

AYAHUASCA ENTITY VISITATIONS: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS
OF INTERNET-REPORTED ENCOUNTERS

by

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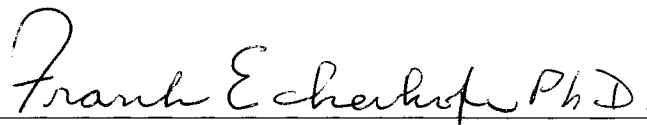
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AYAHUASCA ENTITY VISITATIONS: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF
INTERNET-REPORTED ENCOUNTERS

Abstract

Aliens, robots, insectoid creatures, deities, and mythic beings are familiar to users of the hallucinogenic plant mixture Ayahuasca. While Ayahuasca has been extensively studied, this is the first systematic analysis of these entities, even though they are widely known by Ayahuasca users. The analysis focused on the texts of Ayahuasca experiences among Internet forum discussions. The selected data consists of text archives from a four-year period of a single anonymous users' forum. Using a systematic, computer-assisted method, the researcher developed a code consisting of classifications of entities and their attributes. I used *thematic analysis* as described by Boyatzis (1998). An integral literature review includes brief references to the origins and use of Ayahuasca; more lengthy treatment is given to theoretical considerations with respect to Ayahuasca research. A brief exploration of mental imagery in current psychological literature introduces the theoretical framing. The contributions of cognitive psychologist Shanon (2002) produced the most comprehensive report of Ayahuasca phenomenology to date; he draws conclusions that question fundamental assumptions about psychological science. Many Western scientific approaches look to inner cognitive structures, attitudes, and neurophysiology for causes and functional

roles of mental imagery. In contrast, Jungian and transpersonal theories address content rich dimensions of nonordinary states and collective universals. The results of the present study include over 140 categories of entities and their interactions, and thematic patterns that were associated with two affective *antipodes*, which means diametrically opposed poles, derived from 29 codes for nuances of negative and positive emotions. The discussion relates these results to Jungian thought and the transpersonal perspective of Grof (2001); it also responds to some of Shanon's contributions to the study of Ayahuasca.

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Dedication

No words can possibly capture the essence
of my love and appreciation for all of you:

To my extended family:

Dawn, Ryan, Amber, Tom, Lyla, Eden, Florence,
Kate, Libre, Gwennyth, Diane, Karen, and Sandy.

To Colibri Circle and friends:

Corie, Brian, Marlo, David N., David S., and many others.

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Chapter I: Introduction

The word *Ayahuasca* is from the South American Indian *Quechua* language. *Aya* refers to souls of the dead, while *hoasca* means vine, the combination of which yields *vine of the dead*, *vine of the spirits*, or *vine of the souls* (Metzner, 1999). The word *Ayahuasca* is capitalized in the present work, in deference to the cultures that regard the plants as living spiritual entities, as described in Quinlan (2001). Individuals in a number of traditional as well as modern Western cultures drink preparations of the vine for its psychoactive properties, and as a source of information, healing, and psychological insight. Some *Ayahuasca* consumers perceive autonomous hallucinatory entities. The aim of this dissertation is to provide rich and nuanced descriptions of this special class of visual mental events. It is the first study to systematically approach *Ayahuasca* entities exclusively, from a psychological perspective.

Ayahuasca visions occur in the presence of substances that have psychopharmacological effects, and it is regarded as a drug from a Western point of view. Because of this, psychologists who wish to inform themselves about atypical attitudes of social subgroups towards the use of substances may find the imagery discussed here helpful; they may find *Ayahuasca* to be different from delusional material and hallucinations described in typical psychopathological approaches to drug abuse. Furthermore, as processes of the psyche, *Ayahuasca* imagery by definition qualifies as psychological phenomena. The presence of *Ayahuasca* entities among Western users is a new class of mental experience in industrialized culture. The number of Western *Ayahuasca* users has, by virtue of information available on

the Internet, increased in prevalence from hundreds just five years ago to what is currently estimated to be thousands, roughly estimated on the basis of sales of the raw plant materials required to brew the drink. Visions of Ayahuasca entities provide an unusually rich source of mental imagery, not systematically studied by Jungians or by major transpersonal writers; they are a source of iconography that is available for psychological investigation. The presence of modern computer technology has provided me with not only new sources of data in the form of Internet reports, but also new methods for complex analyses. This was the first study to use computer-assisted, systematic analysis of mental imagery of Ayahuasca. In particular, Ayahuasca entities raise questions about psychological universals, because they sometimes present features that some writers think are unprecedented in psychological literature, and unexplained by existing Western psychological models. This led cognitive psychological scientist Benny Shanon (2002) to ask fundamental questions about the nature and locus of cognitive events, because some Ayahuasca entities appear to defy classification into cognitive, psychoanalytic, or transpersonal categories.

Aliens, robots, insectoid creatures, deities, and mythic beings are familiar in the context of Ayahuasca discussions in at least one Internet forum (Ayahuasca Forum, 2003). Contributors to this forum and other Internet sources have developed an extensive lore consisting of thousands of text entries as well as records of expressive art and music associated with their visions. The Ayahuasca Forums' Visions and Dreams Forum (2005) comprised the data for my study. The scope of the

data included all reports of entity encounters found in that forum between December 31, 1999 and January 1, 2004.

Some Ayahuasca drinkers say that they communicate with entities to obtain clairvoyant knowledge, insights as to psychological well being, and instructions leading to physical health of themselves and others. Occasionally, more than one person reports the same hallucinatory entities simultaneously (e.g., Sync, 2001, December 3). While there are many anthropological studies of such paranormal phenomena in shamanic traditions, this dissertation explores a class of such visions that is different, in part because it involves a non-traditional group of Ayahuasca practitioners. The Internet has made information about the preparation and use of Ayahuasca available to Europeans and North Americans, and provided a forum for their discussions. This has allowed for the development of a new population of users, which has emerged in the last 10 or so. This population is essentially a new cultural phenomenon, distinct from traditional Ayahuasca use because it includes people living in mostly urban, mostly Western industrialized parts of the world.

Any theoretical base, which necessarily forms the underpinnings for research, is characterized by a certain bias in the form of presuppositions and preconceived theoretical structures. Ayahuasca comes from cultures that are alien to the Western scientific point of view, but they have long traditions of knowledge and cosmologies that may have survived for millennia. Psychoanalytical investigators of industrialized Western descent look to inner cognitive structures, attitudes, and neurophysiology for the causes of psychological phenomena. In contrast, South American shamanic practitioners affirm causal connections with all kinds of outside influences in the

spirit realm. These beliefs may have influenced the textual data, even though most subjects are not from traditional cultures.

The theoretical section of the literature review introduces Jungian and transpersonal perspectives, along with the views of one cognitive psychologist, Benny Shanon, in order to compare their ethnographic, phenomenological, and archetypal approaches and interpretations. Transpersonal theory owes a debt for its origins to the observations and researches of many thousands of clinically observed sessions of nonordinary states of consciousness, including those induced with psychedelic substances. These states provide evidence for structures of the psyche comparable to those discovered in the Ayahuasca experience, which has a widely known psychedelic dimension. Transpersonal theory is comparable to the Jungian archetypal perspective in that they both address dimensions of nonordinary states, collective universals, and mental imagery.

The literature review has three goals. First, it briefly introduces Ayahuasca. Second, it provides a concise, integral overview that shows how the present study is embedded within the culture of Ayahuasca research and of its users. Finally, it furnishes a critical, specific focus on the chosen theoretical approaches that guide the investigation and offer a framework for its discussion. A brief exploration of how current psychological literature views mental imagery in general introduces the theoretical framing.

I used thematic analysis as described by Boyatzis (1998). He observes, from his years of using and teaching qualitative methods, that most qualitative inquiry

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction to Ayahuasca

While the name Ayahuasca often refers to a single plant species *Banisteriopsis caapi*, it is also true that most Ayahuasca preparations consist of additive plants that contain the more psychoactively potent alkaloids in the DMT (dimethyltryptamine) family (Ott, 1994). Many plants contain DMT; the most widely recognized one in traditional South American settings is *Psychotria viridis*. The presence of the MAOI (monoamine oxidase inhibitor) alkaloids in *B. caapi* potentiates DMT, which is not orally active without them. In addition to the traditional jungle potions, Ayahuasca *analogues* are other plant-derived mixtures whose pharmacology is identical or very similar (Ott, 1994).

Western interest in the beverage began in the mid-nineteenth century. Since that time, botanical and anthropological studies have confirmed Ayahuasca and analogue use throughout South America. It is currently in use among indigenous, urban, and Mestizo practitioners (Luna, 1986). Please refer to Appendix A, which contains more about Ayahuasca and its analogues.

Integral Review of Ayahuasca Literature

It is convenient to group the literature of Ayahuasca and related substances into three categories: (a) users of Ayahuasca and related substances, including religious, traditional, and non-traditional practitioners; (b) academic and scientific investigators; and (c) those which combine both (a) and (b), such that researchers report their own participation in Ayahuasca or other hallucinogen use. These three

categories are to help conceptualize ways that writers have approached Ayahuasca and other substances, and are not strict divisions. There are examples below that could arguably be placed in two, or all three categories. This overlap suggests vague boundaries, and may indicate something about the field of psychedelic literature in general—namely, that these substances appear to attract researchers who have actually experienced them. As noted by Shanon (2002), all known academic works that focus on organized religious use of Ayahuasca are produced by writers who are also members of these religions or are participants during at least some of the religious rites, in which the investigators directly participated by drinking the brew. Shanon's (1998) opinion is that only those who have experienced it can perform valid Ayahuasca research. This is one difference that sets the study of psychedelic phenomena apart from other psychological research. I added two additional pertinent categories for review of the literature: the general psychology literature about hypnagogic and mental imagery and an overview of transpersonal and Jungian theory relevant to the concerns of the current project.

Literature of Users of Ayahuasca and Related Substances, Including Religious, Traditional, and Non-Traditional Practitioners

This class of literature includes writings that may or may not make scientific research claims. However, they make historical and contextual contributions to the overall culture of hallucinogenic plant users and researchers. The books and articles included here have probably had a significant impact upon the recent history of these substances. As such, the intention in introducing this genus of literature is to contextualize Ayahuasca use in terms of a sub-cultural phenomenon, while avoiding

judgments regarding that culture's truth claims. It is hoped that this approach will reveal how some users explain among themselves many substance-induced phenomena, including entity encounters, while providing the reader with a sense of the zeitgeist in which Western experimentation with Ayahuasca occurs.

There are several biographical works whose subjects are indigenous or Mestizo Ayahuasca shamans in the Amazon. Bear (2000) offers an ethnographic biography of a Peruvian Mestizo healer, artist, and Ayahuasquero Don Agustin Rivas Vasquez, penned in the first person by the translator. The book relates childhood accounts of Don Agustin growing up in Amazonia during the 1940s and 1950s, and his adult capture by a jungle tribe, who taught him secrets of jungle medicine. Don Agustin's story is full of encounters of Ayahuasca entities as matter-of-fact daily occurrences, in anecdotal illustrations of tales of the world of Mestizo Ayahuasca shamanism. In this and similar biographical reports (e.g., Lamb, 1986), there occur tutelary and guardian spirit descriptions categorically consistent with those in Eliade (1964) and Halifax (1982).

Western investigators who participate in Ayahuasca religious ceremonies write about their experiences, as do South American practitioners. The largest Ayahuasca religion is the Church of Santo Daime. *Daime* roughly translates from a colloquial Portuguese contraction of *give-me*; *Santo* means *holy*. The Santo Daime is a syncretic religion consisting of elements of Catholicism, indigenous tribal beliefs, and Afro-Brazilian influences (Quinlan, 2001). The word *Daime* has several layers of meaning. It refers to the Ayahuasca beverage when consumed as a sacrament in Santo Daime religious rites called *trabalhos* (works) (Quinlan,

2001). Church members regard the *Daime* as an animated, spiritual force of the brew, a divine being unto itself, the source of the all wisdom, as well as the embodiment of Christ (de Alverga, 1999). The Santo Daime is the largest of the three main religious sects, and its participants are associated with more literature than other religious groups. The Santo Daime Church is spreading throughout the world, and sponsors *trabalhos* in America and Europe (Quinlan, 2001).

There are no known studies that examine Ayahuasca religious conversion experiences from other internal and external factors that may influence visions. Anthropological writers bemoan the blurring of cultural boundaries that essentially destroy the opportunities for making such distinctions, in part, because Western colonization and Christian missionaries endanger the cultures of shamans (Andritzky, 1989).

Scientific explanations may not interest some Ayahuasca practitioners, as is reflected in the following Internet forum posting:

I believe we should always keep in mind that in a host of Indian societies Ayahuasca was or still is used for practical purposes: to see at distance what one's wife was doing, to find lost objects, to locate the enemy, to find where the game was abundant, to decide if to move the settlement, to diagnose, to ease the acquisition of ethological and/or botanical/pharmacological knowledge, etc. All these uses necessitate the learning of a form of control over the effects...this aspect has to receive top priority in an integrated science at the service of humans, it appears that most Western "scientific" experiments...generate a largely irrelevant knowledge: this paradigm is the opposite of real world practices as it precisely and carefully removes all what orient and give meaning to the experience...and *de facto* forbids all the top-down processes that justly permit to gain control, to master the effects...The psychometric tools used in these experiments are no less irrelevant...All these tools are unable to tap the cognitive and affective processes that allow the emergence and training of voluntary control. They are years behind the state of the art in

cognitive sciences, in consciousness research, and are completely disconnected from the reality of ritual practices. (Doctorcito, 2004, June 18)

According to this view, experience among Ayahuasca healers confirms knowledge. To them, gains in health—corresponding to practical shamanic interventions—reveal salient knowledge (Quinlan, 2001). Experiences, however extravagant, that do not yield results are not highly valued. Quinlan, herself American-born, produced a qualitative dissertation at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) containing narratives of five *co-researchers*, a term that is used in the place of *subjects* or *cases* as in quantitative research. In studies such as Quinlan's, co-researchers revisit the data along with the author repeatedly until they come to an agreement that more iterations would not produce any further elaboration about their human experience of the phenomenon. This process contrasts with working with quantitative data, which are collected as discrete samples in time. Studies such as Quinlan's often include the author's own experiences, as well as her experiences and interpretations of her co-researchers' reports.

Quinlan's narrative analysis includes the unfolding of her own story along with the other five, two of whom are Western born. They all report the dramatic healing efficacy of Ayahuasca in the Santo Daime context. Each story is of potentially terminal illnesses, untreatable by allopathic methods. They tell of interactions between the researchers and hallucinatory healing entities. Quinlan and her co-researchers accept the veracity of these experiences because of actual results, in terms of clinically confirmed remissions from serious physical and

biopsychological disorders such as anorexic bulimia and terminal cancers. Quinlan and others see actual proof that translates into real healing as the most salient feature of knowledge, and of the value of entity encounters. De Alverga (1999) also reports the primacy of practical knowledge in the Santo Daime approach to healing:

I met with one of the jungle pharmacists, a woman who makes potent preparations from indigenous wild plants. In an amazing conversation hampered by my limited Portuguese, I learned how elemental spirits of the rain forest appeared to her, sometimes even before the physical plant was discovered, and helped her understand the pharmaceutical uses of their plant. "Yes, but do they really work?" I heard myself asking, half hating myself for the skeptic's question. "Yes," she said simply, "they work." Here in the jungle, I realized, there is not much room for placebos or double-blind studies--or for remedies that don't work! (p. vii)

Two other major religious movements are the *Unido do Vegetal* (Portuguese, *Union of Plants*) and *Barquinha* (Portuguese, a diminutive form of *boat*, as a symbolic vessel for the embarkation of spiritual journeys) (Metzner, 1999). They have a somewhat smaller impact among Western Ayahuasca users by virtue of their lesser prevalence in Western settings. There are opportunities for future research by sociologists and anthropologists of how these syncretic religions influence Western practitioners, as noted by Shanon (2002).

Turning now to a popular American perspective, the well-known ethnobotanist Terrence McKenna was a prolific writer and out-spoken advocate of plant-derived hallucinogens. His *True Hallucinations* (1993) is a subjective and entertaining report of a youthful trip to the Amazon in search of psychoactive triptamine-containing fungi and Ayahuasca analogues, in the early 1970s. When investigating Ayahuasca entities, it may be helpful to keep in mind that McKenna

introduced ideas that have been integrated in the subculture of hallucinogen users throughout Western industrialized culture. Much of his work is that of hallucinogen user, visionary teacher, and mystic, best read as inspired opinion and autobiographical reporting. While making outspoken predictions regarding the end of time (1993), he draws on the resources of science to support his arguments. *Food of the Gods* (McKenna, 1992), for example, contains well-researched references to anthropology and other sciences. McKenna unabashedly and consistently advocates his particular eschatological cosmology, a philosophy of life that blends ethnobotany, shamanic religion, and the prediction of a world-changing event in 2012 based on computerized *I Ch'ing* projections (T. McKenna & D. McKenna, 1993).

Writings of popular psychedelic press sometimes reference Ayahuasca in contexts that are extensions of the drug sub-culture. The *Yagé Letters* (Burroughs & Ginsberg, 1975) are presages of the 1960s Western association of hallucinogens with underground drug use. Burroughs openly declares his intention to seek Yagé in search of the ultimate fix, in his capacity as an outspokenly self-identified junkie. The *Yagé Letters* were developmental to Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* (1966). Burroughs assembled *Lunch*, in part, from a collage of slapstick, drug-drenched pornographic vignettes, or *routines* (Burroughs & Ginsberg, 1975), which originated in *Yagé Letters*. Burroughs' work was the object of historically significant judicial decisions concerning issues of free speech versus obscenity (Burroughs, 1966, p. vii). The subsequent florescence of the drug culture of the 1960s is widely recognized. These historical factors are progenitors of present

attitudes of consumers, non-users, and researchers regarding hallucinogens in general, including Ayahuasca.

Literature of Academic and Scientific Researchers

The following class of literature includes physiological and psychopharmacological studies (e.g., Callaway, McKenna, Grob, Brito, Raymon, & Poland, 1999; Strassman, 1996); multidisciplinary metastudies (e.g., Bravo & Grob, 1989; McKenna, Callaway, & Grob, 1998); ethnobotanical descriptions and pharmacognosy (McKenna, 1999; Ott, 1994, 1996); anthropological, archaeological, and ethnographic studies by Western investigators (e.g., Dobkin de Rios, 1977; La Barre, 1972; Stahl, 1989); and psychological studies (e.g., Grof, 1993; Shanon, 1997, 1998, 2002;). While neurophysiological, pharmacological, and botanical matters may not be of direct interest to the current study, they reveal the extent to which the substance evokes multidisciplinary scientific interest. Anthropological and psychological literatures intersect variously with hallucinatory phenomena, and I give them more attention in the appropriate sections below.

Strassman (1996) examines dose-dependent responses in a group of N,N-dimethyltryptamine (DMT) users, measures biological reactions, and compares them to subjective effects measured by an instrument called the Hallucinogen Rating Scale (HRS). His findings indicate that DMT, which is an essential component of Ayahuasca, does not induce tolerance with respect to its subjective effects, at least in terms of the time limitations of the experiment. Strassman (2001) also contributes an entire book that not only expands on the psychopharmacological aspects of DMT but also provided many stories that reflect the phenomenology of subjective effects.

Callaway, et al. (1999) examine interactions between several MAOI alkaloids found in *B. caapi* and the DMT components of *P. viridis*, administered to 15 volunteers. From regularly timed blood samples, Pharmacokinetic parameters indicated some metabolic and subjective effect differences among some of the β -carboline-type alkaloids present in *B. caapi*. In a scientific review of contemporary research, McKenna, Callaway, and Grob (1998) conclude that Ayahuasca research has reached an historical turning point, in an emergence from its traditional shamanic and religious origins, on to the stage of neurophysiology and psychiatry. An earlier metastudy by Bravo and Grob (1989) reviewed psychedelic drugs as tools in psychiatry, in comparison to their cultural contexts. Most psychiatric interest was in the effects of LSD, because researchers believed initially that LSD was a *psychomimetic*, (psychosis mimicking) agent, useful for understanding the phenomenon of psychoses. Later researchers believed that LSD could produce therapeutic abreactions, which were then examined in psychoanalytic therapy for cathecting traumas and fixations, and for breaking addiction patterns (Grob, 1970).

Not all writers deeply examine the spiritual, social, or psychological implications of Ayahuasca; Jonathan Ott appears to be more interested in the plants themselves. Ott's treatments of Ayahuasca in *Ayahuasca Analogues* (1994) and in *Pharmacotheon* (1996) provide detailed natural histories of plants that contain the same alkaloids as the ones assayed in traditional Yagé brews. In these, Ott displays more interest in the pharmacological activity of the brews than in visionary content, reporting only whether an effect is present or not. In reports of effects, he uses subjective language such as "a subthreshold, mildly stimulating effect of DMT" (Ott, 1994, p. 62), a

description of drug effect that may not mean much to the DMT-naïve reader.

Phenomenological criticisms aside, Ott's works are veritable mountains of literature citations; *Pharmactheon* contains a bibliography of over 2,000 references.

One recurring theme in anthropological writings is the role entheogens may have played in cultural development of human societies. LaBarre (1972) proposes that thematic patterns in Mesolithic artifacts reveal what he calls a *narcotic complex*, which indicates that the evolution of religions may have been influenced by hallucinogenic shamanism. Dobkin de Rios (1977) attributes origins of theater and religion to early psychedelic rituals, and in another article proposes that ritual could be made prophylactic, by offering relationships with drugs in social frameworks other than those of substance abuse (Dobkin de Rios & Smith, 1977). Stahl (1989) reveals a number of hallucinatory themes identified in *Kokenydomb anthropomorphs*, which belong to a class of Neolithic ceramic figurines found in Hungary.

From a psychological perspective, psychiatric writer Grof (1970, 1993, 2000, 2001) is one of the first clinicians who induced and systematically observed LSD and other altered-state sessions among many patients. Cognitive psychologist Shanon (2002) provides an exhaustive survey of an estimated 2,500 Ayahuasca sessions. Because the work of both Grof and Shanon were of central interest to my project, appropriate sections below will visit them more extensively.

Literature of Academic Researchers Who Report Their Own Participation in Ayahuasca or Other Hallucinogen Use

Luis Eduardo Luna is a Columbian who writes from the perspective of a professional anthropologist in Helsinki, Finland; Pablo Amaringo is a Peruvian

shaman. Their co-authored work *Ayahuasca Visions* (Luna & Amaringo, 1991) depicts plant spirits, fairies, spaceships, snakes, and many other entities who populate a colorful religious iconography. Luna's journal article (1991) supports the anthropologically academic dimension of the book; both contain discussions of the scientific literature on the ethnography of Amazonian hallucinogens. Luna and Amaringo connect their learning of the ways of the brew with personal experiences, and expound on visions of others who report encounters with entities in the spirit world of Ayahuasca. Shamans or *vegetalistas* (Luna & Amaringo, 1991) derive their powers from natural laws and spiritual forces generally associated with the tropical rain forest. These include all insect life, vegetation, water, soil, air, and every living and nonliving thing of the forest. Vegetalistas receive or spontaneously learn their own individual collection of *icaros* (songs of power). In addition, the education of shamans includes transmissions from senior vegetalistas, or directly from the spirits, of magical or numinous phlegms, variously named *yachay*, *yausa*, or *mariri*. Luna (1986) describes another set of practices and beliefs of this class of Ayahuasca religion in an earlier out-of-print book, *Vegetalismo Shamanism Among the Mestizo Population of the Peruvian Amazon*.

Grof (2000) began his interest in LSD after having been under its influence as a graduate intern and experimental subject while in Prague in the late 1950s:

More than forty years ago, a powerful experience lasting only several hours of clock-time profoundly changed my personal and professional life. As a young psychiatric resident, only a few months after my graduation from medical school, I volunteered for an experiment with LSD, a substance with remarkable psychoactive properties that had been discovered by the Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann in the Sandoz pharmaceutical laboratories in Basel. (p. iv)

While Grof does not explore Ayahuasca extensively, based on his theories, he would be likely to explain themes of Ayahuasca visions using a spectrum of concepts ranging from Freudian psychodynamic explanations to ideas about prenatal life.

Cognitive psychologist Shanon bases his empirical investigations of Ayahuasca (1997, 1998, 2002) on his extensive background in semantics, natural language, creativity, and thought processes. He also does philosophical research projects that encompass the phenomenology of human consciousness and the scientific study of mind. After an unplanned personal encounter with Ayahuasca in Brazil in 1991 during a series of Santo Daime works that were made available through attending a scientific conference, Shanon expresses amazement at finding that the themes he encountered during his own first four Ayahuasca experiences were similar to those of traditional users (1997). This observation flew in the face of the conventional cognitive psychological wisdom to which he had been an adherent. Cognitive psychology looks for structural universals that are common, predictable, or universal within the human organism. The cognitive perspective regards content as uniquely individual, with similarities occurring according to social influences and cultural background. For example, semantic structures unfold along predictable developmental milestones (structural universals) whether the child learns to speak Chinese or English, or grows up enjoying science fiction or classical verse (type of language being non-universal content). Shanon (1997) writes:

Usually, the universals are of a formal or structural type—the deep syntactic structures of natural language, the basic operations of logic and reasoning, elementary schemes of categorization. But the

commonalities presented by Ayahuasca were different: they pertained to content. This presented a great puzzle to me. Could it be that serpents and felines, precious stones and palaces are also universals of the human mind? Are there contents that are not culturally determined? Contemporary cognitive scientists are not prepared for affirmative answers to these questions. (p. 13)

I introduce more on Shanon and Grof below, after a brief review of the general psychology literature on mental imagery.

General Psychology Literature about Hypnagogic and Mental Imagery

As pointed out by Shanon above (1997), studies in this category clarify structural universals from the point of view of mainstream cognitive research. They are not designed to yield analyses of content-related themes. A computerized database search yielded 455 abstracts in PsychFirst containing the key phrase mental imagery, and only nine contained the keyword *hypnagogic*. The vast majority of these references were from the perspective of cognitive psychology. These offer information about function rather than content. In neuroanatomy, correlates between MRI mapping and self-reported imagery reveal overlaps in parietal lobe pathways for both internal and external stimuli (imagery and perception, respectively) (e.g., Trojano, et al., 2000). In clinical applications, mental imagery reveals itself to have varying effects on enhancing function—for example, in sports psychology, the enhancement of performance through mental practice of physical feats (e.g., Shanks & Cameron, 2000). These cognitive studies will not be explored in this dissertation extensively, because they involve imagery that has been prompted by researchers. They are provided here as examples of current applications of mental imagery research. The Ayahuasca phenomena I am examining are different from these examples because the imagery results not from prompted, programmed stimuli, but

from the psychological reality within the subjects' inner experiences. It remains the task of future research to examine the possible applications of consciously applied mental imagery under the influence of Ayahuasca.

