

## ETERNITY IS IN LOVE WITH THE PRODUCTIONS OF TIME\*

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"Between different parts of the memory record there are doors, doors to a different world—doors to the Timeless ... And behind these worlds, beyond, some way there opens the invisible door to the Source ... No more doubts, no more questions." —Soidla (1998a, p. 33)

*ABSTRACT:* This report is based upon a long-distance dialogue conducted over a two-year period between S. I. Shapiro—who teaches transpersonal psychology at the University of Hawaii'i, USA, and T. R. Soidla—a Russian molecular biologist/geneticist and author of a variety of publications on transpersonal subjects. Among the topics covered in the dialogue were: a molecular transpersonal theory of memory coding and its implications; how life-stories can be edited; how consciousness produces teaching stories; the redemptive value of attending to the unfolding of everyday life; dreams as a "royal road to transpersonal consciousness"; personal zoomorphic archetypes; and the related themes of surrender, silence, and emancipation.

*Note: SIS refers to S. I. Shapiro: TRS refers to T. R. Soidla*

SIS: Tonu R. Soidla, Ph.D., D.Sc., is a Russian molecular geneticist, and also one of the new international voices in transpersonal studies. A far-ranging thinker, the fabric of his transpersonal contributions confronts the reader with a singularly imaginative tapestry, provocative in content and evocative in style.

Soidla was born in the small town of Rakvere in Estonia. He graduated from Tartu State University in 1963, received his doctorate in biology (genetics) from Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) State University in 1969, and his D.Sc. in biology (genetics) from Leningrad State University in 1991. He has conducted research in the molecular genetics of yeast and nucleotide sequence analysis *in silico*, and has authored 85 scientific publications devoted to these areas. He has been interested in following the transpersonal movement since its inception, and during the last 12 years he has published a variety of transpersonal studies. Soidla is a member of the European Society for the Study of Science and Theology, has twice been a visiting scholar at

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the University of Hawai'i, has taken part in Princeton's Academy of Consciousness Studies in 1994, and has presented his work at a variety of international conferences. He was the Associate Editor of the *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* from 1998 through 2002 during Shapiro's editorship and Co-Editor with him of the Journal's sub series. *Voices of Russian Transpersonalism*, and presently serves on the Editorial Boards of the *Journal of Mind and Behavior* and the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*. Soidla "feels that genetics provides a sense of stability, rationality, and repeatability of which the human mind seems to have great need." Yet he also feels "one cannot deny a complementary, urgent need of being in contact with some mystery of being that one usually finds almost impossible to express."<sup>1</sup>

The following dialogue tries to capture some of the major themes in Soidla's transpersonal works. For further study, an addendum detailing his transpersonal theory of memory is provided, and a comprehensive bibliography is included with the references.

SIS: You raise the question, "Can studying Memory tell us something important about the most general properties of our world (or *even properties common to our world and some other realms of existence*)?" (Soidla, 1995a, p. 41). Much of your transpersonal writing is devoted to forwarding a molecular transpersonal theory of memory coding and its implications—of how "Consciousness grows from Memory" (Soidla, 1998a, p. 23). So let us begin our discussion by providing the reader with a synopsis of your theory.

TRS: Certainly it is not a theory. If it is a theory, then it is one still in search of its true author. Just some often rather loosely connected intuitions. For example, I suppose that the memory record is punctuated by some kind of synchronization signals. These signals can be filled with material different from the "regular" in-time memory recording. They could possibly be called "comments on living," "archetypal proto-images" or "myth seeds." This material is usually hidden but used in regular editing of everyday memory recording. From a bit more dramatic side, it can occasionally surface in synchronicities, dreams, and mystical experiences. Here I used the term "editing." This is connected with another key intuition that we are not just living our individual lives, but in a way, editing various inherited individually tailored versions of a universal human life story. This is really a very old concept—that of human fate that gently (and sometimes not so gently) strategically pushes us towards this or that situation in spite of tactical decisions of one's free will. And of course one can say that to overcome one's fate is possible, but sometimes this needs an uncommon strategic intuition— or the grace of some mystical entities or forces. I suppose that there is a kind of molecular reality behind these ideas. That is, as we inherit an individual set of macromolecules determining our immunological individuality, we also inherit some kind of individualized universal human life story. Then, generating our individual memory involves editing this story. As I noted earlier, I suppose that our mythological "timeless" heritage is one of the master masons involved in editing one's "in-time" life story.

