

## CHAPTER 10 - DISCUSSION OF PSYCHOTIC EPISODES

For easy reading and flow this chapter starts, after a brief introduction, with a summary of Rachel's psychotic episodes. Again, her wording is italicised and in quotes. This section will be followed by a discussion of these episodes and will conclude with a consideration of hallucinations and delusions. The psychotic episodes illustrate how an individual will adapt, sometimes with extreme measures, in order to create a world that offers some structure, stability and meaning. Thus, the meaning of Rachel's psychotic episodes is of vital importance as it indicates the necessity for her to create this world as well as her desperate need to have a cohesive sense of self. The next two chapters discuss the general themes that appeared throughout the psychotherapy and the effect that the psychotherapeutic variables have on the 'healing through meeting' respectively. Overall, the aim is to indicate how the psychotherapeutic relationship provided a solid foundation for that healing.

Dialogal means relational and the infant is in relationship from the moment of birth. Phenomenological and dialogal therapy view psychopathology as a disturbance of the person's entire existence. Phenomenology believes in understanding the disturbed person in terms of his lived reality rather than clinically observing and labelling him from a medical stance. The whole human being is involved and disturbed behaviour is viewed as a "state of being in which the person starts relating to the world and fellow man in ways which are not readily comprehensible, that is, socially validated" (Kruger, 1988, p. 170). Thus, one does not have a problem but lives it in one's everyday world of relating and functioning.

If a solid, cohesive sense of self has not developed, the individual will be unable to relate in a healthy manner to other people. The focus of the person's being will be on psychological survival. The basic skills of inter-relating are not learned when the centre of one's attention is on avoiding annihilation. If there is no clear sense of self or skill in interacting, the person is unable to step out into a world of relating with any competence. The most sensible reaction is then to withdraw, build up the castle walls and isolate oneself from the dangers. Other people are uncertain quantities, offering gifts whilst hiding the dagger of possible annihilation under the cloak of friendship. The fear of reaching out is real as life experience has taught one to be wary. The scars are constant reminders of the results of offering one's real self in interaction. In few relationships has one found confirmation and simple acceptance of oneself as a human being. Isolation becomes an attractive alternative to the shared world. The other option is to step out in disguise and test which facade will be welcomed and applauded. Whichever guise receives the best response will become the favoured and strongest facade. Regardless of the alternative chosen, the real inner core still thirsts for authentic and genuine meeting. The quest for confirmation and real living for the fragmented soul is an exhausting and lonely one. This has not, however, prevented Rachel from that quest.

The information about the family history and behaviour is authenticated by Rachel's younger sister who was in psychotherapy with me from June 1994 - June 1999. She verified the physical and emotional attacks on Rachel. Although the stories told by these women differ according to their own perceptions of events, the major dynamics

of the family were viewed in a similar light by both of them. The focus is on Rachel's story and her younger sister merely provides a verification of certain events discussed in this work. The younger sister also displayed very similar dynamics to Rachel in her inability to relate to the world. This made her ill-equipped to deal with a difficult marriage and she too withdrew into passivity and severe depression. As the emotional abuse had been less severe and she had escaped most of the physical abuse, she had a stronger sense of self and boundaries. She did not experience psychotic episodes except for seeing the man and angel in the third incident described by Rachel. Although she was severely depressed, I also did not refer her to a doctor for medication. Her more intact inner core allowed us to progress further in a shorter time period in psychotherapy. She is currently in a relationship with a balanced and decent man and is able to give of herself emotionally in a connected, reciprocal relationship. Rachel aims for that same goal.

Rachel's parents had both come from emotionally and financially impoverished backgrounds. For example, her mother's father had died when she was three years old. Her mother, wishing to avoid the constant reminder of her husband, had "*given her away*" to her deceased husband's brother. However, the wife did not welcome her and eventually passed her on to a relative who did not have children. This family kept her but it was not a happy experience. She discovered her history at the age of ten. Rachel's mother had thus experienced abandonment and learned little about interacting as she had been met as an It for most of her life. Rachel's paternal grandfather was from a very large, poor Russian family who had experienced both the pogroms and Nazi concentration camps. Her grandfather had been a "*violent and crazy*" man and so her father had learned to be passive to survive.

Rachel's childhood experiences had ill-prepared her for life. The second daughter in a family of four, with the only son as the youngest, Rachel suffered a great deal from the parental damage that was continuously acted out. The eldest daughter had borne the brunt of attacks from her mother and rebelled against this endlessly. Rachel had been passive from a very early age in an attempt to slow down the physical and emotional violence she experienced. Rachel's family unit was socially isolated with no adult friends visiting and the children were not allowed to bring friends home. There was also little relaxed play allowed as the children always had to be neat, tidy, well-behaved and clean. With no role modelling of healthy relationships but only closed, destructive, damaging ones, Rachel was unable to learn a healthy manner of relating in a shared world. Her parents were inconsistent and unpredictable in their responses so she never knew what to expect which further confused her and prevented a solid sense of self from developing.

A thread running through Rachel's life has been the importance of religion. Raised in a strict Catholic home, her mother ensured that the family followed those principles closely and religion was the backbone of the family structure and beliefs. The family reinforced the religious aspect constantly. For example, when there was a problem, the frequently offered solution was to pray. The church was a powerful influence and, combined with her mother's strict views, resulted in Rachel believing that the authority figures in her life were judgemental, unforgiving and punishing. This reinforced her lack of worth. Over time, certain members of the church did judge Rachel as unworthy. For

example, the priest who refused to grant her absolution because she was having sexual intercourse with a married man deeply wounded Rachel. She was so angry at the judgement that she refused to leave the church until he did grant her absolution. She felt betrayed and abandoned by a structure that was as integral to her life as her family was. Her perception and belief that God was punishing and cold, like her mother, increased her desire to be accepted by both God and her mother. Rachel endlessly struggled to deal with the apparent paradox that God was hard and punishing and yet her sense of him within herself was that he was good and kind. She did not have the same perception of her mother as is indicated by the episodes that follow. Overall, the influence of the family's strong belief in the strict principles of the Catholic church deeply affected Rachel's sense of self and worth. This is clearly illustrated by the role that religion plays in her psychotic episodes.

Rachel is able to recall what occurred in her early childhood. Even at that early point, she had a conflicting sense of her mother. At times her needs were met but the primary feeling is of not being perceived and treated as a person of value. In her efforts to survive she always tried to behave in the correct manner that would bring confirmation. This did not happen at a sufficient level and she began to experience psychotic episodes which occurred at intervals throughout her life. She experienced some incidents during her time in psychotherapy, including one event which occurred while we were together in my consulting room. There were many less significant experiences for her which occurred so frequently that she seldom bothered to mention them. I only became aware of them in later discussions when she was beginning to understand and clarify why and how the major experiences functioned.

An abridged version of the major incidents is provided below in Rachel's own wording in order for the reader to be able to enter her world of experiencing with her. Only minor corrections have been made, such as spelling mistakes and the deletion of names for the sake of confidentiality. A full description of the events is provided in Appendix A. Brief comments are made for clarification and a full discussion follows in the theoretical section. The first eleven incidents occurred before she entered psychotherapy. During the six years we have worked together there have been fewer and fewer of these occurrences. The last event which occurred in my consulting room was the breakthrough for her in understanding the visual hallucinations.

#### SUMMARY OF PSYCHOTIC EPISODES:

The first eleven incidents were written in retrospect as an adult. One must allow some licence as Rachel's recall was now coloured by nearly two years of psychotherapy. The first incident is clearly a reconstruction of a vaguely recalled incident although Rachel is adamant that she has full recall of it. The memory will thus not be accurate but the meaning and the feelings she attaches to it are vitally important. Overall, the attempt was made to be as true to the experiences as possible.

#### **First incident:**

Rachel states that her first recollection of experiencing her life in a different manner was just before the age of one.

*"I could speak another language. I had other conversations, like memories in my mind*

*and I could see myself as another person fully conversing in a language known to me and to those with whom I conversed. I was understood. I could communicate in this language. I could understand the language communicated to me and I had the distinct awareness that my own feelings and thoughts I could communicate in return and be understood. The language was like a memory of me communicating. I recall my Mother and Father talking to me in a strange language. It was not long before I understood that I was supposed to learn their language and communicate in their language. It was then that I recognised that I had no power over my mouth or tongue muscles. I wanted to talk as fluently as I knew how to them and show them that I could talk ! I knew that it would surprise them and possibly shock them because even then, I received a form of guidance that this was not supposed to happen. I was comforted in my struggle with my tongue and mouth that because it was not supposed to happen, it could not and would not. I felt quite desperate and continued to struggle to communicate in my own language. My effort was blunted by my Mother laughing at me when my efforts came out garbled. Her affections did not penetrate into the awareness that I just might be struggling to say something".*

Rachel goes on to describe learning her new language of English which she found difficult and the knowledge of the old language beginning to fade. She felt desperate as she lost this special gift and *"I decided to look at my Mother and hold her eyes to try to communicate via my awareness. She did not see. I was treated as a baby. I was not a baby. She did not see my awareness. I could not communicate my presence in another language. My memory was slipping of the language. I knew I would lose all recall so I decided to try to hang on to at least one word ! A word I could bring to the world as proof and recognition that what was happening to me was exactly the reality that I already knew would be denied in the world".* She wished to protest by not learning English but *"I think my decision went against a certain law ... I felt without any objection or concern a presence that came to me and said this was not okay to do and I argued my position".* She was advised she would be *"granted the memory only that I knew and was able to fully converse in a different language before I gained control of my body muscles as a baby. It was a small consolation".* So, Rachel mastered her own language but experienced this as *"only a small effort placed in this regard because, as I mastered the language and managed it into sentences, I received applause and laughter that I could do such a thing and not once did the awareness of those around me, look deeper at the deeper significance of my effort. This result quickly erased my efforts.*

*I recall the colourful rattle toy my Mother draped across my pram. I recall she looked at it with much happiness and enjoyed it more than me. I remember her telling me to look at it and she played with it as if to show me what to do with it. I distinctly remember thinking how stupid this was and asking myself what it was for. I remember thinking, if only she knew, if only she could be aware that I am not the age or awareness of the body I was having to learn to master".* When she did reach out to the rattle her mother was delighted but this response made her feel *"quite hopeless in my effort to express my thoughts and knowingness that were fading as I gave in to the effort I required to master my body".*

Rachel *"lost memory of the language, the words, the grammar, the very form of the*

language. I do recall that it was very different to English ... I have not one word with which I could seek out and find my language and be 100% certain of identification. I am aware, to this day, of this loss. That this is the form which was decided and given to me as a baby in which I would retain this experience. I had no choice and this is a gift, a consent".