Among a small group of studies found in a computerized database search using keywords *hypnagogic imagery*, two articles and three dissertations focus on content. Journal articles include tests of a self-observational technique (Nielsen, 1991) and a Japanese-language investigation of individual differences in hypnagogic imagery (Watanabe 1998). The dissertations correlate hypnagogic imagery with cultural factors in a Puerto Rican immigrant sample (Jacobson, 2001), and investigate hypnagogic imagery techniques to enhance creativity (Johnson, 1981; Stembridge, 1972). As with the keywords *mental imagery*, a majority of studies that focus on *hypnagogic imagery* are from a cognitive psychology viewpoint. With the exception of Ayahuasca researcher Shanon (1997, 1998, 2002), cognitive writers generally offer information about function rather than content, such as how brain areas are involved with imagery in the presence of certain disorders, special abilities, creativity, or intelligence. Thematic content is not an issue except as it may correspond with specific brain or psychological function.

There is one area in which the content of hallucination is used in psychiatry for diagnostic purposes. The notion of *mood congruence* has been used clinically as a diagnostic sign in some circumstances of pathology, when psychiatric patients present with delusions or hallucinations. Some studies indicate correlations between mood congruence of hallucinatory content and prognosis (e.g., Winokur, Scharfetter, & Angst, 1985). Mood-congruent delusions and hallucinations have been found to be

associated with mood disorders in both depressed and manic states, while incongruent ones are associated with schizophrenia and worse prognoses.

Shanon (1997, 1998, 2002) uses a phenomenological approach to examine general Ayahuasca phenomena. His curiosity seems especially energized when inferences about Ayahuasca visions contrast with the background of his linguistically-oriented cognitive perspective. Shanon's book (2002) is unique in scope, with the largest number of Ayahuasca data cases to date of any study. He provides thematic categories that he offers as useful guidelines for future research, such as the typography identified in this dissertation. He ends the book with chapters that go beyond what he considers the parameters of psychology into philosophical realms. In the process, he deconstructs cognitive, Freudian, and Jungian psychological perspectives, concluding that while each of these may say something valid about themes of Ayahuasca visions, not one of them captures the full meaning or experience of all Ayahuasca phenomena. After reviewing the limitations of each of these psychological perspectives, he states, "The only scholar I know of who does address the topic of particulars of content in visionary experiences is Aldous Huxley" (Shanon, 2002, p. 391). Huxley uses the term *perennial philosophy* to explain encounters with transpersonal realms in psychedelic states (Smith, 1976).

Shanon's theoretical quest appears to be driven by an authentic cognitive dissonance created by the tension between two well-established knowledge systems. On one hand, he grounds himself in Western psychological science, which resists resorting to such non-human, transpersonal explanations as suggested by the Platonic ideas. On the other hand, he cannot account for a huge compendium of evidence—

including his direct experiences in Ayahuasca sessions—of apparently universal content themes, by cognitive science or psychoanalytic models (Shanon, 2002). These issues have yet to be resolved. As Shanon also says, the ontological tension between universal structure and universal content will continue to be a source of scientific argument into the foreseeable future. Shanon (2002) suggests an explanation based on a newly developed cognitive science concept of a type of human creativity. He rejects transpersonal and Jungian explanations in favor of

a *creational* one. According to that, Ayahuasca visions reflect neither what is hidden in the mind of the drinker nor mind-independent, Platonic-states of affairs, but rather, they are the works of creation. While the recourse to creation salvages us from Platonic realism, psychologically it is much more radical than may seem at first glance. Specifically, if we are to account for the particular contents that commonly appear in Ayahuasca visions and ideations in terms of enhanced cognitive abilities, including that of imagination highlighted by Merkur (1998), then the notions of 'human creativity' or 'power of imagination' turn out to be much more fantastic than they are usually thought to be. (p. 396)

While Shanon reports that he has developed a theoretical view of cognition that is different from most current assumptions in cognitive psychology, it remains unclear exactly what he means by his *creational* view. He criticizes Jung for lack of verifiability, but in the above paragraph makes an equally metaphysical assumption that Ayahuasca visions are mind-independent and non-Platonic. Later in the same book, Shanon makes a statement about the Jungian perspective that appears contradictory to his criticism of Jung. I say more about this later in the theoretical discussion below.

Overview of Transpersonal and Jungian Theory

In this section, I review Jungian and transpersonal theories, followed by more about Shanon. These theoretical ideas help to contextualize my results in the final discussion chapter.

Carl Gustaf Jung's idea of a healthy psyche resembles the model of a developed self, explained by comparative religionist Huston Smith (2000), in Smith's description of a "fully realized human being." Smith, believes in a purpose and directionality to life (Smith, 1976). Smith's optimism lies in the attitude that regardless of any difficulty or crisis, there is always possible a choice that can lead the individual toward greater freedom, elevated consciousness, and increased capacity for intimate exchange with humanity, cosmos, and nature (Smith, 1976). This is similar to the Jungian idea of the process of *individuation*, which is the process of becoming whole and self-realized (Jung, 1961, Stein, 1998).

Jung describes individuation as a state that is indivisible, because the contents of the unconscious are made available to consciousness, after a long process of psychological growth. One way of characterizing obstacles that are in the way of individuation is to say that the ego is not mature or strong enough to mediate the more powerful affective contents of the unconscious (Wheelright, 1982). When this happens, the person may experience being overwhelmed or possessed by archetypal forces. A typical compensatory mechanism to avoid the uncomfortable feeling of helplessness is to exaggerate one's self-importance. This is known as *inflation*, which is over-identification with the persona, with an archetype, or with historical and religious figures (Jung, 1960a).

Jungians might view Ayahuasca drinkers' imaginal encounters with entities as messengers from the collective unconscious (Stein, 1998). They would interpret Ayahuasca visions, perhaps, as Senn would from the point of view of what he calls *Jungian shamanism* (Senn, 1989), which proposes that Jungian psychotherapy is parallel to shamanism in that they both involve altered states, which Jung appreciated as evidence of the unconscious as a "living spatial element" (Senn, 1989, p. 120).

Jung's interest in archetypes began between 1909 and 1912 while he was writing *Psychology of the Unconscious* (1960a), in which he examines what he thought to be premorbid fantasies of Miss Frank Miller. His observations of Miller's imagery led Jung to question, and then distance himself from, Freud's libido theory (Stein, 1998). Jung's observations at the time starting in 1912 were precursors to his concept of the collective unconscious. The archetypes are the foundation of Jung's theory of psyche, and Jung saw them as the source of all symbols responsible for the creation of human social structures, culture, art, and civilization, as he does in his essays on the origins of art and literature (Jung, 1966).

Archetype and instinct relate as complementary poles that define the upper and lower limits of psyche (Jung, 1960a). For the sake of conceptualization and not as actual spatial location, the instincts are associated with the lower somatic pole, while the archetypes are associated with the higher layers of mentation and spirit. Jung envisions these complementary directions on a vibrational scale comparable to electromagnetic bandwidths of light, with archetypes at the high frequency, ultraviolet end and instincts at the lower-frequency infrared end (Jung, 1960a). In between are the visible areas corresponding to psyche, all of which are available to

conscious apprehension. The psyche is conceptualized as lying on a continuum between upper archetypal and lower somatic, instinctual limits. On the each end of the continuum, there is an assumed limit where possible consciousness disappears into absolute matter and absolute spirit, which can never be fully *psychized*, or brought into awareness. The ends of these poles both supply sources of unconscious information, entering into consciousness in the forms of parapsychological phenomena on the one hand and psychosomatic symptoms on the other (Stein, 1998). These phenomena and symptoms, called *psychiod* by Jung, account for intrusive, non-integrated, psychopathological, autonomous, and psychotic archetypal encounters (Jung, 1960b). On the instinctual side of the spectrum, Jung did not completely discount somatic encounters with repressed instinct, such as in the case of conversion disorders as interpreted psychodynamically (Grof, 2000). On the positive side, favorable encounters with the archetype of wholeness integrate psychiod processes, which are often experienced as encounters with divine entities. The task of the ego, which is often associated with hero mythology, is to fully accept emerging unconscious contents and to decide whether or not to act on them according to moral values and ethical development.

As he struggled with these issues in psychiatric cases, Jung sought parallels among images of his own imagination, those of his patients, and myths of groups in unrelated geographic and historical loci. His works sometimes reflect the feeling of visiting a zoo or museum of natural history, as in some of the material in *Alchemical Studies* (Jung, 1967). Spontaneous images and themes appeared to him during his investigations, including those of the mythologies of Europe, Africa, Australia, and

Native America. His conclusion was that much material in the unconscious could not have been repressed from biographical consciousness, but had to have been there in the first place (Stein, 1998).

While Shanon appreciates that the Jungian perspective is “paradigmatically linked” (2002, p. 390) to Ayahuasca encounters, he objects to Jung’s ideas based on three points. Two of these are objections to Jungian theory in general, while the third pertains to how he believes the Jungian perspective fails to capture the full meaning of Ayahuasca content. First, Shanon objects to the concept of the collective unconscious, saying that it amounts to a tautology: “The postulation of the collective unconscious is tantamount to saying that there are psychological phenomena that are . . . collective . . . except for stating that these phenomena do in fact exist, the term ‘collective unconscious’ does not explain anything” (2002, pp. 390-391). Second, Shanon is uncomfortable with the indeterminate vagueness and ambiguity that accompanies definitions of the Jungian archetypes. Shanon is not alone in this critique of Jungian theory, which has yet to scientifically verify whether archetypes are theoretical abstractions, correspondences with biological structures, or evidence of an ontological, Platonic layer of objective reality (e.g., Friedman, 1967; McGowan, 1994).

Shanon’s third criticism is that Jungian archetypal themes are very different from Ayahuasca visions that occur independently among different users. According to Shanon, the Jungian archetypes are limited to those directly related to the human predicament, shared by all in symbolic expressions of “The Great Mother, the Old Sage, the Hero, the Eternal Youth, the Trickster—these are all roles that are either

played by people in the course of their lives or are portrayed by famous figures in all human societies and as such are personally known to all their members” (Shanon, 2002, p. 391). These are possibly the best known symbolic expressions of some archetypes; however, it is also clearly true that there are dozens of other archetypal symbols that were investigated by Jung. Jungian literature is neither limited to concerns about “roles that are...played in the course” of human lives, nor to things “personally known to all their members.” The notion that Jungian archetypes are limited to the five types mentioned by Shanon is inaccurate.

The Jungian world is one that contains a multiplicity of objects, processes, and relationships, and while Shanon writes that Ayahuasca visions sometimes involve “Serpents, palaces, and objects of gold...specific contents that cannot be reduced any further” (Shanon, 2002, p. 391), the process of Jungian interpretation is not “reduction.” Rather, the Jungian method uses *amplification*, which in a process opposite of reduction, seeks symbolic analogies in myth, literature, and art to clarify the contents of dreams and other mental imagery (Edinger, 1972). Shanon does not account for the fact that serpents, palaces, and objects of gold do, after all, appear in Jungian literature. In *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*, Jung reports a serpent in one of his own dreams, which he interprets as “an indication of the hero myth” (1961, p. 182). Serpents also appear as symbols in this amplification of alchemical themes:

The idea of transformation and renewal by means of a serpent is a well-substantiated archetype. It is the healing serpent, representing the god. It is reported of the mysteries of Sabazius: “Coluber aureus in sinum demittitur consecratis et eximitur rursus ab inferioribus partibus atque imis” (A golden snake is let down into the bosom of the initiated and taken away again from the lower parts). Among the Ophites, Christ was the serpent. Probably the most significant development of serpent symbolism as regards renewal of

personality is to be found in Kundalini yoga. The shepherd's experience with the snake in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* would accordingly be a fatal omen (Jung, 1968b, p. 133).

Palaces often appear in Jung as symbolic representations of archetypes associated with religion (1968a). Precious metals, gemstones, diamonds, and sapphires appear as Jungian symbols in art, imagination, and dreams during individuation and are symbols for an integrative experience of the Self. For example, Jung (1968a) describes the state of wholeness as "a static state subject to no more change" (p. 357), which in Chinese alchemy is known as the *Diamond Body*. In turn, the diamond is also associated with the medieval alchemists' *corpus incorruptibile*, and the Christian *corpus glorificationis*, the indestructible body of the Resurrection (Jung, 1968a).

It may be that Shanon has experienced an Ayahuasca phenomenon that subjectively feels different to him from his experience of Jungian archetypal phenomena. This might be based on an incomplete grasp of what an archetype is from the Jungian perspective. Many stories of Ayahuasca sessions available in press (e.g., Metzner, 1999; Wilcox, 2003) appear to be readily associated with the Jungian archetypal perspective, but Shanon asserts that the elaborateness of Ayahuasca visions is unprecedented in Jungian or any other modern psychological literature. Shanon goes on to state his hypothesis, that the multiplicity of Ayahuasca visions are indicators of creativity in terms of an unexpectedly powerful human cognitive ability.

Shanon also writes (2002) that Jungian literature is phenomenologically equivalent in richness of content to Ayahuasca. This is an apparent contradiction to his objection about the inadequacies of the Jungian perspective. Despite the

contradiction, Shanon repeats his opinion that as a theoretical construct, the archetypal perspective fails to account for Ayahuasca visions. His argument is based on his subjective Ayahuasca experiences. He writes that he has seen things in Ayahuasca visions that he feels are beyond the pale of the archetypes as being concerned strictly with “the life history of any individual” (2000, p. 299), which is an incomplete portrayal of Jungian archetypes. His explanation for the appearance of many common themes among a wide variety of individuals is that

human beings have-as a species-been made to develop art and music, seek the transcendent, and worship the holy. None of these accomplishments were there the day *Homo sapiens* first appeared on the stage of this planet. But were anyone to look at the species from a larger time perspective, perhaps from the perspective of the eternal, it would appear that human beings were made precisely in this fashion-to create the very specific things that they have actually created in the course of history-palaces and temples, paintings and sculptures, scientific theories, and metaphysical ideas. What Ayahuasca seems to be doing is to let time pass exceedingly fast and to let the mind be creative to the utmost. When the cognitive capacities of the individual are thus heightened and when the temporal constraints are greatly reduced, individuals may create, spontaneously and without apparent effort what, in the actual course of history, it has taken entire cultures countless generations to accomplish.

What is suggested here is to be confused with neither the traditional notion of innate ideas nor with the Jungian collective unconscious. What is being suggested rather are specific characteristics of human creative imagination. (Shanon, 2000, p. 300)

Laying aside his contradictions regarding Jung, Shanon is probably accurate when he says that the archetypal perspective, or any psychological explanation for that matter, cannot completely explain *all* Ayahuasca phenomena. However, it is not within the scope or purpose of psychological disciplines to explain everything, nor do they claim to do so.

Grof is another writer who has his formative roots in the presence of many thousands of altered states. His experiences and observations offer another spectrum of transpersonal themes. Before I expand on Grof's model, the following paragraphs give a more general background in transpersonal theory.

Among other things, transpersonal theory combines Western psychology and Eastern views of development. It represents a worldview that adds the tacit and the invisible, a shift from materialistic scientism (Smith, 1976). Transpersonal philosophy achieves this shift in part by incorporating various Eastern ideas of *interdependence* represented by some Buddhist perspectives (e.g., Cortright, 1997). The worldview of interdependence rules out the absolute sense of controlled scientific objectivity. To separate human consciousness from the rest of the cosmos, or any phenomena at all, is illusory (Ikeda, 1976). Smith recognizes a fissure between this essentially Eastern view and a view more easily associated with Western scientific sensibility, which, because of its necessary attachment to quantification, views human transactions as separate units (Smith, 1976).

Transpersonal theory, in its relatively short existence, has produced language that includes the spiritual and cosmological in its discussion of the psyche, such as Wilber does in his model of human development (Wilber, 1998). From comparative religious and consciousness studies Smith (1976) proposed that when people progress in spiritual development, they report perceptions that widen in scope, meaning, and progression from the personal to that which lies beyond the personal, or even beyond the human. To some transpersonalists, this suggests the existence of a predetermined, objectively independent, and unchanging ultimate reality underlying all phenomena

(Smith, 1976). This deep, ultimate, unchanging structure underlying all religious experience, they say, ought to be accessible to anyone under the right circumstances. Transpersonalists think that reports of consciousness states resulting from yoga practice, austerities, religious discipline, and entheogens all share these ultimate commonalities throughout recorded history (Ferrer, 2002). This possibility inspired Huxley (1944) to use the term *perennial philosophy* in a book of the same title, where he suggests basic universal principles that he applies as benchmarks of all true encounters with the sacred. Smith agrees that perception of this unchanging ultimate reality is available not only through traditional religious discipline, but also at times under the influence of entheogens.

The most incisive critique of perennialism is possibly that of Ferrer (2002), who does not deny the contribution and significance of the perennial philosophy, but is uncomfortable with insistence upon an *unchanging* ultimate reality. He believes perennialism is not flexible enough to allow for the idea that the present moment may hold the creative power for anyone to contribute something completely novel in how creation unfolds. Ferrer's argument offers a counterpoint that has yet to be adequately rebutted and is thus a good source for critical thinking about the perennial philosophy, according to a close associate of Ferrer, David Nicol, M.A. (personal communication, 2003). Ferrer's creational ideas may remind one of Shanon's creational conclusions mentioned earlier, but Ferrer does accept transpersonal realms as ontological, where Shanon (2002) does not, at least not in psychological terms.

Smith is in a particularly strong position with regard to the question of the application of perennial theory to entheogenic phenomena (2000). His experience

with entheogens spans personal and academic domains. He is a widely known authority on comparative religion, and he has personally experienced several hallucinogens. His first psychedelic encounter was under the auspices of Timothy Leary (Smith, 2000). He feels that was the beginning of a life-changing transformation, due to encounters with strata of consciousness, which he finds phenomenologically indistinguishable from traditional religious experiences. In particular, in Chapter Five of *Cleansing the Doors of Perception* (2000, p. 65), Smith describes four basic consciousness states recognized by Indian Vedic practitioners, from ordinary waking to the *sacred unconscious*, which is said to be a state of complete bliss, wherein one's perceptions in the world are without the distortions of desire and aversion. In *Forgotten Truth* (1976), Smith goes deeper into that four-fold model, derived from both Eastern contemplative and Western theistic traditions. According to his own experiences and the phenomenological study of others' reports, he is convinced that entheogens can dissolve ego attachments and allow the sacred unconscious to become conscious. This observation confirms to Smith both the model of self that includes the universal four states, as well as the potential for entheogens to trigger genuine encounters with the highest of them.

Smith endorses the work of Grof in a concise overview of Grof in a special appendix of *Forgotten Truth* (1976). He says that Grof provides confirmation of the self-model Smith sees in religious and entheogenic experiences. While Smith *describes* a model of self that permits access to its highest realms through entheogenic contact, Smith (2000) says that Grof used “the entheogens to *validate* the model itself” (p. 79; emphasis added). Smith emphasizes that psychedelic

experiences, along with other peak states, are inadequate indicators of spiritual maturity. He makes a distinction between a spiritual experience and a spiritual life. He regards spiritual practice in daily life as a prerequisite and as a container for valid experiences (Smith, 2000).

Grof (2000) refers to Ayahuasca in the context of explaining his particular model of human consciousness, for example, where he interprets a subject's Ayahuasca vision of a skeleton exploding into light as an "Experience of the transcendence of death" (p. 53). Grof (1970, 2001) bases his model on empirical evidence spanning over 40 years, derived from altered states including thousands of psychedelic ones. Grof and his followers use the term *holotropic* as a modifier associated with any state, substance, or method that is involved in producing visionary experiences that confirm the existence of the transpersonal realm (Grof, 1993, 2000, 2001). It may be argued that *holotropic* is an unnecessary coinage, because it appears to have the same meaning as the word *transpersonal* in most instances. Grof's works include empirical data in the form of clinical observations which he says suggest that people who experience holotropic states are, in some fashion, perceiving various landmarks and features of a single, vast, multiculturally recognized dimension of nonordinary reality. Grof goes on to say that regardless of individual differences, each person is a fragment of a universal hologram, through which experiences of the whole constellate, just as a fragment of a holograph can reproduce the entire image. In the fragments that comprise our individual psyches, then, it is possible to constellate visions that connect our experience with all our fellow

humans as well as the entire cosmos (Talbot, 1991). The idea of *holotrophy* accompanies an optimistic assumption: “This composite word literally means ‘oriented toward wholeness’ or ‘moving in the direction of wholeness’ (from the Greek *holos* = whole and *trepein* = moving toward or in the direction of something)” (Grof, 2000, p. 5).

Transpersonal theory conceives of consciousness as an aspect of reality that lies beyond ordinary perception. The characteristics of this reality is a topic that is under continuous revision and interpretation by transpersonal philosophers, but a common feature often includes belief in a universal reality that is not part of the usual experience of an individual’s physical senses (Grof, 2000). Grof says the empirical evidence of thousands of LSD and other altered states not only affirms the existence of the transpersonal realm, but also reveals that the experience of ordinary reality is itself illusory (Grof, 2000). Grof refers to the consciousness research of Talbot (1991) as well as the physical sciences to support a view that the universe, material existence, biology, and the human psyche are all boundaryless manifestations of a single unity, and that consciousness permeates all of it. The notion that there exists this overarching, mostly hidden reality can be challenging to deeply held convictions, social conventions, and intrapersonal beliefs, as Grof (1993) states:

If we are to accept this new view of consciousness, it means accepting, also, that our lives are not shaped only by the immediate environmental influences since the day of our birth but, of at least equal importance, they are shaped by ancestral, cultural, spiritual, and cosmic influences far beyond the scope of what we can perceive with our physical senses. (p. 84)

Transpersonal theory relies on the historical precedents set by Jung and Maslow (Grof, 2000). Maslow provides the groundwork for preparing the personal psyche for being non-judgmentally open to subtle processes of the inner psyche, and Grof and others give him much credit for paving the way for the emergence of the transpersonal methodology (Grof, 1993). Maslow's concept of *peak experiences* generated enormous interest in transpersonal states, the ultimate goal of Grof's approach for psychotherapy and personal growth (Grof, 2000). This goal is nothing less than the death of the *skin-encapsulated ego* (Watts, 1957), and the birth of a new way of living.

Transpersonal experiences are preceded by the melting away, breaking through, or dissolution of, the operational construct of consensus reality (e.g., DeKorne, 1994). People who have had them are often insistent that their intensified esthetic awareness, identification with others, and future, past, and expanded spatial awareness *feel* just as real as anything that can be perceived in normal states. These transpersonal experiences can be triggered by severe trauma, psychopathology, spiritual practice, or ingestion of psychedelic or entheogenic substances (Grof & Grof, 1989). For example, visions can be triggered by brain trauma or mental disease. In such cases, if there are transpersonal elements in the patient's symptoms, they are unwelcome intrusions and delusions rather than opportunities for insight. Grof is careful to make this distinction in *LSD Psychotherapy* (2001). His treatment of nonordinary states apply to individuals who may have psychological problems, without permanent organic causes.

Grof integrates much of Jung in his own theory and quotes him liberally (e.g., Grof, 1993, 2000). However, Grof is not a Jungian, as such. While freely borrowing Jungian language describing how the transpersonal domain is structured, Grof bases his cartography of the psyche on his observations of a particular class of holotropic sessions. These provide imagery in the form of reported hallucinatory phenomena, art, and words that are associated thematically with various stages in multisession, overarching dramas of birth and death. Grof applies techniques according to these assumptions, while Jung was less concerned with technique and more with expression of psyche in a process of non-directed, heuristic discovery, using active imagination (Stein, 1998).

Grof (2000) describes three different experiential levels of the transpersonal realm: (a) those that lie within the bounds of consensus reality; (b) those that lie beyond ordinary time and space; and (c) *psychoid* events, in a sense related to but not exactly the same as the Jungian use of the word. Reports of psychedelic intoxication include all of these types of experience.

Events of the first type occur during periods of transcendence, but their contents are identifiable as lying within the realm of ordinary reality (Grof, 2000). This includes experiences of unity or identification with groups of people, rapturous appreciation of beauty, ecstatic sexual love, and the sense of being part of all humanity. This is also the category of experience when there is a connected feeling of identification with the living world, during which being in nature can evoke profound feelings of oceanic oneness.

The second refers to a more ego-dissolved state, in which there is a sense that one has a view of oneself in the context of vast stretches of time and space, or that time has collapsed and all is seen as a single, seamless unity. People who have these experiences often return with convictions that they have viewed past life material, or the configuration of their karma in context with not only all of current humanity, but of the river of all biological evolution. Some psychedelic reporters (e.g., McKenna, 1991) of this category of experience are also insistent that they have seen the shape of the future. In this realm, people report information about distant events and times. They can come up with words and phrases from languages and cultures that are not of their own. There are those who claim confirmations of many such experiences, which provide compelling evidence for the authenticity of transpersonal encounters (Grof, 1993, 2000).

Grof's description of the third transpersonal realm reveals a view of the archetypes that is opposed to Shanon's. Like Jung, Grof speculates that the archetypes have ontological presence, and believes that they reside within the domain of the transpersonal (Grof, 2000). Grof extends *psychoid* to include not only the archetypal, but also all phenomena that are outside the range of conventional reality. He does not believe that they are manufactured in the heads of observers (Grof, 2000). For example, to the extent that ghosts, poltergeists, and communicating with alien entities are "real," they would be psychoid phenomena. His evidence for this is the phenomenon of *synchronicity*, a benchmark that authenticates transpersonal encounters (Jung, 1961). Shanon

mentions synchronistic and syntonetic phenomena (2002) but does not take a stance regarding their ontological evidence.

Grof (1993, 2000, 2001) refers to a substantial body of anecdotal data that he has collected over the years, in support of the existence of phenomena throughout all three transpersonal regions. These include observing people speak languages they do not know in waking consciousness, memories of pre-natal events confirmed by birth records and parent memories, the experiences of coincidental meetings of long-lost friends and family members, and shared hallucination. Shanon's psychological creational conclusion does not appear to account for this type of evidence.

Grof developed his model based on two categories of transpersonal experience. The first of these involves observations in nonordinary states that appear to indicate the existence of memories of the birth process. Grof proposes that there are nonverbal, somatic impressions from conceived ovum to neonate, which remain in a deep level of the psyche and influence personality. These impressions and memories are described as challenges and obstacles to psychological growth and transformation of the adult psyche. They are the *basic perinatal matrices (BPM's)*. The second category in Grof's system is the *COEX* system (system of condensed experience), which refers to central tendencies of the psyche and organized collections of symbols, experiences, and memories, according to what is unique to the individual.

To summarize, I provide a background for Ayahuasca entity encounters, based on past explanations of these kinds of visionary experiences. Visions of this

ilk have been primarily the domain of Jungian and transpersonal explanations, except for Shanon's unique interjection of a cognitive psychological phenomenology. The Jungian archetypal perspective may be a useful source of metaphorical amplification (Edinger, 1972) of the symbolic meanings of Ayahuasca entity encounters. Grof's model of the perinatal matrices and COEX systems offer another possible explanation, which like Jungian amplifications, may be appropriate in some cases. As Shanon states (2000), there is probably much that cannot be explained in psychological terms. Some unresolved issues resonate with the fundamental questions of scientific psychology and psychological philosophy, and are concerned with the nature of consciousness, the validity of knowledge systems, and discriminations between fantasy and spirit. These areas of difference are likely to generate debate into the foreseeable future, and they all help inform the discussion of Ayahuasca entity encounters.