SIS: As you have expressed in several of your publications, "My life story is written and read as part of some enormous play of consciousness ..." (Soidla,

1997c, p. 125). "We give to the timeless, to myth-seeds, one more lifetime in us. We can even use this lifetime for an attempt at fully re-writing or at least drastically changing our Timeless, creating a New Kingdom in the realm of consciousness" (Soidla, 1998a, p. 20). These statements offer a rather optimistic, biological view of reaching transpersonal understanding and transformation—would you explain the editing-transformative process in more detail?

TRS: As the editor and the editable life story are both memory texts, it is natural to suppose that editing involves a feedback loop and texts are able to mutually edit each other. Mythological stuff is used to edit an individualized version of a human life story. At the same time there exists a complementary process:

editing of the editors of the life story—archetypal images and myth seeds. I guess that usually this is a slower process towards some concretization, individualization of these images—feeding them with individual life story material. The results are shared in a space of culture, maybe also in some other less obvious ways. In some special critical points this allows for creating new timeless realms ("kingdoms") hosting essentially new mythological master stuff of the memory game. I would stress that the last mentioned events are extremely rare. So this possibility must not sound too optimistic. And then one is forced to ask: Is the process of editing of the editors supervised (edited)? Who or what is the supervisor (or super-editor) of editing? Consciousness seems to be a right guess, but possibly a too general one. Different, more specific answers are possible on this point. As about optimism concerning understanding transpersonal matters via molecular biological studies of memory coding, yes, such a remote possibility is implied in my hypothesis. But any possible huge new body of hard molecular data of very high complexity will most likely introduce more new questions rather than bring answers. Real progress will be quite slow. And certainly many very serious ethical problems will arise. Much more serious than problems related to human cloning. I would like to remind you that in spite of the technical feasibility, humanity has (quite reasonably) not yet started any eugenic self-improvement program. So my "optimism" is rather attenuated. I acknowledge certain remote scientific possibilities but understand that they would most likely lead us to a tangle of new problems.

SIS: You have remarked that a central element of the memory theory is that "archetypal universal myths emerge as forces and energies ..." (Soidla, 1998a, p. 23). Please describe the nature, dynamics, and reality of universal and personal archetypes in your system.

TRS: The history of psychology seems to demonstrate that concepts of forces and energies are often useful in visualizing and understanding the dynamics of psychological processes. Mechanistic models have their unquestionable (and strange) ways to be predictive and productive. Encouraged by this I have supposed that we have some way of perceiving (w)holistic aspects of various psychological situations as energies. I would rather not get involved in creating some all-inclusive system along these lines. I would prefer to meditate on some specific points, rather irresponsibly supposing that greater wholes will take care of themselves some way automatically—in due time.

This is seemingly not a very responsible position, of course. At the same time there are people who are naturally inclined to build systems. The more inclusive, the better. And there are these most honorable people who are fond of creating huge sand paintings—theories of all and everything. I am rather a kind of anarchist than a builder. I do some work in creating forms, but see more truth in the moment of destroying the painting—perceiving something that feels like an indescribable Nothing behind it. So for me the archetypes (perceived either as forms or as energies or both) are a part of illusion, but in a way it is a revealing, teaching illusion, an illusion that can kindly help to dissolve countless other illusions.

SIS: You have also said: "My personal working hypothesis is that what we feel as different energies within our body has something to do with a (seeming) potential (or intensity) of flow of coincidences ..." (Soidla, 1995a, p. 38). Would you explain the notions of energy levels and recognizing coincidences, and the relationship of these phenomena to the memory process?

TRS: I hypothesize that we have some inherited sensitivity to detect changes in "style" of micro-coincidences flow (in other words, of the flow of events which feel meaningful to us—in some mysterious subtle way). There are dramatic cases of such a shift, and rather mild ones. (As if listening to the minimalistic music of one's perceived life story one can say after some time that nothing dramatic has happened but clearly something has changed.) The different "styles" of coincidences flow are somehow related to different perceived energies (or rather to (w)holistic qualities of a life situation perceived as energies). As I said, the changes (*possibly a sign of shifting to different molecular segments of some memory engram encoding a universal or an individualized version of human pre-recorded life story*) can be gradual or in more dramatic cases rather abrupt. The results of rather preliminary introspection allow me to speak about at least three different levels of subjectively perceived energies. Such statements are of course "personal metaphysical" stuff, as there is no systematic study behind them; and I have some doubts about the feasibility of such studies. That which is really holistic in the world cannot be isolated from the field of greater wholeness during scientific experiments. What begins as an experiment, in some unnoticeable way becomes a teaching story addressed to the persons involved. Are we ready to accept this change of perspective? I would sum up that I suppose that studying holistic properties of the world we inhabit needs some yet unspecified but most likely fundamental revision of the prevailing scientific method.