**Rachel's reaction:**

"I was quite anxious at first because I wanted to communicate to others. It felt like I was ignored because I could not communicate to my parents and their friends. I did not understand the language I was born into. I felt ignored because I could not speak and I wanted to change that. As I realised that my muscle control was not efficient and that I could not articulate my tongue to say the words in my mind, I felt frustrated. I wanted to talk in my language even if others did not understand. I felt sure someone would recognise a different language and the feeling of being ignored would then be removed and they could then understand a lot more. There was only very little comfort when I was made aware that I could not change things, that I was not supposed to change things as they were. I felt in the presence of higher beings who gave me this advice and who tried to comfort me. They did not succeed but they did say there would be more and I would open the dimensions to connect with the earth dimension of consciousness, in time. They did not say this to me in this way but I was assured I would connect, not fully though, the passage way between the two dimensions and worlds. I felt like I was given, in recognition of my sorrow before such unawareness and knowingness that I could understand and converse in a language, I was given a kind of reward. I would have a thread, like a single thread, in the future, only when I was grown up to connect the two worlds. It was not enough. I was still angry that I could not reach out and be understood. I do recall that I was very upset so I asked if I could have just one word which was denied. I was very unhappy that this too would be taken. I felt sure, that with one word, I could prove my language as soon as soon as I could linguistically articulate it. Again in recognition of my despair I was told that I could keep the memory of this incident and that was all. This was against my will and there was nothing I could do about it but struggle, and struggle I did".

Rachel recalls losing her last word. "I could not get it back. It was gone ... I knew I could not get it back and there were other things to concentrate on like growing and using my effort to develop muscle co-ordination and vocal co-ordination. I did remember that my language was gone. I did remember that there had been a body of persons advising me and watching over me. It was not them that stopped me from speaking, it was the condition of the human body I had in infancy that obeyed other laws that could not be broken even though I tried. I was not alone because I did have the advisers and comforter but my will was even against their will and the laws of the human condition and in this I felt betrayed even by the spirit council. This spirit council was like a group of elders in spirit wisdom. They were not visible but I felt them and received their presence as if they were behind me. Even lying down in the cot, they were mentally behind me in mind not in physical reality near the cot but behind my mind behind my consciousness.

I felt the spirit council presence as if I knew them and they were familiar to me. I felt them with acceptance but with anger when they would not break the rules of the human

condition and the laws governing lives here in this world. They said they could break the rules but that would be breaking higher rules that I was not aware of and that that would not be good and it would have very wrong consequences for all. This would include those to whom I wanted to communicate and I did not want that to happen because I wanted them to be enlightened not harmed. This is what made me acquiesce. It was this argument. When I asked about the higher rules I was not informed. I was told. It was not for me and that my direction was human life. I was prepared to die to bring the knowledge to the earth, but that was not accepted. I said I would give my life. It stalled the spirit council and brought with it sombre and deep tones. It felt like it was resonating with such great love it hurt them. I could feel this from their communication to me when they came back to me but even that did not change the rules to **allow me to speak from the crib** "!

### **Second incident:**

This occurred at three years of age in the garden at home.

"My older sister and I were outside in the garden. She was in front of me at some distance. I stood up to walk over to her and felt myself being thumped very hard from behind on my left shoulder. It was a powerful thump that sent me flying. I fell but did not hurt myself. I started to cry, not because I had hurt myself, but more from the shock of being thumped so hard. I did not know why I had been thumped and that was also a shock. I looked at my sister and thought that somehow she must have been the one who thumped me. My Mother ran out of the house and picked me up. She was in quite a state. I accused my sister and she said 'no' it was not her. My sister looked surprised and concerned. My Mother said she did not know what it was that thumped me so hard but it was not my sister as she had seen what happened".

### **Rachel's reaction:**

"Before being thumped I felt a presence that was gathering force like a ball of energy waiting to explode. I was concerned and wanted the presence to go away. It just got bigger. I could not see anything but I could feel where it was and that it was like a ball getting darker and darker. Rather like seeing a person go from calm to very angry until they hit something. I was really scared. Firstly, I felt being thumped and it was hard and a real knock. I did not enjoy the suddenness of the thump nor the force with which it threw me and that it actually hit me. That was shocking. That it actually hit me and I was doing nothing but playing in the garden. That it was not my sister who knocked me made me feel even more scared because my Mother had not seen anything hit me so she could not defend me from something she did not see. This made me scared and anxious. It worried me for a long time. It was not the first time I had felt being touched but it was the first time I had been knocked over very hard. I had been touched before but it did not hurt or worry me. It was like little pats that did not worry me because they did not hurt even though I could see no-one touching me. It was just something that happened that did not worry me until I got a huge clout. From then on I did not want to be touched, patted or knocked over again. It felt like all the pats were just a build up to a huge knockout and I did not want any part of it and I did not want it to happen ever again. It did not. The earlier pats took place only over a period of a few days on and off before the big thump".

### **Third incident:**

This occurred at the age of eight in Rachel's bedroom and is the event which she described in psychotherapy as the aliens.

*"I woke up and saw people in my room. They were adults and they were talking among each other. The room was filled by their presence and there were about four or five of them. I then noticed that they had noticed I was observing them. One of the men came over to my bed side. He crouched down to bring his face to eye level with mine. He had bright green eyes and his face glowed light from inside him. He smiled at me but it looked all too glary bright and out of the ordinary because the lights were off and the room was dark. I looked at his face and his jersey was of a most unusual knitting pattern. His smile and eyes just seemed to glare brightness at me and seemed to penetrate into my own beingness with intensity that I shut my eyes and started to feel very frightened. I said to myself that I would shut the sight out by closing my eyes. I was so afraid I could not even move my body. Hoping he had gone away, I opened my eyes just a fraction to look and was shocked that even with only barely opening my eyes again, his full face and smiling menacing glare came full into view. He said he would not go away and would come back again. I was terrified. I then, with great resolve, managed to turn my body over to face the wall. It was then that I went to sleep, determined to sleep and find safety there to shut out the images in my room.*

*The next day I had full recall. I tried to tell my Mother, but she brushed what I said aside and said it was a bad dream. That night I was terrified to go to my room to go to sleep again and insisted that the door to the room be open and a light outside in the passage be kept on". There was a similar visitation that night where the forms took shape out of the door handle and "grew" into the presence of people. She heard a serious discussion and was again terrified by the same menacing man. She again blocked these images out by "willing" herself back to sleep.*

*The next day, her mother and father again insisted that she was having a bad dream. Her father advised her to pray. "That night, the appearance of the people again came about before I could go to sleep. There was a speed of appearance this time, as if they all knew I could see them and their appearance was without restraint. Only this time it was very different. The conversations became loud and fierce and then a fight broke out. One of the adults drew a knife and stabbed the other man who fell. They dragged him across the room. I was so afraid I started to pray the Our Father, at which point a small white light appeared right in the centre of all the goings on. It grew into a small white angel of intense white light that was not of a kind that extended itself into the room. It was white, self-contained light. At that moment the passage light went on and I could hear someone coming out of my parents bedroom. The images scurried for cover with one of the men coming to hide right behind the dresser next to me. He saw me observe him and commanded me to 'Shhh' then disappeared. When the room had returned to normal in the few seconds, I dived out of bed and ran to the passage, throwing the door open where I saw my Father, fully dressed in his day clothes coming out of his room. I ran into his arms crying and explaining the people were in my room. He held me in his arms and asked me if I had prayed. Yes I said feeling certain that was why he had come out of his bedroom on his way to the bathroom just when I needed him ! He encouraged me that all would be alright. I told him what I had seen*

*and he said all would be fine now and I returned to my bed and went to sleep feeling better.*

*The next day I was in happy spirits that my Father had been there at the precise moment I needed him and that the people had not come back. My parents did not inform me then, that my Father had not come out of the room and he only asked me what he was wearing. I told him and that was the end of the discussion except for the fact that there was a scratch across the room where I had seen the people drag the body. I pointed it out to my parents to make them believe what I had seen. They did not believe that part and I was puzzled. The mark on the floor was there. I had not put it there and I had seen why it had appeared. My Father, I was later to learn, had no recall of coming out of the room to comfort me. I was sure it was my Father who came out the room and even as my Father said he did not remember, I knew that my Father came out his bedroom and I had seen him do so. He asked me what he was wearing and I explained. That he had come to my rescue was all that mattered to me whether he could remember or not. The people then went away after that night and no longer appeared to me. My Father had not come out of his room that night, and my parents decided that the house was haunted and we moved to another house as a consequence to another incident that made me scream in such terror I frightened my eldest sister who recalls the incident. I was not to know that my parents had decided to move from the house due to these events until some ten years later when the event by casual discussion came into our conversation. I was quite astounded by this news because at the time, my insistence of the event was treated as if I was dreaming bad dreams".*

Her younger sister confirms that she too had seen a form of a man leaning over her who then moved over to her sister Rachel. She described it as an ordinary looking man but she could not see his features in the dark. She then saw an angel in white kneeling and praying and, feeling unafraid, went to sleep. She did not experience or witness any of the other events Rachel describes.

#### **Rachel's reaction:**

She still finds this event disturbing as she cannot find an explanation for it and she feels more comfortable if she can understand things. The fact that she could see the man's whole face when she squinted makes even less sense for her. She found the experience of the menacing man smiling at her *"rather intimidating to me because smiling was so rare in my life. The glow from the face was not normal to life either and this also unnerved me"*. She found the unnaturalness of their appearance terrifying and worse was not being able to relate this to her family *"with any hope of understanding or appreciation"*. She believed that because the event took place at night when everyone was asleep, her experience was invalidated by others which made her feel very unprotected.

*"When I saw the angel preceded by a few flickers of white points of light, one at a time to only then disappear, I concentrated my fervour in prayer and the angel appeared like a white flame. I was very happy and felt only then that something had come to protect me and to save me from the terror I was feeling".*



#### **Fourth incident:**

This occurred in her sister's room when Rachel was eight year's old.

Rachel and her older sister were swimming and Rachel was afraid to go back into the house to fetch her towel. Her sister went with her as far as the door. She was certain something bad would happen.