Unresolved Issues

The following unresolved issues appear in Ayahuasca literature:

1. There have been no systematic studies to reveal patterns of themes in Internet Ayahuasca reports; nor have there been any at all focusing exclusively on themes of Ayahuasca-induced entity encounters.
2. However broad and deep cognitive, Jungian, and transpersonal approaches may be, there is not common agreement on whether or not these theories provide a valid basis for thematic analyses of Ayahuasca phenomena. Nor is it certain from a

reliability perspective that a researcher using these theoretical orientations would notice themes necessary to obtain the most useful conceptualizations about the data.

Research Question

The single, overarching question throughout this study has been: What are the thematic patterns of entity encounters specific to Internet-reported Ayahuasca drinkers' experiences?

Chapter III: Methods

Design, Materials, and Procedure

As indicated previously, the data for my project consisted of textual Internet reports of the experiences of Ayahuasca drinkers. These were retrieved from the Ayahuasca Forum, which has been in operation since 1998. Forum entries consist of thousands of conversational threads, which can be downloaded as text, a convenience open to anyone who wishes to join the forum. In its six years, over 2,000 members have joined. A small number of these are active at a given time; during the period of the data here, there appeared to be about 100 active contributors. The demographics of this population were reflected in polls, which are special forum web pages designed to display numerical counts of responses about geographical location, age, frequency of Ayahuasca use, education, and vocational status. However, there was no way to verify any demographic details; anonymity is a prime feature of the Ayahuasca Forum. For the purposes of the current study, I viewed the fact that the reporters were inhabitants of mostly European and North American industrialized cultures as the only salient demographic.

I conducted a thematic analysis according to the sequence described by Boyatzis (1998), which involves three steps: (1) addressing design and sampling issues; (2) developing themes and a corresponding code; and (3) establishing the validity, reliability, and use of the code. Below is a summary of these three steps.

Design and Sampling Issues

The criteria for selecting samples were a) the existence of entity encounters, b) the richness of descriptions, and c) the extent to which descriptive elements can be discriminated from interpretive statements. I found and coded all the entity encounters reported in the “Dreams and Visions” section of the Ayahuasca Forum, between January, 2001 and December 31, 2004. Because a good sample of the currently active members of the Ayahuasca Forum actually responded to the demographic polls, it was possible to determine the likely demographics of the writers of the raw data. However, it was not considered necessary to exclude any texts on the basis of demographic criteria. Demographic variables were not identified in the design of this cartographic dissertation. However, it is undeniable that the reporters are from Northern industrial cultures. This is a given feature of the existing data; the forum was started by Northern Ayahuasca aficionados who were likely to have regular access to computers and the Internet. Under the circumstances, it was not possible to follow up my observations by talking to the forum members. The limitations of textual data suggest possibilities for future research.

A hypothetically ideal description would have resulted in a mental image in my mind that corresponded exactly to the original vision of the reporter. While this may have been an ideal, it was rare to find writing that approached it. Nonetheless, I found rich sources of descriptive elements, including visual, tactile, and auditory impressions, which are the sensory data referred to in phenomenology as *textural* elements (Moustakas, 1994). Reports also contained evidence of mood and affect

tones, as well as orientations with respect to space and time as experienced while under the influence of Ayahuasca.

The contributors wrote in an informal way—sometimes even to the point of ignoring spelling—to an audience of peers. Their descriptions freely wander between descriptive and interpretive elements. Here is a sample, with no corrections for syntax:

Earlier this week I was struggling with a back problem. So I brewed down a quart to about 1 cup and asked grandma [*grandma* here refers to Ayahuasca] to fix me please. Well, after taking a bath and getting well (purging) It was on. I had to lay on my bed, when they came. I have read about entities but this was my first real encounter. At first they were standing over me and to my left slightly behind. Then they started ring a bell and making popping noises like dong . . . pop . . . pop . . . dong . . . dong . . . pop.

These fellows were very serious and talking to each other. Leaning over me checking and adjusting things in what I assume is my energy body. They had an Easter Island look to them and were made of very light bright colors, blue, green, white purple. When they were done the scene changed, another group came around darker, red, black, hellish sort of and now approaching over my right shoulder. At this point I covered up and rode it out. I figured I asked for it so I might as well let them help. It seem like the first group aligned the problems and dialed everything in then the second group came to burn up, drive out the sickness. When it was over I felt a little better and in a couple of days I was able to unlock the spasms in my lower back.

Some of the descriptive elements here include the words and phrases: *At first they were standing over me and to my left slightly behind* (orientation in time and space) . . . *ringing a bell* . . . *popping noises* (auditory experience) . . . *very serious* (mood) . . . *light bright colors, blue, green, white purple* (visual texture) . . . *Easter Island look* (an interpretive element that is nonetheless helpful, because of the context of lots of other sensory description).

Developing Themes and a Code

New code development, called *inductive code development*, is a time-consuming, laborious process. New codes are known to require hundreds of hours of labor. I therefore was grateful to adapt portions of the coding I derived from Shanon (2002). Some of his definitions had to be adjusted to account for my text data. I incorporated only the parts of his code that I judged directly applicable to entity encounters. This resulted in being able to partially employ a previously developed, *prior research-driven code*, which saved time and made the dissertation process more manageable.

Using previously developed codes is less sensitive to new data, and such a code is used sometimes at the expense of validity. Advantages and shortcomings of different approaches to coding can be imagined to lie on a continuum. One end of the continuum has the advantage of increased reliability and validity, with the disadvantage of increased labor and time. At the other end, the advantage is efficiency of labor and time, with the disadvantages of risks to reliability and validity (Boyatzis, 1998). I struck a balance between inductive and prior research coding, both to make the project manageable and to be as faithful as possible to the nuances of thematic elements in the data. I achieved this balance through the application of a hybrid of two of three approaches detailed by Boyatzis (1998). To help clarify, the three approaches are outlined below, followed by the hybrid approach I used in this project:

Theory-driven code development (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 99) is the quickest, easiest, and most often used in behavioral research. Drawbacks include lower

interrater reliability, and the likelihood of omitting new or novel themes that may be essential features, which are not readily classified into theoretical categories. This approach is a process that is analogous to making clinical diagnoses according to a patient's symptoms, consistent to a theoretical construct of disorder. Coding that is theory-driven risks poor interrater reliability, because of wide variances in how researchers interpret theory. I found that the discussion of theory was best left for the discussion section, after thematic patterns were arranged in meaningful models.

The second approach is *prior data or prior research-driven* code development (Boyatzis, p. 99). This involves building upon previous research, which has obvious advantages in time and effort savings. A disadvantage of relying solely on this approach is that previously developed coding may not be valid for new or novel themes. Because Ayahuasca entity encounters are a newly-studied type of data, this type of code development was applicable only where Shanon's (2002) work intersects with entity encounters.

The third approach—*inductive* code development, newly derived from raw data (Shanon, 2002, p. 66)—offers greatest interrater reliability. A disadvantage was that the process was indeed time-consuming. This type of coding was considered applicable to those novel data that were not clearly identified in Shanon (2002).

I employed a hybrid of the prior research-driven and the inductive methods. I derived Shanon's themes by coding his *The Antipodes of the Mind* (2002). I also read my data exhaustively for opportunities to code new entity encounters.

Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity of the code was tested with the aid of an interrater. I first coded the data. Then I submitted the coding to the interrater, who studied the code and the definitions, and when she was satisfied that she understood them, applied them to blind samples of the raw data. Validity refers to whether or not the code indicates something real, essential, or important about the data. The interrater reliability process could not occur without validity, because at least some agreement on validity would be a necessary condition for correlated coding choices.

However, this does not rule out the possibility of entirely missing a chance to code a thematic feature. Such an error would be a problem regarding both reliability and validity, by virtue of omission. As mentioned previously, to address this problem, the data was read and re-read in an iterative process that ended when there was a sense of conviction that I had reached the saturation point (e.g., Moustakas, 1994; Shanon, 2002) in which I was convinced that no new entities would present themselves from repeated readings.

Using Computer Software and Visual Modeling for Qualitative Analysis

The data was coded in a software product called Nvivo (QSR International, 2002), which is used for developing thematic categories and inductive modeling. The use of software made it possible to conduct Boolean matrix searches of the entire data set, which performed the thousands of calculations necessary to reveal associative patterns that exist in the coded data. The results of these searches returned totals of associated passages in spreadsheet form. These numeric totals were then arranged in rank order, and cutoffs were determined by eliminating the lowest numbers according

to 95% probability that the same result would not have been due to chance alone ($p=.05$).

When one performs a search in NVivo, there are many choices among the types of searches. The matrix intersection I chose was based on the fact that it yielded patterns of themes that were more complex and meaningful than a simple count of emotional coding per entity. The structure of these searches yielded a matrix of intersections where themes were related to text passages. The structure of the resulting search will be further explored below in Chapter IV.

At several junctures during analyses, I printed code labels on paper, cut each item out, and then arranged the labels on poster boards, according to groups suggested by their context and by intersections within matrix searches. I made several of these maps, in order to inductively organize the code in terms of overall patterns, and according to the associations discovered in matrix searches. NVivo features similar visual maps, which are called *models* in the software, but I chose physical pieces of paper, partly because my computer screen is too small to be able to view entire maps of searched associations. Also, I was then free to move the code around by picking up the strips of paper and fitting them according to inductive logic, which is used in qualitative research that investigates unstudied or new phenomena (e.g., Menzies & Taylor, 2004). I made digital photographs of each map that I felt was worthy of consideration, in order to refer to their patterns while discussing the results.

The code was given to an interrater, who applied the code to text samples of the data. The code definitions that failed the interrater test were revised or deleted, until there was full agreement between the interrater and me on all the code and its

definitions. Please refer to Appendix B for the code and its definitions, taken in raw text directly from the NVivo software environment.

Chapter IV: Results

Themes of Ayahuasca Entity Encounters

This chapter begins with a brief overview of how results in NVivo software are structured and displayed. Next are paragraphs that describe six main phyla of thematic categories associated with entity encounters. Third, there is a presentation of the results of NVivo Boolean matrix searches, which, as will be seen in the next chapter, suggest some thematic patterns that are particularly accessible to theoretical interpretations. Fourth, there will be a somewhat longer, more detailed segment with descriptions of exemplary passages of the coded text. When individual reporters' texts are referenced, their Ayahuasca Forum usernames are used, and their Internet usernames will be capitalized. Gender pronouns are employed only when there were clear indicators of sexual category in the reporters' texts. The labels of coding nodes are italicized. The purpose of this is to clarify when I refer to code names, in contrast with the use of the same words and phrases that may occur when they are not explicit code names. The chapter ends with a mention of the outcome of the interrater procedure, and a brief summarizing paragraph.

Some of the coding nodes that appear in this chapter will be described as derived from Shanon (2002), which is the prior-research derived part of the coding process explained in Boyatzis (1998). All of the code derived from Shanon is in reference to coding found in *The Antipodes of the Mind* (2002). While some of Shanon's labels are used explicitly, my definitions of them are modified to reflect the fact that the data is archival text about past experiences, while Shanon's was direct observation during sessions. Another difference is the fact that the present study

focuses strictly on material that is associated with entity encounters, while Shanon's work is a global overview of Ayahuasca phenomena.

NVivo Results Appear as Trees

Thematic units in the software are interchangeably called *code*, *coding*, *nodes*, or *coded nodes*. NVivo organized all the pertinent nodes in nested categories, in one overall set of nodes called *trees*. The organization of *trees* is similar to the organization of a nested folder system such as is widely known in computer operating systems. The nomenclature of the tree system is based on the notion of family trees. Nodes can thus have branches, or subcategories, called siblings, parents, children, and descendants. Please see Figure 1 to view a screen shot of a section in the actual software expanded to reveal the tree of my project with some of its descendants.

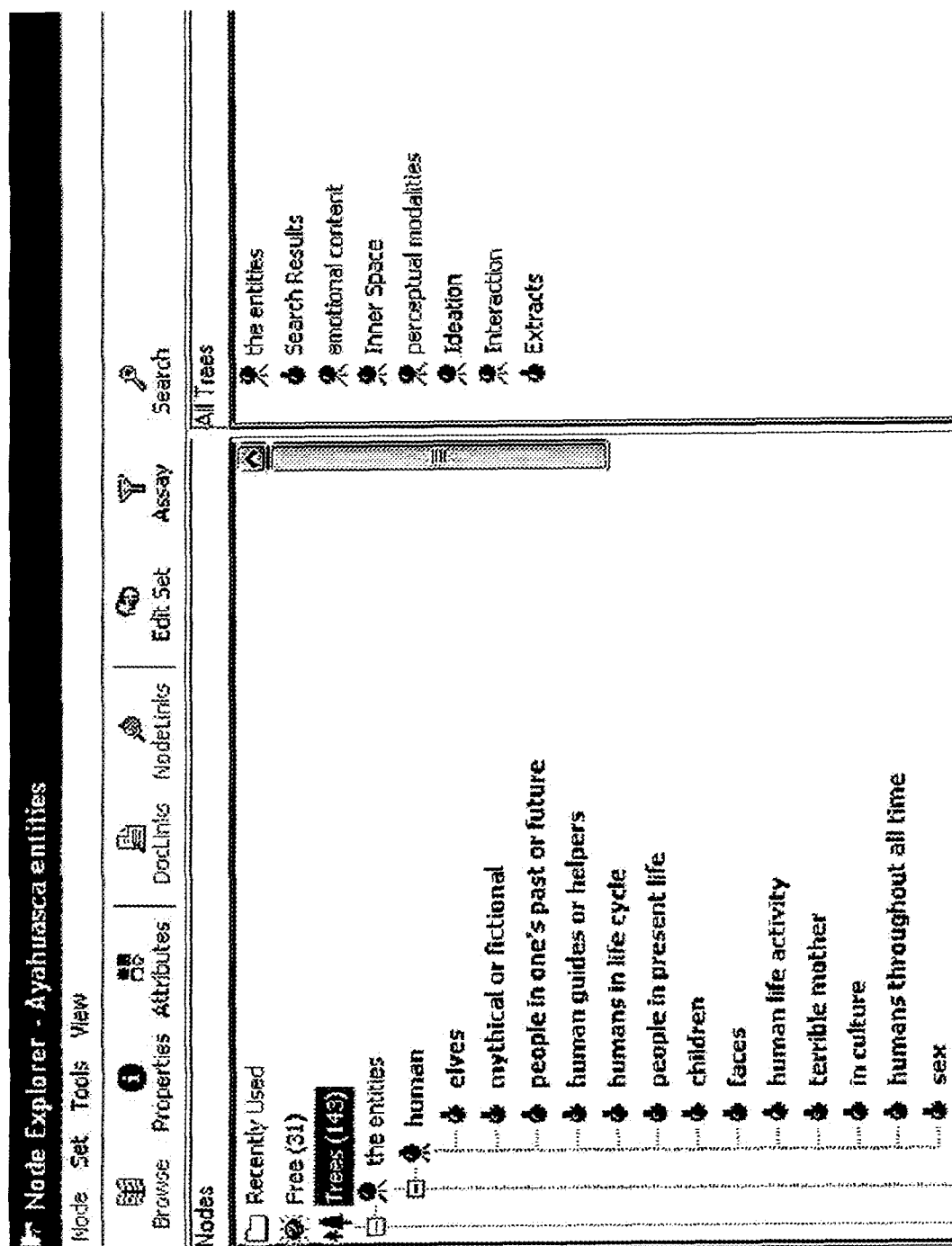


Figure 1. Screenshot of the coding tree for Ayahuasca entities, as it appears in NVivo software Node Explorer (Author's image)

Overview of the Results

Appendix B contains a listing of the entire code in raw form as it appeared in the software. Appendix B also contains the code definitions. For a listing of code that is most pertinent to the discussion, please see Table 3 on page 59. Coding of documents was regularly reviewed in the NVivo software in various formats. One way to view coding was in a Document Coding Report, an example of which is in Appendix C. Another helpful format generated by the software was to *browse* nodes, which produces a document that contains all text passages in which a node is coded. An example of text revealed while browsing the node *serpents* is in Appendix D.

The project's parent tree has six main categories called child nodes, which are in turn comprised of 141 descendants of the parent. These six child categories are labeled *the entities*, *emotional content*, *inner space*, *perceptual modalities*, *ideation*, and *interaction*. In the following paragraphs, I will review the definitions I assigned to these six nodes and offer some examples from the data. Please note that when I quote from the raw data, I present it just as written, without corrections for syntax, spelling, or punctuation. All the descendants of these main categories appear in Appendix B. It should be noted that the definitions of the nodes may reflect just one of many possibilities. This will be discussed at more length in the discussion in Chapter V.

First, *The entities* node contains 86 descendants, including a sub tree of 14 codes for *entity actions*. Generally, entities as such are labeled with nouns or adjectives, while their actions are labeled with verbs. The definition of this node included any reference to the appearance of living or animate beings. This definition

included implications of entities, or artifacts that would have been created by an entity, such as works of art. The entities as such include 14 kinds of *human* encounters, 3 kinds of *extraterrestrials*, 18 different *animals*, 7 different percepts of *Ayahuasca as entity*, *entity as higher self*, *malevolent beings*, 4 different *combinations*, 5 types of *anthropological* images of humans of different cultures and their *works of art*, *self transformed into entity*, various *healers*, *vague presences*, *entities inside one's body*, *robots and machines*, disembodied eyes, 4 kinds of *religious* figures and icons, *unnamed higher beings*, and *portal guardians*. Often, entities occur as first-order perceptions, such as when they are explicitly named, like the animals in the following passage from Kosmikas Farkas:

The wolf came to me in the dream prior to this, as a silhouette, standing there watching me. this time he was much closer, right on top of me, if he stuck his tongue out it would have licked me. accentuating his features. he just stayed there, directly in front of me, staring for an unknown amount of time. there was nothing else around, behind or in front. just the wolf.

The coding of *entity as higher self* was assigned to several passages by Sync.

At one point, he explicitly defines this type of entity interaction himself, "Passing through the channel I was soon in the light of the higher self, vast love and intelligence, incomprehensible consciousness to my tiny light." In subsequent posts, Sync describes dialogues with this higher self:

"These are yours to work with." The unseen spirit teacher says. "They create precursor core causal structures on which the finer more complex forms are built." I barely have any conception of what it means. I ask to see the completed structure, to know how the causal form relates to the lower and upper mind, to see the celestial influences and programming that moves the event sequences of the world. "Your mind can't handle it." I am told. By this I am shown the simple and sad truth that the levels of complexity and inter relationship are just too vast for my mind to grasp the overall patterns

and details. It exceeds my limitations, and there is no possibility of doing so even in the distant future. "Be still and learn at a level appropriate for your stage of evolution." I am told.

The second of the six main child nodes *Emotional Content* consists of 29 different emotional states or variations on emotional themes associated with entity encounters (Appendix B). When defining this code, I wrote:

This is perhaps the most challenging aspect of coding, because some interpretation of implicit affective content or stylistic affect may be coded. Emotional content is felt to be experienced by the ayahuasca drinker directly, or perceived to be expressed by entities. For example, "I stomped around in rage" or "an iron goddess breathed fire and destroyed the greedy ones" would both be coded for anger, rage. Or, an emotional tone can be suggested by the context. For example, an expansive, biblical style may suggest divine love, in the context of certain content.

The 29 emotional codes are divided into two composite nodes, which were two general codings for *negativity and abreaactions* on one hand, and for *grand emotion* on the other. *Negativity and abreaactions* codes the same passages as *fear, anger and rage, bereavement and grief, alienation of affect, and aggression*. *Grand emotion* codes the same passages as *divine reverence, ecstatic joy and bliss, forgiving love, happiness, brotherly love, motherly love, serenity, gratitude and thankfulness, courage, clarity and integration, and compassion*. Associations of entity encounters with these two poles of emotional themes were explored with Boolean matrix searches, which will be treated in more detail later.

The third child node is *Inner Space*. It contains 5 subcategories of entities that are associated with themes relating to global or cosmic viewpoints. I created the node to include entities involved in one's location in the span of human life throughout time, in the life span of the universe, or within the web of the living world. All five

descendants of *inner space* were derived from Shanon. *Anima mundi and the life force* is described in Shanon as pertaining to visions involving the World soul, Gaia, or the Universe expressed as a life force. *Anima mundi and the life force* was not used to code themes of the human cycle of birth and death, but it did overlap with coding for themes of *evolution and creation*. *Webs* were found in my data and noted by Shanon (2002) to consist “of translucent fibres that embrace the whole of Existence (p. 150).” A text search of the word *web* found references in 9 documents, and when associated with entity encounters, their purpose appeared to be to transmit information and for entity transportation. *Celestial and heavenly scenes* were denoted by Shanon as scenes that were evocative of God on a Biblical scale. For Shanon, these scenes includes bliss, and a sense of unlimited abundance. Coding for entity encounters in this category was differentiated from the experience of Gaia or feelings of universal power within oneself, which were assigned *anima mundi and life force*. The code for *evolution and creation* was also derived from Shanon. I found this theme in a single passage where DNA was reported as directly perceived to be involved with the source of human life.

The fourth of six child nodes, *Perceptual Modalities*, contains 2 nodes for the location of entities with respect to the visual field or physical presence of the body. This was data-derived code for two specific entity related phenomena, in which a salient feature of the entity encounter was the that the entity was reported to occupy a *spatial location within a visual field*, or was described to be interacting within a spatial reference to one’s body, labeled as *exteroception*, such as in this passage from Karparfinkle:

I'm currently working on breaking apart a large, dark, light-sucking, stagnant block of guilt and shame that's lodged in the upper left quadrant of my field of vision. It's also where an indescribably LOVING GOLDEN LIGHT appeared to me during my latest Dream. The block, which mentally manifests itself as the sudden discovery of my debauched drug use and the disgust and ridicule which follow, is slowly melting away.

I no longer assume that taking Entheogens is inherently wrong. I can feel the MASSIVE ME calmly pushing my awareness through this particular block.

The above passage was also coded with *entity as higher self*, in reference to Karparfinkle's earlier descriptions of "massive me."

Descendants of *perceptual modalities* include three others, derived from Shanon: *interpreting as*, *seen as*, and *seen in*. *Interpreting as* is neither intellectual processing, nor is it visual hallucination. It is defined as an interpretive way of seeing, which according to Shanon (2002) has been known to mystics as "seeing things the way they really are (p. 70)." An example of *seeing as* would be seeing the people present during an Ayahuasca session as angels. In my data, Muffi "went to the back yard of my house and laid on the grass, I could see that the Grass was alive, I zoomed into the grass and saw cities in there, like whole civilisations which are hidden normally to the human eye." In this case, Muffi saw the grass as alive in a way that was animistic. Further, Muffi's cities and civilizations are good examples of *seen in*. *Seen as* occurs when objects in the setting of a session transform or morph, or take on animistic quality, such as a carpet *seen as* a serpent, a photograph *seen as* living with eyes tracking observer, or furniture becoming animated.

The sixth child node *Ideation* was the most frequently used code, and was derived from Shanon. Used here, the definition is different from Shanon's, in that it includes thoughts or interpretations about entities by the reporters some time after the

fact, and not thoughts or interpretations during sessions. The node was defined to include all ideations about entities and related subjects by the reporters, and not strictly thoughts and interpretations during sessions. This code includes *noetic aspects*, which refers to the experience of acquiring knowledge directly from a spiritual source. The *ideation* family tree contains two nodes for thoughts and beliefs associated with entity encounters. These were ideas about the *nature of Ayahuasca*, and *noetic aspects*. Both of these were Shanon-derived. As Shanon mentions, the word *noetic* refers to insights, spiritual wisdom, or philosophical knowledge perceived to have been directly received during non-ordinary states.

Goodenz encountered *noetic aspects* when he:

was then whisked away I went forward in time and cannot explain where exactly. I then was given the understanding that all life, all we know, all I am, is energy. this energy is timeless and will continue on. I knew now the reality of this time and space is just something my energy has chosen to reside in for now.

Shanon is credited with the basic definitions of the entire tree of the sixth child node, *Interaction*. Again, definitions for the purposes of this project were modified to focus on text reports of entities, rather than Shanon's direct experience. The two levels of *interaction* are *active interaction* and *passive interaction*. A third subcategory indicates interactions that were in reports that displayed *narrative complexity*. Reporters sometimes exerted thought or imaginal action upon entities, and the results were *active interactions* that resulted in responses or changes in the entities' behaviors or characteristics. There were two types of *passive interactions*; they were *receiving* and *passive immersion*. *Receiving* also occurred during active interactions in which the reporter had influenced entities and as a result receives some

benefit. *Receiving* also refers to passively observing an entity who imparts something to the reporter, such as knowledge or healing. *Passive immersion* occurred when a reporter had the experience of being within a scene, but did not exert any influence. By definition, *Receiving* occurred in many of the same passages as coding for *passive immersion*, *active interactions*, *passive interactions*, and *entity actions*.

For Shanon, *Narrative complexity* refers to interactions with entities that involve a sequence of events that have a story line, often involving translocation within a vision from one place to another, including portals to scenes of heightened spiritual or psychological significance. I defined this code differently from Shanon, but not because of disagreement with him. He refers to repleteness of stories as they unfold in the moment of the Ayahuasca session, while I define it as textual repleteness, as a quality of writing rather than direct observation of series of events. Judging written *narrative complexity* was parallel to Shanon where he describes it as “not the content of visions, but rather the structured types in which they are manifested (2002, p. 108)”; some kind of coherent storyline is necessary for the appearance of any kind of interaction. *Narrative complexity* was associated with two reports in which style and textual repleteness of the storyline appeared to reflect an essential quality of the entity encounter. One example was Sync’s:

Passing through the channel I was soon in the light of the higher self, vast love and intelligence, incomprehensible consciousness to my tiny light. It showed me my life and childhood, the ignorance and deception I grew up in, the darkness I had dwelt in all my life. Then it showed me as I was at fifteen, confused, lost. I showed how it saw me, a small incarnation, step out onto the planes and reach out into the unknown. Unknown to me, the spirit had seen, and reached back. It had been there, and had guided, protected and taught as asked ever since, though I had not recognized it in the fog of my own delusions and illusions.

Results of Two Boolean Matrices: Emotional Antipodes

I performed a reading of the entire data set and coded for affect and emotional themes and coded 29 variations on these. They were categorized into two overarching themes, according to whether they were positive or negative emotions. I refer to these two basic themes as affective *antipodes*, which means opposite poles. I then used the capacity of the NVivo software to find complex systems of relationships called *matrix intersections*. In order to produce these, the software performed many thousands of calculations involved in searching all possible permutations of the search terms, which were coding nodes for many documents in their own right, within the entire data set. The resulting patterns would have not been possible to formulate in a reasonable time frame without the aid of computer technology. Figure 2 is a screenshot of the NVivo search tool and the panel that was used to define the scope of these searches.

