

Healing and the Wounded Psyche

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I first became interested in the subject of healing in my 40's. The reasons were both personal and professional. I had no idea at the time how it would change my life.

For a number of years I had worked as a consultant psychotherapist in a large hospital, involved in teaching, supervision and seeing patients, individually and in therapeutic groups. I had revered Sigmund Freud, feeling myself to be standing on the shoulders of a giant and I was determined to help my patients to the best of my ability. I believed that my knowledge of unconscious mechanisms and the vicissitudes of the transference gave me a privileged insight into the workings of the human mind.

Psychoanalytical theory is aligned with the Newtonian world-view. It is a reductionist approach, mapping in detail the components of the mind and mechanisms that govern its function, and aiming to help resolve fractious parts into a better functioning whole. The problem of where the mind actually resides, or how it relates to the brain has remained largely unaddressed. Great attention has been given, however, to the complex, dynamic influences that shape the development of personality.

To begin with, the explanatory power of psychoanalysis had enthralled me but over the years I began to feel uncomfortable with what I felt to be its limitations. While claiming to encompass the human mind, it seemed to be a totally secular theory with no place for Soul or any appreciation of spiritual reality. Freud was a confirmed atheist, having turned his back on the Jewish mystical tradition. His investigation into the unconscious had mined a rich vein, but he took the consciousness of everyday life to be the highest and best to which the human being may aspire. In fact, Freud disparaged the transcendental, feeling it to be a threat to the good name of psychoanalysis.

I was increasingly drawn to the writings of Carl Jung. Where Freud minutely examined the mind rather like the engine of a car, Jung's attention was focussed on the self, an inclusive vision which dared ask questions of the driver as much as looking under the bonnet. At the heart of Jung's exploration lay God, although Jung preferred the psychological term *Imago Dei*.

Jung's readiness to see each person as sharing in a deep ocean of knowledge, the collective unconscious, attracted him to advances in quantum physics and the investigation of what Freud had scathingly dismissed – the so-called paranormal. Through his work with active imagination and the archetypes, Jung appreciated that while we see through a glass darkly, we can nevertheless envision something of a greater whole, where our essence lies and from which our individual psyches have formed. Jung was, at heart, a Gnostic, the Greek word *Gnosis* meaning directly cognising or becoming conscious of oneself. This is very different to learning *about* oneself, an

approach based on measurement (in Latin the word is ratio, from which derives the word rationality).

To return for a moment to the dilemma that faced me in my forties, I knew that the pressing task for me was to discover, and learn to express *who I really am*. I had been in psychoanalysis before. Should I return to the couch?

It is, good, of course, to know *about* oneself; to be aware of one's ego-strengths, vulnerabilities and defences. Yet any such account engenders the subject-object divide. I, the subject, am learning about me, the object. And the object cannot be known from within, for it can never be the subject. All I can do is learn more and more about myself, the object. This is the exoteric tradition on which Newtonian science is based. But no amount of such introspection uncovers the subjective truth of 'who I am'.

In the esoteric tradition, on the other hand, the self has always been held to mirror the greater consciousness that informs the whole universe. 'As above, so below' is the saying in the Hermetic tradition. In fact, consciousness is understood to be the materia prima of which the physical universe and all its life forms are merely condensations.

There remains the problem of how such a cosmic information field might work. Current research into neutrinos may provide part of the answer. Every human being is irradiated by over 50 trillion neutrinos a second as they pass through us at close to the speed of light, coming from star systems throughout the galaxy including our own sun. Neutrinos have now been shown to have a minute but measurable mass, which means that they can carry information.

Yet neutrinos cannot account for non-locality phenomena that have been startlingly demonstrated in quantum physics. Two photons, once entangled and now separated in space, continue to react instantaneously to each other. Stop the integer spin of one and the other stops simultaneously - there is no time lag, not even at the speed of light. This is a supra-luminal connection, and strong evidence for a domain that transcends the limits of the dimensions of spacetime.