*"I took a deep breath, ran into the house, into my room and grabbed my towel, turned and walked quickly out. Passing my Sister's room, I got the fright of my life ! There in her room were red gnomes with one of them with his head in her beach bucket. They were only playing, I knew, but it was not right that I should see them. I was so instantly shocked, I let out a scream of terror and ran with all my strength to get out of the house. My Sister heard my scream from outside and by the time I reached outside, I was crying from terror. She was quite shocked ... I was crying and Mother came to see what was happening. I was so distraught that my Sister explained to my Mother what I had seen. I was very frightened. Mother took me in her arms and calmed me and we returned to the swimming pool after she assured me she would tell my Father and they would do something about what was happening".*

#### **Rachel's reaction:**

*"I felt ready to die. I was so unhappy and I felt so sure that I would not be believed. There was comfort in my older sister's concern that I looked as white as a sheet when I ran out the house but that did not remove the terror that I was the only one getting to "see things". No-one could comfort me ... and this was very distressing".*

#### **Fifth incident:**

Rachel was fourteen years old when this event occurred in her bedroom at home.

*"I had decided to enter the school diving competition. I had only two dives that I could do to some extent. I needed to have a third dive for the competition". The third dive she decided on was a complex one which, if not accurately performed, could result in her hitting her head on the board. Encouraged by her teacher she decided to enter but felt anxious and afraid that she was "doing the wrong thing".*

On the weekend before the competition, whilst riding her bicycle, she *"had a thought enter my mind that something bad was going to happen to me. I had a thought that I might harm myself in the diving competition but I put the thought out of my mind".* Praying to God she received another thought that *"something bad would happen because I was good"* and that she was not being punished for being bad.

*On the Thursday night, I woke up in the middle of the night. I woke up gently, not sleepily, but clearly and gently. There at my bedroom door stood a beautiful golden, glowing person in a long molten gold to the floor garment. I could not discern whether the person was male or female. The person's face was also golden and the features were chiselled and perfect. What a beautiful sight. The hair was thick and gently wavy in thick locks of golden brown shoulder length in a glow of light. Standing at the door, the person said, 'Do not be afraid'. I was instant in my response, 'How can I be afraid? You are so beautiful!' The person smiled as if my reply had given the person the way*

*to now come near to me. Smiling, the person came right up to my bedside and crouching down to face me, told me not to speak, but to talk with my thoughts so we would not wake anyone. I was happy and excited to feel the radiance of the being with me. I was very happy. The being said to me that there was news for me. I was at once curious. I was told not to be worried. That God did not want me to think I was bad because an accident had to take place in which I would be slightly hurt. I asked why such a thing had to occur feeling quite worried in that very instant. The angel person asked me to remember the diving competition. 'Yes' I answered. Then it was explained to me, that my decision to dive at the competition was going to lead me to do the dive in front of all the people. I was shown, as if on a movie in my mind, that my dive would result in a head injury in which I would be killed. I was very stunned and the angel person then continued to say that this was not what God wanted for me and so I had to be in a small accident to prevent me being part of the competition".*

Rachel begged the angel for recall of the incident but was advised she would only be given a small reminder. The following day she did not have recall. Riding home from school, a friend *"lifted his leg up and kicked out his foot against my bicycle handles and sent me flying in a somersault over the handle bars at full speed. I went crashing to the ground, my face hitting the tar road and in that instant I blacked out! In the blackout, I had full recall of the Angel's visit"!* She was taken to the hospital to receive stitches.

Rachel did not tell anyone of the angel's visit. Upon hearing of the deliberate action of the boy her father went into a rage and was going to sue her friend's family. Her father was serious about taking the boy's family to task and she was determined to prevent this. Asking him not to take action against the family only made her father angrier so she told her parents about the *"person ... in golden garments ... I was very forthright about God not wanting us to hurt anyone. This succeeded. My Father did not pursue legal measures ... nothing was said again of the matter".*

#### **Rachel's reaction:**

*"I was not going to say anything to anyone because I was so used to hearing the 'Yeah yeah' response. It was only when my Mother said that my Father was going to punish my friend's family that I felt I was now duty bound to prevent a court case. I had to convince my parents not to do such a thing because I was spared and they had to not be angry with anyone... There was some comfort from my Mother who was not so quick to disregard what I was saying and she took up my cause and won on religious grounds and persuasion. I had said I would have no part of any fight in court. To go against my parents was not comfortable but what had happened with my Angel visit had happened and there was no getting past that. It happened and bad could not come of it ...".*

#### **Sixth incident:**

This occurred in Rachel's bedroom at the age of sixteen.

*"I woke up. I felt something was about to happen. There was an intensity, a frequency of some kind that I could feel. The room was in a natural soft dark shadow. It was night time. Something was going to happen. I could feel it. Something imminent was about to happen. I felt a white being at my right shoulder. I was comfortable with the sense of the being in white light at my side. The presence of the being seemed to be quite*

*natural and comfortable. I felt it communicate to me to be unafraid that yes something was about to take place and at no stage would the being leave me. Then I saw it. It was a purple light. It had a life of its own. A cobalt purple light that appeared in a dimension all of its own I noticed. It appeared as a small spot of light appearing out of a great distance while yet against the cupboard door that was near to my bed. The light had its own dimension and was imposed against the normal regular dimension of my cupboard distance from my bed. This was the first strange thing to me. I reached back in resistance to turn to the being at my side and received the communication not to look at the white being at my side. That the being is my guardian and that all would be well. I looked at the light and sensed a velocity of speed as it was in high speed as it travelled into view and grew in size. When it arrived fully in my room, it was a ball of purple light that took on a solid form of a small little beast of a blob of animal but not animal appearance. It had a long snout and black eyes that glinted at me as it seemed to see me. It just looked at me. Pretty harmless, I thought. So, now what I thought. The being next to me informed me to pray the Our Father. I did so and as I uttered the words, the little, strange looking thing let out a huge scream. It snarled and its mouth curled back over its teeth. The white light being said I should keep praying and as I did so, I noticed that the words of the Our Father seemed to be killing it. It could not come near me and it went backwards into the ball of light and reversed back over the same path which it had appeared in my room. Then it was gone. The being of light was still with me. So, what was that for I asked? I felt safe and was informed that the prayer I had said had been my protection. I knew I was safe and wondered at the intense frequency I had felt ahead of the thing coming into view. I felt sorry for it because it looked as though the prayer had strangled it and like it was in intense agony as it reduced in size and vanished. I had also noticed its intent to harm me if it had been able to attack me in defence but it was unable to harm me as the white being had assured me. That was the only remotely scary thing about this event and the frequency of speed of an approaching dimension was the scary part. I felt throughout the incident that I was safe and in no way did I feel that I was in danger as I was assured that the prayer would protect me and that the being of white light was near to also help were it necessary. I was quite puzzled after the event. I noticed that I was not so scared and that was a comfort. I was disturbed that there was a dimension that had made itself visible to me and that its intensity was greater than the intensity of the regular world. It had interfaced over it like a live hologram".*

**Rachel's reaction:**

*"I had felt protected from the very start of this experience. I felt rather puzzled as to the meaning of the experience in the first place other than to convey the power of the prayer the 'Our Father'. It left the question in my mind ... was I going to need it in the future? That was disconcerting to feel I might be alone in the future where the only thing I have to hold onto is the prayer 'Our Father' where even my protection would be removed. I felt worried but not too worried because I had felt protected through a very bizarre experience".*

**Seventh incident:**

This occurred in Rachel's bedroom where she had seen the purple light described in the previous incident. She was seventeen years old.

*"I woke up with an instantly fresh and alert mind. I had for some months been doing yoga meditation. This was done in my room alone and the feeling I got from the meditation was simply a feeling of my body becoming very heavy and then like a concrete cask. During the meditation I had become aware of a cloud like vapour above my head. Like a dark rain cloud... over the days, the grey thing above me grew. I was perplexed. I sought to be in a state of goodness and went through my conscience with a fine tooth comb. I could not find any error or guilt in me... I was seeing a 72 year old Swami at the time ... and I asked him about it and he told me not to worry".*

That night the grey cloud moved above her head and had grown larger. She woke to see a beautiful looking man in a bright orange tunic and turban sitting in the Lotus position in the centre of her room. He was levitated off the ground. *"As I looked at him, he looked into my eyes and I realised that if I as much as blinked, he would vanish. I regretted this knowledge as his appearance was very beautiful, especially as he was levitated about eight inches off the ground and his face and eyes were soft and good, filled with warmth, seeing and connection with awareness of him. He knew I saw him and it was as if he was there to be seen and I was to see him only for a second. I panicked that I would not remember this, so I quickly scanned his face for a feature that I could remember in the morning. I took in his eyes and forehead, and then blink, he was gone. What a pity! He was so welcome. The sight was too brief I felt. I felt only sorrow that he had not stayed and that he was lost in a blink"!*

Her family flew to London the next week on holiday. She had arranged to visit a Swami at the Ashram in London. The cloud had not disappeared. Rachel visited the Ashram and whilst waiting to see the Swami she paged through a photograph album that was on display. She saw the picture of the Swami she had seen in her visitation. She asked who he was and the Swami responded by enquiring why she had singled that photograph out of the many different pictures in the album. *"I told him I had seen him. He asked me when. I did not want to go into any detail so I answered simply 'about a week or two ago'. The Swami replied with a gasp, 'Oh strange, he has been dead for over one hundred years'! I felt embarrassed so I said, well I had seen him in a dream and remembered what he looked like. The Swami asked if I was sure. I affirmed yes, and then he returned to me with a book all about the Yogi I had recognised. The Yogi, in his life, had been a very holy man and his book is highly regarded about his miraculous, holy life".*

On her return to the hotel with her newly purchased books she again felt the presence of the grey cloud. This angered and perplexed her as she felt herself to be *"in a state of goodness and yet this contradiction of a grey cloud following me was more intense than ever. Walking back to the hotel I was in conversation in my head to God".* An unshaven, scruffy-looking man appeared, walked up next to her and started a conversation. She had a conversation with God in her head and was angry when advised to be polite to him. *"I was appalled. It didn't make sense. I quickened my steps and my thoughts advised me to hurry to the hotel and that once inside I would be clear of the man who would not follow me into the lobby looking the way he did".* She raced into the lobby and told her younger sister who reassured her and they sat in the lobby. *"I put my two heavy plastic bags of books down and noticed a brown package tucked under the chair next to me. I had no concern for it and as I glanced up, I saw the man*

*again, who had followed me. I felt a sharp rush of panic and dashed up off the chair, grabbing my bags, and running across the foyer looking for my Sister and heading for the lifts. I found her and, not wanting to go without her, I grabbed her arm with force and insistence. I explained I had seen him again. Where, she asked? I looked again and saw him. 'There'! I almost screamed, and not really worrying if she saw him or not, as the lift doors opened, we both hurried inside. As we got to our floor we got out the lifts to go to our room. As we were opening the door a huge explosion went off. We rushed into the room shutting the door and rushed to the window to see what it was. We saw the people on the street below as if they were frozen in their tracks for a split second before turning to run like mad people screaming in the opposite direction.*

*My Sister and I did not understand. We decided to go and see what happened and as we opened our bedroom door, a thick blanket of grey smoke like a wall met us. Sixty four people had lost their lives in the first IRA bomb attack on a London hotel in the Hilton lobby where we were staying. The brown package I had seen moments ago, I think must have held the bomb that was so devastating to cause the glass windows to shatter glass across two highways in front of the hotel. I had not trusted God. I had said so. I was very sad at this realization. No-one in my family had been hurt".*

Her sister confirms that there was an IRA bomb blast in the hotel where they were staying and that she and her sister narrowly missed injury or death.