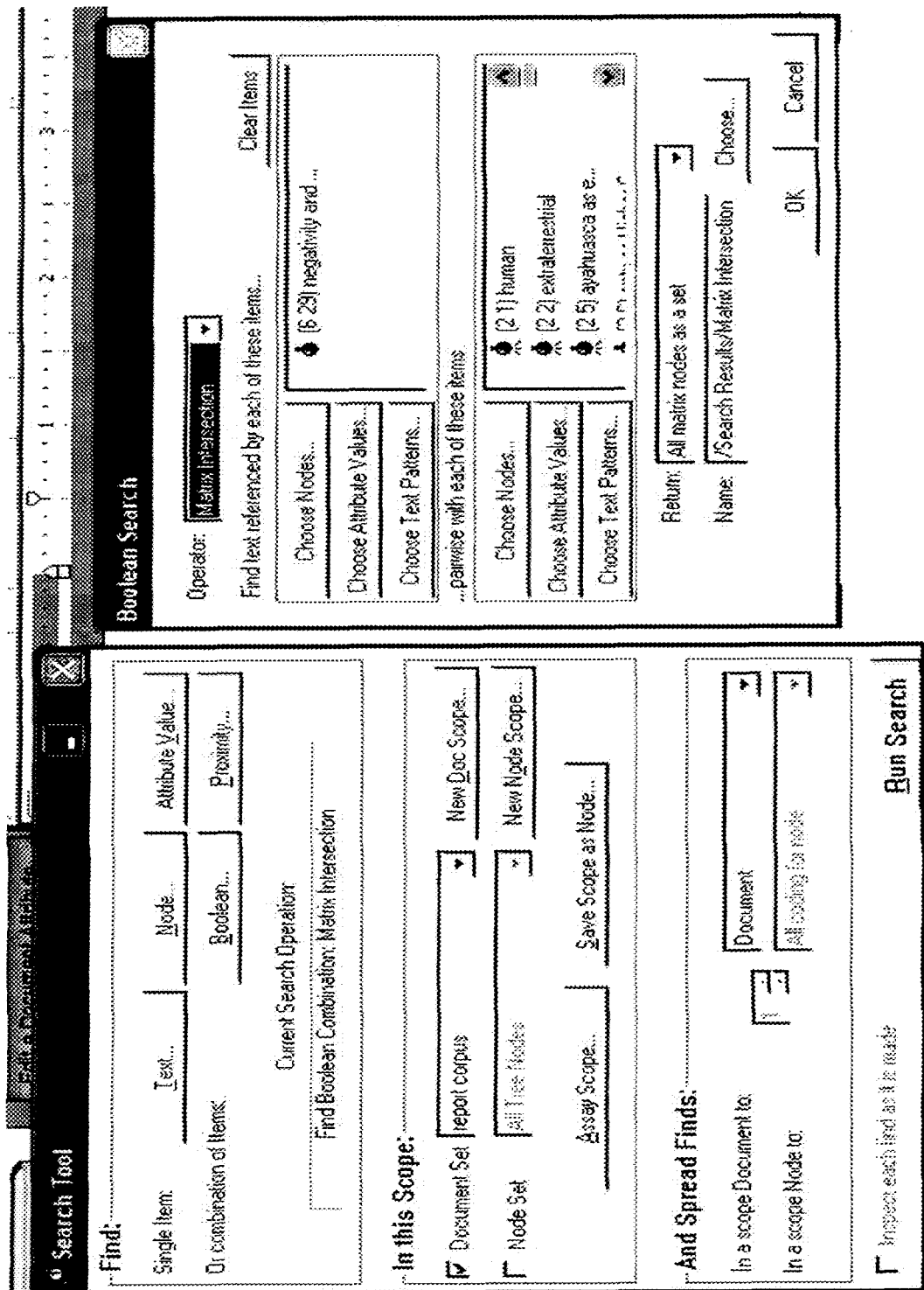


Figure 2. Screen shot of a setup for a Boolean matrix intersection search in NVivo software. (Author's image)

I performed two such searches, one for each of the emotional antipodes. I chose this type of search based on the fact that it yielded patterns of themes that were related to most of the passages in the data. These patterns were also psychologically meaningful, and availed themselves to discussion in the final chapter. One of the matrices contains the composite node labeled *negativity and abreaction*, and codes all passages that were coded for *fear, anger and rage, bereavement and grief, alienation of affect*, and *aggression*. The other search contains the composite node labeled *grand emotion*, which codes the same passages as *divine reverence, ecstatic joy and bliss, forgiving love, happiness, brotherly love, motherly love, serenity, gratitude and thankfulness, courage, clarity and integration*, and *compassion*. The results were returned in a spreadsheet, and once again, I cut the code labels out of paper printouts and arranged them for the purposes of later discussion. That model appears in Figure 3 in Chapter V, where it is pertinent to the discussion.

Now, I will attempt to explain the structure of the matrices. While complex and possibly difficult to read, it is not necessary to grasp this technical explanation; the reader may go directly to Figure 3 and the ensuing discussion in the final chapter to appreciate the patterns that appeared in the matrices.

The searches are called *Boolean* by virtue of the fact that they contain the logic operators *if, and, and then*. The results are displayed by the number of passages, which occur in the texts of reports that comprise the data. Text passages are defined during the original coding process; they can consist of a few lines, paragraphs, or entire documents, according to how they best reflect the meaning of the code. The structure of the resulting matrices can be imagined as a network of links or pathways

among text passages and coding nodes. For example, say a passage was found to contain one of the codes within the node *grand emotion*, and the word *serpents* appears in the same passage. *Serpents* would then receive a count for *grand emotion*. If *serpents* occurred in any other passage, then all the coding within that passage also received a score for *grand emotion*. For example, in another passage, *serpents* may be coded again, where the anthropological code *pre-Columbian features* is also found. This would then also give *pre-Columbian features* a score, by association, in the matrix search for *grand emotion*, even if a *grand emotion* was not directly coded in the passage containing *pre-Columbian features*.

Again, by virtue of the Boolean operands *if*, *and*, and *then*, If entity a *and* entity b appear in the same passage, *then* all instances of intersections of their coding with other codes would be related to one of the two emotional variables. The result provides numeric counts of these intersections, which can be displayed as descriptive statistics (Tables 1 and 2). *Grand emotion* is thus related with entity encounters in a total of 2,597 intersections, with the highest number scored by *divine reverence*, at $f=93$, followed by *serpents*, $f=85$. I assigned a cutoff, which was the number of hits below which results were excluded, was determined to be <6.91 , at the 95% confidence level.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics of Number of Text References Containing Coding Intersections with Grand Emotions (Author's image)*

Mean	29.17978
Standard Error	3.478431
Standard Deviation	32.81545
Sum	2597
Count	89
Maximum	93
Confidence Level(95.0%)	6.912655

I performed the other Boolean matrix search for *negativity and abreaction*, in identical fashion. The numerical results revealed 808 intersections, with coding for *fear* receiving the highest score. The cutoff was <6.78 , $p=.05$ (Table 2).

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics of Number of Text References Containing Coding Intersections with Negativity and Abreaction (Author's image)*

Mean	14.42857
Standard Error	3.387032
Standard Deviation	25.34623
Sum	808
Count	56
Maximum	77
Confidence Level(95.0%)	6.787762

Table 3 shows all the coding nodes that were over the cutoff ($p=.05$), and frequencies of passages associated with *grand emotions*, while Table 4 shows the equivalent results for the negative antipode. As an example, it is interesting to note that the code for *brotherly love* scored among the three highest scores for intersections associated with negative emotional content; more about this will appear in the next chapter.

Table 3. *Coding Nodes Associated with Grand Emotions, by Number of Text*

Passages in the data. (Author's image)

Matrix Nodes	Number of Passages Associated with Grand Emotions (cutoff \geq 4, $p=.05$)
emotional content/love, divine reverence	93
serpents	85
people in present life	82
entity actions/entity giving guidance, instruction	81
webs	80
emotional content/contemplating the dark	79
entity actions/they communicate	76
emotional content/ecstatic joy, bliss	76
Ayahuasca as feminine	73
emotional content/happiness	73
Ayahuasca as the Christ	72
robots and machines	69
entities express human emotion	69
entity as Higher Self	69
emotional content/fear	69
emotional content/clarity, integration	69
Ideation	67
people in one's past or future	67
entity actions/biographical recapitulation	67
insect	67
emotional content/brotherly love	67
emotional content/receiving love from entities	67
Ideation/noetic aspects	66
Ayahuasca as entity/Ayahuasca as healer	66
Interaction/narrative complexity	66

Table 3 (continued)

emotional content/compassion	66
portal guardian	65
human guides or helpers	64
entities in body	64
entity actions/they confer upon	64
octopus	63
human-animal combination	61
anthropological/precolumbian features	61
wolf	60
self as transformed into entity	21
emotional content/amazement, astonishment	13
humans throughout all time	10
perceptual modalities/auditory	9
human/children	9
Passive Interaction/passive immersion	9
Full-Fledged Scenes	8
human life activity	8
human/in culture	8
religious/Christian	8
animals in human movement	8
cow	8
elephant	8
emotional content/serenity	8
Anima Mundi, and the Life Force	5
vague presence or impossible to describe	4
Celestial and Heavenly Scenes	4
emotional content/narcissistic projection	4

Table 4. *Coding Nodes Associated with Negativity and Abreaction, by Number of Text Passages in the Data.* (Author's image)

Matrix Nodes	Number of Passages Associated with Negativity and Abreaction (cutoff ≥ 4 , $p=.05$)
emotional content/fear	77
emotional content/narcissistic projection	69
emotional content/brotherly love	66
entities in body	65
Ayahuasca as feminine	65
elephant	64
Ayahuasca as harsh teacher	64
emotional content/anger, rage	64
malevolent beings	63
worm	60
Ideation	57
serpents	11
portal guardian	7
Anima Mundi, and the Life Force	5
the entities/entity actions/entity giving guidance, instruction	5
the entities/entity as Higher Self	5
emotional content/clarity, integration	5
emotional content/compassion	5
Interaction/Active Interaction	4
Interaction/narrative complexity	4
Celestial and Heavenly Scenes	4

Some Detailed Examples of Coding

All of the coding results described in this section had scores above the cutoff ($p=.05$) in the two matrix intersection searches described above. For the most part, the order of appearance of entities in this section corresponds to the number of total

reader to recall that code labels are indicated in italic, while the usernames of the forum members are capitalized.

Snakes that appeared in the data were coded *Serpents*, and they were also sometimes coded as *healers*, entities who were perceived as having the ability to produce psychological or physiological improvements. Snakes commonly appear during times of the intestinal distress that is connected with the purgative effects of the Ayahuasca tea. *Serpents* are sometimes felt as being endowed with vast wisdom, capable of *giving guidance and instruction* about one's personal growth or spiritual development. *Serpents* also appear as fleeting glimpses whose presences are not interpreted by the reporters in any meaningful way.

The code for *People in present life* was defined as the appearance of one's acquaintances in present life during a session. Visions of people were sometimes reported, but most often, they appeared not as hallucination, but in thoughts during contemplation about being a better human being in interpersonal relationships.

Sync discussed his role in the Ayahuasca community with an *entity as higher self*. During a discussion with this spirit, he perceived the presence of *People in present life* in the form of others in his community: "with the inner senses I heard the vibration of the group. Others working on that side of the bridge, learning, helping, a community I had been a part of but forgotten. Spirits working in matter on the long journey home."

Webs was a node created as the result of a word search using the word *web*. Shanon also coded this item. *Webs* were consistently portrayed as having something to do with interconnectedness or communication. In one case, Earthbound described

a web that “may be a sort of communications link to others who are open to that layer of consciousness.” The word appeared as an ordinary figure of speech, used in the context of ideations about one’s place in social circumstances.

Fear during moments of entity encounters was one of the most frequent occurrences in the data. Sometimes, entities were reassuring presences to counteract *fear*, such as in Turtle’s account of his or her second session, in which he/she was “determined to be brave, to not run away from the visions.” Apparently, the reporter had had a difficult experience in the first Ayahuasca experience. During this second session, entities appeared as if in response to his intention to be brave; two glowing beings remained at either side, protecting him throughout the session. Anonymous, however, perceived a less friendly visitation in which the entities themselves were “terrifying in their otherness” and had “a menacing quality.” *Fear* also appeared in response to overwhelming physical and psychological intensity of some Ayahuasca sessions, such as when Apostle begged Ayahuasca to “Stop hurting me, I am your child.” In response, an Ayahuasca *as feminine* entity then appeared to him as a “semi-bestial mother figure with fiery eyes,” whose presence was nonetheless accompanied by a sense of release from the fear.

A code labeled *they communicate* pertained to the action of entities who answered questions or volunteered information. These communications included use of language, telepathy, or one somehow just knowing the intention of the entity. This node was created to differentiate it from actions that changed, bestowed powers, or healed disorders.

Ayahuasca as the *Christ* appeared in a single instance, in a report by Meteor that conveyed a religiously toned *full-fledged scene*. Meteor reported ideations about the aptness of the biblical saying, “I am the vine and you are the branch.”

Robots and machines were most often described as automatons who appeared in a role of a special type of healing or diagnostic process. Sync succinctly captured the impersonal and apparently benign nature of these curiosities: “it’s not a being as such, it’s a device, a tool, a probe of some kind used for making energy adjustments to the forms. It appears insect-like because it is so complicated a device that the technology appears organic, but it is impersonal because it has no innate intelligent consciousness.” The coding of *robots and machines* often overlapped with the code *insect*.

On the other hand, non-human entities were at times found to *express human emotions* of love and concern for human welfare. Entities sometimes guided reporters to *clarity and integration*, which was often attained after contemplating difficult problems or dark themes. These were reports of completion and unity that sometimes contained symbols of archetypes of wholeness, such as encounters with a god, with one’s higher self, or with cosmic consciousness. Such reports were accompanied by emotionally pleasurable descriptions of serenity, awe, and gratitude. Some *clarity and integration* occurred on a biographical scale, accompanied by a new perspective that reframed a personal problem, such as when Muffi felt suddenly released from the pain of a past relationship:

[Text is not corrected for syntax or spelling.] It was a state of a total ego loss !!! Then a vision of my ex boyfriend came with his new girlfriend (I have to say It kind of hurted me before when I knew he is with someone new-even though our relationship ended some time

ago) and seeing him now in my vision made me happy. I wished all the best to them. And since then I am happy—I sorted this problem in my head.

After 4 hours on it I felt completely purified—healed from my mental issues. And even now 3 days after I still feel that this cleared so many problems in me.

Sync's reports were typified by *narrative complexity* as well as *clarity and integration* in universal terms, in his long dialogues with an entity that he described as a spirit that was his higher self:

"What if I don't genuinely feel love, would it just be false?" I asked.

"It is for you to learn to focus and wait for it to become real. Energy follows attention, moves to that place formed in the mind. Focus on love and intelligence and it manifests as experience, as does any other part of the psyche."

I did as the spirit directed, thought about love, though I did not feel it. Gradually the feeling of love and gratitude returned to its former level. This cycle repeated several times, as I was taught to use the tea. It taught that the reason people are buffeted about by the dreams are they do not focus the mind in a chosen direction, but rather let the energy run wild following their train of thought and association. I realized how difficult it was to do this for long periods, being merely human.

Visions of ancestors, of future progeny such as one's children of future marriages were coded as *people in one's past or future*. This was also used to code visions of those who were presently alive if the vision concerned the past, such as one's living mother in her childhood. Sometimes it appeared unlikely that the knowledge represented in the vision would have been available to the reporter by ordinary means. For example, Ayahuasca's Bride wrote that during one session, Ayahuasca as *feminine entity* revealed to her that as a young girl, her grandmother "had witnessed women from her village in Ireland being raped by English soldiers and that this had resulted in her having a cynical view of men and giving my

grandfather and later my step grandfather a hard time.” In another example, a future descendent was revealed to Uncle Cid when he saw himself

in the future. In maybe my late 20s early 30s (I'm 21 now). I saw myself with a child. A son. I remember pretty much what he looked like and everything. I even caught a glimpse of a girl that will be very important to me. At this point I believe she will be the girl I will fall in love with or maybe just the mother of my child. Time will tell and I will always be looking for her.

Entities sometimes engaged reporters in a process of *biographical recapitulation*, a code synthesized with Shanon's coding for autobiographical subject matter: “In particular, one can see snapshots and scenes of one's personal past. The most elaborate visions of this kind reported to me are serials in which drinkers inspected different scenes of their life and as a consequence had a psychological insight of personal import to them” (Shanon, 2002, p 114). I found this in relation to entities who sometimes revealed unknown, repressed, or forgotten biographical events, or who facilitated increased integration of biographical material in some way. In one example, DrStrange revisited unresolved grief regarding his mother's mental decline and eventual death, and closed his narrative with indications of *clarity and integration*:

[Text is not corrected for syntax or spelling.] Sat back down and began to feel even more intense grief, now clearly first as my mother for her mother, then as me for my mother's sadness and my inability to connect with her and help her when she was alive, and then, finally, for the lack of mothering I received from her when I was a child. Much more weeping and sobbing. More nausea. Much more. Everytime I would get distracted from my emotions or let my attention drift, the nausea would surge up to unbearable levels. As soon as I could get back to the feelings, it would subside. Not all the way but fairly bearable. Eventually felt the urge again and grabbed my bucket and the water I drank about two hours before came up with pure, "invisible" toxins. Burned my throat so it was sore for many hours after but did not taste acidic in my mouth at all and

really had not much taste at all except for the drop of peppermint oil I had licked off the back of my hand as a chaser for the tea seemingly forever ago. No odor either, except the mint.

Next totally spontaneous act was to find myself lying on the floor, hugging a pillow and crying, "I want my mommy. I want my mommy, now," with racking sobs. Total regression. After an endless time, maybe another hour, I could feel everything start to settle down. Still very sad. Saw my mother as image like in one of the Wizard Trading Cards from Harry Potter. She could see me and spoke but no sound and I tried could not read her lips. She looked about same age as when she died but not sick at all. I could tell she was very sad about what had happened in the past and extremely happy about what I was doing now and felt freed and released by it.

Ayahuasca as healer was defined when *Ayahuasca*, felt to be a living spirit, was identified as a doctor, surgeon, or other healing entity. This was a fine but clear distinction from *Ayahuasca* appearing as a teacher or guide. *Ayahuasca as healer* generated reports of relief from physical and psychological symptoms. Lil Merlin wrote of one such psychological benefit:

[Text is not corrected for syntax or spelling.] I understood at once that *Ayahuasca* was speaking to me... Finally I had crossed the frontier between life and death, I said to myself, torn away from the fears which were preventing me from being free, I had abandoned life. This first awakening pointed out precisely what it was I had come to seek: to cure my fear of death. The anguish which had followed me for six months gave me the impression that I was no longer attached to the world of the flesh, that a strong wind could bring me to the other world that I sometimes perceived simultaneously. I had endured a distressing dissociation which made me feel that death would be like a state of eternal loneliness and isolation. In fact, this latter feeling appears to me today to be that which I endured in my life and within my family during that six months period of anxiety. I was feeling alone, abandoned, unloved. And I could not see any end to this situation, as if my energy were blocked. Nothing flowed by itself any more... Fear, anger and vengeance were preventing me from flowing calmly and with joy in life. It was in this context that this place, where I found myself after so much vomiting, felt like the transcendence of these feelings.

Visions of humans included *human guides or helpers*. ShamanCarlos wrote that during some visions repeatedly meets an assistant in the form of a little boy, Carlito. Turtle did not see people directly, but had a perception that objects he saw were signposts of past Ayahuasca users, left behind for future journeyers.

At times there appeared *entities inside one's body*. ShamanCarlos received a clutch of *octopus* eggs that were laid inside his head. He interpreted this as an auspicious occasion, and wrote that he believed the eggs symbolized a source of wisdom. He recognized the *octopus* as a benign ally "right away." He continued, "so now I've got octopus eggs in my head," and the vision was "a recognition of my desire to learn plant spirit medicine."

When an entity appeared to be associated with a shift to a new state of consciousness or noetic state, it was in the form of a guide who aided ones transition, or in the form of a guardian who blocked the way as a seeming test. These entities were labeled *portal guardians*. They were markers of passage through doors, planes of existence, tunnels, and vortexes, as described in this colorful example from MadGoldfish:

[text is not corrected for syntax or spelling.] there was this golden lady beckoning me to go with her, so I went, she led me up a white marble staircase, which spiralled round into this red cliff face. Then she took me through a door, and I went through it - I realised that she was the keeper of the gate between the real world and the aya world. From where we came out on the other side of the cliff I could see this massive ocean stretching out, in all different colours. Then she began to take me flying with her, and we flew over various places, one was like the pyramids but all golden and distorted. The other was like a view of new york from the bay. Then she flew me upwards into space and showed me different galaxies and planets.

Perti saw *elephants* as demonic figures representing human greed; Bazillion saw just a fleeting glimpse of one during a succession of random figures; Druidream experienced them as “flying blue energy-elephants.”

I found *malevolent beings* in several passages. One was a vague reference by Uncle Cid to a malefic presence, tangled in visual symbols of Mayan graphics. These graphics were also recorded as having *pre-Columbian features*, a child of the *anthropological* node. Another *malevolent being* that appeared to Kosmikas Farkas was in reference to one that clearly symbolized the reporter’s struggle with alcohol problems. In this instance, the being was identified as a type of animal, a *worm* who carried a cane and had sinister plans for getting his way, which was interpreted by the reporter as the cunning persistence of addiction. Sometimes, the spirit of the beverage itself appeared in the form of *Ayahuasca as harsh teacher*.

Felines and the *wolf* were portrayed as *entities inside one’s body*, or as *self transformed into entity*. These transformations were found as allies in association with *fear* responses. These inhabitants’ ferociousness were imagined to be more powerful than frightening forces or *malevolent beings*, such as in this example from Uncle Cid:

[Text is not corrected for syntax or spelling.] What happened next is hard to describe. I envisioned myself as a jaguar. I became it in some sort of way. I remeber feeling what it felt like to run as a panther. It was extremly odd but I somehow felt very at home with the sensation. I felt an incredible amount of power and at this point the menacing figure was no longer an issue. I envisioned how easy it would be to tear the monster apart. After that I moved on to the next step of the trip.

Meteor saw “the collective astral and mental bodies of the planet itself, composed in part of the emotional and mental bodies of all humanity,” which was an

example of *humans throughout all time*, a theme suggested by references to humanity as a whole, or in broad swathes of history and prehistory since the beginning of the human species. This theme of overarching humanity occurred in the presence of states of religious enthrallment or consciousness from a cosmic perspective. Other human themes included the presence of *children*; people engaged in ordinary *human life activities*, such as would be found in daily life; *humans in culture*, signifying scenes with indicators of geography or ethnicity; and *animals in human movement*, creatures who danced or sang.

Summary of Results

All the code that appears in this results chapter has interrater agreement. The interrater failed to code the data samples in less than 6% of items. In those cases where the interrater had trouble assigning appropriate code to text examples, the code was redefined and retested, or eliminated from the project.

All results are represented in tables, figures, and appendices. It may be helpful to think about the results in terms of levels of abstraction. The first-order level of results actually occurs the moment a passage is coded with a thematic unit. Some of these first-order results were described in the lengthy section above, where individual codes were defined and illustrated with examples. The visual models, where I had cut the labels out of paper and arranged them in both inductive and deductive patterns, might be considered a second-order level of abstraction. I would call the discovery of three-dimensional patterns within the Boolean matrix searches a

third-order level. The results of the matrix searches must be approached with critical thought, which is presented in Chapter V.

Chapter V: Discussion and Conclusion

The following discussion begins with a critical look at limitations of the present study, which lead to thoughts about future research. Next, there are sections that view results in terms of some Jungian ideas, followed by sections relating to Grof and Shanon. My remarks about Shanon are influenced by the idea of *resolution*. The notion of resolution can be understood by using the metaphor of a microscope, to suggest the idea that future research may delve into finer distinctions.

The Results: Generalizability, Limitations, Suggestions for Future Research

In order to appreciate the strengths of the present results, it is necessary to recognize their limits. I believe that to recognize these limits turns them into strengths, by virtue of the questions they imply. I would hesitate to claim that my results are predictive; given fresh data, I would be surprised if the present matrices were to be precisely duplicated. This is because of certain limitations inherent to the prospect of using archival text as data, which were anticipated from the start. For example, I knew that while the experiences described in the texts could have been accurate accounts of experiences during Ayahuasca sessions, they probably also contained artifacts of the creative moment of writing them down. From the most cynical perspective, any of them could have been fictional accounts. The precise boundary between representations of phenomena as written facts, and tendencies to embellish some aspects while dismissing others by omission, would have been impossible to verify. Reporters have a tendency to write interpretively, possibly because of a human drive to make sense of one's unusual experiences in ways that

are ego congruent. If a new sample of Ayahuasca Forum reports were taken today, content themes might have shifted because of changes due to increased familiarity with Ayahuasca states, or an evolution of progressive Ayahuasca experiences of the members.

A conservative assertion is that the code and models of the present project reflect thematic patterns that emerged within a given time frame, among writers who, more than likely, had recent Ayahuasca experiences. However, an interpretive element is present even in my choices of which items to code, and in my definitions. This implies that there may have been any number of possible meanings assigned to codes other than my own that I may have missed. My fondness for Jungian and transpersonal explanations influenced my coding and definitions, which then would influence the properties of the data that comprised my visual models. Given the inherent problems, there are many unresolved questions. This is one of the roles of qualitative explorations of unstudied areas, according to Boyatzis (1998) and others. It opens doors and invites hypothesis testing. At the end of this chapter, I will make a few suggestions that may generate topics of future studies. Because this is the first formal study of any kind to focus exclusively on Ayahuasca entities, its contribution may be seen not as conclusive, but as a foray into a new territory.

What Would Jung Do?

This section focuses mainly on Jungian interpretations of the model represented in Figure 3. While only one among many possible ways to explore this model, one Jungian interpretation would examine what role entities would play in a drama of an individual's process of individuation. These roles would all be regarded,

in Jungian terms, as metaphors of different aspects of the psyche during maturation and psychological growth. I will explore how some entities would be thought to play their roles in some difficult reactions that might befall a person intoxicated on Ayahuasca, because it is thought among Jungians that it is during crisis and distress when the greatest potential for liminality and the drama of transformation can occur. Finally, the section ends with a brief discussion of mood congruence and ego syntonia, which may be a bit of a digression from Jung, but is an appropriate transition from immediately preceding ideas.

