
Spiritual Rebirth in Three 19th-Century European Classics Compared to Transpersonal Experiences in *Zeno's Conscience*: A Psychosynthetic Analysis

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Abstract

In the first article of the two interconnected articles, titled "Out-of-time experiences in four iconic 20th-century European modernist novels including *Zeno's Conscience*" (Tóth-Izsó, 2023b) the examination of Kairos experiences transpired through the lens of a psychosynthetic framework. In this second article the most important transpersonal experiences of the characters of *Brothers Karamazov*, *Les Misérables*, and *A Christmas Carol* are briefly presented and interpreted from a psychosynthetic view, by using appropriate quotes. The spiritual experiences presented in this paper clearly show religious aspects and thus can be interpreted as mystical experiences that constitute a broad category of the more inclusive transpersonal experiences. These two share similar characteristics to a certain extent, but also differ in many aspects as we will see in the comparison presented. In the Conclusion, transpersonal experiences of *Zeno*—identified in the first article—are compared with similar experiences of the characters of the three selected classics. This comparison revealed, that while in the case of *Zeno*—the only sporadic—transpersonal events were hidden deeply in the text and had no lasting effect on the life of *Zeno*, in the cases of the three analysed classics these events were markedly conspicuous and had radical life-changing effects on the concerned characters' life.

Keywords: Transpersonal Experiences, Psychosynthesis, Comparative Literary Analyses, 19th-Century European Classics, Spiritual Rebirth

1. Introduction

These two interconnected articles—of which this is the second—pursue multiple objectives (Tóth-Izsó, 2023b). The primary formal objective is to pay tribute to the writer Italo Svevo and his masterpiece *Zeno's Conscience* published a hundred years ago and recognized as the inaugural Italian modernist and psychoanalytical novel. Another objective is to reexamine this novel, along with several others, from a fresh perspective—specifically, the viewpoint of psychosynthesis. An additional aim is to establish the utility of psychosynthetic literary criticism.

The foundational principles of psychosynthesis are expounded in the works of Assagioli (1959, 1966, 1974, 1983, 2012). Concerning psychosynthesis as applied to literary criticism, I have previously published two papers in English (Tóth-Izsó, 2021, 2022a), a book in Hungarian (Tóth-Izsó, 2022b) and an article in Italian (Tóth-Izsó, 2023a).

Transpersonal experiences, integral to psychosynthesis, are, generally infrequent, but profoundly significant episodes of human life throughout human history, contingent on the prevailing social climate (the so-called "zeitgeist"). Literary works offer a rich source of such experiences, and my hypothesis posits that these encounters can be effectively scrutinized through the lens of psychosynthesis. It is also conjectured that novels sharing genre, theme, and era tend to manifest similar transpersonal experiences.

The first article, titled *Out-of-time experiences in four iconic 20th-century European modernist novels including Zeno's Conscience*, after a succinct overview of psychosynthesis identifies and analyzes Zeno's transpersonal experiences from the psychosynthetic perspective, subsequently describing and analyzing analogous experiences in three 20th-century European modernist novels (Joyce's *Ulysses*, Proust's *Time Regained*, and Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*). Finally, the results are compared, and these three novels are also subjected to a brief psychosynthetic analysis, as well.

In this second related article, parallel psychosynthetic analyses of three well-known 19th-century classic masterpieces—Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, Hugo's *Les Misérables*, and Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*—are conducted. A comparison is then made between the findings of these analyses and those of *Zeno's Conscience*, as presented in the first article.

2. Transpersonal experiences in *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Les Misérables*, and *A Christmas Carol*

In this section, three widely known and read European classic masterpieces are studied from the view of transpersonal experiences in the frame of psychosynthesis. These differ from *Zeno's conscience* in genre, topic and time. Accordingly, markedly different results are expected than in the case of *Zeno's conscience*.

