

The continuous hallucinatory experience

The practice of movement between merger to differentiation

The continuous hallucinatory experience is based on the innate psychological traits of merger and differentiation. Merger is the natural psychological state to which an infant is born. Henceforth, from the initial merger point of the inborn and her caregiver, there is a long individuation and differentiation journey. The movement to and from the state of merger is a natural trait that is done unconsciously.

In a group setting, the conscious and aware practice of differentiation and merger was conducted as a deliberate and active process, allowing altered states of consciousness. This practice, which I led with a group for a year, can be performed throughout daily life and enables movement and flexibility between states of consciousness. The space held by the group provides a container for the natural state of non-duality to emerge, specifically for the opening of the range of movement between a sense of a separate self and being awareness itself.

The spectrum between merger and differentiation is known internally not only because of the ways of psychological development. It is also the continuum of the trauma response: on one axis are dissociation, derealization, and depersonalization, while on the other axis is being in the presence of the experience. The experiencer goes through Freud's (1920/2015) pleasure principle, moving away from pain towards pleasure. The most immediate pleasure in the case of a traumatic event is disconnection. It does not bring gratification but eliminates the pain. Thus, the axis of movement between merger and differentiation is natural, innate, and known to the psyche. Merger in the continuum is on the same side of the axis as dissociation, depersonalization, and derealization. Differentiation in the continuum is on the same side of the axis as presence.

In the group I led, utilizing the spectrum with deliberation and awareness brought skillful maneuvering between merger and differentiation. Unlike post-trauma, where dissociation, depersonalization, and derealization occur unconsciously and hijack the mind, the movement on the continuum is calculated. The space of the group is a synergetic creation. It provides a safe container (Bion, 1985) for the delicate unfoldment of the psyche due to the rewarding properties of social interaction.

Social interactions influence the increase of and require the coordinated activity of oxytocin and 5-HT in the nucleus accumbens (Dölen, Darvishzadeh, Huang, et al. 2013; Nagasawa, Mitsui, En, Ohtani, Ohta, et al., 2015). Moreover, meditation impacts brain networks connecting the default mode network and the anterior hippocampus, which are involved in emotion and memory. Psilocybin also has this impact (Siegel, Subramanian, Perry, Kay, Gordon, et al., 2024). These may explain the underlying mechanism at work.

*Differentiation: The conscious-aware state of presence within oneself while aware of the presence of otherness.

*Awareness: Being reality; as one entity.

*Self: An apparatus of self-aspects. A singular self-aspect may be dominant at any given moment. The domination of self-aspects is interchangeable. Self-aspects can cooperate within the self-apparatus. The apparatus has a self-observer that influences its flexibility (de Lange, 2014).



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