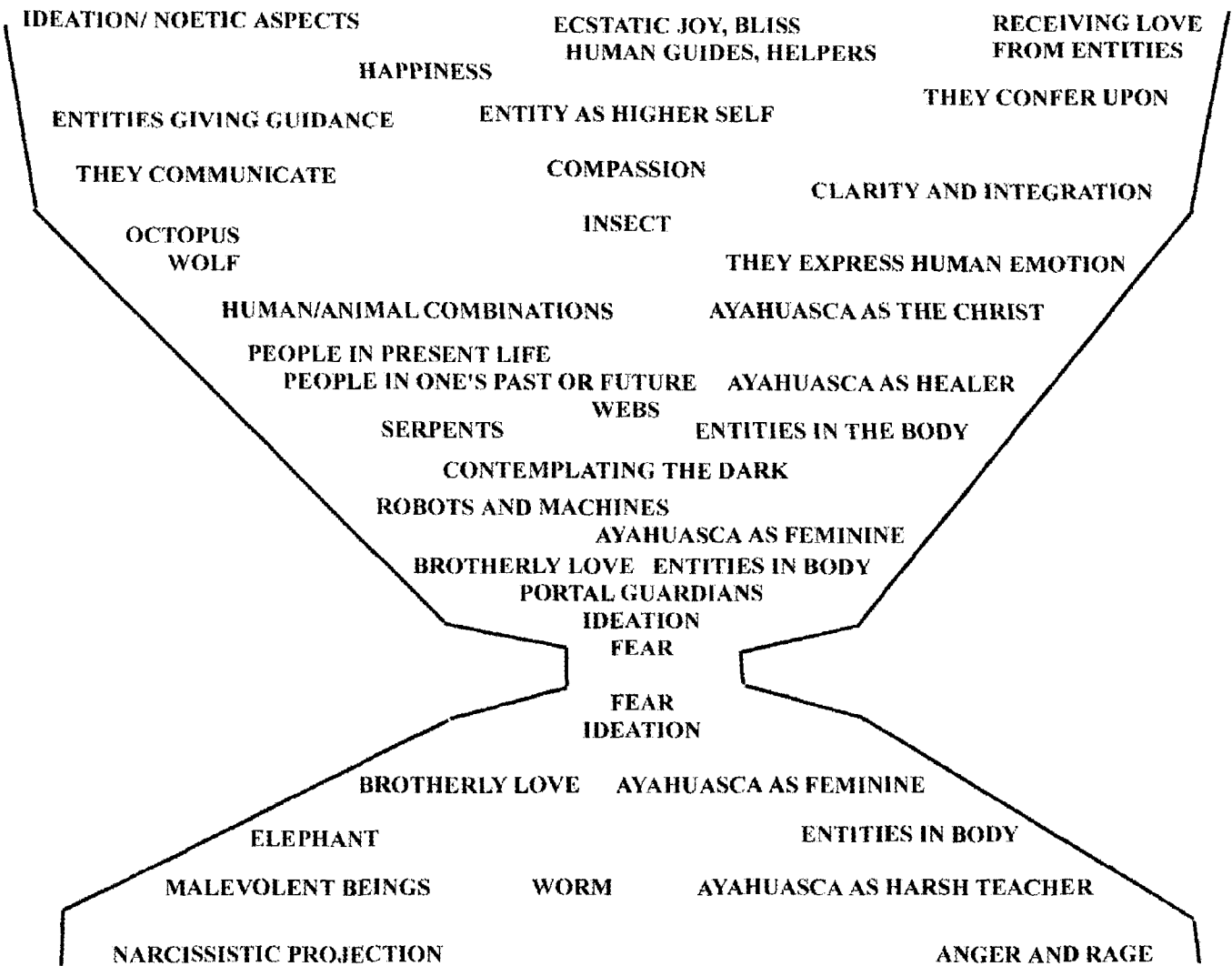


Figure 3. A visual model of code in affective matrix searches for both positive and negative affect. The model contains both inductive and deductive elements. (Author's image)

The map shown in Figure 3 is a model that contains elements of both result and theoretical interpretation, and so the discussion of it contains both inductive and deductive elements. It is a map of the entities that were implicated in the affective Boolean matrices described previously. I think of the shape of the pattern in the map as being a cross section of a three-dimensional hourglass figure.

This map follows ingredients of both inductive and deductive reasoning. The inductive ingredient creates meaningful order, informed by familiarity with classes of entities and repeated readings of the data; code labels are not simply scattered randomly, but reflect narrative contexts from which they were derived. The deductive ingredient is informed by a conscious intention to organize the map according to my theoretical orientation (Boyatzis, 1998). The deductive part is related to theoretical discussion, while the inductive is more related to results. Because of the deductive element, the map is an interpretation that avails itself to Jungian discussion, which is one of many possible explanations.

The upper half of Figure 3 contains code labels that had a significant number of associations with *grand emotions*, while the lower part contains those of *negativity and abreaction*. Notice that there are some codes that appear in both sets, and that *fear* occupies the closest place at sites on both sides of the boundary between the two affective territories. This inductive placement is suggested by the fact that fear in many reports appeared to intensify during moments of transition from negative to positive affective states. These states were accompanied by thoughts, or ideations, that were often in response to fearsome imagery and anxiety. The placement of portal guardians close to the affective transition boundary was no accident; there were

accounts of these entities appearing just at the precise moment of greatest tension, just before intense fear gave way to breakthroughs to clarity, joy, and the other higher emotional states of grand emotions. According to my interpretation, this is why there is a mirror effect close to the portal area. There is a pattern shown in the Boolean matrix intersections in which themes of *fear*, *ideation*, *Ayahuasca as feminine*, and *brotherly love* appear in the spaces that define both negative and positive affect. The appearance of these codes on both sides of the portal reflect the logical idea that they are implicated when reporters had transition from negative to positive affective states, and therefore the coding associated with their reports scored on both variables.

So far, I have described inductive placement within my visual model. The deductive part lies in the fact that the model itself is hourglass shaped, where I organized the two affective variables into two funnel-shaped spaces, joined at the middle where there is a portal, an opening between the two affective realms. This theoretical way of organizing things in an “as above, so below” fashion relates to Jungian models that organize the psyche in arrangements of opposites (Jung, 1976).

Incidentally, the shape of the map also corresponds to the transpersonal spaces described by Grof in his system of perinatal matrices (1993). And, for Shanon (2000), affective state transitions are described in terms of

scenes that are connected by a proper narrative dynamics. In these, the development of the plot is dictated by actions and events rather than by physical movement or transformation. Here, in principle, all the distinctions made-by linguists, psycholinguists, and students of literature-in the textual analysis of stories apply. (p.110)

More about implications from the perspectives of Grof and Shanon appears in later sections.

Returning to my model represented in Figure 3, I now review pertinent areas of Jungian thought. Jung defined *ego* as the center of the conscious part of the psyche. The organizing principle of an individual's entire psyche is called *Self*, which is often capitalized by Jungians to differentiate it from other definitions, as in Edinger (1972). When Jungians refer to *Self*, they refer not to ego consciousness but to an archetypal image of wholeness, or the tendency to unite opposite forces in a fundamental impulse toward homeostasis (Stein, 1998). Jung (1961) describes the structure of the unconscious and the entire personality as consisting of affective energies. Jung places his archetypes as factors that form structures within unconscious processes called *complexes*, which only partially emerge into consciousness in the form of mood, affect, and behavior. Complexes produce behavior patterns and emotional responses which have numinous properties when the defenses and constructs of the ego are lowered, an event Jung called *abaissement du niveau mental* (1973), literally, *lowering of consciousness*, but closer in contextual meaning to lowering of ego consciousness specifically (West, 2004). It is this precise juncture of lowered ego thresholds that I would place in the portal region of the model in Figure 3. It is the locus of greatest *fear*, because it is the place where ego identifications are threatened with dissolution, which often carries very convincing feelings of impending death, such as described in this passage by Othello:

[Text is not corrected for syntax or spelling.] There is the distinct impression of dissolving . . . all of my outward form is falling away I'm crying with joy and writhing gently when I tell B. "I'm dying, dying, really dying, and its okay, it's okay, it's soooooo okay . . ." I'm just so happy to be experiencing this, gratitude is flowing through me and out of me even though at this point there is no me, I'm like a gut that passes energy through it, a conduit, a vessel, at my most basic recognizable form . . . a presence draws near, somewhere up

over my left shoulder, and begins to speak to me, without words, telepathically. I recognize this presence immediately with a certainty that is undeniable. It's my mother. I don't see her, I feel her. It's her soul, stripped free of all the details of her long and often deeply sad life here on this earth. She says, again without words, "Othello, This is God. I want you to meet God. I want you to know that God is real."

I speculate that Jung might say that the presence of portal guardians and guides in the form of feminine beings and serpents are expressions of a universal mother archetype, and that the portal itself is suggestive of the transitional passage of the birth canal. He would also say that the time of diffused ego boundary is a liminal state, which holds the greatest potential for the assimilation of archetypal material, and also the greatest risk of being overwhelmed by archetypal energies (Jung, 1960b).

In one instance that may have been an expression of archetypal mother expressed in a scene containing a birth-canal portal, a serpent swallowed Sync—who had an appropriate measure of fear at the moment—and was transported through the snake's body:

There was fear for a moment, then letting go in the trust I had tried to foster. I was swallowed, passing down its throat, a tunnel of energy that I suddenly recognized. It was the tunnel to the light of the higher self, the channel between the lower and higher self. The channel is living energy, a spirit unto itself.

This descent through a tunnel to a realm of higher awareness is a widely recurrent pattern, not only in my reporters' stories and Jung, but throughout literatures of comparative religions, anthropology, and mythology. It is in shamanic voyages described in Halifax (1982), and is in the blueprint for the monomyth of Campbell's heroes (1968). Campbell also describes the processes of travel, of the

portal, of descent, and of ascent as metaphors for the great cycles of eons in the creation myth of Jainism, the eternal wheel of birth and death of Buddhism, and cabbalist eternities, among other cosmic themes.

Experiences of awakening described by reporters are often accompanied by emotional descriptors associated with joy, awe, ecstasy, and other expansive feelings. Jung wrote extensively on these moments of transcendence, including dissolutions of self concurrent with feelings of uniting with a reality that is not measured in time (e.g., Jung, 1973). They are often experienced as timeless or eternal. Jung calls the feeling associated with this type of event *participation mystique* (Jung, 1973), referring to a sense that one's identity is fused with the object as it was in infancy in regard to the personal mother; the object is perceived to be the ultimate reality. Subjective reports during constellation of the participation mystique describe affectively toned feelings of timelessness, universality, oceanic oneness, and eternity. These perceptions are accompanied by "a sense of certainty, trueness and rightness that appears to follow from the immediacy, power and the 'fullness' of the experience" (West, 2004). The same feelings pervade many descriptions in the present data.

West (2004), a Jungian analyst who synthesizes aspects of Freudian and Jungian psychology, postulates the *emotional core* as a concept that is distinct from not only ego consciousness but also the Self. He finds the idea of an emotional core clinically useful for framing the organization of ego defenses in narcissistic and borderline patients. For the purposes of the present discussion, I find West's emotional core useful to conceptualize one example of what might happen when

there is a failure to adequately integrate material revealed in Ayahuasca sessions. For example, some partakers of Ayahuasca report encounters with Christ during Ayahuasca sessions. All of the major formally organized Ayahuasca religions are syncretic forms of Christianity, such as the Santo Daime (Quinlan, 2001). What might happen if, after encounters with Christ on Ayahuasca, there appears a rigid, critical, concrete moral stance marked by condemnation and judgment of any interpretations that are not consistent with one's new-found religiosity? In such a case, it is conceivable that the image of a serpent would represent something associated with the Biblical messenger of Satan.

I found that serpents, for many reporters, were positive entities who had attributes of healing, divine wisdom, and loving compassion. But a minority of reporters view serpents, along with spiders and other species, as vermin who symbolize, literally, Biblical satanic forces. One reporter posted a description of a trip to the Amazon, where he wrote that he took part in an anaconda hunt. He claimed to have slain one of the great snakes. He posted pictures of the dead creature, and spoke of his conquest in heroic terms that reminded me of the mythic slaying of the dragon by St. George (Johnson, 1989). This would have been an action of shocking insolence to many Ayahuasca users, who regard the spirit of the anaconda as being a representative of the divine aspect of Ayahuasca, and the embodiment of the living presence of the Amazon itself (de Alverga, 1999; Luna & Amaringo, 1991; Quinlan, 2001).

What is going on such that an encounter with the Christ archetype in one person's Ayahuasca session may have resulted in apparent constriction, while many

others experience Christ as expansive and liberating? I find it helpful to continue with West's (2004) concept of the emotional core, which dovetails with the Jungian perspective. When the conscious ego begins to perceive and take responsibility for the contents of the unconscious, Jungians say that this can be a step toward integration and individuation. And, as emphasized by West (2004), this is not quite enough; it is important from the Jungian perspective for the ego to have the resources to consider whether it is advisable to balance the archetypal contents emerging from the unconscious with energies that are more temporal and logos oriented. When there is emotional content that is not integrated, it affects the functioning of the ego with intrusions of unconscious, feeling toned, archetypal material. This uncomfortable emotional content is then *projected* on an external person or object. Jung would say that projection has occurred if a living snake is regarded as an evil to be slain. The image of the snake would be thought to embody disowned parts of one's psyche.

West employs the concept of the emotional core as a kind of affective sensory organ that has both conscious and unconscious parts. The conscious part of this emotional sense is expressed as feelings that are known by the ego, while the unconscious part gives archetypal contents of complexes their emotional tone. According to West, the emotional core can be misidentified as indications of the true Self. Such misidentifications can result in the ego assuming that it has characteristics that are beyond its capacity, and the outcome is known as *inflation*, a topic that is described succinctly and with many examples by Edinger (1972).

Stated simply, Jungians seek psychological significance in imaginal entities according to their capacity to reveal a transcendent function, or movement toward

wholeness. West says that to access affect in psychotherapy and believe it to be an aspect of the true Self is not always helpful. If, for example, a hallucinatory entity is produced as part of a defensive system, it can be experienced as timeless and omniscient, just as authentic transcendence can. Feelings of eternal damnation are no less timeless than feelings of eternal bliss. But eternal damnation and other terrors are too awful for an unprepared ego to assimilate, so the prospect is kept out of consciousness by attaching the bad feeling to a symbolic entity that is felt to be outside of oneself. It is then no longer necessary to feel that the badness is part of oneself, and the ego is relieved to find that it can sustain itself in the face of so much evil. The ego identifies itself with the energies associated with the hero archetype, which instead of powerless and terrified, feels noble and pure. Again, operating as a kind of affective sense organ that commits attentional resources (West, 2004), the emotional core gives reinforcing feedback consisting of relief and pleasure. It is thus possible to confuse defensive systems with contact with the authentic Self. West's observations are comparable to Grof's (2001), who noted cases of transcendent unity in LSD sessions, but which resolved themselves in regressive, rigid religiosity or messianic complexes. An inflated identification with a personal hero symbol during a difficult or frightening Ayahuasca session would be an example of the expression of such a complex. Wheelwright (1982) would also describe a lack of ego strength necessary for successful integration of the powerful archetypal forces of life and death faced by the hero. This is why Wheelwright states that Jungian psychotherapy often involves a long process of ego support. Otherwise, as Edinger says, "contact

with powers that would be too big for the limited ego consciousness . . . might explode it disastrously” (1982, p. 63).

Avoidance of psychological pain, according to Jungian theory (Stein, 1998), does not successfully rid one of painful psychic energy. Rather, it is relegated to the unconscious, where it remains active. One way repressed material can be avoided is through identification with an inflated self image. To avoid difficult Ayahuasca themes, it is possible that the appearance of entities that are associated with one’s specialness may be preferable to the fearful contemplation of one’s inadequacy, sorrow, or helplessness. In such cases, one may consciously identify with a powerful and favorable entity, and repress the painful or inferior emotional energies to the unconscious. To the extent that there is a conscious expression of nobility and purity of the inflated ego-identified hero, there would be, according to the Jungian law of opposites (Wheelwright, 1982) an equal and opposite accumulation of negatively-charged material in the form of a complex called the *shadow*, which remains unconscious to the individual. The shadow is expressed in projections so that external objects and other people appear to embody the very evil that one avoids.

These repressed energies are expressed when internal and external conditions trigger a constellation of emotions and behaviors known as *acting out* (Stein, 1998). Returning to the above-mentioned reporter who claimed to have participated in an anaconda hunt, a Jungian might speculate that the snake evoked split off fragments of his own psyche imagery that perfectly embodies the darkest of archetypal energies. The reporter’s actual, real-time killing of the anaconda may then be viewed as a ritual that symbolizes and reinforces a severance between conscious and unconscious

forces. What may appear to be the killing of an innocent creature to some may feel to the hunter like a human triumph over the chaos of nature, which in his worldview may be not only separate from humanity but also separate from God (Campbell, 1968).

To be clear, I should add that it is not the position of all Jungians that all hero identifications result in regressive acting out of violent impulses or projections of destructive shadow material. The hero's journey is also thought to be a bona fide quest during the course of a lifespan, symbolic of individuation or authentic religious awakening, such as is explored throughout Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1968). The difference between failure of integration and authentic personal growth is explained throughout Jungian and related literature to depend on the strength of the ego's capacities of mediation, moral choice, and tolerance of ambiguity (e.g., Edinger, 1972; Grof, 2001; Jung, 1960b; Stein, 1998; Wheelwright, 1982).

Now I will discuss the notion of the portal, which I identify as the boundary between the upper and lower portions of Figure 3. Portals in general have distinct Jungian implications, metaphorically associated with lore of birth and death, the archetype of the mother, and anything having to do with mythic moments of transformation and transition. In Campbell's monomyth (1968) as well as in Wilkinson's interpretations from a feminist perspective (1996), there appear moments in the hero's journey where entities appear in the presence of critical moments I associate with the portal, through which the hero must pass to accomplish missions. There are often female characters who present the hero with magical weapons, or directions through passages of descent or ascent. In addition to the helpful feminine

presences, these passages are often guarded by entities with fearsome reputations, characterized by Jung as representatives of the trickster archetype (Jung, 1969). In my data, I assigned the code *portal guardian* when there was an entity that acted as guardian or guide in association with a transition to higher plane of consciousness or to a noetic state, as was apparent in this passage from Sync:

The serpentine spirit was here again, a spirit I have seen many times, accept, but do not understand. Minor anxieties came and were exhausted, and I continued to wonder at the coils around me. Suddenly the coils had a great head, mouth open, coming for me. There was fear for a moment, then letting go in the trust I had tried to foster. I was swallowed, passing down it's throat, a tunnel of energy that I suddenly recognized. It was the tunnel to the light of the higher self, the channel between the lower and higher self.

Transitions with attendant entities can appear in the form of doors and thresholds to visions of translocations in time or space, as in MadGolfish':

there was this golden lady beckoning me to go with her, so I went, she led me up a white marble staircase, which spiralled round into this red cliff face. Then she took me through a door, and I went through it - I realised that she was the keeper of the gate between the real world and the aya world. From where we came out on the other side of the cliff I could see this massive ocean stretching out, in all different colours. Then she began to take me flying with her, and we flew over various places, one was like the pyramids but all golden and distorted. The other was like a view of new york from the bay. Then she flew me upwards into space and showed me different galaxies and planets.

Transitions can be aborted by the processes of inflation and projection.

Campbell observes, "In the United States there is....a pathos of inverted emphasis: the goal is not to grow old, but to grow young; not to mature away from mother, but to cleave to her (1968, p. 11)." This resistance is seen by Jungians and also by Grof, as will be visited in more detail below, to be associated with the unfinished business of one's mother complex. According to both views, to abandon oneself to be

inexorably squeezed through a portal of transformation is psychologically equivalent to acceptance of separation from the mother and acceptance of the next maturation task, while its avoidance is equivalent to clinging to the womb.

Congruent with mood at times of transcendence, entities reported in my data sometimes appeared as beings who have special powers of abundance, healing, and sublime wisdom. Archetypally speaking, these entities are symbols of inner guidance, that can lead to integration of the Self. They can be considered from a Jungian perspective to be symbols associated with portals that lead to imminent self-realization and individuation, which is said to be the Self's developmental apotheosis (Jung, 1961). The powers of these divine entities, Jungians might say, represent the dormant powers of the individual, and their appearance indicates that one is on the threshold of the long process of integrating them. A Jungian developmental task at this time would be to assume ownership and responsibility for one's own sublime wisdom, healing powers, and connection to abundance, without inflation.

*Relationships Between Mood Congruence, Ego Syntonia, and Entity
Encounters during Experiences of Cosmic Unity*

The notion of *mood congruence* has been used clinically as a diagnostic sign in some circumstances of pathology, when delusions or hallucinations are presented by psychiatric patients. There has been some literature that has indicated correlations between mood congruence of hallucinatory content and prognosis (e.g., Winokur, Scharfetter, & Angst, 2004). Mood congruent hallucinations have been found to be associated with mood disorders in both depressed and manic states, while

incongruent ones are associated with schizophrenia and worse prognoses. *Ego dystonia* refers the experience that one's thoughts, feelings, or behaviors are repugnant or inconsistent with one's values, moral standards, or self-concept. *Ego syntonia* refers to the opposite condition, in which those aspects are experienced as congruent with self-concept. The notions of ego syntonic and ego dystonic thoughts, feelings, and behaviors stem from the Freudian psychoanalytic recognition of various degrees of nonintegrated superego functioning (West, 2004), while Jung might be more likely to describe them in terms of unassimilated complexes (1960a). The significance of mood congruence and ego syntonia, for my purposes, has less to do with pathology and more to do with what these ideas may say about the structures in which Ayahuasca entity encounters may be embedded.

According to my analysis, an entity encounter could result in experiences that have four permutations of the possible combinations of mood congruence, mood incongruence, ego syntonia, and ego dystonia. I will spare the reader speculations on all four of these permutations, and consider just three of them.

In the first instance, one's conscious experience of mood may be blissful, and there may be a non-anxious, ego syntonic realization that one is connected in a direct way to all of creation. Such an event may foretell an unfolding of actual change in daily life, and the beginning of healing long held patterns. Entities in Ayahuasca visions in this scenario might be beautiful and compassionate, while being both ego syntonic and mood congruent.

In a second instance, however, such powers could conceivably be perceived as undeserved and therefore ego dystonic. If there are damaged, immature self

perceptions caused by narcissistic wounds, the result may be that the person could not tolerate a non-anxious experience of channeling divine powers, because of a belief in one's unworthiness. The result then might be that the individual would fail to completely integrate the energies symbolized by divine beings. The unprepared ego might grasp at a compensatory mechanism that results in ego inflation (Grof, 2001; Wheelwright, 1982). In such a case, a wisdom-based, mood congruent, noetic feeling of being at one with all, for example, may be misidentified as identical to the personal self, which results in the well known delusional state sometimes called the messiah complex.

A mood congruent entity encounter may be ego dystonic in at least one other way. For example, if a person is angry about some injustice, a mood congruent vision may occur such as a fierce, avenging archetypal mother, capable of roasting one's enemies in wombs made of iron furnaces. This would be mood congruent because of the individual's anger about the injustice, and is ego dystonic because the person would probably not engage in torture of others.

Thirdly, mood incongruent entities may include figures who convey utter otherness or alien presences. The feeling tone of some alien encounters often defies categorization because their existence is felt to be beyond human experience. The reporter will express astonishment, or a sense of curiosity, and at times awe that the Ayahuasca experience can include utterly alien beings with vividly photo realistic features. Such visions are often described in terms that express an unutterable otherness that is alien to any conceivable human experience. Therefore, they cannot be said to be either ego syntonic or dystonic.

Applicability of the Perinatal Matrices

In this section I continue to examine the model in Figure 3, and to further discuss the problems of inflation and projection, from a transpersonal perspective that uses the nomenclature of Grof (1970, 1993, 2000, 2001). Grof employs a model that was constructed on the basis of thousands of sessions of nonordinary consciousness, including the use of LSD and a technique he named Holotropic Breathing.

Before continuing with data analysis, I will briefly review Grof. All of the biographical material herein appears in his *LSD Psychotherapy* (2001). In the early days of his psychedelic explorations while a graduate student in the 1950s in Czechoslovakia, Grof immediately speculated on his startling observations of his own and others' LSD sessions along theoretical lines. His would have been consistent with a deductive approach, which essentially would have consisted of thematic analysis based on theory-driven coding. Whether or not his analytic process would have used Boyatzis' nomenclature such as the terms *thematic analysis*, *coding*, and so forth, he would probably have gone through the same steps that Boyatzis articulates. In fact, Boyatzis says that after many years of teaching qualitative methods to graduate students, he has come to believe that all of the qualitative disciplines use the steps of thematic analysis in one form or another (1998).

Grof (2001) describes a quandary early in his psychiatric career, when he attempted to analyze certain repeated content themes of LSD sessions. He came to an unavoidable conclusion, after months of anguish over risks to career and professional respect from colleagues and teachers. The conclusion was that the theoretical

framework of the day, which was in his locale solidly embedded in Freudian analytic psychology, failed to account for his observations. This is the very risk of theory-driven coding according to Boyatzis; as useful as it is, deductive coding based on one's theoretical presuppositions risks overlooking novel phenomena. Following the feelings of his cognitive dissonance, Grof began paying more attention to his data, and found that some aspects of psychedelic experience corresponded to what he knew as a physician of the physical birth process. He asked himself why we should assume that psychological development begins at the moment of birth, because much of the imagery he saw in LSD sessions appeared to be metaphors and actual representations of prenatal life. This moment of questioning was the beginning of an unforeseen research and clinical career involved with the hallucinatory phenomena of LSD states. Over the years, he developed a model that incorporates much transpersonal and Jungian theory, along with some novel ideas. These consist of Grof's proprietary notions of the basic perinatal matrices (BPM's) and the *COEX* system (system of condensed experience). These ideas were described more thoroughly in Chapter II above, so I will not again explain them in much detail.

An obvious connection between Grof's views on the perinatal matrices and my data as represented in Figure 3 is the idea of the portal and its surrounding entities. The portal is suggestive of the birth canal, and there are entities in my data who would probably play significant roles in an analysis based on Grof's perinatal matrices. (As an aside, it did not escape my attention that the Boolean searches in the NVivo software and Grof's system both employ the word matrix, whose etymological roots form the basis for the word mother in many languages.)

BPM I (Basic Perinatal Matrix I) corresponds to the areas in my matrix in Figure 3 that are associated with some of the feelings of *grand emotion*. During periods of ecstatic bliss and divine reverence, there can be feelings that one's being floats in an undifferentiated wholeness of a friendly, nourishing universe, which Grof would say resonates with prenatal somatic impressions made during periods when the fetus grew in undisturbed union with the mother's uterine matrix. The feelings associated with this period correspond to those of oceanic oneness described in terms of Jung's participation mystique (1973). They are also equivalent to the mystical enlightenment of the hero when he or she apprehends the true nature of the universe as the cosmic egg, according to Campbell (1968). The cosmic egg is, incidentally, another level of the uterine matrix, and an archetypal expression of the Great Mother archetype on a much expanded scale (Neumann & Manheim, 1963).