#### **Rachel's reaction:**

*"The build up of grey cloud that I felt over my head but could not see, was very worrying. I did not know what it meant at all. I felt guilty yet I could find no reason to feel guilty. I could not relate the grey cloud to anything pleasant or worthy. It was not something I wanted in my life. So it was very upsetting and it would not go away. I could go away from it by aiming my awareness to daily life but it would not go away from me. It would make itself felt in quiet moments of reflection and contemplation that were part of my meditation exercises that I was doing daily. The cloud got bigger and seemed to have a life of its own quite removed from my will for my life to be cloudless. There it was. In my consciousness and it was going nowhere, just getting bigger. I was very concerned because I could not see the run up of events that were to take place in London that would occur and save my very life. I could not see the future and if I could, I would fight not to be there even though I would be unharmed".*

#### **Eighth incident:**

Rachel was married at this stage and this event occurred in her bedroom in Italy at the age of twenty two.

*I was missing my husband dreadfully. It was a most stressful period of my life as he was working in Libya three months at a time with two week breaks back in Rome where I was staying with my Mother and Father-in-law.*

*One night I dreamed that my husband was slouched over the steering wheel of his car with a dagger in his shoulder. I felt the pain in my own shoulder that made me recall the dream and consider it meaningful. When I woke up the following day I recalled the dream and pondered the feeling it had left in my emotions. My shoulder was feeling the*

*pain. It was distinct and as I thought about it I felt a presence, in a dark shadow form, stand before me and ask me if I was willing to let my husband go. I thought about it and said no.*

*He returned from Libya early with an injury to the same shoulder I had seen wounded in my dream. He explained that he had received a powerful electric shock that had been so strong as to throw him off his feet into unconsciousness. He only survived due to the quick thinking of a colleague who unplugged the machine that was carrying the voltage that tore the nerve endings in my husband's shoulder. It took four months before he was fully recovered.*

*My husband returned to Libya and again, some several months later, the shadow presence came to me asking me whether I could let my husband go. This time, I had no dream of any danger or harm that my husband was facing. I questioned the presence and was informed that if I was to say yes, that I wished to be released, he would die. That was too much for me, to contemplate his death and yet I was informed that he would die as I requested release, in that moment ! I said no. When my husband returned he told me he had gone fishing and had swum too far out to sea. It was dark and he started to sink under the water. He explained that a good feeling came over him as he drifted down under the water". At the same time that she had advised the presence not to let her husband die, he experienced a vision of her under the water and he surfaced and swam back to the shore.*

*The shadow presence reappeared to her on their return to South Africa where she was asked whether she needed to suffer more in her situation. She experienced her marriage as a "brutal experience. Once again I was asked if I could let my husband go. I knew by now that this meant his death so I argued that it was not Godly to say yes and so be the cause or desire of anyone's death no matter what my suffering. The presence did not leave but stood, as if held in sorrow for me, and again asked me if I was now ready to let my husband go. I thought about it and then took a most bold step. I answered with my arms open wide in image of Christ the crucified, 'May the will of God be done, I embrace my destiny'. I did not know if I was the one who was going to die after I affirmed my final answer. Aware of this, I was most conscious of the events in my life and the time that lapsed.*

*The shadow presence was not something I saw with the naked eye. It was a presence felt and can only be described as a shadow presence that does occupy a place and form that is felt not seen. Some three months later, my husband was killed in a tragic accident". He was, in fact, murdered.*

#### **Rachel's reaction:**

*"I was in an urgently unhappy relationship and marriage. I felt such pain when my husband died but I was so grateful that his passing had not been my decision. I would have felt like a murderer. The absence of such a feeling only gave more space to feel the devastation of his death without cramping self guilt. A hopeless utterly destroyed incoherent space of soul. His life in my life was pain. His death in my life was pain. A double-edged sword. What for ? I felt his presence for many years after his death. I only felt released from him when a Mass was said on the anniversary of his death for*

*the intentions of his soul and his relatives by a very good Priest friend of mine who opened the Mass with the powerful invocation to God - 'Oh God, if thou shouldst mark our guilt, who could ever stand before you ?' That Mass gave me tears of joy. I felt pure joy in the core of me radiating into my bones and flesh leaving me trembling all over. I knew my husband had ascended from my mind and thoughts that his soul was earthbound. I felt so happy for him and for the first time I felt free from pain and loss".*

**Ninth incident:**

Rachel was 34 years old and this occurred in her bedroom at a London hotel.

*Waking slowly one night she "entered into a different, altered state of awareness of myself inside myself in the region of my head. The first thing I recognised was that there was a tall being of white light at my right hand side guiding me in walking towards the centre of my own self... I then became aware of 360 degree inward sight. It was a most extraordinary experience. It lasted a while and confirmed that I was seeing inside me, not outside ... As I continued with the guide behind me, we came to a faceted obelisk metal structure right in the centre of me ... he encouraged me to take steps to approach the structure. As I took a few steps forward I became aware that the structure was 'all powerful' ! I was quite stunned as I contemplated this and felt that it was communicating to me that it was the power that created the planets and systems of the universe. I was quite amazed. It called me to approach it and with the awareness of what it was, I started to think that I could share its power. I felt what it was like to create a planet and to reverse it into non-existence. I was awed at the thought that this was inside me and to approach and merge would erase me as I knew myself in the outside identity of my experience of my own life. I was unable to move forward and share the power of the structure and, as I decided this, veils started to fall. First one, then another. I regretted not merging with the structure and felt the desire to be at one with it and felt my deep regret and urged the white being to allow me another chance.*

*The veils lifted. I took two steps forward and again felt the power, the greatness that again overwhelmed me and I could not go further. 'God' I acknowledged. 'Yes' was the most subliminal response. The veils fell again, and this time I was very sorry I had not been able to go forward. I pleaded again for a chance to go forward. I was denied but at my urgent insistence, compassion again let me try. Even before the last veil was lifted I knew I could not of my own strength approach God. I accepted. I was sad. The white figure next to me of a shaft of light, said I was not ready.*

*I re-entered my awareness of the room I was in and had full recall of what had just taken place. God was with-in me ! I saw. I knew and experienced inward sight with no question of a doubt ! I had not even the imagination to have created such an experience or dream. I was awake. I was exhilarated ! Thrilled, excited and very happy".*

**Rachel's reaction:**

*"I was sad with myself that I was not strong enough to go forward and merge as I thought would have happened if I had stepped forward. I had been invited to do something and I could not. I wanted to, but I could not. I did not have the fearlessness. That was what stopped me in my tracks. I felt sad at myself but not in a reprimanding way. It could not be helped. I simply was not ready and there was no punishment*

*attached. I have since been advised, in 1998, by a person who I consider to be very spiritual with whom I shared the experience, that if such an experience should ever happen again, I can equip myself with the precursor of whatever is to follow by saying, 'For the good of all Mankind only'.*

#### **Tenth incident:**

*This occurred in 1990 in Rachel's Cincinnati apartment just before dinner when "I felt a presence over at the window. It was unavoidable. It was felt and I could shake the feeling had I wanted to. That was an option ... I just felt like the presence would go away if I chose ... I got the feeling that it was in a large grey orb. I have since discovered that the reason I felt this was that the grey orb was a veil to the presence's intense light that would otherwise harm me to see into it because it is so bright. I am comfortable with that explanation that came to me some years after the event.*

*When I went over to the window, the presence said I should take off my shoes as I was standing on holy ground. The ground referred to was the ground immediately in front of the presence and not the ground of the apartment as such. The presence said I should pray ... as I prayed ... the presence said to me in a stunning thought - I should pray for Judas - the Judas that had betrayed Christ. I was stunned. The presence did not feel to me to be unholy. On the contrary. The thought of doing such a thing went far against all I had been taught. The presence gently said that what was wrong in the world is that Judas is still not prayed for or forgiven by us, mankind.*

*I felt a huge excitement ... the presence asked me to get a pen and paper and write down a prayer. I was to give this prayer to the priest. That was the very hard part. The prayer was dynamic in terms of everything I had ever conceived of in religion - but to pass it on, that was really very hard. I had not written it. How could I explain any of this? I was in conflict. I did not want to put myself into any question. I did not want to have to do what was asked of me. As I wrote the prayer down I was thrilled. It felt like a huge holy revelation. I was so very excited and happy and I felt very humble and amazed. The presence left as these feelings took over ... There was just excitement, thrill and responsibility to pass on the prayer".*

Rachel advised me that she had gone to a particular, senior Catholic priest and told him of the message she received. She did not want any publicity or to have to follow through with any other action as she was afraid of the power of the message. She felt herself unworthy of having been the recipient. He mentioned a priest who had likewise received a message from God and had been ostracised from the Church for some time before being re-accepted into the faith. The priest did reassure her that he believed this message to be a spiritual one. Rachel never followed up on this incident.

#### **Eleventh incident:**

This occurred within the year before Rachel started psychotherapy.