2.1. *The Brothers Karamazov*

In this analysis, the four Karamazovs, the father – Fyodor Pavlovich – and the three brothers – Dmitri, Ivan, and Alyosha – are considered subpersonalities within the same "Karamazov psyche" because of their close family links and their mutual interconnectedness. Fyodor Pavlovich is a selfish, repulsive and sensualist man who takes no interest in any of his sons. Dmitri, the irresponsible eldest son, is also a sensualist, a great drinker and carouser, a seducer and duelist, who demands his inheritance from his father. The aloof and rational middle son, Ivan is an intellectually brilliant, disappointed atheist. His mandate is "If there is no God, everything is lawful." Finally, Alyosha, the tender-minded and deeply religious youngest son, is an apprentice of the renowned elder ("*starets*") Zosima at the local Russian Orthodox monastery. He is the main hero of the novel, seeking spiritual development. Father Zosima, clearly a symbol of the *Transpersonal Self*, is a highly appreciated Elder, spiritual advisor, and Alyosha's teacher in the monastery. Fyodor Pavlovich and Dmitri fall into conflict over the money and finally agree that the Elder, Father Zosima, the holy man, could help resolve their quarrel. So Alyosha arranged a meeting between the Karamazov family at the monastery, with Elder Zosima as a mediator. But, as we can see from the following quotation, this meeting suddenly took an unexpected direction (the quote is from Dostoevsky (1992), and the page numbers also relate to this edition):

But the whole scene, which had turned so ugly, was stopped most unexpectedly. The elder suddenly rose from his place. [...] The elder stepped towards Dmitri Fyodorovich and knelt before him, having come close to him. Alyosha thought he had fallen from weakness, but it was something else. Kneeling in front of Dmitri Fyodorovich, the elder bowed down at his feet with a full, distinct, conscious bow and even touched the floor with his forehead. Alyosha was so amazed that he failed to support him as he got to his feet. A weak smile barely glimmered on his lips. 'Forgive me! Forgive me, all of you!' he said, bowing on all sides to his guests. Dmitri Fyodorovich stood stunned for a few moments. Bowing at his feet - what was that? Then suddenly, he cried out: 'Oh, God!' and, covering his face with his hands, rushed from the room. All the other guests flocked after him. (pp. 61-62)

Everyone was confused by the meaning of this mysterious act. Father Zosima later explained his shocking enigmatic action to Alyosha in the following way: he knew that Dmitri, deep down, was a good man who would be forced to suffer much before he could be redeemed, and therefore asked for himself, and Dmitri forgiveness. Zosima asked forgiveness for himself, too, since he also felt responsible. I agree with Whitlock (2016), who states that this evasive action becomes the prototype for Zosima's most profound belief: that all are guilty of everyone and everything.

Although the gesture of kneeling and bowing targeted Dmitri, who was momentarily profoundly shocked by that, in the longer term, it had a more significant and longer-lasting spiritual effect on Alyosha. It was a part of the teaching from Zosima to Alyosha, who vaguely felt its great spiritual significance. Despite being shocked and embarrassed, Dmitri did not understand the meaning of this gesture, and because of his rampant temper, he could not profit from it. Father Zosima gave the final and most potent teaching to Alyosha in the form of a dream much later, immediately after the father died. Those many who believed in Father Zosima's powers gathered around the monastery where the Father was about to die, expecting some miracles to happen and hoping the father's body would be preserved. They all, including Alyosha, were bitterly disappointed because they only experienced a rotting corpse instead of miraculous events. Some became angry and questioned Zosima's entire religious life. Some monks, who were jealous of Zosima's high reputation, were secretly malevolent that the father's body started to stink. Very late, Alyosha returns to the monastery and goes to Zosima's cell. He kneels and prays, still troubled by many things, and then hears Father Paissy reading the account of the wedding at Cana in the Gospel of St. John. Because he is exhausted and because of the sweet lull of the father's voice, Alyosha dozes. He dreams of being at the marriage in Cana, along with Christ and the other guests. Zosima appears there and calls Alyosha; he tells him to come forth and join the crowd, reminding him that man should be joyful. The following quotations by Dostoevsky (1992) – describes parts of Alyosha's dream:

What's this? Why are the walls of the room opening out? Ah, yes ... this is the marriage, the wedding feast ... yes, of course. Here are the guests, here the newlyweds, and the festive crowd, and ... where is the wise ruler of the feast? But who is this? Who? Again the room is opening out ... Who is getting up from the big table? What ... ? Is he here, too? Why, he is in the coffin ... But here, too ... He has gotten up, he's seen me, he's coming over ... the little wizened old man with fine wrinkles on his face, joyful and quietly laughing. (pp. 305-306)

Alyosha, on the borderline between dream and ecstasy, to his greatest astonishment, experienced that Father Zosima appeared beside Jesus as if he was still alive and talked to him:

Now there was no coffin anymore, and he was wearing the same clothes as the day before, when he sat with them and visitors gathered around him. His face was all uncovered and his eyes were radiant. [...] 'I, too, my dear, I, too, have been called, called and chosen, 'the quiet voice spoke over him. 'Why are you hiding here, out of sight? Come and join us.' His voice, the elder Zosima's voice ... How could it be anyone else, since he was calling? The elder raised Alyosha a little with his hand, and Alyosha got up from his knees. 'We are rejoicing,' the little wizened man continued, 'we are drinking new wine, the wine of a new and great joy. (p. 306)

Alyosha, already in full ecstasy, was shocked by this unexpected great peak experience, which can be interpreted as part of a descending transpersonal psychosynthesis process after a long period of conscious efforts to reach ascendant psychosynthesis. Alyosha took a look at the dead whose voice a moment ago he heard and that voice was still sounding in his ear. It was clearly a religious mystic ecstasy. Assagioli describes in detail such Kairos experiences in his study *Spiritual Development and Nervous Diseases*, which can provoke lifelike visions: "In some individuals predisposed to it, the "awakening" is accompanied by various types of paranormal psychological manifestations. They have visions, typically of elevated or angelic beings, or they hear voices, or feel compelled to write automatically. The value of the messages received in this way varies significantly from case to case; therefore, it is essential that they are always examined and objectively evaluated" (Assagioli, 1988, p. 102). Other than the resurrected figure of the starez Alyosha could also see Christ himself in his vision. Father Zosima uses for Jesus a widely used archetypic expression: "our Sun" which can be directly and easily interpreted as the Self, the "Inner Christ", an expression used widely in Christian teaching and mysticism. Assagioli describes in detail the unusual forms of behavior caused by the crisis of spiritual awakening and we can easily identify that of Alyosha: "In other cases, the sudden internal illumination produced by the awakening of the soul instead results in an emotional exaltation, expressed in a dramatic and disorderly manner: with shouts, crying, singing, and various motor agitations" (Assagioli, 1988, p. 101). Now, let's see Dostoevsky's description of Alyosha's psycho-spiritual state during his transpersonal peak experience, which is very precise and aligns well with that of psychosynthesis:

Filled with rapture, his soul yearned for freedom, space, and vastness. Over him the heavenly dome, full of quiet, shining stars, hung boundlessly. From the zenith to the horizon the still-dim Milky Way stretched its double strand. Night, fresh and quiet, almost unstirring, enveloped the earth. [...] The silence of the earth seemed to merge with the silence of the heavens, the mystery of the earth touched the mystery of the stars [...] Alyosha stood gazing and suddenly, as if he had been cut down, threw himself to the earth [...] he was kissing it, weeping, sobbing, and watering it with his tears, and he vowed ecstatically to love it. (p. 307)

By this teaching, Father Zosima, representing the *Transpersonal Self*, heightened Alyosha to him. When Alyosha wakes, his eyes are filled with tears of joy. He goes outside and flings himself on the earth, kissing and embracing it. His heart filled with ecstasy over his new knowledge and his new understanding of the joy of life. Assagioli when talking about spiritual psychosynthesis, states that "mystical" in the good and precise religious sense means: union of love with God, a state of spiritual ecstasy accompanied by bliss, self-forgetfulness, and a forgetting of all outer reality and environment" (Assagioli, 1965, p. 207). Assagioli, in accordance with many Christian teachers, emphasizes that "mystical experience is not an end in itself, but from it the subject has to draw the fire, enthusiasm and incentive to come back into the world and serve God and his fellow man" (Assagioli, 1965, p. 207). And this is exactly what Alyosha will do by following Father Zosima's imperative: "Three days later he left the monastery, which was also in accordance with the words of his late elder, who had bidden him to 'sojourn in the world'" (p. 308).