My data reported experiences of cosmic consciousness, expanded perceptions of existence, and the heightened awareness of clarity in Ayahuasca sessions. The associated entities, according to the matrix searches, were teachers in the form of serpents, wolves, Ayahuasca spirits, humans, Jesus Christ, creatures who were combinations of humans and animals, artifacts and humans with pre-Columbian features, insects, and octopi. These beings imparted gifts of noetic wisdom, specific guidance and instruction about one's development, lessons about brotherly love, compassionate regard of one's biographical recapitulations, healing of physical ailments, clarity and integration regarding dark and light aspects of life, happiness, ecstatic joy, and bliss. The entities in this agreeable space also expressed human emotions, generally described in terms of unfathomable love toward reporters.

In comparison to Ayahuasca sessions, my impression of Grof's oceans of bliss in BPM I is that they are relatively uninhabited. Certainly, many entities do appear in Grof's discourses, but my impression is that LSD and Holotropic Breathwork states are distinctly different from Ayahuasca states, due in part to the simple profusion and significance of Ayahuasca entities. Entity encounters and the inexhaustible creativity of whatever force creates such diversely populated scenes, along with a vast profusion of other content, are of central interest to Ayahuasca studies, while LSD studies focus on mood, trauma, and states of consciousness as they relate to the development of the self. I suspect that entities who do appear during Grof's holotropic work are regarded as means to an end, signs of progress in cathecting the birth trauma. In a session with Grof practitioners, whatever messages the entities have to impart may be of less importance than moving the patient along through the rebirth portal and on to the next BPM. In my data and in the literature generally, triptamine intoxicants, such as ones usually present in Ayahuasca, feature entity encounters as being of primary, salient, and central interest. These include aliens encountered by Strassman's subjects in his *DMT: The spirit molecule* (2001), aliens in the form of intelligent space-traveling mushroom spores in Terrence McKenna's works (e.g., 1991, 1992, 1993), and as healing agents in Quinlan (2001), just to name a few.

My conclusion is that Grof offers a framework that is supported during special kinds of Ayahuasca sessions. However, his model does not, and was probably not intended to account for all entity encounters. The BPM's (Basic Perinatal Matrices) are best matched to my results in areas immediately surrounding the

dynamics of stories related to the portal areas of Figure 3. This is because of the obvious connection between the portal guardians appearance during times of transition from one state to the next, and the fact that the birth process for humans is the mother of all transitions.

There are a number of reports in my data in which the task that is demanded of the protagonist appears to be the resolution of significant biographical trauma, such as rape, child abuse, and suicidal loss of family members. In those cases, there may be themes that could be related to Grof's BPM rebirth cycle and to the COEX system (system of condensed experience), matching his thesis that traumatic themes arch across spans of lives to intrude again and again on the lives of the sufferers. Sessions in my data describe periods of time in some cases that matched, feeling for feeling, Grof's descriptors of having been in a *poisoned womb*. Grof would say that at those darkest moments, the most wonderful thing is about to happen. All the scary visions and terrifying entities are indicators that it is time for the protagonist to move on. He would recognize poison womb sensations and suspicions of eternal damnation as corresponding to the next phase of transformation, which is BPM II. For him it would be time to let go and allow expulsion through the cosmic birth canal; the more energetic the hellish visions, the more powerful the potential for cathexis. Grof invites readers to imagine a fetal child who has been in a beautiful womb universe for months, when one day all the protective fluids drain away, or levels of hormones change so the ocean of amniotic fluid begins to feel hostile instead of nourishing. But that is not bad enough—the walls are closing in, forcing the head with such pressure through an opening that is so tight that the skull had to be evolutionarily designed

using bones that fold in on themselves, extruding the brain through the vaginal canal, a small tunnel to the light. In cases where someone is having somatic reactions and visions that match these themes during an Ayahuasca session, Grof's model may offer valid suggestions that could bring the session to fruitful resolution. It is my view that what Grof does, he does superbly; he does it based on a lifetime of training and familiarity with thousands of successful sessions and in the presence of severe emotional problems related to posttraumatic stress.

Let us revisit Figure 3, with some added speculations about how Grof's model would translate in terms of my map. According to Grof (2001), the inflation of an over-identification with a hero may not be sustainable in the presence of the overwhelming affective states of a psychedelic session. Over the course of psychedelic treatments, abreactions occur because of the breakdown of a sense of a self-regulated ego. This can feel devastating, and fears of death are often present. Grof would say that the safety of the protective womb, which is a feature of BPM I, begins to dissolve. Jung would identify this as a liminal state, an opportunity to become conscious of, and thereby integrate, portions of the mother complex. When one's comfortable illusions are thus penetrated, the cosmic egg of one's personal consciousness, which had been a coherent sense of the universe, may feel like a poisoned womb (Grof, 2001).

An Ayahuasca session can only be approached with the intentions and expectations that are within the scope of one's existing world. The intentions of a drinker may include unconscious attachments to the nourishing womblike peace of a mother complex, such that there could be expectations that an Ayahuasca session

would help one patch the fissures in an inflated self image, with a sincere belief that one would be seeking *Ayahuasca as healer*. But the unconscious, according to both Grof and Jung, would be very likely to intrude. For a few sessions, things may appear to go according to plan, with hero myth energized by the heightened energy of the plant drug. But avoidance may not be sustainable, as indicated in this passage from Star Hawk:

I became aware that my familiar identity had become encompassed by a broader, non dual field of consciousness, the Self in which my persona floated. My persona felt detonated, hanging like fragments in the void. When confusion came up, the amplified voice of conscience would perform laser-surgery on the offending thought forms, illusion after illusion was destroyed. I saw that Star Hawk is a lie, a lie to my true nature and potential.

There appears to be sessions when *Ayahuasca as healer* turns her face and becomes *Ayahuasca as harsh teacher*. It would become painfully evident that the inflated hero's sun had passed into the night, as do all things. No matter that there are times when the cosmic egg provided all the religious awe of the participation mystique, the inevitable conclusion is always expulsion from paradise (Grof, 2001). An example of demolished inflation may be indicated in this passage from Mariri, which was coded *Ayahuasca as harsh teacher*:

White plastic pseudo-shamans? Who do we think we are, in the face of this titanic infinity of mystery and existence that we are thrown about in from birth to death, to delve into the mysteries, which our nervous systems were never configured to interpret? We are all being truly humbled by a harsh, harsh teacher. I am shown my enclosed, profane sweating self in all its sickness. I see myself in my fathers eyes, feel his disappointment, I see myself through the eyes of past partners, I am appalled. What dithering weakness! What endless, inky blackness of space! What loneliness! I feel shaken to the real, humbled beyond my 'human' pretensions, seeing a world increasingly damaged by dominator cultures in the pathetic pursuit of power and profit.

Ultimately, the cycling of the journey of the Self is thought to be endless (Campbell, 1968; Grof 2001). This system can be thought of in terms of a spiral, in which repeated returns to themes of growth and destruction are accompanied by increased awareness with each return. Grof bases his system on a view of human reality in which the good womb, whether it be the biological one or the universal egg on a cosmic scale, is not a static condition where one is supposed to remain, but always returns to a condition that foretells death and rebirth. Ayahuasca visions would at this juncture presumably contain entities associated with *negativity and abreaction*. *Fear* would intensify as one approaches the liminal field of the portal. It would be hoped that one would be prepared with the awareness that the death experiences in Ayahuasca states are not physical death in the ordinary sense, but can be portals to liberation. In this context, when the individual avoids the necessary transformations, the assumption would be that there is a preexisting reason for clinging to the womb, a vulnerability that would have its source in an unhealed psychological wound caused by an earlier trauma.

Grof's COEX system could also apply in the context of a transformative Ayahuasca session. The COEX system, as explained in Chapter II, resembles the Jungian idea of the complex, in that the COEX involves constellations of affect and archetype. However, the COEX is a thematic thread that is woven throughout not just the psychic domain but through the entire lifespan, in one's ancestry, and throughout one's past existences (Grof, 2001). A suitable example of a trauma that would support the COEX idea might involve themes of parental loss, which would be thought to weave its influence throughout one's life, including the lives of one's

ancestors. The theme of abandonment was woven into this story of abusive relationships, sexual confusion, and depression, as told by Ayahuasca's Bride:

She then showed me a series of traumas that I had been through in my life: the drama of being born (I could see the head emerging from between my mothers legs), having to go to school and being separated from my Mummy and Daddy at four and a half, my first same-sex explorations and wetting myself in class as a result of a bladder infection both at the age of fourteen and an abusive relationship I was involved in many years ago. She said that my inability to cope with these traumas was resulting in recurring depressions. Later on the Ayahuasca gave me some information about the relationship between the relationship between my Uncle and my Grandparents on my mothers side. I've always been told by my mother that my Uncle who died at 18 months was loved and adored as at last they had had a son after four girls. The Ayahuasca said that initially they had viewed him as another mouth to feed and that he had an ambivalent attitude towards them.

Expanded states of Ayahuasca intoxication include states in which there can appear archetypal associations with the theme of the feminine as a scornful, rejecting, vengeful destroyer of titanic proportions. Entities that appear at this time include terrible mother figures such as Kali, the wrathful deity of Hindu mythology who represents the feminine face of God (Neumann & Manheim, 1963). Hers is the domain of anything in the underlying matrix of all creation and nature that is involved in death and return. She is worshipped as the source of creativity, because whatever a new thing is, it must be created out of something that is destroyed; after being fashioned into something new, we are no more. Jung (1968) mentions that the feminine face of God is represented in Christian iconography not only as the sweet, nourishing aspect of the blessed Virgin, but also as the Cross. The Cross as mother represents the dark side of the matrix of birth and death, suffering that is structured in the bedrock of reality, equivalent to the forces of Kali.

In terms of Grof's ideas, these deities might appear as Ayahuasca entities when one is close to the boundary between affective states, corresponding to Grof's BPM II and BPM III (Basic Perinatal Matrices I & II). If the process were allowed to complete itself, one might proceed through the portal, which in perinatal terms corresponds to the birth canal of BPM III. The breakthroughs described in my data that were associated with *portal guardians* would be viewed as having emerged, reborn among entities in scenes reminiscent of the resurrection. BPM IV resolves into a state that once again has the feelings associated with oceanic unity and the participation mystique, in a phenomenally similar but more complex state than BPM I. Thus, the cycle repeats in a heuristic spiral. Ideally, each repetition of the birth process experienced in this way results in more insight and release from trauma. A patient would be considered well when he or she is relieved of the symptoms of the traumatic stress. Successful treatment would correspond with visions whose emotional contents in nonordinary states would be manageable, non-anxious, and non-manic (Grof, 2001).

On the other hand, there are portals, even ones that are suggestive of invagination and birth canals experienced by my reporters, whose associations were reported without the sense of emotional urgency I attribute to Grof's rebirthing model. The drama associated with the whole business of cycles of birth and death, for some, simply lacked the affective energy that would generate interest in Grof. I suspect that some of these explorers had already resolved some of their psychodynamic and birth related traumas, and that others may have not had any significant trauma to begin with. Another possibility is that once one has mastered

some control within Ayahuasca states, the painful issues surrounding trauma could be skillfully navigated by simply directing one's attention elsewhere. Some of my data indicates travel through tunnels and shamanic portals that contain uterine symbology, but the birth process is simply not of central significance. Of more interest to these reporters, such as is consistently apparent in Sync's writings, are the messages, healings, and other interactions of the entities on the other side.

In summary, it is apparent that Ayahuasca tends to be associated more with interest in what entities have to say and do than interest in the process of getting there, while getting there is the central issue of the Grof system. This is not to say that there are no Ayahuasca sessions without perinatal significance, it just means that the Grof model may not explain all Ayahuasca entities and their associated affects. I do not believe that Grof intended to explain all psychedelic or Ayahuasca experience in the first place. I would not discard Grof's model, but would rather include his conceptual model for use at proper times for use as they occur in Ayahuasca and other expanded states.

A Lineage of Beginnings: Shanon

Here, I briefly review how Shanon's observations in *The Antipodes of the Mind* (2002) are related to my data. Most of what I have to say about Shanon is already expressed in Chapter II. While his work guided me to think about ways to classify and organize the data, my work is unprecedented in Ayahuasca literature not only because of its exclusive focus on entities, but also because of my use of qualitative computer software. Below, I will reflect on how the study of entity

encounters may fit Shanon's cartography. I will then respond to his objections to Jung in light of my data.

I view my computerized coding of entities as being a look through a kind of microscope, within landscapes already described in Shanon (2002). My focus on a narrow area, combined with my use of a computerized software that used complex matrix searches, enabled me to examine areas of Ayahuasca experience with what may be considered a finer scale of resolution. Future studies could examine Ayahuasca reports in more detail, such as in-vivo phenomenology or quantitative tests to confirm or refute the significance of particular entities with respect to precisely defining emotional content. These future studies would employ techniques with yet finer resolution, and still be looking in landscapes blazed in Shanon's pioneering work. I will suggest topics for future research in the final section.

There are completely new elements in the present study, or more precisely, elements that were probably not seen exactly in the same ways by Shanon. For example, let us look again at the idea of the portal as a transitional boundary between affective states. I found in Shanon almost identical results, in terms of female presences at critical junctures:

The people of South America refer to the vomiting induced by Ayahuasca as an act of purga, that is—a purge. Indeed, the moment of vomiting is often one of a major transition—from a situation one can hardly stand to one of coming to terms with the Ayahuasca experience. Many informants recount that the first time they underwent this vomiting experience, a helping guide, usually a female figure, appeared and gave them moral support. Often this encounter and the relief it produces are taken by the drinker to be of substantive spiritual significance and they may even result in some sort of personal transformation. (2001, p. 57)

In the above paragraph, Shanon does describe a in a general way the presence of female entities. In my analysis I found a wider array of forms associated with moments of major transition. I too found female portal guides in the form of female serpents, Ayahuasca as a feminine spirit, and one golden lady. In addition, I found other non-feminine entities including insects, a ship's captain, a personal demon, male serpents, male teachers, and malevolent beings directly in text passages that describe scenes of transition. These observations are not contradictions to Shanon's general idea; rather, they are observations of increased resolution.

Besides the difference in resolution, there is also a difference in the ways that Shanon and I formulate the general idea of transitions that I call *portal*. The word is not to be found anywhere in his book (2002). His words for the boundary between two states include *transition*, *demarcated itinerary*, *boundary* or *obstacle*, and moving between "one well-defined domain and another" (2002, p. 101). This difference in word choice suggests that the way we structure our coding and interpretations for entity encounters is influenced by our respective theoretical viewpoints.

I associate the word *portal* to the idea of a round opening. It is a word used to signify cathedral doors, which have arches. *Portal* also suggests to me the idea of passing from one state of consciousness to another in a liminal state that is often accompanied by imagery of tunnels, vortexes, and openings in time and space. Because of my Jungian influences, these images are symbols and metaphors associated with birth canals. The word *portal* evokes imagery that is connected to the mother archetype and all of her echelons of related entities. Shanon does not

subscribe to a psychoanalytic tradition. It does not seem surprising, then, that he would choose a word such as *transition*, which is also used in analyses of grammar, plot, and syntax; he describes himself as a cognitive psychologist who specializes in linguistic science (2002).

My study of Ayahuasca entities has convinced me that the Jungian point of view is robust in its ability to deliver cohesive, useful analyses of some types of Ayahuasca entity encounters. This does not disprove Shanon's hypothesis that Ayahuasca may also reveal something completely new and different—a creational modality of human cognitive function that has been entirely unpredicted by Jungians. I believe that some Ayahuasca experiences may be best explained in Jungian terms, but I doubt that any one theory would explain everything about this brew.

I developed my thematic inferences about entities from Jungian and transpersonal viewpoints, which represent only two of many possible ways of deriving their importance. Regardless of theoretical orientations, however, the emergence of thematic patterns in my Boolean matrices are significant because they were derived from data not from a single reporter, but from the entity encounters across many individuals. The patterns that emerged in the analysis may give the impression that the entities may be associated with, and perhaps dependent upon a transpersonal structure. However, my study was not intended, nor does it attempt to address the problem of the autonomous existence of entities. That would be a radical hypothesis that would require more study under experimental circumstances. The patterns I found, however, do suggest a coherent narrative of a natural human change

process that can be associated with pervasive shamanic, mythic, and psychological archetypes.

The hourglass shape in Figure 3 evokes a narrative that suggests the progression of shamanic transformation. Throughout geography and times from the earliest known cultures, in many traditions shamans have obtained their powers by traveling through a portal to an underworld, or to a realm of death. This descent is made necessary by virtue of some wound or tragic fault. Shamans are often misfits. They may spurn or be spurned by the opposite sex, or they may be too sensitive and frail to be acceptable to a warrior class. Or, a shaman may simply be chosen by a predecessor, and thereby called to duty. In any case, the often shaman begins the descent by first being called to the vocation (Eliade, 1964). The shaman is often an established outsider. In tribal initiations of shamans, there may be symbolic execution of the outsider in the form of ritual killing of the shaman. This killing is not what Westerners would define as death of the physical body in an objective sense, but is described by indigenous shamans as subjectively real. Sometimes, the shaman reports being physically dismembered, with body parts scattered in significant directions. Thus free from the ordinary physical body, the shaman often searches for what I would label as a portal, the appearance of a tunnel or doorway in the earth or sky, or a subjective experience of transition. After this transition, the shaman often travels in a transpersonal realm in search of his or her true identity or soul, and attendant magical powers, before returning to the world of humans in a state of awakening (Eliade, 1964). Ayahuasca's Bride illustrated such a dismemberment in one of her narratives, after which she obtains knowledge:

The Ayahuasca honoured my request to be dismembered. Maggots consumed all my flesh before I was given a variety of new improved body parts and had the top of my head opened up a book of plant knowledge placed inside for future reference and then my head closed up again.

The shamanic descent and return, which are covered extensively by Eliade (1964) and Campbell (1968), are accompanied with echelons of spirits and entities. These may be animal or ancestral spirits, or figures that represent anything in nature. Special entities appear at a critical juncture, just when in the shamanic story things are most terrifying. Usually the fear is accompanied by the requirement to enter some kind of portal or transitional threshold. There are familiars with whom the shaman may have cultivated a personal bond, during a period of apprenticeship with a master shaman, or they can appear spontaneously to the shaman in solitude. These entities play a key role at the threshold of the portal. In Ayahuasca visions, in Figure 3, I would identify them as *portal guardians*. In parallel, Shamans can call on totems, familiars, and other entities for support. Their function is to help the shaman make the decision to abandon oneself to the process, even though surrender is the posture that would be identified with the greatest *fear*. It may be a moment of utter aloneness. It is a necessary step, however, before the shaman can cross thresholds to inner states that are sources of special knowledge and powers. After the passage through these thresholds and portals, one's guardians and spirits are there to welcome the journeyer to additional shamanic experiences. The archetypal patterns of the portal, attendant entities, and restoration appears universally in not only shamanism but also all the world's religions, in resurrection stories, and in many myths and fairytales.

As noted previously, the portal itself appears at times to be represent archetypally feminine ideas that are pervasive in Jung. The first would be the obvious connotation of the portal as a vaginal image symbolizing the mother archetype (Campbell, 1968). In fact, the entire construct of Figure 3, with a portal that separates two vessels, could be related to womb-like images of the mother, and to the cosmic egg thought to contain the whole of the psyche's creation by Campbell (1968).

Another archetypal principle may appear in some reporters' visions in the form of *anima* and *animus* figures. *Anima*, meaning "soul," is characterized by idealized female images while *animus* refers to idealized male figures. The idea is that the ideal female that is carried in most men's psyches actually symbolizes the male's own soul. Likewise, women have been thought to carry a corresponding idealized male symbolic animus figure. Since Jung, Jungians have wrestled at length with the problem that there are exceptions. There are men whose idealized symbols are male, and women whose essential soul may be expressed in feminine symbols; further, the situation is complicated when considering gay and lesbian people (Wilkinson, 1996). An example in my data of a feminine entity that appears to be the embodiment of an idealized anima figure by a woman was reported in another post by Ayahuasca's Bride, in her narrative of *Ayahuasca as feminine* appearing in a vision, and marrying her:

Shortly before the ceremony began the next night the spirit of Ayahuasca came to me and told me that she loved me so much she wanted to make me her bride. She asked me to go upstairs and get myself made up for her and also anoint myself. So when we had the cleansing ritual I rubbed some of the mixture on my pubic region. The group then moved to the fire where we proceeded to heat up the Ayahuasca. It felt like there were negative feelings bubbling under the surface amongst the group and this led to a downturn in my mood, so

much so that I had a few doubts about ingesting her. The first thing I became aware of was the wedding between the spirit of the Ayahuasca and myself. I wore a dress made of green leaves, all the guests were trees, and the man singing the Icarow on the CD was the minister. I asked the Ayahuasca whether I should visit Peru in a month or sometime in 2005. She said that we were married now and that she would be sad and lonely in the rainforest without me and she wanted to show me her world as it was beautiful. I went to the toilet and locked the door so that we could consummate the marriage in private. I wandered outside to gaze at the stars and tell people that they had come out as it was my wedding night. I lay back once I was inside and gradually the session broke up and after cups of herbal tea I went up to bed. I feel glowing and like i've had my soul cleansed.

Often in tribal societies, one of the roles of the shaman is that of the healer.

Healing power is obtained after first healing the shaman's own wound, which is the force that drives him or her into the journey of descent. Injury thus becomes an ally, a sacred wound that when mastered, is the wellspring of renewal, wisdom and healing. This function is an expression of the wounded healer archetype, which is also symbolized in Greek mythology in the story of Chiron, who was accidentally scratched with a poisoned arrow by his best friend, Herakles (also known as Hercules). The arrow that caused the wound had been poisoned by the blood of the Hydra, whom Herakles had defeated in battle. The poison did not kill Chiron, but neither did it ever heal. This results in Chiron becoming a wise healer through his deeply personal familiarity with his own wound (Green & Sasportas, 1993). Herakles induced the wounding of his friend through a clumsy accident, which was an activation of the trickster archetype. This is not surprising, as Herakles' patron god is Hermes (Mercury), who is well known as the trickster of the Greek pantheon.

Jungians characterize another aspect of the change process as the integration of two opposing energies that are ordinarily irreconcilable. The capacity to cope with

opposite forces in the psyche and merge them into a whole is called the *transcendent function*, and is a vital part of individuation (Stein, 1998). Jung thought of this in terms of an alchemical metaphor based on the properties of the liquid metal mercury. (In physical fact, mercury has been in long use, up to modern times, to separate gold from crushed ore.) Materials in the age of historical alchemy were heated together with mercury or mercury ore in crucibles, with the intention to transform the base materials into irreducible, noble elements such as gold. The crucible has various associations with the grail and other vessels. The mercurial vessel was thought by Jung (1967, 1968b) to also be equivalent to the philosopher's stone, which could be obtained only by alchemists who had completed various holy tasks of self-purification. This inner development was accompanied by symbolic use of mercury and other elements in their laboratories. The metal mercury was attributed to have alchemical properties of Hermes, who is a traveler among the opposites of heaven and Earth, and of the Earth and the realms of the dead. Hermes, then, is identified as the god that represents not only the capacity to explore various states of consciousness, but also the capacity to integrate opposites. It is in his role as the messenger between worlds that Hermes is often associated with the trickster archetype.

The trickster has the function of startling one out of a condition of complacency. In the human change process, this function is apparent in whatever guides or forces the protagonist through the barriers and portals that lead to different realms and forms of knowledge. In many of his stories, the god Hermes represents this quality. The word *trickster* connotes some kind of subterfuge, deception, or

humor at the expense of the protagonist. However uncomfortable or inconvenient, the ultimate intention of the trickster is in the interest of individuation, to disarm one's defenses that prevent one from surrender to the process of integrating repressed energies. The stories in my data do indicate the presence of entities who provide protection and encouragement during moments of transition. This fulfills the trickster's function of *psychopompus mercurius*, the redeeming guide of transformation (Jung, 1967). But the entities as such in my data do not deceive the reporters, or use subterfuge. They are most often direct, helpful, or loving, which are not attributes of Hermes when he lies or deceives. Because so many of my informants express astonishment about their experiences, I think of the Ayahuasca brew itself, rather than any particular entity in its visions, as being the embodiment of the trickster archetype. This is most apparent in my data when the partaker of Ayahuasca is new to the experience. Stories of first experiences often contain indicators of unexpected surprise or astonishment, simply due to the sheer overwhelming power of its effects. Surprise and astonishment at the sudden transformation of consciousness certainly qualify as appropriate responses to the activity of the trickster archetype.

Conclusion, with a Look at Social and Scientific Implications, and Future Research

This is the first formal thematic analysis to focus exclusively on Ayahuasca entity encounters. It is the first to organize as many entities into meaningful classes. No other scientific Ayahuasca study has examined entities in such detail. In a broader sense, it may be the first psychological study using qualitative computer technology

to investigate any particular hallucinatory content. My findings support the possibility that many Ayahuasca entity encounters may be involved in a natural change process that is recognizable not only in terms of Western psychology but also in terms of ancient shamanic traditions. My study may be useful to Ayahuasca drinkers and to psychotherapists who focus on substance use. Its methodology has implications for future research in behavioral science. This section will explore these assertions in more detail.

Ayahuasca use is not without risks. Ayahuasca is widely considered an unwise choice for recreational intoxication. To drink the brew as a beginner in situations that are not led by experienced guides in ceremonial or religious settings may result in overwhelmed, confused, and disoriented states. At least one reporter in my data wrote of an emergency-room admission for this reason. It is not inconceivable to contemplate physical restraints, arrests, or pharmacological interventions, such as has been the case in some LSD induced crises (Grof, 2001). This might be the activity of the trickster in its most troubling aspect, and it can generate fears of insanity. Psychotherapists may be puzzled by clients who have imbibed Ayahuasca. Some of my reporters have been catapulted into a realm of ego-dissolution, loose associations, and terrifying, archetypal hell-visions. Long after the pharmacological effects have worn off, disturbances in the form of unresolved abreaction can linger. Education about entities and other aspects of Ayahuasca states may help those who encounter these difficult experiences to orient the imagery of fearsome visions according to anciently human, recognizable, meanings. Entities and other aspects of nonordinary domains would then be recognized as something related

to the human experience of transformation. Then the experience could be connected to a therapeutic narrative of the change process as is indicated by stories, myths, shamanic journeys, and psychotherapy.

In psychological science, the occurrence of one or two entities in a psychological analysis, such as mother symbols in dreams, has generated fountains of literature, but the sheer number and variety of beings that appear in Ayahuasca visions is described by reporters in terms that reflect unanticipated wonder. Ayahuasca entities appear in visions painted with replete backdrops, narrative complexity, and esthetic abundance found nowhere else in any single psychological phenomenon. To give these entities their full due, each one could be followed in its own study. Such a task would take lifetimes, perhaps, or fill volumes. In the future, my computerized coding methodology could be focused on a narrower frame of reference. For example, I noticed that the presence of *felines* in the data were usually jungle cats, and that they usually occupied the reporters' bodies. In their visions, reporters transformed into jaguars and similar animals. Narrative reports and interviews in a future study could provide nuances in the coding of the feelings, ideations, and interactions that occur with this particular kind of encounter. A small case number would allow a deeper investigation with a great deal of resolution regarding each participant's history and demographic details. Boolean searches could be derived in terms of a specific variable, such as a person's sex, cultural origin, or religious orientation, to name but a few choices.

