

OPENING PANDORA'S BOX:  
A DEPTH PSYCHOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING  
OF PROJECTIVE IDENTIFICATION

A dissertation submitted

by

VALERIE ROSE BRINTON

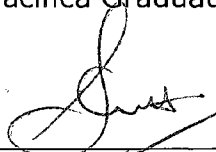
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This dissertation has been  
accepted for the faculty of  
Pacifica Graduate Institute by:



---

Lionel Corbett, M.D.  
Advisor



---

Ashok Bedi, M.D.  
External Reader



---

Diana Sharpe, Psy.D.  
Dissertation Coordinator

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## ABSTRACT

### Opening Pandora's Box: A Depth Psychological Understanding of Projective Identification

by

Valerie Rose Brinton

This dissertation is a heuristic, theoretical, practical, nature based, and poetic investigation of the phenomenon of projective identification from an embodied, imaginal, depth perspective. This study arose from a deep, compelling, and enduring personal engagement with the relatively intractable and destructive personal and interpersonal problems resulting from severe trauma. The initial focus of this inquiry was born of a desire to understand and resolve these persistent difficulties. The phenomenon of projective identification presented itself as the core element in these problems and gave rise to the research and findings recorded here.

The apparent transmission of direct embodied affective experience from one person to another is explored from a variety of viewpoints. This is shown to be a central factor in the etiology of recurrent destructive and disturbed states throughout the lifespan and in a wide variety of contexts. Furthermore, a method for resolving these conditions based in a new view of the origin and character of these transmitted experiences is described.

This new view of projective identification is situated within the contexts of clinical theory, history, and practice; homeopathy and energy

medicine; quantum physics; ecopsychology; and shamanic traditional practices. It is also described as it occurs in the course of many common interpersonal and group dynamics. The findings presented here are also integrated into a new theory of the origin of conflict, pointing to a new understanding of evil and of the full range of human destructiveness, as well as suggesting an approach to resolution and treatment.

Preliminary success with this new method of resolution is reported. Suggestions are made for the integration of this method into the body of current clinical practice, and for its use in self-care and other non-clinical settings. Reflections are offered on the possible outcomes that might be expected from the application of this new theory and practice, and other reflections and poetry offer a glimpse into the personal process of the researcher throughout the course of this investigation.

I dedicate this work to my parents

John Wells Brinton and Albina Angela DeRose Brinton

who encouraged me to live my own life

and to think my own thoughts.

### Acknowledgements

I owe a large debt of gratitude to those unknown companions who have given me their unseen and often unrecognized help as I made my way through this work. Arriving as insights, new perspectives, moments of understanding, and in many other forms, it has been those elements from the unknown, what we call the unconscious, which have consistently sustained, supported, and inspired this work. This surely includes the wisdom of unknown ancestors and predecessors, unseen links with work being done by others, the raw elements of nature, and the living tao.

I also want to thank my committee who, each in their own way, added clarity and rigor to the work, supported my courage, and validated my creative vision and voice. Friends, relations, and clients too numerous to mention by name have given me essential inspiration, aid, and support throughout this journey. My adult children, Tobias Shaw and Kaia Rose, have offered valuable challenges, an unwavering depth of understanding, and loving support for my endeavor. Finally I want to thank George Reid for being himself with me, offering an honest mirror, giving his generous support; for love, humor, joy, and for helping me to survive and go on.

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The style used throughout this dissertation is in accordance with the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2001) and *Pacifica Graduate Institute's Dissertation Handbook* (2007-2008).



Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, that alluvial which covers the globe, through Paris and London, through New York and Boston and Concord, through church and state, through poetry and philosophy and religion, till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call *reality*, and say, This is, and no mistake.

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, 1854/1939, p. 103

The Way of Heaven  
is to help without harming  
the Way of the sage  
is to act without struggling

Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, circa 500 BC/1996, verse 81

To be human and a democratic citizen requires that one muster the courage to think critically for oneself. This love of wisdom is a perennial pursuit into the dark corners of one's own soul, the night alleys of one's society, and the back roads of the world in order to grasp the deep truths about one's soul, society, and the world.