*"When this happened I was at the height of my career and the depth of despair. I felt like I had nothing. Yes, I had the material comforts and security but love was missing and I felt awful ... Feeling filled with poverty, I stripped down and got down on my knees. I started to pray. Look at me I pleaded. I have nothing and I am so sad. It was*



*in this state of prayer that I felt a presence come to me and standing above me said to me ... what do you want ? The question was not audible nor the presence visible. It was felt ... The thought came to me. It was like telepathic conversation ... I answered that I did not know and that I wanted to be helped out of my sorrow and loneliness. The thoughts came back to me in the form of instruction. I was crying my heart out ... the thoughts said I should get some wine and make a sign of a cross on both entry and exit points over all the doors in my apartment. I did not know why but it came to me that from that moment on my apartment would be blessed and no-one would come or go who was not screened by this watching presence. I obeyed. As I did this I was relieved because it felt like something constructive. It felt like I was being saved from a terrible fate as I recalled that the ancient Israelites had to put lamb's blood over the entrance of their homes to guard against being killed when the angels of death flew over their homes".*

### **Twelfth incident:**

This is the event that occurred in my consulting room in February 1998. Rachel had, however, experienced these images on many other occasions before the event in my room. A summary is provided here to remind the reader of the event. Rachel had attended a Reiki course in February 1998. In the next session she connected very powerfully with the images. She was sitting talking to me about the Reiki course and making her usual good eye contact. Suddenly she exclaimed, looked slightly to my left and stated that there were little people standing next to me. Her eyes were absolutely focused and she was animated and excited. Her whole body was alert. She described seeing the silhouettes of people who were grey in the middle but had the colourful lights of their chakras around them. One was a man, another a child who was "*peering ... innocent ... so sweet*". She stated that they were very closely gathered around me and, at one stage, one was kneeling down right next to me looking at me. Rachel was utterly fascinated by these images who were not frightening her at all. She advised me that if she tried to bring the images closer they started to disappear but remained strong if she simply looked at them. After a while, she described how she felt the images were coming from inside her and being projected out. If she reached out a hand to touch them they were insubstantial yet she could see them as clearly as she could see me. She concentrated, reached her hand out, staring intently past me and then as she brought her hand closer towards herself she felt the images were from "*inside*". These images were there for the whole session.

### **DISCUSSION:**

As indicated, the primary caregiver's role is of paramount importance as the first person interacting with the infant (Winnicott, 1963). The dominant, unconfirming mother can result in the child becoming overly dependent, submissive and passive (Cameron, 1947). However, it is not only the mother that may negatively affect psychological development but the whole context in which the individual is raised and interacts. The total "family situation may impede rather than facilitate the child's capacity to participate in a real shared world, as self-with-other" (Laing, 1969, p. 205). This is recognised by many authors. For example, Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1980, as cited in Friedman, 1985) stress the importance of the family in that "the long term legacies of parental accountability are inescapably weighty" (p. 110). Cameron (1947) states that

what is learned in relating with the mother and family at home is generalised into the world as social techniques and this is clear in Rachel's whole manner of inter-relating with her world.

The effects of both the mother and family dynamics are very apparent in Rachel's family where the manner of relating was faulty and often bizarre and violent. As mentioned, I likened Rachel's parents to a pair of scissors with her father providing the blunt edge against which her mother physically and emotionally cut and hacked. Rachel intuitively became passive to avoid the cuts and this approach was reinforced as she grew older and witnessed the terrible damage her older sister suffered by trying to fight the scissor blades. The younger, favoured sister was treated more gently as the mother's anger diluted and the son fared best. All, however, were negatively affected and the whole family were unable to function adequately in relationship.

The damage Rachel suffered in her early years left her feeling fragmented and lost with no sense of a cohesive self or boundaries. The fragmented self results in a lack of experiencing oneself as a separate individual with subjectivity. With no understanding of symbolism, life events are experienced as concrete, literal and real even if they are meant symbolically. There is no experience of thoughts or feelings being one's own and little possibility of interpreting within a broad range of meanings. There is no sense of shared experience and high anxiety is present due to the threat of annihilation. Laing (1969) terms this 'ontological insecurity' which occurs in a situation where the False Self, instead of the True Self, becomes confirmed.

When the facade is the only aspect of the self being confirmed, the person is not met in an I-Thou manner. If the I-Thou relationship is severely disrupted, the infant/child's self is never adequately confirmed and, thus, forever seeks confirmation from others. As the confirmation is only meeting the facade, the individual dwells in a never-ending cycle of inauthentic meeting and false confirmation. This exacerbates the sense of isolation, of being different and out of step in the shared world. The sense of being fragmented is highlighted by interactions with others which increases the need to withdraw and strengthen the facade even more.

So, as stated, relatedness to other people has a radically different significance and function for the fragmented or psychotic person because he is not secure within himself or his world (Laing, 1969). Preservation of the self against a threatening world is the major priority. Laing views psychosis as sometimes being "the sudden removal of the veil of the False Self" (p. 106) which has been maintaining an outward normality for years. This implies that the inner core would then be revealed. Exposure to the real world without the facade for protection would be perceived as too threatening. So, an alternative reality must be created immediately and psychosis develops. Thus, one must look at the meaning and sense of the hallucinations and delusions. What function are they performing? They are there to protect and are manifestations of the person's inner feelings, desires, wishes, dreams and needs. One must discover in what way they are true reflections of needs rather than viewing them as absurd. The psychotic's world is as real to him as any other person's world. However, others do not share and understand the psychotic's world. The psychotic fragmentation results in problematic perception and meaning for the individual in his whole world of relating (Friedman,

1985). His reality is not in a shared world which increases the sense of isolation. This was true for Rachel.

Rachel's need to create her own world where she was viewed as special and protected started at an early age. This is indicated by her retrospective interpretation of her first year of life where she describes having her own language. In this first awareness of herself as different from others, Rachel was already experiencing the world of relationships as negative. Her mother did not understand her and was perceived as derisive and negating when she "*laughed*" at Rachel's efforts to talk. There is no sense of shared connecting with a mother who might have been laughing with delight at her baby's first attempt at speech. There is the first sign of guidance from a presence outside her which advised her that she was not meant to communicate in her own language and must accept that she would forget the language and adapt to the world she lived in. This was the start of her world of isolation. Her sense of not being heard or understood was exacerbated by the fact that she believed her parents could not recognise that she was not a baby but someone who was more intellectually developed and had powers that were unusual in infants.

The sense of estrangement and isolation is highlighted in her words "*not once did the awareness of those around me look deeper at the deeper significance of my effort*". That her mother expressed joy in her efforts to master language and her body, for example with the rattle, made her feel hopeless. This signifies that she felt that only the superficial facade of the physical movements was being recognised and not the depth within. The inability to retain recall of that language and that special world was perceived as a loss which caused sorrow and despair. There was even a desire for death rather than being denied the ability to enlighten people fully. The fact that she feels she was only understood by the spirit council and only in their language already signifies the sense of being different and not understood in her being-in-the-world. She felt ignored and not recognised which was highly frustrating. There is a strong sense of betrayal and anger about the lack of understanding and recognition of her special qualities from the human world. This was added to by a sense of betrayal from the "*spirit council*" who would not allow her to retain her language. However, there is a sense of love from the Spirit Council too which is the start of many instances where she is loved in the altered reality in a way she is not in the real world. Feeling that she had been born into an "*unaware world*" suggests the start of the despair of having to live in a world where she would not be understood and accepted for who she really was. This is highlighted by her sense of being special which was then removed leaving her in a state of isolation.

Some developmental thinkers, including object relations theorists, may interpret this as a sign of Rachel struggling to relinquish a sense of omnipotence. From their stance, that would be a viable explanation. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, my sense of her writing of this incident was that it was a reconstruction of a vaguely recalled memory. She subsequently may have attached deeper meaning to this incident and it may be the first signs of her psychosis.

In the second incident Rachel's mother came to her rescue and was clearly concerned about her daughter. However, this did not reassure Rachel. The fact that her mother

had witnessed that her sister had not hit her created anxiety that there was no-one who could protect her. This would have been especially anxiety-provoking as her parents would not have been able to protect her against something they did not believe in, even if she had been able to describe it then, as she can now. The sense of isolation is powerful in this description especially as the presence here was threatening and damaging.

In contrast to my findings, Jaspers (1963) states that psychosis is often "un-understandable" and that delusions "remain largely incomprehensible, unreal and beyond our understanding" (p. 98). Phenomenology also disagrees with that viewpoint and states that the value of any experience lies in the meaning it has for the patient and his lived reality. In my experience, hallucinations and delusions have always been grounded in the reality of the patient's lived experience. When healthy contact is denied and the self is not met, the individual seeks to create a reality in which basic needs will be met (Eigen, 1993). I agree with Eigen who states, there is a "kernel of truth" (p. 9) in psychosis. It is not simply a matter of a mind gone haywire but an attempt to alter a reality that exists. The meaning for the individual is bound up with his experiences but the altered reality presents in an exaggerated form. As Schwartz (1997) states, the meanings that emerge in psychotic states are more "forceful, explicit and graphic" (p. 180). The expanded horizon and explicit meaning makes the psychotic's world more unmanageable and complex. When there are an overwhelming number of possibilities and experiences available, there is a need to reduce this complexity. Thus, the individual will automatically select a particular, relevant meaning which is conditioned by his past beliefs and experiences. The aim is to have control over frightening and chaotic experiencing. This helps provide and heal the lack of whatever has been missing in the patient's past experience. This is still not, however, shared by others and the individual remains disconnected and isolated.

Rachel had the feeling of being different and isolated in a world where she perceived her parents as being unavailable and unable to protect her. She began to create a reality that reflected her inner fears and met her need to be protected and special. The vulnerability and disconfirmation is again highlighted in Rachel's description of the third incident. Rachel was eight years old and had been given a severe beating from her mother shortly before the incident - it felt as "*if something broke inside*". In the midst of the terror of the aliens' appearance, the white light (angel) appeared to comfort her. This was followed immediately by her father's image appearing in the passage. Creating the angel and father image fulfilled a powerful need for protection at a time that was terrifying and out of control for her. His appearance also served the function of dispelling her images as she did not experience them again. Rachel was thus creating what she needed and desired, that is, a father who did protect her from harm and danger. This was not what occurred in the reality of her daily life where his absence resulted in a failure to prevent her mother's beatings and emotional abuse. Her need was such that, in the face of his denial that he had been there, she simply refuted his words. For her, he had been there. Her parents' disbelief about the incident and particularly the scratch on the floor left her feeling more disconfirmed and confused. The scratch was there to be seen and yet it was still denied which resulted in her withdrawing from sharing these experiences. Although her younger sister had witnessed part of this incident, I am not certain if she told Rachel that she had. This

would have confirmed Rachel's experience and reduced the sense that no-one ever believed her.

When her mother wanted her to "wean" herself off me in psychotherapy, Rachel recalled this incident. I wondered whether the person who was killed in the incident could have been her psychological and emotional self. When her mother beat and tried to throttle her like that, it must have felt that physical death was a possibility too. Her father had not been able to save her then, so she created his image to rescue her in the hallucinations. A similar dynamic connected to emotional death appeared when Rachel's mother suggested she leave psychotherapy. This was the only safe haven she had ever found in the world and her mother was attempting to destroy that too. This would again have broken something inside Rachel. It was highly significant that she drew a boundary and chose psychological life in the face of the punishment she knew she would receive.

