of Inanna, I have attempted to describe how the journey toward embodiment may be realized through the metaphors and subtle energies of the body. Longing for connection with instinctual, bodily, feminine consciousness, Inanna motions to return to her dark sister in the underworld. As the powerful goddess of fertility, order, and civilization wanders toward the reclamation of matter, organic energy, and primal affect, a transformation of consciousness is set into motion. When a harmonious relationship between psyche and matter is finally achieved, a new energy born of love and compassion is realized within the very fabric of matter— in the body.

Throughout the course of this thesis, I have attempted to understand how the process of yoking, or uniting, the opposite energies of two great goddesses may be

experienced, and tended, inside the body. Viewing the wounded body as a portal or invitation toward the path of embodiment and wholeness, I have attempted to uncover the poetic function of the body: the body as a language with the ability to illuminate the very essence of being. By understanding the human form as a sacred place that contains the individuation process, cultures the senses, and radiates intelligence, I have described a Western form yoga that acknowledges the psychological significance for an ancient practice of union. Instead of understanding yoga in a literal sense-- and practicing as a mere physical discipline-- I have imagined the practice of yoga as a re-emergence of a ritual that works to re-connect humankind to the instinctual realm of breath and body.

My work implies that psychoanalysis and yoga, as practiced in the Western world, are merging towards the realization of a ritual, community-oriented practice that honors the process of embodiment. Instead of relying on words and intellectual understanding to unfold the process of individuation in rooms of analysis, I imagine a healing tradition where the process of individuation relaxes into the fabric of the body, and communities engage in rituals of practice that honor, and hold, the body's path of natural unfolding along the path of opposing dualities.

I believe that the Yoga of Embodiment contributes to the field of psychology by including the feminine, instinctual life of the body. With this acceptance, I propose a method of healing that does not rely on psychological interpretation or intellectual understanding. Instead of extending strong mental effort to derive meaning or clarity through words, language, and interpretation, I propose a discipline that creates the space for genuine feeling to emerge. As a body tunes in its own impulses and feeling, the individuation process may be experienced and revered within the body. Only then, as we

cease to concentrate on talking about meaning and understanding, might we have a chance to experience the purity of being alive.

The Yoga of Embodiment is a practice that emerges somewhere between the experiment of psychoanalysis and introduction of Eastern yoga in the West; it is about honoring the energy of the subtle body, and experiencing the life force therein. Though I did not expand upon the practice of kundalini yoga, I would like to recognize the parallels that exist between the Eastern practice of awakening the sleeping serpent in the muladhara chakra and the phenomenon of the coniunctio that occurs when the opposites, matter and psyche, are brought together in union. In fact, my own study of the chakra system and the symbols of kundalini yoga provided much inspiration and momentum for the work of this paper; the symbols lend insight to the particular blockages, illnesses, and energy patterns that individuals may experience within the process of individuation . Unlike the practice of kundalini yoga, however, the Yoga of Embodiment does not involve a series of intense breathing exercises (Judith, 1996). Students are encouraged to access renewed energy by *sensing* their way into the experience of the body.

By exploring the soul's unfolding on an energetic and cellular level, I realize that I have merely succeeded to open discussion on a field of study that is still in its infancy. Questions outside my own present knowledge and experience beg further research. For example, throughout the course of this paper I have wondered about the relationship between the archetypes and their particular manifestations in the human body. Why do individuals tend to foster vulnerability in one particular body part (or chakra)? Jungian analyst Marie-Louise Von Franz acknowledges this budding field of research in her book Psyche and Matter (1988) by exploring the question "of whether certain archetypal

images refer to special organic realms” (p.185). Though I have articulated how I imagine psyche’s expression through the body more as a poetic rendering than a science of energy patterns or archetypal patterns, I would still like to acknowledge how such research could contribute to the understanding of what it is to be embodied.

By honoring the ritual practice of yoking spirit to body through the art of yoga, my thesis attempts a re-visioning the Western practice of healing. Instead of depending on the curative and mollifying counselor, I am offering a model of healing that seeks to eliminate the healer as well as the patient. Through establishing a yogic practice that honors the energy of life and encourages the act of surrender and acceptance, a healing practice that is finally based on the premise of health in born: At the heart of the practice dwells a sense of humor, play, sensuality, and joy. The Yoga of Embodiment is a healing doctrine based on the principles of surrender, sacrifice, and renunciation, rather than struggle, morality, and combat.

Ultimately, when an individual works to grow mentally, physically, psychologically, and spiritually, the work expands way beyond the parameters of individual consciousness. The increase in consciousness, beauty, and purity is meant to extend towards the whole of humanity. In order to integrate conscious knowledge into practical life, however, an individual must actualize, or share how they have grown within a community--and ultimately, within a society. A person working among a group may begin to understand how the whole organism of community is lifted and transformed when the individual exercises personal discipline. One learns to be true to his/her own unique path of unfolding, while, at the same time, contributing to the community at large.

As I have contemplated the emerging practice of the Yoga of Embodiment, I have wondered about the education and training of the discipline's teachers. Working to urge the union between body and psyche, a teacher would ideally possess an understanding of the healing practice of yoga as well as the principles of depth psychology. The yogic asanas (meaning "dwelling place") are curative poses that work toward the integration of body, breath, senses, mind, intelligence, and all of life itself (Iyengar, 1988). The asanas are meditations that move an individual toward the realm of the instinctual life of feminine consciousness and the body. In order to teach The Yoga of Embodiment, a teacher would benefit tremendously from an in-depth study of the Eastern philosophy and practice of yoga as taught by B.K.S. Iyengar.

Whether a psychotherapist, a yoga practitioner, a body worker, or an artist, a teacher would also benefit from a strong education in the disciplines relating to the life of the soul. Teachers working from this approach will nurture an interest in the Humanities, and immerse themselves in the world's religions, mythologies, fairytales, poems and stores of literature. Ultimately, in order to hold the class and teach the practice of yoking opposite energies within the body, a teacher needs to have experienced the transformational process herself.

Jung believed that the practice of holding the tension of the opposites was the most important ethical task for the men and women of the modern era. In unifying the opposites, Jung spoke of a new emerging god image of wholeness—one that would include the masculine and feminine, spirit and body, good and evil. Until that happens, each individual can only continue to listen to the impulses of the psyche, or soul, through

dream images, fantasies, and through the symptoms and sensations felt within our own physical bodies.

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