SIS: "There is a feeling tone of wisdom that allows the unfolding of the wisdom quality of one's own self" (Soidla, 1997c, p. 125). You call attention to "feeling tones" and how they can be apprehended with appropriate attention. Please describe the significance and dynamics of these feeling tones.

TRS: This is one more term close to the metaphysical spiritual energies I just spoke about. After appropriate attunement of one's attention one can become aware of coming complexes of feeling and meaning (meaning being "another side" of feeling). One is happy greeting the spontaneous emergence of such packets of understanding wrapped in special feeling, and one can learn the art of preparing for these experiences and of handling them. One can propose explanations. And

again it is difficult to devise an objective study of such experiences that necessarily involve a (w)holistically connected all-changing Proteus-like field of consciousness. It is certainly easier to delete "feeling tone" and then "conscious" from the vocabulary of respectable scientific terms.

SIS: Have you thought about establishing experimental support for your memory theory?

TRS: Thought, yes! But I was halted by various practical considerations. Since I speak this way, obviously I am not the proper real author of these ideas. And then, too, I feel sometimes that, if true, such ideas can be dangerous, opening ways to various new abuses, to construction of dangerous viruses of consciousness/ memory, and then to a rush of competing attempts of global brainwashing.

SIS: Jeremy Narby (1998) claims that "... shamans take their consciousness down to the molecular level and gain access to biomolecular information" (p. 160). In developing your theory of memory have you had any privileged communications from molecular informants?

TRS: My intuitions, right or wrong, have been of rather formless quality. When once something that could be labeled as "direct communications" took place, it was rather a kind of "molecular joke." During one sleepless night I found myself compulsively repeating the following message: "Infinity for a macromolecule means denying pseudo-infinity via inter-molecular interactions." In a way not senseless—but a seemingly rather useless bit of "understanding." And in a way quite funny. Most likely the same kind of humor reaches us during attempts to communicate with some unseen world, even when designing palindromes. This is one facet of the consciousness world.

SIS: An important theme is that "Consciousness produces teaching stories" (Soidla, 1999a, p. 61). Indeed you claim, "To be conscious means to be self-teaching" (Soidla, 1999a, p. 64). Please explain more about this remarkable feature of consciousness.

TRS: This means that when being attentive one finds oneself merged in a constant flow of teaching. It could be considered as something trivial. One searches for teaching stories and one gets them, possibly just learning to see everything that happens as one of such stories. For me it remains a mystery, even under such a more skeptical angle of view. Indeed, whatever compartment of consciousness would be considered to be responsible for creating these stories, it is certainly consciousness that produces them. The intensity of such a flow of teaching can be perceived as fantastic. I think it is most remarkable that consciousness is intensively self-teaching and self-modifying (even partially self-destroying). This makes consciousness so special. (Special, but possibly not unique. For me it seems to be important that RNA molecules are capable both of self-instructing and self-modifying. They replicate and at the same time change themselves and other RNA molecules in an autocatalytic way. I would like to add that this makes RNA a rather special subject for me and has propelled me into various speculations about historic connections between RNA and consciousness/memory.)

SIS: The stream of teachings reaching us in everyday life seems to be endless, but seldom apprehended: How can one become more receptive, to hear and respond to the voice of inner wisdom?

TRS: Attention makes all the wonders—and also plays many tricks. One can be receptive but one can only too easily also become credulous or obsessed. Most productive attention seems to be a kind of half-attention that is one of the major ways leading one closer to real openness and receptiveness. There are many practical ways to learn the art of receptiveness, such as just keeping a journal. A lot of things come with experience: the art of looking and at the same time not looking (close to shifting to "soft eyes"), keeping an inner half-smile, and then learning to use the passive will, and to allow the real Self to take over. The resulting state is effortless and natural. Seemingly nothing has happened and at the same time everything has been changed (as one can recall when the state has gone, and/or when listening to witnesses.)

SIS: You say, quite eloquently, "Teaching is a nourishing flow that reaches us day and night. Even the part of a Realized Being that is here in the world with us seems to be continuously washed by this flow on the mirror/window of perception. What a gift! What a not-deserved gift... Thank You!" (Soidla, 1998a, p. 26). Do you speak here as a transpersonalist, a molecular biologist, or both?

TRS: Both. But also just as a startled and awed human being staring with a half-open mouth.