Once the boggle-threshold has been overcome, it is possible to approach the whole field of paranormal research in a new way. I can't go here into the research literature of evidence for psychokinesis, clairvoyance or evidential mediumship for example. Yet experiments on healing provide good evidence of an energy exchange that goes far beyond mere suggestibility and which appears to operate outside of spacetime. Dan Benor's formidable publication 'Spiritual Healing – Scientific Validation of a Healing Revolution: Professional Supplement' (2002) does for research into healing what Radin has done for parapsychology (Radin 1997, 2006) and what Koenig, McCullough and Larson (2001) have done for studies on religion, spirituality and health.

To come back again to my own story, since healing is essentially concerned with integration or wholeness (the root of the word means 'whole') (Powell 2005) and because in my forties, I was feeling in danger of falling apart, I

decided to see what the College of Healing in Malvern had to offer. Later, I attended the School of Channelling there as well. The experience of working with healers and carrying out spiritual healing was one aspect of a wider change in perspective, and I began to include the transpersonal dimension in my psychotherapy practice.

Healing as an energy exchange requires the healer to focus on the healee with an equal measure of compassion and dispassion. Many healers refrain from trying for a specific outcome. As the mind is emptied of all thoughts except to attune to the energies of the healee, many ask only that 'Thy will be done'. Some (medical intuitives) 'see' the structural pathology like an x-ray and focus in accordingly. Others feel the aura as they make passes with their hands a few inches over the body surface – areas of heat or cold, or other sensations, and may give healing and balancing to the energy centres of the body, known as chakras. The healer opens to an inflow of energy which some would call Divine and others might name the universal energy field, acting as a channel for this energy to find its way to where it is needed to promote tissue regeneration, relieve pain and so on. Some healers work with specific imagery while some just sit back and leave it to 'the powers that be'. Others clairvoyantly see spirit presences, or angelic forms, standing around the chair or bed, which may be identified as doctors and nurses from the spirit world. Brazilian psychic surgeons such as Arigo and more recently 'John of God' commonly use penknives, probes and scissors to 'cut' into the body - apparently never with any post-operative infection. Filipino healers like Alex Orbito use their hands to 'enter' the body and extract diseased tissue.

A physician friend of mine took his wife, who had an abdominal tumour, to the Philippines and stood next to her while she was operated on. He watched the healer's hand apparently penetrate his wife's abdomen and extract a large lump of bleeding tissue. When the blood was swabbed away, there was no visible trauma to the abdominal wall. At the time of the procedure, he had no doubt of the reality of his perception. Afterwards, cognitive dissonance set in and made him question whether he had imagined the whole thing. At any rate, his wife got better.

These procedures have been examined and emphatically pronounced fraudulent by James Randi, the magician, who spearheads a campaign against psychic and spiritual healers. Can one believe one's eyes? The art of misdirection is subtle. That is why empirical research is so important, as collated by Benor, whose book I mentioned earlier.

I can, however, relate my own experience of psychic surgery when I consulted Stephen Turoff, who 'brings through' a deceased Viennese physician called Dr. Kahn. Stephen is a cheery ex-plumber who as a young man suddenly fell into trance. When he came round, he was told that a stranger had seemingly spoken through him in a voice with a foreign accent, requesting permission to use Stephen as a healer and spirit surgeon. Stephen agreed, on condition that he wouldn't have to see any blood, as he was rather squeamish.

I went to see Turoff in 1993 since I had a deteriorating aortic valve and knew from repeat echocardiograms that my cardiac measurements were worsening. I was in no hurry to have surgery, so meantime I was exploring anything that might help. When I met 'Dr. Kahn', I really did seem to be conversing with a twinkling eyed, elderly and rather old-fashioned physician with a strong foreign accent. I began to give my medical history but Dr. Kahn didn't seem much interested. He told me to take my shirt off, thrust me down on the couch and began operating. It was an extraordinary experience. He worked at high speed, like a video in fast forward, scratching at me with nail scissors and repeatedly extracting, so it seemed, something from my chest. Each time he appeared to throw it in the direction of the metal waste bin where it landed with a clinking sound. Dr. Kahn's concentration was intense and the whole thing lasted only a few minutes. It ended with his pressing his hand on my chest for about 30 seconds, as if to stem the flow of blood. Afterwards there was a red mark, which faded over a few days.