The lack of desire to share her strange and terrifying experiences is highlighted in the next incident where Rachel saw the gnomes. Her comments on the fear of disbelief from others, the "terror" that she was the "only one getting to 'see things'" and how "distressing" it was that she could not be comforted, say it all. There are signs of confirmation throughout these incidents which tend to become lost in the general feeling of not being heard and met. Linking with the mother's delight and joy in her as an infant in the first incident, is the acknowledgement and belief from her older sister and her mother's instant reaction of holding and soothing her in the second. There was a reassurance given that something would be done. And this was followed through, when the family moved believing the house may be haunted, although she was only to know that in later years. At the time she did not experience it as a confirmation and concern for her. It is interesting and somewhat incongruent that, despite the strong religious beliefs, Rachel's parents viewed the house as haunted. It does not appear that her parents prayed to solve this problem. If the belief was that the devil was involved, one could speculate that they might have called in a priest to exorcise the devil/spirits. However, as little detail is known, it remains a query and incongruent point.

This is the second mention of Rachel's mother comforting her and she ignores this on both occasions. It is as if her mother's input is experienced as negative or irrelevant from the beginning. For some reason she is not allowed to play a positive role. One has to query whether the inconsistency and abuse was already resulting in Rachel being unable to trust any good treatment from her mother. Or was Rachel, at some level, already becoming the victim and thus unable to absorb good and valuable treatment?

There is a break of nearly six years between major hallucinatory episodes and it was a time where Rachel withdrew and became depressed. Her family and the world continued to abuse her. Her younger sister's sexual abuse by the men visiting the room at the hotel also traumatised her. This was followed by the doctor advising her parents that she needed a dog and again no-one heard and acknowledged the needs of the lost child. It was shortly after this that she experienced the incident where the angel appeared to her. The angel told her she was not "bad" and that God did not want her killed so a small accident had to occur to prevent her participating in the diving

competition. Here again, someone is making her important and special. Not just anyone, but God. There can be no more powerful a message of one's worth from a father figure than the acknowledgement that God will protect one from danger. Her father did not fulfil his role as protector and denied doing so in her alien hallucinations. So, she created God as the Almighty Protector. This met her need to be recognised as well as protected at a time when this was primarily being denied in life. Her father did in fact come to her rescue here by wanting to sue the boy's parents and then agreeing to drop the charges at her and her mother's request. Rachel did not perceive this as protection. Yet again there is some support from her mother when she argues her case with her father thus indicating some measure of belief in what she said. This provided Rachel with little comfort.

Rachel told me about this incident at the start of the second year of psychotherapy. This was the time when her fiancé had abandoned her and she feared I would follow suit because she had lapsed and called him again. She was perceiving herself as a bad girl who had been abandoned just as she had at that earlier stage of her life. Perhaps she was also trying to give me the message that she was not bad as God had not found her so. Or perhaps she was able to share the experience with me because she knew, at some level, I was unlikely to abandon her and she was simply sharing the fear? The first statement seems more likely to be correct.

At times of danger, usually psychological in nature, Rachel would experience the presence of a white light which always signified protection. This is apparent in many of her episodes. She sometimes saw a white light around me. She initially put it down to the intellectual as it was around my head but a psychic had advised I was an "old soul". The implication is that the old souls are wise, having learned from past life experience, and are thus more equipped to heal. I linked it to her possible view of me as the protector of her psyche and soul in some ways. She only ever saw the white light at times of extreme vulnerability both in childhood and in psychotherapy. For example, the first time she saw it around me was just after her lover from work had been killed and she was extremely distressed and in need of comfort. She also mentions in her notes on the experience of psychotherapy that she pictured my hand as being "*white as a light*" reaching down to save her when I stated that I would not abandon her even if she followed the path to suicide.

The sense of a holy presence to protect her from harm continues in the sixth incident. This occurred at a time when Rachel was again very vulnerable. There is a strong sense of protection and safety despite the little creature being vicious and frightening. She knows the angel will protect her. Her creations meant that some part of her was starting to feel safe within despite the lack of external protection. This episode was not mentioned in psychotherapy but discussed as one of the incidents she had written down at the time when making the decision to stay in psychotherapy. Perhaps this indicated her sense of strengthening within despite her mother's attacks. She knew psychotherapy was the right path for her.

The next hallucinations occur a year later just before and during a visit to London with her parents. Rachel had extended her spiritual interests into the realms of yoga and meditation which were providing her with some satisfaction. This incident, combined

with the bicycle accident which prevented her being killed diving and the protection by the angel from the angry little beast, convinced Rachel that God was her protector. She had stopped expecting her father to fulfil that role. Now she has a warning from God, via a scruffy old man whom she wishes to elude. She takes her sister upstairs to safety - ostensibly from the old man but, as it turns out, from death. Here was another sign of her being special and protected despite her faltering belief in God at that stage. This convinced her that God's protection was very real. The build up of the cloud as a warning made her feel guilty as if she were questioning herself about being bad again. The cloud, however, clearly signifies the dust from the bomb blast. It was thus a warning and of value for her. As stated, her sister confirmed in her psychotherapy that there had been an IRA bomb attack on the hotel which her family had narrowly missed being injured by. This incident is particularly why Rachel perceives herself to have psychic powers.

In the eighth incident where Rachel experienced the thoughts and presence about her husband's possible death, she was desperately unhappy in the marriage. She felt there was little chance for escape and here the presence was offering her that opportunity by his death. There is an enormous sense of guilt at desiring release from his abuse. The perception that she had the power to have her husband killed by simply acknowledging to the presence that he could be released, is important. It indicates the enormous power she believed she had. Here she had the power to change the status of victim and take control - over life and death. That power frightened her and the guilt did not go away. She clearly had not resolved those issues and in her first month of psychotherapy she was discussing this. She only told me much later on in the psychotherapy about these incidents when she was once again discussing her late ex-husband's influence.

The ninth incident indicates her sense of being asked to merge with God. This was about two years before she came into psychotherapy and she was suffering extreme despair, was very suicidal and beginning to feel that she was *"falling down a dark abyss"*. Again, there is the sense of being special that God should chose to reveal his presence to her and that she was somehow worthy enough for that whilst life had denied her a sense of worthiness. There was a desperate need to be confirmed at a real level - by anyone. Not only is she allowed to witness the power of creation, she feels she can share this awesome power. To create and reverse planets into *"non-existence"* is an extraordinary power. She was utterly lost and this must have felt like the ultimate in comfort, confirmation and being special - to merge with God and his power. It is possible that her lack of ability to step forward and merge with God meant that she was not yet ready for death. She states that merging would have meant the erasure of her as she was in life. It felt close and possible but part of her chose to live. Rachel discussed this incident at the time when her lover from work mentioned he was leaving the company. She felt abandoned and betrayed. This made her feel she had lost everything she had learned in psychotherapy. This sense of being shattered and lost was similar to the feelings she was having when the original episode occurred. In both cases there was utter despair and the desire for suicide. In the current situation she was able to deal with her emotions slightly more effectively and controlled the suicidal ideation despite feeling like *"lots of broken pieces of glass"*.

Rachel was still in a fragmented space after the ninth incident and it was shortly thereafter that she received the Judas message. This further highlights her specialness. To be the instrument that is chosen to pass on an important message to mankind that she believes will change religion in a spiritual and moral way is powerful. There is a sense of awe, of her being humbled, of her fear that she was not worthy. This confusion would have been further exacerbated when the priest confirmed her yet advised her of the dangers when people have not been believed. Rachel had experienced that disconfirmation and disbelief all her life so to leave the message in the priest's hands and exit the scenario would have been the safest thing to do. To not have her message believed on a large scale would have destroyed her and intuitively she knew that.

During psychotherapy, when Rachel and Pieter were living together, Rachel was also in a fragile state. Pieter's family did not accept her, Pieter was losing control daily and deliberately trying to "break" her. At the same time he was displaying care and affection for Querida. Rachel then had the vision of her mother telling her to get out of the relationship. This is the first time she created her mother as giving advice and guidelines just as she had done while she was alive. However, this time, her mother is protective which had not been Rachel's experience of her. This seemed to be the start of re-connecting with her mother in a positive way.

In the eleventh incident, one can see the depth of despair in Rachel. She felt that she had material comforts and security but was impoverished in the realm of real, connected relationships, emotional security and love. Feeling "filled with poverty" of spirit she prayed for guidance and help. The presence asked her what she wanted and her response was "to be helped out of my sorrow and loneliness". The presence advises her to paint the sign of the cross in wine on both entry and exit points over all the doors in her home. There is an immediate sense of relief and safety that the presence would be watching over her and that constructive action had been taken. Rachel was very suicidal at this stage and this is clearly illustrated by her feeling that she was being saved from a terrible fate like "the ancient Israelites" who "put lamb's blood over the entrance of their homes to guard against being killed when the angels of death flew over their homes".

Although there is the impression that Rachel suffered very few hallucinatory experiences, she was in fact frequently in touch with images and had many minor experiences throughout the years. She also had the period where she wrote copiously as if instructed to by God. The incidents discussed are the most vivid of her experiences.

Overall, some of the incidents are frightening and some soothing. The danger to her psychological self is apparent in these incidents. In most of them she creates a protective, caring presence who fulfils the role her parents never did. The confirmation that she is worthy enough to be protected is thus provided at one level. But, it is then negated by the disbelief that she encounters in most cases when she chooses to share her experiences. She was simply not met in the shared world. The more she was negated and disconfirmed, the stronger the need for a higher power to provide protection. Hence the movement into the religious episodes.



As previously stated, the content of the psychosis provides one with important clues and information as to the nature of the difficulties experienced. This point has been documented by a variety of clinicians from different perspectives. Prouty (1994) has explored the importance of the frequent connections to religion in psychosis. Eigen (1993), writing from the object relations perspective, describes that hallucinations frequently incorporate erotic and religious elements as well as the individual, personal meaning for the patient. Boisen (1962) found that religious psychosis arose out of the requirements of the life situation and were an attempt to meet the stress of a complicated and demanding world.

The result of being raised in a strict Catholic home has been highlighted clearly in the religious tone which permeates Rachel's life and psychotic episodes. The judgment and lack of acceptance of her by the family was later reflected in the church so there was a tremendous need for her to find some acceptance and peace with her religious superiors. The views of Boisen (1962), who himself spent many years in a mental institution, clearly illustrate this point and support my findings on Rachel's religious experiences. Boisen explores the hypothesis that there is a relationship between pathology and religious experience. He views both as arising from a common situation. He states that the only difference is in the outcome. If the experience is gauged to be successful, it is viewed as a religious experience. If not, the judgement passed is insanity. Boisen gives the example of Paul's hallucinatory experience on the road to Damascus which can be equalled in wonder by many psychotic religious experiences. He draws the conclusion that it is finally not a distinction between normal and abnormal but between spiritual defeat or victory. A major distinction is that the accepted religious experience achieves the result of reducing the sense of isolation as the individual is welcomed into the fold. However, the unsuccessful and unaccepted resolutions of hallucinations and delusions are ignored by the church and others which increases the isolation, loneliness and sense of being different and abnormal. In studying psychosis, Boisen found a high percentage of the 173 cases studied to be linked to the patient's sense of an impending world change, of important issues being at stake and exalted ideas of the patient's role. He views religious experience as an attempt to raise the person's values to the cosmic level and to establish and maintain a relationship with those who represent the highest order.