SIS: Now for a quote from you that has catalyzed the title of our dialogue:

"Eternity (the timeless) is not only in love with the productions of time but is really nursing them as well. As our life story unfolds, the personal gets more and more blended with the transpersonal-mythological as part of a normal developmental process. A practitioner can learn a lot about this process by first being open and attentive" (Soidla, 1997c, pp. 119-120). So a key element in transforming one's life story along more transpersonal lines is deploying nonjudgmental attention—doing witness—to the unfolding of one's life story, as your writings constantly remind us. What more can you say about the dynamics of witnessing and its effects upon redirecting our life story, and how can we facilitate our capacity for witnessing?

TRS: For me this has been a long, seemingly endless process of winning and losing ground. I have listed some practical points above: meditation training is most useful, and my rather limited experience tells me that prayer can be an effective way towards being receptive. But the resulting spiritual trajectory seems to be never steady and straight—not more steady than when trying to proceed on a steep icy road uphill. (Now my perception has a bit changed and I would say—ascending/descending a winding Escherian stairway between animated screens and mirrors.)

SIS: "With endless variations, we are consigned to overcome the same resistance over and over again" (Soidla, 1997a, p. 111). So the awareness of falling repeatedly into the same potholes can someday help in rewriting our life story along more positive lines. How do these repetitive patterns achieve their redemptive powers?

TRS: I am a slow learner in metaphysical matters. There seem to be many people in this huge classroom of slow learners. Possibly for most people overcoming or at least the permeabilization of one's ego is a slow, repetitive, often seemingly endless process. Nevertheless, there are useable catalysts. One can be aided by Jnana—clearly perceiving this repetitive nature of the process, by Bhakti—perceiving the universal love dissolved in it, and by Karma—not striving to obtain its fruit. Following these different traditional voices in the music of consciousness can be of great help.

SIS: You also extol the powers of repetition in a much broader sense: "Any repetitive activity seems to be an entrance to nonordinary (not quite in-time) memory and consciousness ... 'Higher' rituals can lead one to deeper and deeper cycles of creating hybrid structures between personal and mythological timeless memory core structures" (Soidla, 1997c, p. 119, p. 125). Please explain this process.

TRS: I suppose that memory is punctuated by synchronization signals that are filled with mythological, ancient, "distilled" (quintessential) memory stuff. Repetitive activities: rituals, rhythms, musical tones, can start opening these structures to levels of brain (mediated) activity that become closer and closer to conscious threshold. Rhythms activate built-in rhythmical structures. Complex rhythms, that reach us by several (visual, audio, tactile, etc.) channels, can be very effective. Especially if "internalized." There is an art of opening to these levels. As individual memory is edited by one's mythological legacy, the legacy itself is slowly modified by one's life story material. There is a slowly growing world of hybrid structures between individual and mythological elements. One cannot encounter the mythological realm directly—only via hybrid structures between mythological and individual life story realms (experienced either individually or mediated via one's culture.) Dreams are a great individual showroom of these hybrid structures. And there is an art of transpersonal growth, of developing one's mytho-individual hybrid structures (and possibly final dissolution of them to something very simple but usually hardly attainable). But of course, the highest ritual is organic, and the highest art is artless.

SIS: "Transpersonal psychology has often been accused of taking a rather onesided, only positive experience oriented stand as far as all the existential problems (on the very border of suicide) are concerned" (Soidla, 1995b, p. 49). The accusation can certainly not be leveled at your theory of the dynamics of self-understanding: "And so it is: life and death, love and hate, heaven and earth—the powerful machinery that one may find difficult to accept, but at the same time is clearly unable to ignore. Getting intimate with this shocking world does not bring happiness, but it can bring understanding" (Soidla, 2002b, p. 196). So our shadows, too, provide teachings, yes?

TRS: Yes. Shadows are good teachers. But usually we prefer more gentle and seemingly more safe ones. We are rather timid animals of consciousness and like the first small mammals are afraid of old ferocious reptilians.

SIS: "It is important to listen to people who make mistakes, who are [almost] wrong—at least to see the emerging patterns of collective unconscious"

(Soidla, 1995c, p. 24). Which mistaken people should we be looking to nowadays for "guidance"?

TRS: Genetics has demonstrated the value of mistakes in studying living beings. In short, we have learned that mistakes of genetic text (mutations) allow turning genetic texts into very sensitive instruments to study other genetic texts. I am trained to be attentive to possibilities that mistakes open for scientific studies. On some other level, one can say that there are mistakes and mistakes. There is the simple lack of attention and there is the instinctive exercising of powers that create illusions. At some far reach these powers of elaborate occlusion of truth and the creation of illusions seem to say something romantic and/or important about generating and sustaining our world as we know it.

The practices and prejudices of some of the best tricksters, con artists, thieves, healers, and uncannily successful general medical practitioners, demagogues, charlatans, politicians, etc., are a potential gold mine of consciousness works. This art (as something dangerous) seems to be effectively expurgated from rational contemporary science. (Or has it just gotten modified, masked?)