When Dr. Kahn left the room after operating, I got up and looked in the waste paper bin. It was empty except for some cotton wool swabs. Later, reading a biography of Stephen Turoff, I found out that in order to spare Stephen the sight of blood or gore, Dr. Kahn had promised to dematerialise any physical matter he extracted. I told a physicist friend about this, who pointed out that if matter could indeed be de-materialised just like that, it would create a vacuum. As with lightning, but on a micro scale, the collapse of the vacuum would be certain to be audible.

At my follow-up with Dr. Kahn, I asked him, 'How much of my valve problem is due to karma'. I was wondering if my failing valve might reflect an emotional problem of the heart in my remote past (not impossible if one believes that mind and matter arise from the same source). Dr. Kahn peered at me through his glasses, then burst out laughing and said, 'Sometimes a cigar is only a cigar!' This was an extraordinary reply, which I understood perfectly. It was the last thing I expected to hear from an ex-plumber. Freud didn't hesitate to analyse his patients' oral fixations but concerning his own habit of cigar smoking (which eventually resulted in cancer of the jaw), he would only say, 'sometimes a cigar is only a cigar!'

I had in mind to ask about my prognosis but was feeling rather anxious. Dr. Kahn looked at me intently and said, 'you know, I can see what the future holds for you'. My anxiety level rocketed. He added, 'you don't need to worry. You have many years ahead.' I walked out feeling like a man reprieved and so far he has been proved right.

When I went back to my cardiologist for my repeat echo, he said, 'this is very surprising, your measurements have all improved!' The measurements remained stable for the next for two years when suddenly I became acutely ill and my valve had to be replaced. That was 15 years ago.

Healing is a particularly interesting phenomenon because it spans the worlds of material realism and the metaphysical. Medically speaking, its use is confined to observing natural repair – fibroblasts migrate to sites of tissue

injury and form scar tissue, bony fractures unite thanks to a proliferation of osteoblasts and so on. Yet what about the energies that mediate healing? Something is orchestrating tissue repair. We talk about chemotaxis and so on yet we don't really know what organising forces are at work. But forces there must be, for we see the evidence in healing experiments, such as provoking the germination of seeds (Grad 1965, Saklani 1998) and with animals, as in healers' ability to waken anaesthetised mice (Watkins 1971) and to accelerate wound healing (Grad 1961). Distance healing does not follow the usual laws of physics, for the effect is not proportional to the proximity of the healer (see Byrd 1988) and Harris 1999). Experiments in retrocausality, such as Leibovici's study on the effects of retroactive prayer on patients with bloodstream infection (Leibovici 2001) and Radin's experiments on presentiment (Radin 1997) appear to violate the principle of linear time.

Healing, then, takes us beyond the world of the comfortable and familiar to worlds unseen, a universe of energy and interconnectedness that is a long way from the Newtonian physicalist worldview.

What kind of intelligence informs such a universe? The great religions personify the Divine, making it easier to find a personal relationship with God, or whatever we call the ultimate nature of that intelligence. But most religions also teach that the soul survives bodily death. Healing per se could simply be explained in terms of the re-alignment of natural, but subtle energies. However, once the laws of space and time have been breached, birth and death no longer have the same finite meaning; instead they may be better understood as transformations of energy.

According to the Buddhist tradition, there is no enduring soul that survives death. However, my researches, including accounts of the Near-Death Experience, have persuaded me of the survival of the soul, not one that hopes to sit on a cloud and play a harp for eternity but which constantly strives to move forward, to grow in understanding and wisdom. Those who share this optimistic view will appreciate a well-researched book, 'Is there an Afterlife' by David Fontana, (2005), a comprehensive review of the literature.

How much can a person do in one short life? It seems probable to me that we take hundreds, or who knows how many, lifetimes before approaching the exalted consciousness of the great spiritual masters.