The lack of confirmation from people and the sense of failure in the shared world leaves the individual no option other than to seek that confirmation from elsewhere. The highest order may feel like the only option left. However, this can boomerang if people then further disconfirm the individual by viewing the religious experience as a sign of insanity. Many of Rachel's hallucinations have been in the "mind's eye" which was accepted in the age of St. Augustine (A.D. 354 - 430) as being a revelation from God. Today that belief is usually viewed with scepticism and the tendency is to think pathology as the first option. Rachel believes that her Judas message, her religious writings and her meeting with the God presence are a sign of a higher level of consciousness which may be from within herself or from God and are a sign of further progress in her spiritual growth. Boisen discusses the case of a man called Fox whose religious message was accepted and, with increasing social approval and acceptance, his disturbance lessened. Rachel's message regarding Judas was accepted by the priest she discussed it with and this allowed her to make some sense of the event.

Although she did not feel worthy of receiving the message she felt confirmed as valuable.

The vision of the angel and white protective lights, which she has described to me as angels, in four of the incidents (3rd, 5th, 6th and 9th incidents) had powerful meaning for Rachel. In the third incident she was experiencing herself as in extreme danger from the violent men who were murdering someone in her room. The appearance of the white light which turned into an angel helped soothe and calm her a little. Likewise the golden man/angel appeared to warn her of the dangers of the diving competition and the white light protected her from the creature who wanted to attack her. The final white light/angel presence helped her connect to God. These incidents all signify that someone cared enough to protect her from harm which meant that she was worthy. As discussed, this was clearly her desire and Rachel views this now as a manifestation of that need for protection.

Rachel perceived that she was not valued, loved enough or understood so, in the awful loneliness of that space, she fulfilled those requirements by being rescued and protected by her father, God and the angels. Her father is a particularly important issue for Rachel as he failed to prevent any of the emotional and physical abuse by her mother and was thus experienced as participatory in the process. This is frequently felt as a worse betrayal than the abuser - as an adult she could understand her mother's behaviour as a result of her own background and life experience but that her father could comply and ally with that is extremely difficult. In many senses the father figure is the one who should be able to protect the children and her father's absence meant there was no-one attempting to stop the violence. Her father only raised his hand to her once. He pretended to hit her hard and then whispered that she should cry. This was the only sense of protection from him. If he had not smacked her, her mother would have. And it would have been far more severe. To gain protection, Rachel had nowhere else to turn except her mind.

Thus, it can be seen that Rachel's religious hallucinations and delusions of influence and/or grandeur are closely linked to solving her problems within both the family and religious arenas. Since the hallucinatory experience with the little people in my consulting room, she believes that a higher level of consciousness, whether it be oneself or God, exists. Recently, Rachel has begun to connect with her spiritual life in a calmer and deeper manner. Having fought the judgmental attitude of Catholicism all her life, she is finally connecting with a God that is kind, accepting and confirming. This has been reinforced by her reading Walsch (1995) who portrays a gentler picture of God and his intentions than she was ever taught.

Prouty (1994) states that many psychotic patients are too regressed and socially isolated to be able to communicate in any effective way. It is true that many psychotic, schizophrenic and fragmented people have difficulty in describing their experiences. However, Rachel is articulate and intelligent and well able to vocalise what she is experiencing. This has contributed to the therapist being able to enter her world and understand the meaning these experiences have for her.

The narrowing of experience in psychosis has been discussed. When the focus is on the current meaning and experiencing, the broader perspective is lost. The intense

focus in Rachel's hallucinations is highlighted in the writings of many clinicians. Eigen (1993) accurately describes hallucinations as bringing "experience to a standstill, and one small portion of experience is heightened to an extreme degree. The subject is hypersensitive in a highly selective way. Everything seems to gain its meaning from this small portion of experience" (p.125). Thus, the emotional quality involved in hallucinations and delusions results in a lowering of the critical ability to judge. Sass (1994) describes the world of psychosis as "a place not of darkness but of relentless light, which is the natural metaphor for conscious awareness" (p. 94). The heightened focus increases the intensity of the experience and narrows the field of experiencing. Boss (1975, as cited in Kruger, 1988) correctly views the patient's world as thus becoming narrowed and constricted in an attempt to make sense and control his way of being.

I agree with Gendlin's (1964) view that the interaction process between the feeling and the event is limited or blocked. When there has been little sense of self developed in childhood, it further exacerbates the inability to connect in a relationship as a meaningful I. If events are perceived as literal and there is little felt-sense, then experiencing is no longer a process. The individual exists in an isolated and withdrawn world in which there are few links to a reality of being-in-the-world. Rachel's world is aptly described by Gendlin when he states that it is not the content of the individual's experiencing that is psychotic but the "structure-bound manner of experiencing, the absence or literal rigidity of felt experiencing and interaction" (p. 143).

Thus, Rachel had to adapt and change her relationship to the world as there was little ability to understand interpersonal and social rules. This factor had been exacerbated by the family's closed world and lack of healthy interaction. There is also an inability to project oneself into the future or have a sense of the past. Gendlin states that in hallucinations one does not interpret and feel the meaning of a past event in the present. The patient tends to remain in the past which distances him from his current experiencing of life isolating him from his current day-to-day functioning. This leads to a rigidity or lack of felt functioning in the present which results in inappropriate, literal or concrete interpretations and the loss of a sense of self, further contributing to the sense of isolation experienced. This is precisely what occurred with Rachel's experiencing. May (1958) adds that the disturbed person never develops beyond the limited and restricted forms of experiencing in childhood. In later years, the person tends to perceive others and experience life with the same restricted and distorted views. It requires a strong desire to alter those restrictions and views and to learn a more practical and functional way of relating in the world. Fortunately, Rachel has that desire.

Rachel did not have a clear sense of self or the skills required to interpret and behave appropriately in social situations. However, her determination to function better in life is powerfully strong. The severe difficulties with boundaries leaves no possibility of distancing and creating boundaries as fragmented people (and psychotics) are "obsessed by the compactness of their being" (Corin & Lauzon, 1994, p. 44). Rachel does evidence many signs of concrete thought and interpretation where meanings are perception-bound and there is very little ability to see the broader context. She has sometimes taken suggestions and comments literally and acted on them. For example,

when she stopped Pieter in a fight to ask him to describe what he was feeling with the intention of then describing her own feelings. She has also often reminded me of words I have used which she has completely literalised. This indicates the structure-bound functioning in her world and the narrowing of experience and focus on the self. This is clearly illustrated in Rachel's inability to see another's perspective or to put herself in someone's else's shoes. For example, there was usually complete surprise when I ever pointed out a different view of someone's behaviour. Her comment was often "*oh I didn't know that you could ...*" feel or behave that way. Despite this, her capacity to inter-relate is there.

The patient's perceptions are a reality for him as they are experienced and lived as real. However, Prouty (1994) speaks of the patient's inability to own the hallucination as 'mine' as it is experienced outside the body. Thus, although experience as a whole is perceived as real, there is a sense of a mind-body split occurring at times. Certainly, many of Rachel's experiences were felt as separate to her. This is most clear in the twelfth episode with the 'little people'. Prouty describes hallucination as a process which moves from a rigid and alienating self-experience to "a clear, alive, immediate and integrated" (p. 78) self-experience. It can be seen how Rachel followed the four stages of hallucinatory experiencing : 1) the self-indicating stage where the therapist focuses on the image itself to make it more accessible to both the therapist and patient; 2) the self-emotive stage in which the focus is on the image and the feelings required to maintain a unity of process (Gendlin, 1964); 3) the self-processing stage where there is a shift from the symbolic image to experiencing the feelings; 4) the final stage where the feeling "shifts from the hallucinatory image to the person's own sense of self, and is integrated, owned and experienced as self" (p. 81). In this way the hallucination is connected to the self and integrated so that it gradually becomes part of the felt-sense of experiencing. This is what occurred with Rachel as she moved through the process from experiencing her visual hallucinations as external events to understanding that she had created them within to satisfy her needs. She could finally own them as 'mine'. However, she has still not shifted her views on the Judas message and the inspiration for her religious writings. Rachel is convinced that this is a higher level of consciousness.

David (1990) discusses how insight consists of three different phenomena. The "recognition that one has a mental illness, compliance with treatment, and the ability to relabel unusual mental events (delusions and hallucinations) as pathological" (p. 798). Whilst I agree with the process, I do not believe that one needs to label the events as mental illness or pathological. In the light of the above discussion of Rachel's realisation that the images came from within her, we still do not talk of them as pathological or psychotic. They were understandable ways of reducing the chaos, her sense of worthlessness and isolation. In that way they were valid and helpful in retaining her sense of value and sanity. If the world was not confirming her, who would ? Only herself in an altered reality. She was able to recognise that she had life problems that were making her dysfunctional but we did not label that as sick. In fact, it was my respect in not telling her she was mentally ill and pathological that allowed her the space to connect deeply and come to her own insight about the hallucinations.

I believe that treating her as damaged due to her life experiences and her own

vulnerabilities is a better approach. She occasionally stated that the fact that I did not label her, as she knew traditional diagnosis would do, was the ultimate respect. Basically I bracketed any conceived ideas about her pathological experiences and simply went into her world of experiencing and understanding. I do not believe this has led to any delusion or conclusion that she was or is a totally integrated and balanced human being. She knows she was not functioning or relating in the world as she wanted to and has gained good insight into her damage. She also realises she has a long way to go. As long as she is not in danger from the process or a medical condition (like TLE), there seems little point in disrupting what is slowly becoming a more stable world. It is enough that she can understand the phenomena better for herself.

I also do not agree with Jaspers' belief (1913, as cited in David, 1990) that psychotics can only gain transient insight. For insight into an hallucination to occur, there must be the direct felt-meaning of the experience plus the description, where the patient can understand that the perception is false (David, 1990). This has occurred with Rachel. The twelfth major incident which occurred in my consulting room proved to be the turning point in the hallucinatory experiences. Rachel recognised her images were figments of her own creation at times of need and she still retains that insight.