There is a time and place for science as we know it, but there is also a time and place to study with common con artists tirelessly exercising the illusion-creating faculty of consciousness. It is another issue how to learn the art and not fall prey to the all too fascinating flow of illusions. Possibly the classic (Advaita Vedanta) way of searching for one's real Self is a surer path. But it is not an easy path. One is tempted to try alternative approaches. The geneticist in me whispers about some specific creative use of mistakes in both theory and practice. Transpersonal wisdom seems to embrace different paths.

SIS: Prominent among the forms of teaching stories you recount is the special effectiveness of dreams as a "royal road to transpersonal consciousness." Why does paying attention to dreams yield such illuminating transpersonal dividends?

TRS: I just noted that dreams are natural showrooms of hybrid structures combining one's in-time life story and timeless mythological images. To be guided by a succession of these hybrid structures and to come to understand their symbolic language seems to be important steps on the way from the personal to the transpersonal level. Attention is a quite practical starting point of this process. But there is always some element of spontaneity ("grace") in it. Mythological seems always have some logic of its own.

SIS: I know you are fond of your essay on dreams and "feeding twin snakes with stories" (Soidla, 1998d). Would you explain to readers why this is such a personally meaningful contribution?

TRS: This is a mystery to me. But I suppose (and many of us seem to know) that often one's mere attention to dreams leads to more and more personal/ transpersonal hybrid stories—for me it is as if one is feeding some power that in turn carries one further and further into the mythological and transpersonal world. This is what happened when I was writing the essay you mentioned. Writing mobilized attention and attention released a flow of highly meaningful experiences.



SIS: You have published papers about a variety of "zoomorphic archetypes of a personal mytho-bestiarium" (Soidla, 2000, p. 27): Nightingales (Soidla, 1997c); Bees (Soidla, 1998a); Spiders (Soidla, 1998b); Lugworms (Soidla, 1998c); Snakes (Soidla, 1998d); Finches (Soidla, 1999a); Hens (Soidla, 1999b); and, most recently, Dinosaurs (Soidla, 2002b). What is so personally compelling about this spiritual zoo of nonhumanoid teachers?

TRS: Transpersonal forces often wear zoomorphic masks—one more example of "hybrid structures." In ancient religions gods often were hybrid, between human and animal forms.

SIS: You also have more work in progress concerning dinosaurs, and, at the other end of a size-continuum, insects. What can you tell us about this new work?

TRS: To have imaginary contacts with fantastic creatures is usually one of the greatest pleasures in one's childhood. One can return to this pleasure in old age. My creatures are most dear and important for me now, in ways that would have been rather out of place if not impossible during my rationalistic middle years (twenties and thirties). They behave like very effective consciousness-expanding transpersonal teachers. There are also many additional smaller pleasures. One can try to ascribe one's "guests" to various compartments of consciousness. In my personal version of the cosmos, dinosaurs and Wild Old Spirit represent various aspects (masks) of the Higher Self, insects personify Anima, mad Octopus plays the role of a personal shadow, and RSGigaL—the leader of united guerilla hackers and a queen of "no-worlds"—represents transpersonal shadow. At the same time, dinosaurs are rather small and insects gigantic, octopus vulnerable, and RSGigaL seems to be rather close to living creatures. Every image upon closer inspection grows more and more complex. Recently I recognized (with a kind of jolt) my insect anima figures in a picture in a book. This was not a picture of some real insect but an image of "Isis-Hathor as a winged scorpion"—one more example of zoomorphic hybrid structures. Anyway, these creatures are not mere symbols or abstractions, or devices of self-gratification, or even of self-teaching. Their world looks like an independent, not easily refutable realm resembling one's dreamworld, but at the same time being even more lucid, open to all of one's faculties, an alternative real world of responsibility, love, and creation in one's consciousness.

SIS: Are there any other transpersonal projects you are currently engaged in or thinking about?

TRS: At the moment I am preoccupied with preparing a small lecture series "Introduction to Transpersonal Studies" for the Institute of Deep Psychology to be established in St. Petersburg this autumn or a bit later.

SIS: Surrender is a common refrain in your writing: "Surrender, surrender. Death means life. Only to be able to surrender" (Soidla, 2002b, p. 199). Is surrender a matter of grace or of discipline and spiritual fruition?

TRS: I would say that discipline often attracts grace, but cannot really handle and shape it. Grace is certainly a good word to denote the mystery that seems to help when one's personal effort fails. Grace is some benevolent force in the con-

sciousness (or even in the material world) that one seems unable to manipulate, some mysterious uncontrollable residue of spontaneity within us and around us.