Cornel West, *Democracy Matters*, 2004, p. 208

## Chapter 1 Introduction

This theoretical heuristic study comes after quite a long period of engagement and investigation into an intimate experience of projective identification. This has been a deep time of thinking, wondering, feeling, witnessing, and experiencing projective identification from within, as well as seeking remedies for its often destructive effects. Through these many years of seeing, feeling, and being with the phenomenon of projective identification, I have developed a unique understanding that I feel merits consideration. I have come to my current viewpoint by way of personal struggle and perseverance, and while my work has been informed at times by the views expressed by other theorists, significant portions of my understandings diverge in ways that lead to a new point of view.

While there are a few close associates who have endured my intense preoccupation and enthusiasm and who have in some part been subjected to my insights, this text is my first attempt to coherently and comprehensively describe my depth psychological viewpoint on this mysterious, intriguing, hidden, and pervasive phenomenon of projective identification, its consequences in our lives; and a proposed avenue of remedy for its destructive effects and a restoration of wholeness. Herein, I articulate my thinking, my realizations, and results; and I make an attempt to integrate these findings into the larger body of psychological

understandings. I used an embodied imaginal, heuristic methodology that is pervasively informed by depth psychology and an intimate appreciation for and engagement with the unconscious. I have also relied on the poetic process and a poetic voice to anchor, inspire, and articulate my understandings as they have developed. I will mention here that throughout the text any poem not attributed to another author is my own. Also, any italicized type within a quotation is that of the original author.

I now view projective identification and its effects as being at the root of most, if not all, of the apparently intractable problems of human living and relating. I have also found that a simple and easily effected process of receiving and being with the specific feeling manifestations of projective identification in our lives appears to provide a real and lasting resolution for these problems. It seems to me that these findings point to important implications for treatment. If these implications prove to be well-founded they may echo and confirm the prediction made by Grotstein (1981) when he wrote, "In its first hundred years psychoanalysis has been a history of the mechanisms of repression and displacement. Its second hundred years will be a history of splitting and projective identification" (cover title page). Since projective identification apparently involves the displacement of psychological contents from one person to another it may refer to the same phenomenon that in earlier times was seen as possession, the intrusion of the spirit of a person or other being into the mind and body of another. Speaking of possession Guiley (1991)

says. "It has been recognized since antiquity, and has been blamed for virtually every conceivable problem of luck, health, wealth, love, and sanity" (p. 457). Dealing with this phenomenon may also be a return to the roots of psychological treatment for, as Stevens (1993) points out, "The theory of 'possession,' with its treatment by exorcism, is the rhizome from which dynamic psychiatry and analysis have sprouted" (p. 110).

This introduction continues with the following five subsections. The first describes the myth of Pandora and its relevance to my inquiry. The second section discusses the connections between the myth of Pandora and a depth psychological perspective on the phenomenon of projective identification. The third section is a personal sharing of one example of my current understanding of this phenomenon and the application of that understanding. The fourth section is my own history as it constitutes a background to this inquiry, and the last section is an exploration of the relevance of this topic for the field of clinical psychology.

I walk an inner path;  
the steps I tread  
not knowing,  
guided by the placement  
of each step;  
the feel of ground  
of weight let down  
through spine through flesh  
sinking into earth  
earth that rises solid to meet me,  
the moment  
of arrival,  
birthplace  
of the next step.

Where are you Going?  
 some ask me.  
 I always try to answer,  
 to give some accounting  
 of that unknown  
 destination.  
 There, I say, I am going  
 there, up ahead – to the  
 place where I want to be.  
 By 'be' I mean  
 standing on earth  
 rising up to meet me,  
 and by 'I'  
 this body of flesh and bone  
 desire and wonder  
 that steps  
 along this dark path.

“Curiouser and curiouser!” cried Alice (she was so much surprised, that for the moment she quite forgot how to speak good English).”