Her vision during her second day on the Reikie course indicates that, despite her strength and growth, Rachel is still very vulnerable. She is only starting to consolidate a stronger sense of self with boundaries and I believe that any forays into the realms of altered experience would be negative for her. One has to have a strong knowledge and sense of self before these areas can be entered with safety. Personally I do not believe Rachel should ever explore those routes.

#### HALLUCINATIONS:

From a clinical perspective, Rachel appears to have experienced both true and pseudo-visual hallucinations. She has also felt presences without a visual appearance. For example, the presence of the spirit council was not a visual hallucination in traditional terms. She describes it as a mental presence behind her level of consciousness. On most of the occasions that a presence was felt, it was not visible. The presence in the eleventh incident spoke to her but the question was not audible nor the presence visible. However, many of the hallucinatory events did include visual presentations. For example, the gnomes, the aliens, the white lights and angels, the Yogi levitating, the purple creature and the many visitations of the little people.

Jaspers (1963) states that there can be a transition where pseudo-hallucinations can change into true hallucinations or a state where they combine. He believes that pseudo-hallucinations cannot be deliberately altered or evoked and may manifest in the form of pale, vague images. Rachel has experienced the moving, opaque figures just as Jaspers states and Lang (1938) described in his writings on his own hallucinations. Lang (1939) describes that, due to the hallucination being out of control of the individual, the individual then perceives the hallucination as an external phenomenon. Rachel was able to shift from that belief to the recognition that the images were being projected from inside. As with Lang, Rachel's hallucinations appeared without warning even as a child. Despert (as cited in Sedman, 1966a) also found pseudo-hallucinations to be present in a few children with emotional conflicts.

Noyes (1963) views hallucinations as being projections onto the outer world of the individual's psychological difficulties. The hallucination thus provides valuable clues as to what those difficulties are. Rachel felt that her hallucinations were a projection of her own needs and has come to understand their value in providing solutions to those difficulties. As stated, the images faded when she got close and attempted to touch them. Lang (1939) experienced his hallucinations as already organised phenomena and is sceptical of them being viewed as a result of projection. Maybe it is simply that they have no concrete substance rather than that she was actually projecting them. But the hallucinations lost their power when she touched them. So, she has been able to recognise that the little people and the other visible phenomena in these events were a product of her mind. She realises that she experienced them through the mind's eye and that she was not perceiving real objects (Sedman, 1966a).

Many psychotics view the world in a literal and concrete manner as Rachel has done. Sass (1994), discusses Schreber's Memoirs of my Nervous Illness, a case which Freud made famous. In exploring Schreber's psychotic states, Prouty argues that this literal and concrete manner is lacking in his case. Schreber provides an interesting example of how his own hallucinations are subjectively created in relation to him. Schreber describes how "human shapes were set down for a short time by divine miracles only to be dissolved again or vanish" (Sass, 1994, p. 85). So, they were not always experienced as concrete and real in an objective, external world but rather as "fleeting-improvised-men" (p. 85). Schreber thought that "I was faced not by real people but by miraculously created puppets" (p. 86). Until Rachel understood that the hallucinations were her own creation, she had a similar sense of the images of the little people.

As stated, many approaches to psychology, including phenomenology and dialogal therapy, believe that psychotic episodes always have a meaning for the individual. Sedman (1966a) found that most pseudo-hallucinations were psychologically meaningful for patients. They reflected the patient's emotional climate, past experiences and future wishes. In this way they were closely related to the self in both form and content and were perceived in colour, full detail and fully projected in three-dimensional form. Sedman's patients required a conscious act to make the distinction between reality and the images and it made little difference whether they were fully conscious or in a half-waking state. Lang (1939) disagrees stating that his hallucinations often lacked any connection to the current experiencing of the situation. These findings support Sedman as it is possible to find deep meaning in Rachel's episodes. She has stated, however, that she finds it difficult to understand the significance of the episode in my consulting room as the little people were not psychologically significant for her. Interestingly, that episode was the one which allowed her to realise that she was creating an altered reality and that all the other visions had not been objective as in a shared reality.

Jaspers (1963) states that "observing an object brings the visual pseudo-hallucination to an end" (p. 141). Visions, such as pseudo-hallucinations seem to vanish if people move forward to touch the images. As stated, this occurred with Rachel when she reached out to touch the images in my consulting room. Rachel understands that her hallucinations are not visible or measurable in a three-dimensional world and perceives them as having more reality in the sense of a powerful energy field. For example, the knowledge that she would lose the images if she blinked assisted her in realising they

could not be solid and real.

In June 1999, Rachel and Pieter went to see a three-dimensional film whilst in Disney World. In order to achieve this effect, special glasses are worn. She describes the wonder of a butterfly when it *"jumped off the flat screen and flew up through the audience to flutter right in front of me at a distance of about one foot away from my face" !* It suddenly struck Rachel that this was *"exactly how I had experienced my visions ... I could see the butterfly. It was there ! But it wasn't ! The impact of the similarity was like a shock ... here it was ... something clicked, connected ... It is a happy feeling - like finding evidence or something special to uncover"*. Rachel was very excited and told me this on her return to South Africa. She queried whether the depth of her visions had happened *"because somewhere in my brain circuitry there is a momentary connection that allows me to see a third dimension"*. She describes the experience further: *"You see what you see. It is there ! But you know it is not ... It alters perspective. It changes emotions and can be very powerfully felt but when you reach out to touch it, or face that it is there ... it is not tangible but you still see it. Just reaching out to accept it and touch it to discover it has no physical substance is awesome - scary and very challenging. How can you see something that is not there ? Explain that and 'that' is how my visions are ... they are there when I see them, but not in any sense of any reality that is tangible, explainable or logical in terms of any physical reality. That is and has been the huge pain and sorrow and aloneness for me"*. This is a vivid description of how the visual hallucinations were experienced for Rachel.

Rachel's voices were not true auditory hallucinations. The voices were not localised outside nor heard as a separate voice in physical space. She is aware that they were not real but experienced them as a process occurring from the higher level of consciousness. At the time of the Judas message and her religious writings, she believed the words came from God - that they were being channelled through her. Many of the conversations she had with the presences and angels were experienced as thoughts in her head. It felt as if she were not owning her own thoughts which removed any sense of control and mastery. Jaspers (1963) states that this can be experienced as being in the power of some external control or force that suddenly provides one with intrusive thoughts or messages. Gruhle (as cited in Jaspers, 1963) describes the thoughts as coming *"like a gift and I do not dare to impart them as if they were my own"* (p. 123). This description exactly fits Rachel's sense of the voices. Today, she is not certain whether the voices are a result of a higher level of consciousness within herself or God. And she is not actively seeking an answer to that question. She simply accepts that it may be either reality.

#### DELUSIONS:

Delusional perception describes events that are normal to most people but interpreted by the psychotic as having a special significance for him. The following clinicians describe the value of delusional belief which supports my findings. Sass (1994) states that delusions are not always in the shared world but *"rather, it is in the mind's-eye world where emotions, other people, and even the patient's own body exist as purely subjective phenomena, figments of an abstract imagination"* (p. 92). The patient is always the centre of his delusion. When someone experiences an hallucination there is a powerful need for that experience to be grounded in reality. Delusions are, thus,

often associated with hallucinations in an attempt to support and make sense of that reality. Thus, delusions can be viewed as simply an exaggeration of the normal beliefs people use to bolster their perceptions of themselves and reality (Noyes, 1963). When there is a large discrepancy between a person's experiencing and what appears to be the norm, the need to make the experience congruent with the personality becomes a high priority. So, the patient's reality is not necessarily a disorganisation but a "choice that has a superior claim to reality" (Kaplan, 1964, p. x). The above is clearly demonstrated by Rachel's absolute belief in her hallucinations until she understood the significance and meaning they had provided for her at critically dangerous times. Some people would still call her delusional in her uncertainty about whether she can channel thoughts from God or a higher level of consciousness. As long as this does not lead her further down paths of altered reality, it is not an issue for her or me.

#### DISSOCIATION:

Dissociation of the self from the body is normal under severely stressful situations. Feelings of estrangement and derealisation (Laing, 1969) are common. The self is usually alert and may be thinking with "exceptional lucidity" (p. 83). Dissociation usually occurs without the person's control and is an instinctively protective response. There is an ability to develop a schizoid state where the person becomes a mental observer, looking on in a detached and impassive manner at what is being done to the body. There is a powerful need to separate mind and body at that stage of helplessness. The dissociation is a way in which to cut oneself off and reduce the strength of the emotions.

Rachel's dissociation, when Pieter was beating her when she was eight months pregnant, was understandable. No-one had ever protected her and she had learned to be passive in the hope that this would reduce the intensity of the beatings from her mother. Having never protected herself from the abuse in the past she did not know how to do that, despite being pregnant. So, instinct made her curl into the foetal position to protect the baby and she sought help in her head as she had always done. She had a powerful image of me which she "*clung*" onto for life and sanity, again creating a protector that would help her through the nightmare. I felt the dissociation to be an improvement in Rachel's manner of dealing with life. She could so easily have slipped into psychosis at this extreme time of danger for herself and her unborn child. Her strength allowed her to contain the terror in a less defensive way. This incident was followed a few days later by the presence of her mother, again in a situation in which she needed protection. I wondered if this ability to create her mother, instead of her father, was happening because her mother was dead. Or had she learned from my support that the mother figure could protect? Certainly she needed to heal the relationship with her mother. She had wanted protection from her father but the ultimate choice would have been that she did not need protection from her mother. I felt this to be critical and maybe the vision and presence were the first steps in the right direction. Rachel then started having dreams where she connected with some of the good qualities her mother had. The healing process is definitely in motion.

The question of how to deal with Rachel's psychotic experiences was a pertinent one for me. As stated, I never labelled her or the experience but simply entered her world with my senses attuned to what it meant for her. I was open and very curious! Prouty



(1994) views hallucination as a "fragment of the self" and the "successful treatment of hallucinations is a restoration of the self" in order to restore a "communicative human self that was lost in madness ..." (p. xxii). As I confirmed her, she became less fragmented and it became less important to turn to an altered reality to find that confirmation. As she has begun to feel a sense of worth within, so has she been able to remain in the lived, shared world more and more. Thus, I agree with Jaspers (1963) when he says that hallucinations and delusions can be sources of human potential and possibility, not only deviations from the norm.

The above clearly indicates that man can only be understood in terms of his whole existence and not merely within the framework that makes a distinction between healthy and sick. Integration occurs if the sane and mad aspects are allowed to integrate and not be kept apart. Thus, as Laing (1969) states, one does not work at increasing defences against the psychosis but rather incorporating the hated and feared aspects of the self. This allows the person to relate to the world in a more balanced way.