This is the first scientific Ayahuasca study to examine entities in great detail. Figure 3, which was derived both empirically from the data and deductively from

theory, reveals a pattern that can be connected to archetypes of the human change process that is widely recognizable in ancient shamanic, mythic, religious, and psychotherapeutic contexts. The methodology of thematic analysis combined with computerized, complex pattern searches may prove useful to future Ayahuasca studies, and may be generalized for the examination of other content.

The portal in the hourglass shape of Figure 3 can be associated with the shamanic descent and return, which are covered extensively by Eliade (1964) and Campbell (1968). The general idea of descent and return is also nearly universal in myth. Attending deities and other entities are extensively covered by Jung (1967, 1968b). Jung was particularly interested in the function of *psychopompus mercurius*, which he saw as representational of liminal archetypes.

The archetypes associated with the portal may indicate something that deeply matches the change process in psychotherapy. Ayahuasca entities appear to fit well into much of what Jungians have to say. This does not disprove that Shanon's hypothesis regarding an unprecedented human creative capacity may also be at play. Whenever a scientific observation finds something connected to human growth and change, it may someday serve the purposes of psychotherapy. A fruitful starting point for our continuing knowledge of the content of Ayahuasca visions may be a qualitative design that employs sensitivity to the lived experience of the participants, their immersion in the natural world, and their interactions with the brew.

Lastly, I would like to suggest how the future study of Ayahuasca entities may be helpful to people who drink the tea. My thinking here applies to those who follow its use in healing, in personal growth, in scientific, or in sacred settings. As

may be most appropriate for a new area of research, most of my closing statements are in the form of questions. I will first pose the following question: “What relationship do particular entities have with one’s status with respect to universal models of human change?”

The above question implies two assumptions, or, more cautiously, hypotheses. The first is an assumption that there are real, universal cycles of human change illustrated in myth, shamanic journeys, and some forms of psychotherapy. The second hypothesis is that there are recognizable markers of these cyclic phases of human development. Might one of these markers be classes of entities that appear in Ayahuasca visions?

For example, if one’s Ayahuasca visions involved many serpents, what might this indicate about one’s next task in life? How would the requisite life task differ if the visions involved wolves, angels, or worms? What if it were possible to suggest a practical course of action to respond to a psychological diagnosis, based on solid research of a particular category of entity involvement? What might be a suggested treatment for a person in crisis or traumatic stress, based on which entities reveal themselves? Entities are an essential feature of Ayahuasca. While centuries of experience in South America may have clarified their roles in cultures of origin, non-traditional users are making sense of what for them is a startlingly fresh relationship with the plants.

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Appendix A: Description of Ayahuasca

Ayahuasca is famous for its taste, which often stimulates a gustatory revulsion so powerful as to induce an involuntary gag reflex. The evolutionary function of the plant alkaloids, from the plants' perspective, was perhaps to make the flesh of the plants too bitter for animals' liking. In addition, the presence of psychoactive properties might have a protective function, such that when in confused states, animals may have reduced alertness to predators. Thereby, the plant indirectly protects itself by making its eaters vulnerable to enemies. Thus, a coevolution of plant chemicals that are designed to occupy animal neurotransmitter sites is a possible explanation for their appearance in the plant kingdom (Grant, 1985). Humans have participated in this coevolutionary scheme in another way, and turned the presence of alkaloids in plants to their benefit in the production of many plant derived drugs and medicines.

Ayahuasca is brewed in jungle settings by boiling fresh plant materials, including macerated stem and bark of the malpighiaceae liana *Banisteriopsis caapi* with other plants that contain triptamine alkaloids, which are responsible for the most dramatic psychoactive effects. These include leaves from *Psychotria viridis* and *Diplopterys cabrerana*. The two types of plants, the vine and the leaf, are combined because of a synergistic effect. The pharmacological purpose of the *B. caapi* is to provide monoamine oxidase inhibition (MAOI) by virtue of beta-carboline alkaloids, mainly harmaline and tetrahydroharmaline. Monoamine oxidase (MAO) in the human body is an enzyme that breaks down several amino acids as well as naturally occurring, endogenous dimethyltryptamine (DMT) and related compounds known to

be produced in brain and other tissues. MAO is the reason DMT is not orally psychoactive. When the MAOI activity of *B. caapi* is introduced, the breakdown of dimethyltryptamine is dramatically slowed, so that levels in the gut, bloodstream, and brain rise, making DMT an orally active hallucinogen. Chemicals such as DMT that naturally occur are implicated in dream activity, so the theory is that visual effects arise when DMT levels are high (Strassman, 2001; Ott, 1996; Riba & Barbanoj, 1998; Metzner, 1999).

Ayahuasca Forum members report attempts of many variants of Ayahuasca preparations, based on other representatives of the plant kingdom that provide the same alkaloids as the two types of plants *B. caapi* and *P. viridis*. These variants are called Ayahuasca *analogues* (Ott, 1994). The requirements for an analogue is that the two components, MAOI and DMT be present. The most commonly used MAOI analogue plant by Forum members is *Peganum harmala*, the seeds of which contain the richest natural source of MAOI alkaloids. There is a host of plants that have been reported to contain DMT. The root bark of *Mimosa hostilis* is favored for its reliably high content. Other DMT containing plants include representatives of the leguminous trees and shrubs, such as *Desmanthus illinoisensis*, and varieties of grasses such as *Phalaris arundinacea* (Ott, 1994). Forum reports could be based on experiences with any possible combinations, as long as the two basic components are present. The Forum even contains reports of pharmacologically manufactured MAOI's such as Marplan and lab synthesized DMT; however, these are not present in any of my data.

There are up to 200 other plants added to Ayahuasca, especially in traditional settings, where they are selected as prescriptions for specific medicinal, magic, or

religious tasks (Ott, 1996). The most well-known ones are tobacco, and the *Datura* varieties *brugmansia* and *brunfelsia*, which contain the alkaloids scopolamine and atropine, among others. These affect adrenergic and cholinergic neurotransmission in both central and peripheral systems, but their interactions with MAO inhibitors are not yet clear to Western medicine (McKenna, Callaway, & Grob, 1998). These admixtures are known toxins, and Western youths who use them naively have been known to abuse the *Datura* varieties at the peril of insanity and death. The reason for this is that the dosage required for desired effect is often too close to a toxic or lethal blood level to measure safely.

A topic of future research could seek thematic patterns based on the species of plant materials used to make the Ayahuasca brew. This would be of interest to some South American practitioners I have met, who ascribe particular powers to different plants, even though from a Western perspective, the plants may be pharmacologically identical. For example, the extended Mamallacta family of the Napo River of Ecuador declare that there is a special difference between *Psychotria viridis* and *Diplopterys cabrerana*, even though these are known to contain similar triptamine agents. The tribe insists that the *D. cabrerana* is superior in its ability to promote clarity of clairvoyant vision (Elias Mamallacta, personal communication, July 23, 2005). A systematic analysis of this claim could be designed to find patterns of coded perceptual themes, derived during sessions with both kinds of plants.

Appendix B: Code Tree and Definitions

Following is the text containing the code list in its entirety. It should be noted that the text here is imported in raw form from the working text inside the NVivo software, and that it is intentionally left uncorrected for syntax or spelling. Also, it will be noted that first order code that is self evident did not require definitions.

NVivo revision 2.0.163

Licensee: John Heuser

Project: Ayahuasca entities User: John Heuser Date: 10/19/2005 - 11:48:05 AM

NODE LISTING

Nodes in Set: All Tree Nodes
Created: 1/16/2005 - 1:26:42 PM
Modified: 1/16/2005 - 1:26:42 PM
Number of Nodes: 141

1 (2) /the entities

Description:

The appearance of living or animate beings in Ayahuasca visions. Includes:

- any animal, human, or extraterrestrial life forms, or combinations containing these.
- robots and other machines if these are endowed with animation.
- sensed presences, even if they are not explicitly seen in hallucination.
- plants.
- mythical and religious figures.
- any inanimate object that is interpreted as being animated, such as a rock that thinks or speaks.
- one's self, when it is perceived as transformed into another species, or interacted with as a higher self.

Coding for entities can occur if there is evidence of entity activity, such as works of art, buildings, and alphabets.

2 (2 1) /the entities/human
3 (2 1 1) /the entities/human/elves

Description:

entity is explicitly called "elf" or reference to elves from mythology or folk tales

4 (2 1 2) /the entities/human/mythical or fictional

Description:

Pertaining to human-like entity that is associated with mythology or fiction, such as Hercules, Zeus, Winnie the Poo. Not: figures of religions in current practice, or anthropological.

5 (2 1 3) /the entities/human/people in one's past or future

Description:

Visions of ancestors, or of future progeny, such as one's children of future marriages. Can include those who are presently alive if it concerning past, such as one's mother in her childhood. Not: people in one's present circumstances.

6 (2 1 5) /the entities/human/human guides or helpers

Description:

Involving the experience of being guided in a vision, by hallucinatory figures identified as human. Not: the presence of guides or sitters in ordinary time who are at the Ayahuasca ceremony. Fuzzy: with respect to "interpreted as," people and other objects at the ceremony can be experienced as higher or lower beings. In these cases, coding may overlap.

7 (2 1 6) /the entities/human/humans in life cycle

Description:

Includes Shanon's code "birth, death, rebirth" code. The presence of humans engaged in or concerned with the universal themes of birth, growth, sickness, old age, death, or rebirth. Eg: The meaning of suffering and death in human life is revealed by the spirit of Ayahuasaca, or a scene of birth.. Not: non human universal principle of life and death as revealed by the life cycle of suns, other creatures, or galaxies.

8 (2 1 7) /the entities/human/people in present life

Description:

The appearance of one's acquaintances in present life during a session. Does not include people who are physically present in the session unless there is a feature of remote viewing or telepathic communication.

9 (2 1 8) /the entities/human/children

Description:

The appearance of children in a vision.

10 (2 1 9) /the entities/human/faces

Description:

The presence fo faces as disembodied or mask like. Not faces if they are attached to bodies.

11 (2 1 10) /the entities/human/human life activity

Description:

The presence of human beings who are observed in any activity of life, without interaction with the reporter. E.g: a girl is riding a bicycle; people engaged in warfare. Not: any case in which there is communication or exchange with the observed humans.

12 (2 1 11) /the entities/human/terrible mother

Description:

the occurrence of entity who fulfills the wrathful Mother archetype.

13 (2 1 12) /the entities/human/in culture

Description:

Humans in settings in cultural contexts, such as a Shipobo woman in the rainforest. Not supernatural, mythical, or religious icon, unless these are involved in a scene of human observers or participants.

14 (2 1 13) /the entities/human/humans throughout all time

Description:

Containing theme or reference to the notion of humanity as a whole, or in broad branches of history and prehistory since the beginning of the human species.

Fuzzy: can overlap with coding pertaining to evolution and DNA

15 (2 1 14) /the entities/human/sex

Description:

pertaining to sex or signifying sex organs. Fuzzy WRT themes of birth and non-human sex symbols, the idea being that human sexuality is projected upon objects resembling vaginal and phallic shapes, such as flowers or sausages

16 (2 2) /the entities/extraterrestrial

Description:

In a broad sense, pertaining to the presence of extraterrestrial life, not including religious figures.

17 (2 2 1) /the entities/extraterrestrial/alien artifacts

Description:

the indication of entity presence by virtue of things they have made, such as tools, art objects.

18 (2 2 2) /the entities/extraterrestrial/little green men

Description:

Extraterrestrials described explicitly as humanoid, or as classic aliens with the big eyes.

19 (2 2 4) /the entities/extraterrestrial/aliens aiding human evolution

Description:

aliens giving aid to the personal growth of a person or of our species.

20 (2 3) /the entities/animal

Description:

Generally, anything during an Ayahuasca experience that signifies evidence of specific animals. Can include the sensed presence of animal totems or energies, such as snake energy.

21 (2 3 1) /the entities/animal/dog

Description:

dog appearing in a vision. Not: wolf.

22 (2 3 2) /the entities/animal/animals in human movement

Description:

Animals acting in human like manner, such as elephants dancing, serpents singing. Not animal in movement that is congruent to its species.

23 (2 3 3) /the entities/animal/serpents

Description:

Serpents, snakes, snakelike movement, or serpentine energy.

24 (2 3 5) /the entities/animal/felines

Description:

cats; includes jaguars, lions, domestic cat.

25 (2 3 6) /the entities/animal/animal part

Description:

the appearance of a fragment or partial view of animals, such as floating heads of animals, animal faces, claws, or fur.

26 (2 3 7) /the entities/animal/cow

27 (2 3 8) /the entities/animal/elephant

28 (2 3 11) /the entities/animal/monkey

29 (2 3 12) /the entities/animal/wolf

30 (2 3 13) /the entities/animal/worm

31 (2 3 14) /the entities/animal/bird

32 (2 3 15) /the entities/animal/insect

Description:

entity with insect like features. Sometimes this is also coded for "combination" because it often involves machinelike or robotic qualities.

33 (2 3 16) /the entities/animal/octopus

34 (2 3 17) /the entities/animal/prehistoric

Description:

dinosaurs, pre human, long extinct.

- 35 (2 3 18) /the entities/animal/fish
 36 (2 3 19) /the entities/animal/spider
 37 (2 3 20) /the entities/animal/reptiles

Description:

Reptiles, including amphibians such as frogs and salamanders, but not serpents.
 Serpents are coded separately.

- 38 (2 3 21) /the entities/animal/bear
 39 (2 5) /the entities/Ayahuasca as entity

Description:

In a broad sense, Ayahuasca seen as living being or as possessing consciousness.
 Rule out sub categories of this code before coding in this overall category.

- 40 (2 5 2) /the entities/Ayahuasca as entity/as feminine

Description:

Ayahuasca perceived as a living being who is feminine.

- 41 (2 5 3) /the entities/Ayahuasca as entity/as harsh teacher

Description:

Ayahuasca experienced as a teacher who is harsh.

- 42 (2 5 4) /the entities/Ayahuasca as entity/as messenger of Nature,
 Earth

Description:

Ayahuasca experienced as living spirit who imparts knowledge, guidance, or insight about ecology, Gaia, or other aspects of the natural world.

- 43 (2 5 5) /the entities/Ayahuasca as entity/teaches self improvement

Description:

Ayahuasca experienced as living being who imparts insight that is felt as helpful guidance pertaining to one's psychological or daily life circumstances.

- 44 (2 5 8) /the entities/Ayahuasca as entity/as instructor about itself

Description:

Ayahuasca perceived as a living being who imparts insight, teachings, or wisdom about its own nature.

- 45 (2 5 9) /the entities/Ayahuasca as entity/as the Christ

Description:

Pertaining to Ayahuasca as living being who is makes an appearance as Christ.

- 46 (2 5 10) /the entities/Ayahuasca as entity/as healer

Description:

Ayahuasca named as doctor, surgeon, or other healing entity. Not: aya as teacher or guide, unless there is an active principle of healing or working on a disorder. The distinction is fine, but clear.

47 (2 6) /the entities/entity as Higher Self

Description:

The presence of an entity that is acknowledged or implied as one's Higher Self.

Fuzzy: with respect to "self as transformed into entity," or "vague presence or impossible to describe"

48 (2 7) /the entities/malevolent beings

Description:

Beings who are described as having malice. Often associated with experiences of fear and of the experiences of purging. Fuzzy: apparent malice that is really meant as strict teacher.

49 (2 8) /the entities/combinations

Description:

The appearance of entities that are combinations of two or more different percepts. Also, rapidly alternating between two or more percepts. Rule out other subcategories of this before coding.

50 (2 8 1) /the entities/combinations/living glyphs or letters

Description:

a combination image, in which letters or alphabetical symbols appear as living beings, or which contain entity features such as eyes and faces.

51 (2 8 2) /the entities/combinations/human-animal combination

Description:

Combination of human and animal features in a single percept.

52 (2 8 3) /the entities/combinations/animal combination

Description:

combinations of more than one animal into a single percept.

53 (2 8 4) /the entities/combinations/machine-biological

Description:

combination of animal and machine into a single percept.

54 (2 9) /the entities/anthropological

Description:

pertaining to art, cultural creation, ancient cultures. Subsumed in this is Shanon's code for "artistic and cultural creations."

55 (2 9 2) /the entities/anthropological/precolumbian features

Description:

Any entity identified with Mayan, Toltec, Aztec stylistic features.

56 (2 9 3) /the entities/anthropological/asian tibet Indian or buddh

features

Description:

entities with features associated with Asia or India

57 (2 9 4) /the entities/anthropological/works of art, NOS

Description:

Not otherwise specified (NOS). Statues, paintings, or other works of art that depict entities, or are presented as having been created so as to imply the presence of entities. Not in another anthropological category of code.

58 (2 9 5) /the entities/anthropological/middle Eastern features

Description:

features associated with the middle east, arabia

59 (2 9 6) /the entities/anthropological/Celtic and British Isles

Description:

entities associated with Celtic and British isles

60 (2 10) /the entities/self as transformed into entity

Description:

Combined with Shanon code "identity transformations." experience of oneself as transformed or morphed into entity. Includes shapeshifting, discovering one's true identity, ID expressed as animistic totem animal. Fuzzy WRT coding for encounters with higher self.

61 (2 11) /the entities/healers

Description:

Experience of entity as a healer of oneself or others. Fuzzy: wrt Ayahuasca itself as healing entity. Any action by an entity that is perceived as psychologically or physiologically healing. E.g: being worked on, diagnosed, or cured of physical ailment, activity involving acupuncture medians, being xrayed, or psychological problems such as bereavement or depression being explicitly addressed by an entity. Not: imparting of knowledge or power, unless a healing activity is also indicated.

62 (2 12) /the entities/vague presence or imposs to describe

Description:

the vague or implicit sense of a presence of an entity whose features are not distinct.

63 (2 13) /the entities/entities inside one's body

Description:

Experience of entities inside one's physical body. Not self as transformed into entity.

64 (2 14) /the entities/robots and machines

Description:

encounter with entity described as a device, tool, machine, or robot, or performs actions in machine like fashion, such as emitting smoke.

65 (2 16) /the entities/entity actions

Description:

any action involving interaction with the viewer or with other entities.

66 (2 16 1) /the entities/entity actions/entity feeding on oneself

Description:

Entity consuming or with intent to consume parts or all of one's own body; e.g., a jaguar eating the reporter, worms consuming the reporter after death. Entities eating one's thoughts are in a subcategory of this. Not the entity eating itself.

67 (2 16 2) /the entities/entity actions/entities express human emotions

Description:

non humans expressing human emotions, such as love

68 (2 16 3) /the entities/entity actions/biographical recapitulation

Description:

synthesized with Shanon's coding for "autobiographical material:" "In particular, one can see snapshots and scenes of one's personal past. The most elaborate visions of this kind reported to me are serials in which drinkers inspected different scenes of their life and as a consequence had a psychological insight of personal import to them." For the Heuser Code, this is in relation to entities revealing the material or facilitating its awareness in some way. Not: thinking about one's past in general which may be coded "ideation" ; must be under the influence of Aya during the recapitulation.

69 (2 16 4) /the entities/entity actions/seeking human knowledge and experience

Description:

entities perceived as visiting one with the intention of exploring human life.

70 (2 16 5) /the entities/entity actions/giving guidance and instruction

Description:

Entities involved in imparting direction or advice for the sake of one's psychological or spiritual development.

71 (2 16 6) /the entities/entity actions/healing entities

Description:

Any action by an entity that is perceived as psychologically or physiologically healing. E.g: being worked on, diagnosed, or cured of physical ailment, activity involving acupuncture medians, being xrayed, or psychological problems such as bereavement or depression being explicitly addressed by an entity. Not: imparting

of knowledge or power, unless a healing activity is also indicated.

72 (2 16 7) /the entities/entity actions/they communicate

Description:

Pertaining to or including the action of entities who answers questions or impart information. E.g: entity imparts knowledge of the nature of life and death. Can include use of language, telepathy, or other modalities. Not: the action of changing a person, giving a person powers, or healing of a disorder.

73 (2 16 8) /the entities/entity actions/ent writing

Description:

Entity observed in the act of writing. Not writing or glyphs alone, this is another code.

74 (2 16 9) /the entities/entity actions/they confer upon

Description:

Action of an entity that gives the reporter a new quality or power. E.g: An entity gives the reporter the power to heal, deposits objects in the body, or imparts increased abilities, a new status, or performance. Not: the entity action of healing or imparting of knowledge only; these are different codes.

75 (2 16 10) /the entities/entity actions/they joke

76 (2 16 11) /the entities/entity actions/they simply observe

Description:

entities perceived as passively observing the goings-on of a session. Not: an encounter that involves the entity doing anything in particular except observing.

77 (2 16 12) /the entities/entity actions/dismemberment

Description:

the experience of being dismembered, or visions of others' dismemberment in the presence of entities. Involves the percept of separation of any limb or head from body.

78 (2 16 13) /the entities/entity actions/paranormal

Description:

Involving an entity action that has an effect in the physical world. Can include telekenisis, electrical phenomena, such as appliances or lights going on or off. Not: telepathy, remote viewing, or simultaneous hallucination; see code "corroboration" and codes for other entity actions.

79 (2 16 14) /the entities/entity actions/ents use my senses

Description:

an entity that enters the body and uses one's own sensory organs. Does not necessarily involve the notion of possession.

80 (2 17) /the entities/eyes

Description:

Eyes, when they appear as disembodied or as main salient feature of a vision

81 (2 18) /the entities/religious**Description:**

Entity encounters within the context of a religiously oriented experience. Includes religious iconography of religions in current practice, not the mythology of ancient cultures such as Rome, Greece, or Sumer, except where these may be used in a currently living religious practice.

82 (2 18 1) /the entities/religious/Christian**Description:**

the occurrence of the Christian God, Christ, or saints; an entity referenced according to Christian orientation.

83 (2 18 2) /the entities/religious/Eastern religious**Description:**

An entity referenced according to Buddhist, Hindu, Vedic, Tibetan or other Eastern religious orientation.

84 (2 18 3) /the entities/religious/God, NOS**Description:**

Explicit or implied presence of a Supreme Being or Higher Power. E.g: the mention of God without a sectarian or church context. Not: Jesus, Buddha, or any other deity identified with a particular religious alignment.

85 (2 18 4) /the entities/religious/angel**Description:**

Angels not specified as Christian or other religious orientation

86 (2 20) /the entities/Spirit as unnamed higher being**Description:**

The presence of an entity who is suprahuman, often acting as guide or instructor. Fuzzy wrt "entity as higher self."

87 (2 21) /the entities/portal guardian**Description:**

entity that acts as guardian or guide in association with a portal to higher plane of consciousness or to noetic states

88 (6) /emotional content**Description:**

This is perhaps the most challenging aspect of coding, because some interpretation of implicit affective content or stylistic affect may be coded. Emotional content is felt to be experienced by the Ayahuasca drinker directly, or perceived to be expressed by entities. For example, "I stomped around in rage" or

"an iron goddess breathed fire and destroyed the greedy ones" would both be coded for anger, rage.

Or, an emotional tone can be suggested by the context. For example, an expansive, biblical style may suggest divine love, in the context of certain content.

89 (6 1) /emotional content/humor and play

90 (6 2) /emotional content/humility

91 (6 3) /emotional content/substance euphoria

Description:

elevated mood or elation that is probably a drug effect. For example, a report of "...the familiar mimosa DMT glow of well being..." This is different from feeling toned responses to visionary content.

92 (6 4) /emotional content/romantic or sexual love

Description:

Includes themes of coupling, marriage, seduction, lust. Can involve other people in one's life, such as one's husband or girlfriend. Also includes observing in visions romantic interactions among entities other than oneself.

93 (6 5) /emotional content/strangeness

Description:

experience, response, or implied tone of weirdness, oddness.

94 (6 6) /emotional content/love, devine reverence

Description:

The direct experience of divine love, or observation of entities who represent the love of God or a loving Universe on a cosmic or global scale. Not: love or lust with respect to another human being, regardless of how divine such a feeling can be.

95 (6 7) /emotional content/ecstatic joy, bliss

Description:

ecstatic states that are not simply a drug effect, but are responses associated with vision content. Can be fuzzy WRT other positive affect such as forms of divine, motherly, forgiving love.

96 (6 8) /emotional content/amazement, astonishment

Description:

a description that evokes or explicitly describes amazement regarding vision content.

97 (6 9) /emotional content/forgiving love

Description:

can be ones own forgiveness of self or others as well as the experience of encountering an entity who forgives. The affective element of love is implied or

explicitly named. Not: forgiveness without the experience of love.

98 (6 10) /emotional content/contemplating the dark

Description:

a general category meant to identify the exploration of emotionally difficult themes in visions. Can occur in a narrative of breaking through difficulty or portals. Fuzzy WRT fear.

99 (6 11) /emotional content/grand emotions

Description:

Feelings associated with transcendent experiences such as elightenment, noetic breakthrough, spiritual awe and bliss, compassion, love for humanity. Not: emotions associated with negative feelings, and not feelings associated with narcissistic self absorption or delusion.

100 (6 12) /emotional content/happiness

Description:

The words happy or happiness are explicitly used.

101 (6 13) /emotional content/fear

Description:

The occurrence of fear while in the presence of entity encounter. This can be implied from context, and not necessarily named by the individual.

102 (6 14) /emotional content/brotherly love

Description:

love or divine love expressed toward people generally. Not romantic or sexual love.

103 (6 15) /emotional content/awe

Description:

Wonder, admiration, not awe in the fearful sense.

104 (6 16) /emotional content/clarity, integration

Description:

an experience of congruence between the emotional core and self. Experiences of completion, unity, archetypes of wholeness, such as unity with a godhead, are often accompanied by emotional serenity, awe, or gratitude. Often involves breakthrough to a new level of awareness. Fuzzy WRT other codes for positive emotions.

105 (6 17) /emotional content/receiving love from entities

Description:

Interaction with an entity who communicates loving regard for the viewer. Often in the context of receiving healing and other gifts; can coincide with the presence of divine love and other transcendent feelings.

106 (6 18) /emotional content/motherly love

Description:

Maternal love, viewed as occurring among entities or as directed to oneself by entities, as a form of divine love, or as contemplated among people one knows in life.

107 (6 19) /emotional content/serenity

Description:

a feeling of tranquility and equanimity, acceptance. Absence of anxiety, without arousal.

108 (6 20) /emotional content/gratitude, thankfulness

109 (6 21) /emotional content/bereavement and grief

Description:

coded when there is mention of a loss that the subject has experienced and is processing during an ayahasca session. this code can be inferred if the loss is mentioned, even if the emotion is not explicit.

110 (6 22) /emotional content/alienation of affect

Description:

Coded when it is evident that the reporter may be out of touch with any feelings associated with entity encounters.

111 (6 23) /emotional content/agitated arousal

Description:

Indications of anxiety in a report that contains descriptions of motor nervousness, twitchiness, irritation, inability to sit still. May or may not be in the presence of anger, rage.