If this life, or succession of lives, is a classroom for the benefit of the soul, the law of karma, in which cause and effect are perfectly matched and in which effect becomes the next cause, seems to me to be an excellent blueprint for the progression of both thought and action within the domain of space-time. If this is indeed an evolutionary universe, an idea that strongly to me, it makes sense that consciousness needs to become embodied in space-time. The human drama is no mere side show in the cosmic scale of things. It is - like all the other dramas that flow from a myriad of intelligent life forms - in the service of a living, conscious universe.

I have three broad reasons for thinking that we are participants in such a universe. One comes from my understanding, such as it is, of quantum field theory, which sees the universe not as a void populated with eruptions of hot gas and inorganic lumps of rock but as a matrix of energy constantly manifesting in form with the collapse of the wave function, and dissolving back into energy according to the law of entropy. The quantum physicist Amit Goswami describes this reciprocity as a tangled hierarchy, in which consciousness brings about the collapse of the wave, and the collapse of the wave brings about consciousness, like Escher's picture of two hands, each drawing the other (Goswami 1993).

My second reason for thinking this is a conscious universe concerns its extraordinary holographic nature. Michael Talbot (1992) has described how the converging insights of two great scientists of our time, led to this astonishing theory.

Karl Pribram, the neurophysiologist, had been searching for a topographical basis to memory in the brain but there seemed to be no such localisation of function. When he learned about the new science of holograms, he came up with the theory that memory is stored holographically by means of arrays of neurones producing electrical interference patterns in wave form (known as Fourier transforms). The visual cortex was found to work in the same way (Pribram 1977). Pribram was pondering the implications of this finding - that everything we perceive that looks real and solid might therefore simply be holographic projections - when he came across the work of the quantum physicist David Bohm.

Bohm had concluded that the whole physical universe is itself a holographic projection (what he calls the explicate order) of an invisible, deeper implicate order, in the same way that when a laser beam strikes a photographic plate on which is embedded an interference pattern, it will generate a three-dimensional image. Bohm wrote: 'Ultimately, the entire universe (with all its particles, including those constituting human beings, their laboratories, observing instruments, etc.) has to be understood as a single undivided whole, in which analysis into separately and independently existent parts has no fundamental status' (Bohm 1980: 174).

Talbot summarised it like this: 'our brains mathematically construct objective reality by interpreting frequencies that are ultimately projections from another dimension, a deeper order of existence that is beyond both time and space: *The brain is a hologram enfolded in a holographic universe*' (my italics) (Talbot 1991:54).

My third reason for thinking this is a conscious universe is my intuition. It may seem to be a contradiction in terms but as the scientist and mystic Blaise Pascal wrote, 'the heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing'. (Pascal: 2007). And Henri Poincare, the brilliant scientist who paved the way for Albert Einstein wrote, 'It is through science that we prove, but through intuition that we discover'. Since in a holographic universe the part already contains the whole, we can reasonably look within ourselves for the answer.

Why should humankind continue to be so occupied with the ineffable if a mechanistic view of the universe is sufficient? One explanation is that we are more than just connected with the source of all that is, we *are* one with all that is. It is only when we engage with the phenomenal world that we enter into the illusion of separateness.

This is the role of the ego, to which we human beings owe our emergence as a striving, ambitious and competitive species. It is also that which separates us from each other and the natural world. Yet it is only a function of the mind, and the mind is not really a thing at all - it is a process. Even when we talk about the physical brain as a thing, from the holographic perspective, it too is merely an energetic process, fashioned into something solid by our special sense organs, for nothing has any objective reality, or solidity, beyond the consciousness that is ultimately what we are. From this perspective, birth, life, illness and death can be understood as nothing more than ripples in the interference pattern of Bohm's implicate order.

I mentioned that my early acquaintance with healing was focussed on the body, but before long I realised the task was to integrate what I was now learning with my practice of psychotherapy. I have written specifically about soul-centred therapy elsewhere (Powell 2009) and so for this discussion, I want to take up the question of woundedness as set against the backdrop of a conscious universe and the vast intelligence that it expresses.

Why cannot human beings simply live in Paradise? Why did Adam and Eve have to be exiled from the Garden of Eden? This profound myth describes the fate of every human infant for there is no childhood without trauma, frustration, pain, rejection and loss.