(Carroll, 1865/1960, p. 26)

### *The Myth of Pandora*

Pandora of Greek mythology, it is said, was created in the earliest days of the emergence of our human existence. “Pandora, whose name literally means All Gifts, came into being when Zeus had her created by the master artisan Hephaestus to punish Prometheus for stealing fire from heaven” (Bell, 1991, p. 339). Prometheus stole that fire and gave it to humankind, thereby setting us on our unique human path. This mythic first woman of ancient Greek tales (Grimal, 1987), a precursor to the biblical Eve (Bell, 1991), was sent as a wife to Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus. She was sent entrusted with a fateful box. The title of this

dissertation, "Opening Pandora's Box," refers to this story of Pandora, whose name has also been associated with Rhea (Grimal, 1987) and with Gaia (Bell, 1991), the earliest female deities in the Greek pantheon. Giving fire to humanity had been forbidden by Zeus, the patriarchal head of the gods, presaging and echoing the forbidden knowledge of good and evil represented by the apple in the biblical tale of Eve. Pandora was similarly forbidden to open the box she carried, although Zeus' intended punishment required that she open it. She had been endowed with many wonderful attributes along with an irrepressible curiosity (Bell, 1991, p. 339-340) that insured she would transgress the order to leave the box unopened. When she fulfilled Zeus' real intent by opening the box, she inadvertently released many hitherto unknown forms of horrible pain and suffering upon the world. She slammed it shut in a failed attempt to halt the spread of misery. Then she opened it again. I imagine Pandora must have approached the box this second time with more caution and with an awareness of the horrors that had been dispersed into the world. It is said that when she opened the box for the second time she released Hope<sup>1</sup>.

The Hope that lies within the box suggests an inner path, which has been my approach to this topic. My heuristic investigation into a depth psychological understanding of projective identification did not begin with any established theory but rather with a rigorous exploration of direct

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<sup>1</sup> In some versions Pandora leaves the box closed with Hope inside (Bell, 1991). In either case hope remains within to be found by Pandora, or later by us.

experience. It was born of my engagement with forms of suffering that must have been among those loosed by Pandora. I began this study of the phenomenon through direct observation of its effects in my life long before I knew it had been observed, named, and described as projective identification. Like the hidden contents of Pandora's Box, this enigmatic psychological phenomenon is practically invisible. Like the wind, we see its existence through its effects rather than observing it directly. As an unconscious process it is invisible to everyone: the person using it, people affected by it, and any unaffected observers as well. The mechanism for its action is difficult to determine, and there are those who consider it to be a kind of trick, not a real phenomenon at all. We may as well reckon it to be a gift from the gods. And, like most gifts from the gods, it pleases and displeases. When a healthy-enough mother gazes at her baby and an inner knowing directly and reliably informs her of her infant's experiential inner world, it demonstrates this capacity for the direct communication of experience. Rather than isolated pockets of awareness, it suggests a shared field of consciousness within which each individual participates. Painful and pathological conditions, akin to the many horrible sufferings unleashed by Pandora's curiosity, such as failed attempts to leave abusive relationships, persistent anxieties and depressions, shame, suicide, and addictions, may be among the destructive results of this phenomenon, this capacity for telepathic communication that results in a direct, reliable, and immediate inner experience of the experience of another.

*The Myth of Pandora and a Depth Psychological Understanding of Projective Identification*

This early myth of Pandora speaks of the unique forms of suffering that humankind is heir to. Within its images we may find relevant and useful suggestions about the source and the resolution of that suffering. Through the lengthy inquiry in which I sought solutions for the suffering experiences of my own family, I have come to believe that an unseen epidemic of unrecognized and unresolved projective identification may be the primary causative force in the inception and persistence of the various devastating problems of living and loving that seem almost unique to human life. When I attempted to resolve various apparently intractable problems in my own family I was faced with those experiences of pain, misery, and suffering that Pandora is said to have released upon the world. A return to the source of that suffering may be indicated by the need to return to Pandora's Box to find Hope. I have found that a return, a second opening, is indeed the path to the resolution of these otherwise persistent suffering experiences, a path as reliable as the rain or the wind.