Assagioli furthermore says "There are many ways in which one may have a living contact with the Self, which have no mystical quality at all, taking mystical in the precise sense just mentioned. The dialogue between the spiritual Self and the personality can be unaccompanied by any emotional exaltation; it can be on a clear mental level, in a sense impersonal, *objective*, and therefore unemotional" (Assagioli, 1965, p. 207). This is what happened to Zeno several times. Let's read now one example: "Mine was genuine meditation, one of those rare instants that our miserly life bestows of true, great objectivity when you finally stop believing and feeling yourself a victim" (Svevo, 2001, pp. 335-336). According to the founder of psychosynthesis, it is extremely important in therapy to use as much as possible the subject's own terminology in relation to the whole setting of his beliefs and preferences. He basically draws attention to the needs of the modern way of thinking: it is better to stick to the empirical approach of interpreting transpersonal experiences and the related techniques eliminating every philosophical or religious question. This idea has great importance also in literary analyses when dealing with transpersonal experiences. In the case of the first article's transpersonal experiences we used a neutral approach while in the case of this article, we need to work using Christian terminology since in these novels the protagonists' background and experiences are clearly religious. In the past, in fact, religious experiences were analysed such as strictly religious events, and all other, neutral transpersonal experiences were considered just fantastic and imaginary elements that were born from the author's artistic

inspiration. As we can see, psychosynthesis is a very effective tool to interpret transpersonal experiences in literary pieces exactly for its neutral, extensive and integrating vision.

2.2. *Les Misérables*

Jean Valjean was released from a French prison after serving nineteen years for stealing bread and for several subsequent attempts to escape. When Valjean, exhausted, arrives at the town of Digne, no one is willing to receive him for the night except the warm-hearted bishop of Digne. The bishop provides him shelter and food, but during the night, Valjean sneaks into his room, steals the silverware, and escapes. In front of the holy man's bed, Valjean experiences an unexpected vision where the inner and outer worlds embrace each other, akin to Jung's concept of *Unus Mundus*. (The following quotations are from Hugo (2022), and the page numbers also relate to this edition.):

His whole face was illumined with a vague expression of satisfaction, of hope, and of felicity. It was more than a smile, and almost a radiance. He bore upon his brow the indescribable reflection of a light which was invisible. The soul of the just contemplates in sleep a mysterious heaven. A reflection of that heaven rested on the bishop. It was, at the same time, a luminous transparency, for that heaven was within him. That heaven was his conscience. At the moment when the ray of moonlight superposed itself, so to speak, upon that inward radiance, the sleeping bishop seemed as in a glory. (p. 178)

In contrast with Alyosha, Jean Valjean was absolutely unprepared to meet the Self, to experience numinosity, as Jung puts it, who also draws attention to the following truth: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). In a psychosynthetic interpretation the bishop represents Valjean's Self, while the "mysterious heaven" represents Valjean's superconscious. Concerning the superconscious, Assagioli wrote:

There exists – in addition to those parts of the unconscious which we have called the lower and middle unconscious, including the collective unconscious – another vast realm of our inner being which has been for the most part neglected by the science of psychology, although its nature and its human value are of superior quality. [...] 'superconscious' would be more exact to call 'a higher state of awareness or spiritual consciousness'. This raises the all-important and not often clearly realized difference between 'superconscious' experiences and psychological activities and the spiritual Self. The superconscious precedes consciousness of the Self, because – as we shall see – there are very many people who have had conscious experience of facts or of functions which are generally superconscious: i.e., those that generally do not enter spontaneously into the field of consciousness, but which in some cases make a spontaneous, unexpected, sometimes unwanted irruption into the field of consciousness – parallel to, or in a sense inverse to, the irruption into the field of consciousness of instinctual or emotional drives and forces. (Assagioli, 1965, pp. 197-198)

And, as we can expect it, Jean Valjean did not want or foresee this event that will be the beginning of an encounter that will change his whole life. It was even fearful as he met numinosity via the sleeping bishop. His feelings were similar to those of Alyosha who, seeing Jesus at the marriage of Cana, said to Father Zosima: "I'm afraid ... I don't dare to look, 'whispered Alyosha. 'Do not be afraid of him. Awful is his greatness before us" (p. 306). Although frightened and shocked, but stole the silverware.