SIS: Your writings are seductive teaching stories and you have an uncanny literary skill to induce altered states of consciousness in readers. How do you accomplish this?

TRS: Do I? I suppose that the trick is in your (and some other close friends of mine) being creative readers. For most readers I suspect nothing special happens in reading my texts. I have not consciously devised any special linguistic tricks. Possibly one's being in a subtly altered state of consciousness in some way gets communicated to readers who are familiar with such an altered state by some subtle keys (shifts of meaning, rhythms, etc.) built into any language. I have a feeling that poetry performs the same trick for many readers (especially for those who are able to read slowly), without most of them even being aware that something special has happened. A lot of important minor but cumulative things take place during communication that are usually not analyzed, leading to seemingly too insignificant effects.

SIS: One of the roles you ascribe to transpersonalists "is a reporter whose job is to keep a faithful record of what is taking place. A really good report is not easy to find" (Soidla, 2001, p. 10). Would you elaborate on transpersonal "accountants"?

TRS: Transpersonalists make up a rather disparate group. I am an autodidact in transpersonal matters, with some Advaita Vedanta background (Vichara training according to Sri Ramana Maharshi), and with an exotic (for a transpersonalist) scientific background in genetics. I think of myself as a marginal personality in the transpersonal field. But I have contacts with the transpersonal community in person, via extensive reading, and as a journal editor, so possibly I may be allowed to generalize that transpersonalists are a much more varied group both by training and by the world views professed than my fellow geneticists. Still they have something in common—in one way or another communicating important material concerning transpersonal experience. This material, this information can be scientifically backed, or philosophical, or experiential, or whatever else. What is important for most people is less the consistency or scope of transpersonal theories than the quality of this information. *It* is not easy to define the word "quality" in this context. I would dare to say that it does not mean only scientific. Quite the contrary. The scientific approach can be sensitive and relevant in the hands of a person like Charles Tart, but it can also be rather dull. In the world of transpersonal phenomena the scientific approach often leads to some of the worst cases of scientism. I agree with Robert Pirsig who said that feeling quality means feeling the presence of God (I would often say Source). For me and possibly for some other like-minded persons this is a clear enough formulation. For scholars this is of course not the last thing to be said on this topic. Here one should probably just start a discussion of scientific method as such. But my special ideas on this point are still too vaguely formulated for any serious discussion of this kind. I only see that in the more or less distant future such a discussion will be unavoidable.

- SIS: Your writings, and especially the teaching stories you relate, contain subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) humor. Is humor, too, a "royal road to transpersonal consciousness" or perhaps just a result of it?
- TRS: Sorry for having exposed readers to the not so subtle variety. (Laughing is often a most sensitive matter showing and/or determining one's position in the spiritual field. Metaphorically speaking, some varieties of laughing can be love songs or war songs of the invading Shadow.) But subtle humor—yes! I suppose that it is one of the true roads towards the transpersonal. And it affords one the recognition that the path and the destination can be one and the same thing.
- SIS: A decade ago you wrote: "I have a feeling that contemporary scientific method itself is something to be overcome one day" (Soidla, 1995c, p. 6). Are we any closer to this scientific revolution today?
- TRS: Of course, there is some evolution in this direction. But contemporary science is not yet cornered enough to give rise to very radical and at the same time viable new developments.
- SIS: You especially value the transpersonal work and example of the late Professor Vassily Vassilievich Nalimov (1910-1997). (See Soidla, Shapiro, & Gross, 1997.) Would you comment on why he is such an inspiration?
- TRS: His multi-disciplinary ideas continue to be fascinating. But possibly most important is that he was himself a genuine embodiment of transpersonal ideals, more just being than doing something "spiritual." For some details by people who knew V.V. Nalimov much better than I did, see Drogalina-Nalimov (1998) and Yarkho (1998).
- SIS: What about any links between genetics and transpersonalism—Is there an enlightenment gene, and, if so, how close are we to cloning it?
- TRS: Most of genetics is concerned with very complex and very well defined mechanisms. Transpersonalism deals with fluid, Proteus-like, transcendent phenomena. Even a very preliminary attempt at uniting these two approaches provides one with the satisfaction of an all-inclusive, universal, almost cosmic view. At least one feels as a metaphysical bird of prey flying very high. And still there are many other components of the whole. There are certainly still higher points of view. As about the E-gene ... I would not be surprised if some such gene would be declared to exist one day. No doubt there would be grounds for this, but I feel sure that this would not mean a much deeper understanding of what is enlightenment. Are not the contemporary attempts to substitute mechanism for meaning more misleading than one would like to admit?
- SIS: "Spiritual search, by its nature, is dualistic and it is exactly the very dualism that must be overcome" (Soidla, 2000, p. 29). Care to elaborate on this paradox?
- TRS: "I and Thou" is a great formula, and still it can feel a bit insufficient. One can say Oneness, and then one can say Nothingness. And then it comes to feeling that all these formulations are true. I do not know if here is the end point of

this process. I do not know if there is any end point. I am just following along the road.