Furthermore, the arrival of this mythic first woman suggests the beginning of human intimacy. Indeed she, like Eve, completes the first human couple and the box that she brings<sup>2</sup> suggests both the vagina and the womb. A box or container suggests receptivity and openness, that which receives and holds-within. Pandora also brings a powerful curiosity,

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<sup>2</sup> In some versions the box was already in Epimetheus' home, in which case her arrival opened what was already inherently there (Bell, 1991).



which is alive with the desire for contact and knowledge. These qualities of receptivity, openness, holding-within, and a desire for contact and knowledge suggest intimacy, intimate connectedness, and the sharing of experience. This intimate connectedness is the field of action of projective identification, which is a resident of that deep, intimate realm where the boundaries of personal experience are in many ways permeable.

I suggest that our intimate ability to receive the experiences of others exposes us to suffering, only when unresolved painful experiences which have been displaced from elsewhere become activated within us. In this way Pandora's arrival and her predestined opening of the box brought the experience of human suffering into the world. When any devastating situation overwhelms a person who lacks an intimate other who can help them to tolerate and process the experience, it will lead inevitably to projective identification and the displacement of that experience. These displaced experiences have, in a sense, flown out of the box; in other words they have become uncontained, as they were intolerable to the person originally experiencing them. Layers of these unresolved displaced experiences accumulating through the generations may be significantly contributing to the depths of suffering and dysfunction that have become so common in our human society. If this is the case, then dealing with the horrors released by Pandora by finding a path of resolution for this burden of layers of unresolved displaced experiences would be a great boon.

Perhaps like Pandora, if we open to these experiences a second time in a different way, with care and conscious awareness, we will find their resolution. This movement toward a second opening, another look, in itself suggests a depth psychological point of view for as Hillman (1983) clarifies, "Depth is . . . not literally hidden, deep down, inside. Rather, the fantasy of depth encourages us to look at the world again, to read each event for 'something deeper' " (p. 42). Given the awareness, insights, and understandings that I have found through my inquiry, the second opening of Pandora's box suggests to me an experiential opening to an embodied awareness of the displaced experiences that have resulted from earlier intolerable circumstances and hence been displaced through the action of projective identification. This is the second look, the deeper awareness. The process of receiving these displaced experiences in this way brings real and lasting relief. This is the second opening, which I have found brings resolution to the displaced experiences that may be causative in so many of the situations of human misery and suffering. Perhaps this is the meaning of the opening that can release the hope that remained deep inside Pandora's box when all the demons of suffering escaped; the Hope that persistently waits for someone to open the box for a second time.

My inquiry thus far has also suggested that these displaced experiences are autonomous, existing on their own much like the plaguing creatures that originally escaped from Pandora's box. This leads to a quite different understanding of the process of projective identification than is

usually described. St. Clair (2000), for example, in accord with most other theorists defines projective identification as, "Imaginatively splitting off part of oneself and attributing it to another for the sake of controlling that inner aspect of the self by externally trying to control the other" (p. 198). Bion (1962/1983) speaks of "An omnipotent phantasy that it is possible to split off temporarily undesired, though sometimes valued, parts of the personality and put them into an object" (p. 31). "It is important to realize that projective identification is an unconscious phantasy, in effect, *imagination*" adds Grotstein (1981, p. 124); and many years later (2000) he continues, "I assert that one can never project into another person; one can only project into one's *image* (phantasmal or symbolic) of that person" (p. 185). Agreeing with these views Ogden (1989) states, "In projective identification, the projector—by means of actual interpersonal interactions with the 'recipient'—unconsciously induces feeling states in the recipient that are congruent with the 'ejected' feelings" (p. 25).

Within the definition of projective identification in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV-TR; 2000) real transmission of experience is ruled out: "The individual deals with emotional conflict or internal or external stressors by falsely attributing to another his or her own unacceptable feelings, impulses, or thoughts" (p. 812). Because he clearly elaborates this commonly held view I will quote Gabbard (1999) at length; (citing his own previous work, 1995),

Mental contents are not mystically transported from patient to clinician. Rather, interpersonal pressure is applied by specific patient behaviors that evoke specific clinician responses. These coercive pressures from the patient have an obligatory quality to them that makes them extremely difficult to resist. Although it may feel as if an alien force has taken over the recipient of the projection, in actuality what has happened is that an aspect of the recipient's internal world has been activated by the behavior of the projector. The analyst's or therapist's usual sense of a familiar, continuous self is disrupted by his or her own repressed self or object representations emerging in response to the patient's interpersonal pressure. (p. 7)