From this unwanted mystic state, Valjean had to turn back to "real" life ("Suddenly Jean Valjean replaced his cap on his brow; then stepped rapidly past the bed, without glancing at the Bishop, straight to the cupboard, which he saw near the head; he raised his iron candlestick as though to force the lock; the key was there; he opened it; the first thing which presented itself to him was the basket of silverware; he seized it" (p. 180)), as Assagioli puts it: "Such a blessed state lasts for varying periods, but it is bound to cease. The lower self was only temporally overpowered and stunned, but not killed or transformed. The inflow of spiritual light and love is rhythmical, as is everything in the manifested universe; after a while it diminishes or ceases; the outflow is followed by the ebb" (Assagioli, 1988, p. 103). Valjean though probably he was not even eager to stay in it... He escaped, but gendarmes in town found him suspicious, carrying valuable silverware in his knapsack, arrested him, and took him back to the bishop who was not even surprised and said to Valjean:

I am glad to see you. Well, but how is this? I gave you the candlesticks too, which are of silver like the rest, and for which you can certainly get two hundred francs. Why did you not carry them away with your forks and spoons? Jean Valjean opened his eyes wide, and stared at the venerable bishop with an expression which no human tongue can render any account of [...] Jean Valjean was trembling in every limb. He took the two candlesticks mechanically, and with a bewildered air. (p. 185)

The gendarmes, stunned, had to release Jean Valjean and retired, after which Jean Valjean was on the point of fainting. The Bishop then let him go with the following solemn words: "Jean Valjean, my brother, you no longer belong to evil, but to good. It is your soul that I buy from you; I withdraw it from black thoughts and the spirit of perdition, and I give it to God" (p. 186). The utterly unexpected drama of this fate-changing scene, in which the bishop appeared quite obviously to represent the *Transpersonal Self*, radically changed Valjean. He hid his identity and started an entirely new and honest life and with this, he, too, accomplished the "goal" of transpersonal experiences, as did Alyosha: "mystical experience is not an end in itself, but from it the subject has to draw the fire, enthusiasm and incentive to come back into the world and serve God and his fellow man" (Assagioli, 1965, p. 207). Furthermore, Assagioli says that "when Transpersonal Will becomes active, many diverse effects can result from the interplay between it and the often rebellious will of the personal self. [...] The aspiration and will of the personal self and the pull from the Transpersonal Self to transcend the limitations of 'normal' consciousness and life do not manifest themselves only as a search and will to meaning, to enlightenment [...] The highest forms of humanitarian and social

action have a transpersonal character. They are motivated by the Transpersonal Will, which is independent of, and at times even against, the personal will, against the instinct for self-preservation and the drive to personal self-assertion. These actions may involve courage, hardships, sacrifices, risks. They may be prompted by selfless devotion and active consecration to an ideal or a cause and can reach the peaks of true heroism" (Assagioli, 1974, pp. 115-117). And, indeed, Jean Valjean who let the Self win over his personal selfish little human aspirations and goals, dedicated his life to helping the poor, that is to a transpersonal goal.

2.3. A *Christmast Carol*

First, this novella is an excellent didactic and famous tale about love itself, the power of love, the possibility of taking a pull, and a happy ending. On the other side, however, there is also another reading, which is also about the drama of individual spiritual development. This second reading will be interpreted here from the psychosynthetic perspective.

"Christmas" itself also appears here with a double meaning. If we consider this piece a simple didactic tale, Christmas is the great annual Christian festival commemorating the earthly birth of Jesus Christ; in simpler terms, it is also the holiday of social feelings, love, joy and peacefulness. The deeper mystery of Christmas involves longing for the transpersonal, meditation, the secret of subsiding into silence and waiting, the birth of the light and the joy of it. The whole period of the Advent is the preparation of the soul for the encounter with God. Pope Leo the Great says in his Christmas sermon (*Sermo 1 in Nativitate Domini*, 1-3: PL 54, 190-193): "Let the sinner be glad as he receives the offer of forgiveness. Let the pagan take courage as he is summoned to life." As is well-known, the main character of the novella, Scrooge, the miser, is both a sinner and pagan who takes Christmas as a humbug. Yet, at Christmas, Scrooge is still invited for forgiveness and true life. Scrooge's related experiences and feelings can also be and will be, interpreted in the psychosynthetic frame. Scrooge is characterised right at the very beginning of the novella as follows (the quotations in this section are from Dickens (2021), and the page numbers also relate to this edition): "he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features" (p. 2). Marley, Scrooge's late business partner, who died seven years earlier, was Scrooge's compeer in his life. Marley used to be just as cold-hearted, selfish, scraper, and hard-shell as Scrooge.