SIS: You have expressed that as the years go by you find yourself thinking and writing more often "about the unlimited possibilities and wonders of consciousness, about the great Timeless, about the Source."<sup>2</sup> What about this great Universal Teacher—the Omega point?

TRS: Great, indeed. But I would rather not pretend to know beforehand the lessons of teachers of this most transcendent school.

SIS: Let's end here by considering these words of yours: "Who is who and who is me? All forms are the forms of Truth" (Soidla, 1998a, p. 32). A comment?

TRS: This question of course suggests an answer of "No comment." But possibly this would be a bit too rhetorical end point to our conversation. So, instead, I would like to confess that my words were an attempt at a Western/Advaita Vedantic/Buddhist statement. It is difficult sometimes not to fancy some future great synthesis of the main spiritual traditions (possibly including science). A dream only, of course. And this being said, we can celebrate the implied "no comment" with a pause, with some minutes of silence.

"Yes, the Timeless is in love with the productions of time. But at the same time we, timelings, are in love with the subtle Timeless." —Soidla (2002b, p. 201)

SIS: Onward now to your transpersonal "theory" of memory, as well as a more extensive bibliography of your works, that we promised at the beginning of our dialogue.

#### ADDENDUM

Synchronization Signals of Memory, Containing Timeless Service Messages:  
An hypothesis.

*(On myths and music behind one's everyday memory. Rhythms as a way to the Timeless [mythological, archetypal, religious] imagery.)*

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Many remarkable ideas that emerged at the beginning stage of molecular biology were not developed in the following years. One of these ideas was that if a genetic message contains punctuation signals, then inside these signals there is an obvious place to write down some useful "comments," some "service information"—some

texts that are read on a quite different level. As the usual genetic texts turned out to be essentially comma-less—and translation punctuation (initiation and termination) signals were shown to be of comparatively simple structure—this idea was abandoned (surviving almost solely in some memoirs of those days). The idea was not resurrected, even with the discovery of the intron/exon structure of eukaryotic genes, because introns, with few exceptions, can generally be written off as "junk" (or "egoistic") DNA (Watson et al., 1987).

But perhaps the idea of punctuation signals—as a space for texts written down on a different level than the main message—can have a curious Second Coming in a seemingly quite unrelated realm of memory coding.

One of the greatest problems in discussing memory/consciousness is the "binding problem" (Hardcastle, 1996): How perceived colors, sounds, smells, and shapes come together to create a realistic picture in one's consciousness and memory.

My general hypothesis is that one necessary element that would explain this phenomenon is a set of synchronization signals, signals that will allow for juxtaposing different parts of a memory/consciousness "text" along identical time scales.

There are alternative ways how synchronization signals can be further involved in memory/consciousness. If one is inclined to take the conception of synchronization signals as likely to have some place in memory recording/retrieval—one immediately confronts the possibility of necessary "timeless" comments on the main "in-time" memory message. This means supposing the existence of a set of memory service texts that are situated within synchronization signals forming a part of memory that is clearly outside of the ordinary time frame.

My special hypothesis is that these service texts ("comments on living") are involved in the very process of memory recording (that has an aspect best described as "reciprocal editing"), and in this process the inherited seeds of these texts give rise to mythological, archetypal, and religious imagery, and finally re-enter memory in the mature disguise of mythological figures. What I am postulating is a basic mosaic Structure of memory records.

As I have noted above, I assume that memory recording involves editing of some pre-recorded material. That means that the human life story is in some gross aspects pre-recorded, and actual memory recording is in many respects a process of editing of this inherited (universal, or even individualized) life story. This editing process uses "timeless" memory texts that are written down within synchronization signals. In other words: during memory recording, memory texts are editing other memory texts. This process is most likely reciprocal.

If my core hypothesis about the existence and localization of timeless memory stuff is true, it is immediately clear that repetitive integrative functions like music, dance, poetry (with its rhythm and rhyme), spiritual practices (mantra, yantra, etc.), and religious rituals with their many-leveled, repetitive, highly symbolic activity are all situated on the royal road towards this timeless layer. Alternatively, these levels

are reached during neurotic and psychotic episodes, including the auras of such super-synchronized brain states as epileptic seizures. Considerable anecdotal evidence is available to support these claims. See for example Music (1991) and Alvarez (2001).