My investigations have led me to a significantly different view of this phenomenon. I suspect that the actual subjective experience of projective identification, which includes feelings of being taken over by a compelling other-than-self force, may be quite authentic and accurate in describing what is actually going on. I have come to think, as well, that most of the displaced experiences that are being transmitted through the action of projective identification have their origin in neither of the people involved in the current event, but rather elsewhere in earlier severe traumatic circumstances. These horrific experiences live on as autonomous beings awaiting resolution that was not, is not, available in their time. They then arise in the field of our experience as if calling out for aid and attention. Mistaken for current personal psychic contents, this is not what they find.

If these displaced experiences which can result in so much pain and suffering indeed exist autonomously and hence are not tied to the person or people experiencing their activation then those individuals who are most psychologically burdened by the painful weight of these displaced

experiences may not need to be the ones who deal with the difficulties themselves. In this case other approaches may be called for. Shamanic and mystical practices that aim to deal directly with these troublesome, displaced entities might suffice to bring real relief. In describing some similarities between shamanic and psychotherapeutic practice, particularly the active imagination of analytic psychotherapy, Corbett (1996) notes, "The shaman directly addresses personified intrapsychic entities as they appear within the altered states of consciousness produced by shamanic techniques" (p. 121). Indeed, it seems that indigenous cultures may have historically developed ritual practices that were capable of resolving the results of projective identification. Other mystical and healing practices, such as therapeutic theater in the Greek tradition, may also effectively address the difficulties that result from the existence and activation of unresolved displaced experiences.

In describing a variety of mystical practices, Guiley (1991) states that, "The cure for unwanted possession is exorcism, performed according to a specified ritual. Voluntary possession, on the other hand, terminates at the end of a religious ceremony, healing ritual, or sitting" (p. 457). Although the approach that I have been using to resolve the effects of projective identification is simple and does not require any religious forms or training, in a sense it is a form of exorcism. Furthermore, as it involves opening to a fully embodied experiential connection with the displaced experience, it may be a voluntary possession. It appears to result in real

and lasting resolution and it involves an embodied immediacy that is akin to shamanic and mystical practices. If my understanding, and the results I have experienced thus far are as real, reasonable, reliable, replicable, and accessible as I suppose then there is reason to hope for a wide relief of the suffering, destructiveness, and disruption of relationship caused by the current accumulation of layers of unresolved displaced experiences. These ideas may stretch credibility, but "the universe is wider than our views of it" (Thoreau, 1854/1939, p. 323). While the problems caused by the action of projective identification may be pandemic, complex and persistent, the solution may be as simple as opening a box.

Pandora, Inanna, Eve, and Alice;  
we are always curious, always curious  
opening doors and opening vessels,  
entering into forbidden places.

Seeing the No Trespassing sign  
we hear the song that sings,  
'on the other side  
it didn't say nothing'  
and we go right ahead,  
reclaiming the world.

We use the keys we  
were told to never touch;  
staining our fingers with blood  
as we uncover Blackbeard  
and all his violence.

We go down to meet Death  
or to follow the rabbit.

We don't only look  
in the mirror,  
We go through  
to the other side.

*How this Understanding Lives in Me Now*

Many theorists (Grotstein, Ogden, Sandler, Joseph, Young, Cashdan, Bion, J. S. Scharff, D. E. Scharff, Gabbard, Clarke, Shur, and others) have discussed various aspects of the phenomenon of projective identification including its relationship to empathy, its use as a means for the communication of otherwise incommunicable experience, the uncanny effects that are experienced by the recipients, and the healing power of the working through of these displaced experiential contents by the therapist within the context of a therapeutic relationship. My rather renegade investigations have led me to a significantly different vantage point, for my journey has been as Winnicott (1945) describes: "I gather this and that, here and there, settle down to clinical experience, form my own theories and then, last of all, interest myself in looking to see where I stole what" (p. 145). I have come upon an understanding of these unresolved, displaced, projected into another, autonomous, activating, and contagious experiences and what is required for their resolution that seems to suggest the need for a much wider application of an awareness of the existence and workings of projective identification. Here I will describe one example of my use of these understandings for my own healing. The use of this approach allowed the resolution of a significant residue from a very early trauma for which I had no explicit memory.