Two things help me to make sense of why we suffer. One is to remember that this whole drama played out on the stage of spacetime is in the service of the evolution of consciousness. Just as individually we can learn to move from being possessed by the demands of the ego to discovering the magnanimity of Soul, so we collectively take our place in, and can contribute to, a universe moving in the same direction (Powell 2006).

Secondly, while the soul brings unconditional love to the ego, the ego brings incalculable learning to the soul. If we could stay in a perpetual comfort zone, we would learn nothing. Some say that is why the soul is driven to incarnate in the first place, to go where the actions of the ego ensure that there is bound to be suffering.

The ego undertakes the construction of identity we call personality, a complex negotiation born out of the needs and desires of the child learning to grow and survive in a competitive and unpredictable world. Feeling constantly threatened and insecure, the ego tries to dominate. Its favourite words are 'my' and 'mine'. The word it finds hardest is 'ours'.

Yet ironically the ego is the servant of spiritual growth, for in its ambition to conquer all, it must eventually lose all. The wounds to the ego are countless - fear of loss, of status, possessions, of being loved and finally, of death are all consequences of its separative mentality.

Soul, in contrast, is the presence of Spirit unfolding from the implicate order to manifest in each human being. The incarnating soul knows only unity. It doesn't love out of need like the ego; its original nature is love. We know from the transformative effects of the Near-Death Experience that soul love is the radiation of sheer, unconditional love, which trusts the outcome always to be good. Where, how and when, it may not be possible to know, but in the words of Julian of Norwich, 'all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well'.

Soul is unperturbed by death, since it knows this human form to be only a temporary event. However, in co-habiting with Ego for the purposes of gaining experience, Soul is brought face-to-face with pain, rejection and abuse. Being made of love, it has no way of responding except either to withdraw or to love the more. As Jesus pointed out, it is easy to love your friends – loving your enemies is the test.

Learning how to go on loving in the face of being wounded is the journey of the soul. It means finding forgiveness where the impulse of Ego is to retaliate. Where retaliation constricts the heart, forgiveness expands it. Forgiveness isn't confined to forgiving others, for when we come to recognise we have hurt others as much as we have been ourselves wounded, we are faced with finding forgiveness for ourselves too. Compassion for others and for oneself is one and the same when we understand that ultimately humanity is one.

There is no incongruity between human psychology and the spiritual agenda. The former serves the latter in the drama of life, a play with countless scenes and with each scene to be experienced deeply, authentically and in the most personal way. The lines are written and yet the script is open to endless improvisation. We do not have to follow the plot - there is freedom of action - and yet if we do not accomplish what we came to discover and do, the soul will be the poorer for it.

This is where I want to come back to healing, which means to find wholeness. Hands-on healing is an act of love. It brings the healee, through energies channelled by the healer, into alignment with wholeness. Where there is disease and dis-unity, it restores coherency to mind and body. This gives the best chance for repair, sometimes leading to what we call cure. But healing is also used where bodily decline is inevitable. Here, the aim is to minimise physical and emotional stress and to bring peace and comfort. One can die healed, as much as one can live with a broken heart. The root of the word for therapy is the Greek 'therapeuein'. It doesn't just mean to treat; it means to serve, to care for and to heal.

If we believe that our bodies, minds and souls are variations of the same theme, of the emergence of consciousness in spacetime, then we won't be deceived into thinking of them as separate entities. Love is a word largely

avoided in the lexicon of psychiatry and psychotherapy. We are fearful of its erotic, possessive and destructive potential and we see enough evidence of that in our daily work. But we should not hesitate to bring soul love into the consulting room, for whether the doctor is a surgeon, physician or psychiatrist, the vibration of love will enhance every kind of treatment. What is broken will be helped to mend, what is wounded will be helped to heal.

We are born whole, we become disunited and we spend our lives searching for that sense of wholeness we once knew. But we cannot return to where we began, nor is it intended we should. Rather, as in the lines of TS Eliot's poem 'Little Gidding', it is 'to arrive at the place we started and know the place for the first time'. That is the birth of a new consciousness, and the start of a new journey.

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