Some additional thoughts: The very term "symphony" calls our attention to the possible effectiveness of multiple complex harmonies and rhythms. (Possibly one must also mention the use of overtones in Tibetan chanting having profound spiritual effects.) It seems quite likely that real memory records are organized in complex multirhythmic patterns delineated by synchronization signals. It also seems quite possible that the complex point-counter-point blending of different voices can simultaneously activate more synchronization signals to lead to fuller proto-mystical experiences. But of course cutting away distracting stimuli (perceived as noise) can better reveal pure underlying harmony. And one must be aware of the powerful effects of expectation of one or another result.

Whirling (Mehlevi order) dervishes and other "sacred dancers" exemplify how adding rhythmic movement can increase the effectiveness of applying music. On a different level. Western ballet and opera (and now various popular groups) have demonstrated the power of a complex multisensory environment. All this means that the combination of the right multisensory stimulation with the right expectation in a right setting can be extremely effective. The Byzantine sumptuousness of the Russian Orthodox liturgy, a feast to all sensory channels, that at the same time never occludes the basic simple harmonies of its different lines, is an excellent example of a really effective traditional use of music in the right religious context for activating timeless messages in one's memory. (Especially if applied to an appropriate person with a suitable biographical background.)

I am skeptical about the possibility of effectively isolating some aspects of the Timeless in scientific experiments—as the function of the Timeless is highly integrative, multisensory, and "holistic." But it is most likely possible to document many of the repetitive structures involved. Some kinds of repetitions involved can be even analyzed by molecular probes of fixed repetitive structure.

Some further biochemical speculations (in italics): *There is a possible, but mostly neglected during the last decades (happily analyzable), substrate that can be supposed to be involved in memory/consciousness—RNA molecules. Several numerical coincidences make this idea attractive to me. First and foremost—the rate of RNA synthesis—ca. 50 nucleotides/ sec is close to ca. 40Hz (gamma) brain rhythm that some authors (see Crick, 1995, p. 245) suppose to be related to [visual] awareness. If one looks further to how long a molecule would be created during a human lifetime if one continuously registers firing/rest patterns of neurons, the resulting RNA molecule(s) is (are) close to the total RNA content in a typical eukaryotic cell (or to a whole Liliium genome). At least quantitatively, RNA seems to fit some basic parameters of the process of memory recording. It is important to note that this controversial idea is intended not to substitute for but to supplement current ideas on memory coding (Soidla, 1995b, 1996, 1997a).*

*I suppose that the RNA pathway is the first memory (or rather some protomemory)*

*recording mechanism that emerged in evolution; nevertheless, I also suppose that the more recent evolutionary developments like synaptic networks, neural map training, and so forth (Edelman, 1992; Rolls, 2000; Smith, 2000) have not quite replaced the older mechanism. This means that possibly RNA engrams are still created in special neurons in special locations, perhaps as a quite important part of the memory recording process. At the same time, some basic "ideas" from the ancient memory recording (RNA) level—like "timeless" repeated material within synchronization signals, and possibly also trypanosome-style editing (Kable, Heidmann, & Stuart, 1997; Landweber & Gilbert, 1994; Simpson & Emeson, 1996) of prerecorded life story and RNA-style (Cech, 1985) autocatalytic self-modification ("self-teaching")—were possibly not only retained but also used in a different form at the higher neural network level.*

*The RNA level, as a whole, is certainly easier to put to experimental tests now—40 years after the first wave of initial naive experimentation along these lines (reviewed in Gaito, 1966). By now one can use a brain cDNA library to search for very low-copy-number giant brain specific RNA molecules—possibly carrying small repetitive regions of homology with nuclear DNA. The parts of these molecules that are not represented in human nuclear DNA must be different in different individuals.*

*On a cellular level, these hypothetical RNAs can be found in RNA-rich structures in brain cells (in Nissl-bodies [Hall, 1992], or most likely in some special subclass of Nissl bodies, in few scattered RNA-rich cells). But they may not be related to any known identifiable structures.*

I would like to note that the general idea of synchronization signals filled with "timeless comments" seems to be rather independent of any particular hypotheses (shown in italics) concerning the memory recording mechanism(s) and its material substratum.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Biographical note. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 1998, 17, pp. 190-191.

<sup>2</sup> Biographical note. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 1999, 78, p. 195.

Some of the entries can be found at the following website:

<http://dino32.narod.ru/index.html>

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