Once upon a time, on Christmas Eve, that the old Scrooge hated much, he went home, as usual. But at home, not as usual at all, Marley's Ghost appeared to him: "Though he looked the phantom through and through, and saw it standing before him; though he felt the chilling influence of its death-cold eyes [...] he was still incredulous, and fought against his senses" (p. 9). In everyday terms we would say, Scrooge "couldn't believe his eyes," but Assagioli formulates more precisely the denial of this almost automatically occurring phenomenon:

Sometimes the reaction goes so far that the person comes to deny the value and reality of their recent inner experience. Doubts and criticisms arise in their mind, and they are tempted to consider everything that has happened as an illusion, a fantasy, a 'sentimental setup'. They become bitter and sarcastic, mocking themselves and others, and may even be inclined to disown their ideals and spiritual aspirations. Yet, no matter how hard they try, they cannot return to the same state as before: they have had the vision, and the allure of the unknown remains within them, unforgettable. (Assagioli, 1988, p. 102)

The spectre of Marley raised a horrible cry and shook its chained hands. The scared and trembling Scrooge asked the ghost: Why are you fettered?

I wear the chain I forged in life, ' replied the Ghost. 'I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it.[...] My spirit never walked beyond our counting house— mark me — in life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole, and weary journeys lie before me!' (p. 11)

One of psychosynthesis' fundamental principles is that we are dominated by everything with which we identify ourselves; conversely, we can dominate and control everything from which we disidentify ourselves. This lesson was affirmed for Assagioli when he was imprisoned for pacifism in 1940 in the prison of Regina Coeli of Rome. While he was meditating on Viktor Frankl's experiences, he was also observing his fellow detainees. His observations are described as follows: "The furious outburst of the detainee I had met on the first day continued to echo in my ears: 'I want to eat well; I want wine; I want women,' making me vividly understand that these overwhelming desires represented his true slavery. On the day he regained external freedom, he would remain psychologically more imprisoned than ever" (Assagioli, 2016, p. 23). Marley and Scrooge, the same way, were imprisoned by their own selfish aspirations, but at least, after his death Marley tries to help his ex-partner. His heavily suffering Ghost continued his warning: "I am here to-night to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope escaping my fate.' [...] 'You will be haunted,' resumed the Ghost, 'by Three Spirits'" (p. 12). Marley's Ghost finally showed Scrooge a shocking scene of many other similarly suffering ghosts, and after that disappeared.

We could easily think of the well-known biblical quote about the rich man and Lazarus. The parable is about a rich man who lived in luxury every day and at his door laid a beggar, Lazarus. They both died: Lazarus was taken to Paradise by angels, and the rich man to Hell. The rich man begged Abraham "Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead" (Luke, 16: 27-31). Now, Marley somehow could make it: he came back to warn his mate with the help of the three

spirits so that Scrooge would not suffer a fate like his. It is, indeed, a huge and rare occasion, a once-in-a-lifetime chance for Scrooge to change radically his life and subordinate his personal needs, comfort and goals to the Transpersonal Self's will (as did Jean Valjean in *Les Misérables* as a consequence of his life-changing transpersonal experience).

This scene with the many suffering ghosts resembles the Hell in the *Divine Comedy*, where Marley's Ghost is a kind of "negative Virgil." In a psychosynthetic interpretation, Marley's Ghost represents Scrooge's dominant cold-hearted, selfish and narrow-minded subpersonality. This personality part, however, by now became unsustainable, "dead" in a sense, as Marley himself also became dead. The failure of this selfish behavioural pattern has shown a strong need for change, as long as it is not too late. A new life is necessary.

According to the psychosynthetic interpretation, the subsequent appearances of the Three Spirits could be taken as three subsequent attempts by the *Transpersonal Self* to foster Scrooge's spiritual development by ascending his personal self (ego). When the First Spirit (the Ghost of Christmas Past) appeared, Scrooge saw the following.

It was a strange figure—like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man, viewed through some supernatural medium, which gave him the appearance of having receded from the view, and being diminished to a child's proportion. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it, and the tenderest bloom was on the skin. [...] from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible; and which was doubtless the occasion of its using, in its duller moments, a great extinguisher for a cap, which it now held under its arm. (p. 15)