112 (6 24) /emotional content/anger and rage

Description:

felt directly or observed in an entity. Can be represented by a wrathful diety who destroys wrongdoers.

113 (6 25) /emotional content/narcisistic projection

Description:

I made this code to denote possibility of some Ayahuasca expereinces of the infinite may result in a narcissistic appropriation of the emotional core. Not all of these are negative; includes coding for sexual and romantic themes, and other themes generally associated with self-interest.

Not: themes connected to a whole greater than oneself, such as wlelfare of the planet, causes for the oppressed, or humanity as a whole.

This code is for the purposes of generating discussion as it is not a directly observable phenomenon of the data, but is more on the side of inference.

- 114 (6 26) /emotional content/courage, bravery
- 115 (6 27) /emotional content/compassion
- 116 (6 28) /emotional content/aggression
- 117 (6 29) /emotional content/negativity and abreaction

Description:

any of the clearly identified negative emotional responses: anger, fear, rage, aggression.

- 118 (7) /Inner Space
- 119 (7 1) /Inner Space/Anima Mundi, and the Life Force

Description:

From Shanon. A percept involving the World soul, Gaia, or the Universe expressed as a life force. Can include the interplay of feminine-masculine elements as source of Creation. Not: human cycle of birth and death, but may be fuzzy WRT code for "evolution and creation."

- 120 (7 3) /Inner Space/webs

Description:

Reference to webs in Ayahuasca visions that are perceived as being interconnections of life.

Code was a Text Search: text matching the pattern 'web'

Scope: all documents in the project.

- 121 (7 5) /Inner Space/Celestial and Heavenly Scenes

Description:

From Shanon. Involving a scene that is evocative of God on a Biblical scale, includes bliss, sense of unlimited abundance. Not precisely the experience of Gaia or feelings of universal power within oneself--see code for 'anima mundi and life force' for those.

- 122 (7 9) /Inner Space/Evolution and Creation

Description:

From Shanon. Theme of evolution and creation, can include references to DNA when in context of viewing the source. Fuzzy WRT "humans throughout all time" and "Anima Mundi and the Life Force."

- 123 (7 11) /Inner Space/Full-Fledged Scenes

Description:

From Shanon. A complete scene comparable to a movie. Involves semantic and narrative complexity. Not: full immersion, which is where one is part of the scene.

- 124 (13) /perceptual modalities
- 125 (13 2) /perceptual modalities/spatial location within vis field

Description:

The perception of an entity occurring within a specified area of the visual field.

126 (13 4) /perceptual modalities/exteroception

Description:

Explicit perception of an entity's location outside of the reporter's body, within the perceptual field. Uses any sensory modality or general sense. E.g.: an entity to the right and behind me, a jaguar in my upper left visual field, a voice over my head.

Not: a location identified as being within the reporter's body.

127 (13 14) /perceptual modalities/interpreting as

Description:

Shanon's code for an entity perceived to have meaningful significance at the moment of its perception, e.g., feeling that participants in a ceremony as angels.

Not: visual hallucination; is rather an interpretive way of seeing. Costaneda called it "real seeing," Daime calls it "seeing things the way they really are." (Shanon, 2002).

128 (13 14 1) /perceptual modalities/interpreting as/egocentric

Description:

From Shanon. The experience of seeing things as being specially related to oneself; when negative it is paranoiac. When an inanimate object, involves and overlaps with animism. E.g., a photograph felt as being alive and concerned with one, or a conviction that the group is especially concerned about one's thoughts.

129 (13 14 2) /perceptual modalities/interpreting as/animistic

Description:

From Shanon. The experience of an inanimate object as being alive, or of animals and plants possessing conscious intentionality, often includes some kind of communication with the viewer.

130 (13 15) /perceptual modalities/seen-as

Description:

From Shanon. Objects in the setting of a session transform or morph, or take on animistic quality. E.g., a carpet "seen as" a serpent; a photograph "seen as" living with eyes tracking observer, furniture becoming animated. Not: "interpreted-as" or "seen in." See those code definitions to make distinctions.

131 (13 16) /perceptual modalities/seen in

Description:

From Shanon. Entities or other hallucinatory phenomena that appear on or in existing objects. E.g., a hallucinated snake appears in the branches of a real-time tree. Not: existing objects morphed, which is coded seen-as.

132 (13 20) /perceptual modalities/auditory

Description:

Pertaining to the presence of an entity reported as a voice through auditory modality.

133 (19) /Ideation

Description:

InVivo node created from shanon antipodes full text, but includes all ideations about entities and related subjects by the reporters; not strictly thoughts and interpretations during sessions. This code includes noetic aspects, which refers to the experience of acquiring knowledge directly from a spiritual source.

134 (19 1) /Ideation/Nature of Ayahuasca

Description:

(shanon) Ideations regarding the nature of Ayahuasca, its being a livin spirit, teacher, etc.

135 (19 2) /Ideation/noetic aspects

Description:

(shanon) References to experiences of being the direct recipient of Knowledge, philosophical or spiritual. Can be indistinguishable from another coded moment, "interpreting-as." Not: intellectualized interpretations after the fact.

136 (20) /Interaction

Description:

From Shanon. One is in a scene and is involved in a passive or active role, or as the one in control. See sub-categories of this for coding.

137 (20 1) /Interaction/Active Interaction

Description:

From Shanon. Synthesized to include Shanon's code for "control;" one takes actions in the scene that cause it to change, or entities to respond. Also pertaining to any visionary scene in which one is one of the actors.

138 (20 2) /Interaction/Passive Interaction

Description:

From Shanon. One is a recipient of entity actions, including teachings, healings, information. Pertains to any experience of receiving something in a vision, includes being immersed in a vision (i.e., Shanon's codes for "receiving" and "passive immersion,") in which one receives something from entities, but without one taking any action or initiating any communication with the entity.

139 (20 2 3) /Interaction/Passive Interaction/Receiving

Description:

InVivo node created from shanon antipodes full text. Pertains to any experience of receiving something in a vision.

140 (20 2 4) /Interaction/Passive Interaction/passive immersion

Description:

The experience of being entirely within a scene, without any action taken by one.

Can involve receiving from entities, but without one taking any action or initiating any communication with the entity.

141 (20 25) /Interaction/narrative complexity

Description:

Synthesized from Shanon. Interactions with entities involving a sequence of events within a vision that have a story line, often involving translocation within a vision from one place to another, including portals to scenes of heightened spiritual or psychological significance.

Appendix C: Sample Coding Report of a Data Document

This appendix contains a coding report in raw form, directly imported from the NVivo software environment, and is intentionally left uncorrected for syntax or spelling.

NVivo revision 2.0.163

Licensee: John Heuser

Project: Ayahuasca entities User: John Heuser Date: 10/12/2005 - 11:36:44 PM

DOCUMENT CODING REPORT

Document: Ayahuasca in Suffolk
Created: 3/26/2005 - 3:22:18 PM
Modified: 9/25/2005 - 5:21:21 PM
Description:

<http://www.forums.Ayahuasca.com/phpbb/viewtopic.php?t=5400&view=next>

Nodes in Set: All Tree Nodes

*Node 1 of 141 (2 1 3) /the entities/human/people in one's past or future
Passage 1 of 2 Section 0, Para 29, 621 chars.*

29: the spirit of Ayahuasca asked me if I was ready to see scenes from my Grandmother's life. I said yes and then she revealed that as a young girl she had witnessed women from her village in Ireland being raped by English soldiers and that this had resulted in her having a cynical view of men and giving my grandfather and later my step grandfather a hard time. Then the spirit of the plant told me that my grandmother had had an affair with my great uncle Frank and that my aunt Maureen was in fact only a half aunt. I had a vision of my granddad burning loveletters that Frank wrote to Betty(my grandmother)in front of Betty.

Passage 2 of 2 Section 0, Paras 40 to 43, 880 chars.

40: Ayahuasca told me that

41: my grandmother had preferred the bright lights of the city than being in the country and that she was not a very bright woman who didn't realise the damage that she had done to them and that she had had very bad mothering herself.

42:

43: Then I lay on my side and dealt with the trauma that I had gone through at the age of twelve and decided to do a soul retrieval for myself to seek out and reintegrate the part of myself that I had lost as a result of this event. When I had done this I marched up to the person who had been responsible for this event

taking place, grabbed their newspaper from them as he was sat down and shouted in his face "WHY?". He turned ashen as I explained to him what the consequences of his actions had been for me. Then I forgave him and we passed love hearts back and forwards to one another in a gesture of healing and reconciliation.

*Node 2 of 141 (2 1 6) /the entities/human/humans in life cycle
Passage 1 of 1 Section 0, Para 47, 248 chars.*

47: A while later I had a vision of the circle of life. A boy and girl linked arms and danced together and as they did so they changed to a man and woman who made love, produced a baby who turned into a boy who found a girl and started dancing with her.

*Node 3 of 141 (2 3 1) /the entities/animal/dog
Passage 1 of 1 Section 0, Paras 26 to 29, 405 chars.*

26: placed it with my heart and closed it up again.

27:

28: I had a vision that a dog appeared and started eating my flesh bit by bit which was very painful. Soon afterwards I hit the peak of the experience. I went through what felt like ego death as I let go on my sense of identity completely. The only way to handle this was to repeat again and again "go with the

29: flow,flow,flow" whilst breathing long deep breathe

*Node 4 of 141 (2 3 2) /the entities/animal/animals in human movement
Passage 1 of 1 Section 0, Paras 45 to 47, 479 chars.*

45: I the healing I needed on this issue and I was a grown woman now and it was time to live my life.

46:

47: To lighten things up I started having visions of a succession of animals stomping their feet in time to the Icaros or shamanic chants and music. First a chicken, then a mother and baby elephant, then a mouse and finally cats and dogs. A goose appeared and kept on flying into my chest. A while later I had a vision of the circle of life. A boy and girl linked arms and danced together a

*Node 5 of 141 (2 5 4) /the entities/Ayahuasca as entity/as messenger of
Nature, Earth*

Passage 1 of 1 Section 0, Paras 51 to 53, 673 chars.

51: I somehow managed to stand up and have a pee outside clinging on to the wall for dear life and slowly traced my way back to the room. I lay down and watched the full on visuals before having a final vision of being admitted to the court of the spirit of Ayahuasca who was sitting on a throne and was resplendent and invited me to sit at her feet. She told me that when the Ayahuasca vine is chopped down then part of the spirit of the plant dies with it and that she doesn't feel acknowledged and urged me to save the rainforest.

52:

53: I lay back watching the full on visuals, feeling emotionally very raw and in need of a hug before coming down at about 5.30 or 6 in the morning

54:

*Node 6 of 141 (2 10) /the entities/self as transformed into entity
Passage 1 of 1 Section 0, Paras 24 to 26, 980 chars.*

24: The ceremony itself started about ten. I went to the front and asked for a completo or full cup. Originally I had the intention of having a top-up dose later on but eventually decided that I was too tired to be able to handle this.

25:

26: The first thing that I was aware of was the realisation was that I had been a snake my whole life and hadn't realised it. This made me giggle softly and I had to fight the impulse to slither round on the floor like a snake as this would have disturbed the ceremony. Instead I had to be content with sticking my tongue out. I began to sway and hum along to the sound of the Icaros(Peruvian Shamanic chants and songs)that were being played on the CD.I went outside to be sick but this didn't happen so I ended up merging with the tree that I was standing under. I went back inside and the experience carried on being fairly mellow for a while. Ayahuasca lifted off the top of my head, took out my brain, replaced it with my heart and closed it up again.

27:

Node 7 of 141 (2 16 1) /the entities/entity actions/entity feeding on oneself

Passage 1 of 1 Section 0, Paras 26 to 29, 405 chars.

26: placed it with my heart and closed it up again.

27:

28: I had a vision that a dog appeared and started eating my flesh bit by bit which was very painful. Soon afterwards I hit the peak of the experience. I went through what felt like ego death as I let go on my sense of identity completely. The only

way to handle this was to repeat again and again "go with the
29: flow,flow,flow" whilst breathing long deep breathe

*Node 8 of 141 (6 9) /emotional content/forgiving love
Passage 1 of 1 Section 0, Paras 43 to 45, 764 chars.*

43: Then I lay on my side and dealt with the trauma that I had gone through at the age of twelve and decided to do a soul retrieval for myself to seek out and reintegrate the part of myself that I had lost as a result of this event. When I had done this I marched up to the person who had been responsible for this event taking place, grabbed their newspaper from them as he was sat down and shouted in his face "WHY?". He turned ashen as I explained to him what the consequences of his actions had been for me. Then I forgave him and we passed love hearts back and forwards to one another in a gesture of healing and reconciliation.

44:

45: Ayahuasca said that she had given me all the healing I needed on this issue and I was a grown woman now and it was time to live my life.

46:

*Node 9 of 141 (6 10) /emotional content/contemplating the dark
Passage 1 of 2 Section 0, Para 43, 624 chars.*

43: Then I lay on my side and dealt with the trauma that I had gone through at the age of twelve and decided to do a soul retrieval for myself to seek out and reintegrate the part of myself that I had lost as a result of this event. When I had done this I marched up to the person who had been responsible for this event taking place, grabbed their newspaper from them as he was sat down and shouted in his face "WHY?". He turned ashen as I explained to him what the consequences of his actions had been for me. Then I forgave him and we passed love hearts back and forwards to one another in a gesture of healing and reconciliation.

Passage 2 of 2 Section 0, Para 49, 270 chars.

49: The ayahuasca honoured my request to be dismembered. Maggots consumed all my flesh before I was given a variety of new improved body parts and had the top of my head opened up a book of plant knowledge placed inside for future reference and then my head closed up again.

Node 10 of 141 (6 11) /emotional content/grand emotions

Passage 1 of 2 Section 0, Para 43, 624 chars.

43: Then I lay on my side and dealt with the trauma that I had gone through at the age of twelve and decided to do a soul retrieval for myself to seek out and reintegrate the part of myself that I had lost as a result of this event. When I had done this I marched up to the person who had been responsible for this event taking place, grabbed their newspaper from them as he was sat down and shouted in his face "WHY?". He turned ashen as I explained to him what the consequences of his actions had been for me. Then I forgave him and we passed love hearts back and forwards to one another in a gesture of healing and reconciliation.

Passage 2 of 2 Section 0, Para 49, 270 chars.

49: The ayahusaca honoured my request to be dismembered. Maggots consumed all my flesh before I was given a variety of new improved body parts and had the top of my head opened up a book of plant knowledge placed inside for future reference and then my head closed up again.

Node 11 of 141 (20 1) /Interaction/Active Interaction
Passage 1 of 1 Section 0, Para 36, 933 chars.

36: At this point I got a bad attack of nerves and nearly didn't imbibe. But by 10pm it was time to drink I walked to the front and asked for a completo or full cup. The mixture tasted very different and a lot more acrid than the night before. I began to develop serious tummy trouble and kept on belching so it was suggested to me that I stand up to alleviate this. After the discomfort I sat down again and was in a nice mellow tripped out state when all of a sudden I became aware that my heart was bursting full of feelings of pure love towards the rest of the group and that I was a being of pure white light healing energy. I managed to push this energy round the circle that the group was sitting in and back to myself several times. Eventually I couldn't keep this up any longer and I appealed to Ayahuasca to switch off the circuit. As she did so the physical impact of what I had achieved hit me and I collapsed to the floor.

*No other nodes in this set
code this document.*

Appendix D: Text Coded at Node *SERPENT*

This appendix contains text in raw form, directly imported from the NVivo software environment, and is intentionally left uncorrected for syntax or spelling.

Document 'a new dreamer's story', 1 passages, 842 characters.

Section 0, Paragraphs 45-46, 842 characters.

A great serpent came at one point, he was huge, almost a foot in diameter in some places. He had come to check on my case, and he consulted with the beings who were with me and with some smaller snakes who came as his attendants. He was focused on my situation, but he never interacted with me in a personal way. He was there to perform some healing that I had asked for on entering the dream, and i knew it was an honor to have him working on me. I don't remember more of what he did, but later I realized that the others distracted me at this point, took my conscious mind away somewhere, i believe because i would have been too frightened at what came next. From small fragments of memory, i believe the serpent entered into me through an incision, and i do think that would have been too scary for me, due to his immense size and power.

Document 'Egoic Healing - Unknotting the angel', 1 passages, 991 characters.

Section 0, Paragraph 38, 991 characters.

I lay back... and immediately percieve the most bizzare entity against cavernous depth. It is archetypally 'shamanic', very Aztec, alternating with deities depicted in Nepalese Thanka cloths. The creature is not possible to describe in language, even attempts at drawing it have failed to capture its weird beauty. I had the impression of looking down a giant serpents mouth, eyes, fangs, venom glands, throat. It beamed back at me a curious affection, and sank into the depths. Lightning bolts pulsed through my body, sets of muscles, beginning with my toes, feet, knees, thighs, right up my body to the top of my head, tightened and released. As this occured, I felt various self images or egoic self-simulation programs arise, activate, and dissipate in a rhythmic dance. As this 'wave' hit my solar plexus, a whole panorama of imagery I had been unconsciously projecting into my world seemed to collapse and the energy maintaining these projections withdrew back into the solar plexus.

Document 'first', 1 passages, 1121 characters.

Section 0, Paragraph 22, 1121 characters.

I closed eyes and found myself sitting on Great Female Serpent it took me on the rollercoaster ride around our desperate planet, when around our solar system, when around our Milky Way galaxy and just when we got to deep space it turned its head around and eat me, at that time the egoless state of Samadhi and total bliss was briefly experienced. When I opened eyes I found myself little shaky, but back to “normal” if we can call it that, only one hour have past. With other plants of power it usually took days and in some memorable occasion weeks to completely get back, but here I was back to ground zero in one hour. I heard that coldness is associated with caapi, so I think brew is ok on that side. What if I make additional 50g of chaliponga or virdis only brew and add to the remaining liquid? I found experience to be highly involved and at few points it had a potential to go in the different direction (thanks to the prayers, trust, previous experiences and daily meditation practice it didn't) which can be more frightening when with any other teacher plant, so any advice is highly appreciated. Thank you.

Document 'First dream to come very soon', 1 passages, 398 characters.

Section 0, Paragraphs 174-176, 398 characters.

g of Caapi.

I went back into the tent, emotionally calm and fairly neutral. When I closed my eyes I very faintly saw a snake staring me in the eyes. I asked if it was my teacher (I hear to do this when you see entities, for any being that is not your teacher will leave)... and it dived right in. I felt a kind of relaxation in my bowels, my body became very relaxed and it felt like the medicine

Document 'Frog people spitting fluorescent gre', 1 passages, 352 characters.

Section 0, Paragraph 32, 352 characters.

I felt like I was constantly ending up in different places. There was a farm woman handing me things, then I was in a field of grass with the sun shining, then in a desert with large spiky plants. Then I saw a tiger in some asian-looking place with a stream, an unmoving samurai, and snakes. I started hugging the tiger and it seemed very comforting.

Document 'Kundalini--Eyes--Sphere', 1 passages, 265 characters.

Section 0, Paragraph 29, 265 characters.

I saw villages and one time somewhere- it was night I saw a girl walking down a dirt road with water jug over her head , slithering along came a python snake crossing the path. I could see the patterns on its back clearly a big mouth it almost wants to swallow me.

Document 'latest dream - psychic surgery ~amon', 1 passages, 279 characters.

Section 0, Paragraph 25, 279 characters.

Familiar themes include what I call the chacruna mandala (an intricate rainbow-bronze geometric seal like that thing on the film "Tomb Raider"), snakes, jaguar faces (somewhat fainter and in the distance), and an impenetrable maelstrom of other stuff on which I couldn't focus.

Document 'ilmerlin in Peru', 3 passages, 3766 characters.

Section 0, Paragraph 26, 1065 characters.

... I was suddenly taken with a violent urge to vomit. The pressure of my bowels twisting to push back the vile liquid was so strong that I had to control myself to allow enough time to breathe and not to die of asphyxiation (the thought of which also scared me for a moment). The vomiting wanted to continue without interruption. The rare inhalations which I could manage were immediately followed by stomach spasms and vomiting, again and again. However, these physical efforts brought me back, made my body function, heated it up again, a strength which I needed. I found myself again over my plastic bucket, in the putrescent stench of my vomit, spitting out the cursed liquid with disgust. I felt at this moment a powerful anaconda slipping into my muscles, squeezing my body to expel the psycho-physiological evil which tormented me. I felt better, able to dream in a more pleasant and deeper way, but without fear, apprehension... for a moment; then the black thoughts returned to torment me, the fears, the loss and confusion invaded me again...

Section 0, Paragraph 28, 909 characters.

I had the impression that I was frozen. I needed to warm up, lost in the icy night. Coiled up in my blanket, I tried to move my body in order to warm myself up. Sitting up, I was unable to make big movements, but my survival seemed to depend on it, I stirred myself again and again, then I saw an undulating form: a snake. I decided to undulate in the same way. To my great astonishment, while following its rhythm, my body produced a permanent heat and a greater mastery of my situation. The reality of the snake began to increase. I had the impression that it guided me away from my sufferings. I suddenly noticed Norma's icaros; her song was in time with the rhythm of the snake. I followed the serpent's melody. The snake invited me to face the fears which I had been afraid to face before. It taught me to avoid them, circumvent them, not to allow them to exert such an influence over myself.

Section 0, Paragraph 33, 1792 characters.

I remember other images while speaking with this spirit that I have often seen in the form of a snake. I wondered: "But how do you know so many things?" The snake spoke to me about itself, showed me the way in which it acquired its knowledge, in animal form. I understood what it said to me. It often appeared to me in various snake forms, generally green (of various hues) or with a little brown. This was not the constrictor snake that squeezed my bowels during the vomiting; rather, it appeared like a fine snake whose teeth however I never saw. By its attitude, its stature, its measured slowness and its capacity as an observer, it spoke to me about its attitude with respect to knowledge, about the acquisition of knowledge. It revealed itself to me as being more of a teacher than a healer. I asked it: "Where does your knowledge come from?" but this question was like diving into the depths of eternity. I was expecting some secret thing of which I would finally solve the enigma. The snake suggested to me another thing of greater importance than the question I posed: it is not Man who acquires knowledge and becomes its jealous guardian. It is knowledge which uses us as living means of being transmitted, as means of living. This sentence could be refined further: knowledge is a living being of its own type which creates and is created by the forms or the states which it traverses. It is not confined to accumulated intellectual knowledge; it is also a way of being. Among the beings which carry it and transmit it, that we here call "teachers", there are various, vegetable, animal, and human forms, and those not always confined to what we perceive with our senses. "This is what I am:" Ayahuasca seemed to say, "plant here, animal there and much more."

Document 'My First Dream - and i will never be', 1 passages, 935 characters.

Section 0, Paragraph 18, 935 characters.

i lit the candles and layed on the blanket on the floor. i was going to wait an hour for the first to kick in. i layed back and it hit me...hard. the vine alone had me flying. these sonic waves of energy were rushing through my body. then a lady appeared to me. she said because of the reverence and loved i had shown, she was now choosing to reveal herself to me. she said it was time to finish the rest. it was hard, i could only get about half of it down. i can't explain everything i experienced, but i will say it was the most profound, life-changing even i have ever encountered. the answers to just about all the issues im facing in my life were given. i became the serpent. i met more power animals. all i have to say is Ayahuasca is my wonderful. i purged. i experienced pure spiritual exstasy. i wish i could convey everything, but words just can't explain it. i again just want to say thank you. and have blessed journeys.

Document 'serpent of life story', 1 passages, 1148 characters.

Section 0, Paragraphs 17-18, 1148 characters.

I saw the power and beauty of the Anaconda, I understood, “My skin is a living breathing conscious being”, I am wearing a “Skin being” an S kin that loves and protects me, how beautiful, how wonderful.. I could feel the entire Universe perpetually making love in the dance of creation. The veils are still opening, my hands are filled with an overwhelming energy. Alarmed, I stretch my arms outward, this is too much, a gut wrenching sickness suddenly comes upon me, I must go to the trees, I stagger a few paces and collapse to my knees, I throw up and roll onto my side, oh no - this is too much, please stop, the energy in my hands are like nuclear power stations, I attempt to hold them away, but I am paralyzed. Oh my God something really big is coming, what a fool I am, I drank too much, I should never have come here. Please keep away, I didn't know, I am sorry, I should have been more respectful, please forgive my intrusion, No No No Noooooooo. The overwhelming presence draws even closer, Annihilation is upon me.

No words can even begin to describe this being, I will call it The Serpent of Life, the creator of energy in all life forms.

Document 'Snake and Courage and Compassion_ -', 1 passages, 994 characters.

Section 0, Paragraphs 26-34, 994 characters.

my nerves! feelings of creeping jungle fever.

So I turned off the music and just sat in the dark, like I usually do through the peak of a dream. Feeling a little scared for the first time in a while, so I asked for courage.

Thinking about the aspect of courage I grow a little calmer, things become very still and I feel a snake-like presence. The snake has a quality of complete absence of fear, just strength, stealth, and appetite. So I ask myself is this the courage I requested and realized that it wasn't because courage remains related to fear, and other human emotions, including compassion, where as the snake's vibe was devoid of all this and simply kind of cold-blooded (perfectly appropriate for a snake)

So I asked for help in receiving opportunities for developing compassion and courage in days to come and I stuck in my thumb and I pulled out a plum and I said "oh what a good boy am I!" just kidding.

So I sat there in the dark and noticed some reel

Document 'Snakes And Fish - What does it all m', 1 passages, 245 characters.

Section 0, Paragraphs 20-26, 245 characters.

listening to the emotion of Are you Shpongled?)

What he saw was one of those typical hovering in mid-air visions of scores of snakes and fish entagled in a swirling dance of flowing movement.

What does it all mean?

"We

Document 'To dream, perchance to awaken', 1 passages, 1149 characters.

Section 0, Paragraphs 25-27, 1149 characters.

"Did you make another one of those thoughtforms that I don't know about?" My wife asked. I said no, it wasn't one of mine. She kissed me and went to bed. I began to meditate on where the last dream had ended, realizing that the higher self was love and intelligence, and that it could be trusted, that no mater what I thought, that higher self knew better than I.

Soon the visions began. Easy, beautiful internal images of serpent coils made of millions of colored scales, winding, sliding, undulating, and living. The serpentine spirit was here again, a spirit I have seen many times, accept, but do not understand. Minor anxieties came and were exhausted, and I continued to wonder at the coils around me. Suddenly the coils had a great head, mouth open, coming for me. There was fear for a moment, then letting go in the trust I had tried to foster. I was swallowed, passing down it's throat, a tunnel of energy that I suddenly recognized. It was the tunnel to the light of the higher self, the channel between the lower and higher self. The channel is living energy, a spirit unto itself, and being a connecting channel, only naturally lends

Document 'what do the eyes mean', 1 passages, 248 characters.

Section 0, Paragraph 15, 248 characters.

Also, has anyone here ever seen an overbearing male serpent entity while dreaming of syrian rue or jurema? If so, I would very much appreciate and information about that. I think my friend asked about this a while back, but I can't find his post.