This description refers to the usual attributes of the *Transpersonal Self*: it is timeless (unifying the innocence of a child and the wisdom of an older man) and emanates bright light (representing higher truth and knowledge). It was just this light that disturbed Scrooge most of all; he was perfectly unprepared for such uneasy and unearthly brightness. So he begged the spirit to cover the light: "What! exclaimed the Ghost, 'would you so soon put out, with worldly hands, the light I give!'" (p. 16). The Ghost of Christmas Past took Scrooge to his earlier Christmas Eves, starting from his childhood memories. He saw and lived again old, emotionally powerfully charged scenes with ageing family members, friends, teachers, acquaintances, and finally, his then sweetheart. All these were far too much to him; desperately wrestling with the Ghost asked it to take him home and not haunt him any longer. Thus, the frightened Scrooge tried desperately to get rid of the light, but he could not. After that, he was overcome by an irresistible drowsiness, found himself in his bedroom and sank into a heavy sleep. This fact would not surprise those familiar with Assagioli's psychology, who, when referring to the period of transmutation, affirms: "We should not be surprised if such a complex and arduous work is sometimes the cause of nervous and psychological disturbances, such as nervous exhaustion, insomnia, irritability, restlessness" (Assagioli, 1988, p. 105), or in this case exhaustion accompanied by an "irresistible drowsiness."

When the Second Spirit (the Ghost of Christmas Present) appeared to him as a jolly Giant, it also showed Scrooge different scenes, which this time were all related to the actual present Christmas. Among many others, Scrooge could see and hear how his poor clerk's family and his nephew's family spent their Christmas Eve very modestly but in perfect love. All these had a very positive effect on Scrooge; he felt happy and completely free from any fear and anxiety. Scrooge precisely followed the phases and psycho-spiritual states described by Assagioli:

A harmonious spiritual awakening arouses a sense of joy and an illumination of the mind that perceives the meaning of life, dispels many doubts, provides solutions to many problems, and instills a sense of inner security. This is accompanied by a vivid sense of unity, beauty, and sanctity of life [...] His former personality, with its sharp edges and unpleasant elements, seems to have disappeared, and a new person, likable and full of sympathy, smiles at us and at the world [...] This joyous state lasts more or less for a while but is destined to cease. (Assagioli, 1988, pp. 102-103)

When the Third Spirit (the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come) arrived gravely and silently in a deep black garment, the air was full of gloom and mystery. Scrooge trembled and unwittingly knelt. This Ghost also showed Scrooge different visions, but these all were very bleak, gloomy and sombre. The death of a man touched him most deeply since there was not a single person in the town who felt pity over the death of this man. Finally, Scrooge saw a neglected grave with a tombstone bearing Scrooge's name. The message of this shocking experience was that if he did not change, this would be his fate. So he said to the spirit:

I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future.

The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone! (p. 48)

Scrooge has learnt the lesson and has completely changed! A real "metanoia" was accomplished. Scrooge had a fundamental change in his character and had a whole new perspective on the world and on himself. Awakening on Christmas morning, he is a new man: he became kind and generous. Scrooge finally accepted the call of the *Transpersonal Self* that had been denied so long, he had decisive transpersonal experiences, and based on these, he could take a substantial step upward. He promised to live in the Past, the Present, and the Future, which has a symbolic meaning in a psychosynthetic context: approaching the *Transpersonal Self* also means nearing eternity, where the Past, the Present, and the Future are dissolved in the state of the timelessness of Kairos.

3. Conclusion

Comparing the results of Zeno's Conscience's psychosynthetic analysis with similar analyses of the three selected 19th-century European classic masterpieces revealed the following.

While in the case of *Zeno's Conscience*, an exhaustive search was necessary to safely identify some transpersonal events hidden deeply in the text, in contrast, in all the three analysed classics, the transpersonal events were markedly conspicuous even for a first superficial reading. These latter transpersonal experiences were not hidden at all; these were leading, shocking, life-changing events that radically altered a characters' life suddenly. These peak experiences were clear, definite and very intense:

- the last teaching of Father Zosima (after his death) to Alyosha Karamazov,
- the unexpected beau geste of the bishop of Digne to Jean Valjean,
- the hauntings of the Three Spirits to Scrooge.

Another clear difference was that while Zeno's (and also the characters' of *Ulysses*, *Time Regained* and *The Man Without Qualities* studied in the first article) peak experiences were hardly religious or not religious at all, that seemingly had no lasting effect on the life of the involved characters, the protagonists in these three classics went through definitely religious experiences that markedly changed their lives. This finding is not surprising and can directly be attributed to the differences in "zeitgeist": while in the 19th Europe the religious world view was dominant, in the 20th Europe the role of religion somewhat decreased.

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