More than once my mother told me the story of how I was weaned. A middle class white family, like ours, in the United States in the middle

of the 20th century did not generally find much support for breastfeeding. Bottles and formula were thought to be far superior to the breast and its milk. So, it was notable that I was breastfed at all, and even more striking that I was a full nine months old when this weaning occurred. My mother had managed to follow her own impulse and resist the common sense of the day, but at this point she was unable to stand against a group of older neighbor women who had decided that it was time for this to stop. They seemed so sure and they were so insistent. The end to my nursing came when these neighbors arranged with my mother for me to be put in my crib in the bedroom with a baby bottle while they stayed with her and played bridge in the living room to prevent her relenting or responding to my cries; remaining until I had given up.

I found myself returning to this experience with my analyst although I had no conscious memory of the event. Following dreams and impressions, I had arrived at an almost-memory. My body remembered and as I spoke about the end of nursing, a numb feeling of deadness arose. My analyst suggested this deadness might have come when I had to deaden myself to deal with the pain. It seemed plausible, but it didn't feel right. As days went by, I wondered whether I actually had deadened myself to avoid feeling the extreme pain of this wrenching separation. Did I create this deadness in myself that would further interfere with the intimate connection between my mother and me? Would I, in this way, have made matters worse in order to avoid the pain?



I understood the idea that a person will sacrifice things to avoid feeling overwhelming pain and that this can be a necessary loss. Still something about it nagged at me. I kept feeling that in this case the answer was no, I had not done this to myself. It is hard to put my finger on just what nagged at me, but perhaps it was a sense of not-me-ness; this deadness just didn't fit me somehow. Then I began to wonder about these neighbor women who had felt so strongly that they had to stop my mother from continuing to nurse me. Apparently they could not abide an awareness that we were continuing to nurse. I felt certain that my mother would not have done such a thing to anyone, nor would I. Was there then some extreme distress that drove these women to make this demand? And did a contagion of their unacknowledged distress add to the pressure on my mother to succumb to their intrusion? I have seen similar results in other situations from what appear to be the effects of these displaced experiences resulting from projective identification. Further, if the process of projective identification was active at that time, did I also receive whatever was distressing them? It seemed to me that my own traumatic experience of longing and crying for my mother while being forcibly kept away from her would have left me vulnerable to whatever unconscious distress lay behind and beneath these women's intrusive action.

Since I have found an approach that seems to resolve the results of the action of these displaced experiences, I decided to apply it to myself, as I had done at other times. I knew from the prior applications of this

approach that I could begin by moving toward an imaginal memory of the situation as it was prior to the trauma. The imaginal memory that I am referring to here is not an abstract narrative or factual recollection but a true re-membering, an inner embodied engagement with a vivid image of the experience involving a full range of the impressions, senses, feelings, thoughts, and affects. By going toward such a memory I would be likely to encounter any obstruction or displaced experience associated with the traumatic rupture that had occurred. It seems that any received displaced experience will become activated through this attempt to reconnect with the prior undisturbed situation in which the projective identification occurred, and it will arise as an obstacle to a full imaginal connection.

So I began to attempt to recall my infant nursing experience. To my surprise I could not seem to do so at all. I could not even get close. While I could easily picture an abstract nursing scene, I could neither locate myself in it in any vivid way nor could I evoke any satisfying image of my mother nursing. I had expected to at least begin to remember and so I tried a number of times; but still I felt nothing. Then it struck me: This "nothing" might be the very feeling that I was after. This might be the predominant quality of the obstacle, the displaced experience that had been projected into me at the time. I seemed to be encountering a sense of numbness, deadness, a palpable lack of feeling. I followed the trail of this lack of feeling, continuing with the process, and opened myself to the experience I was encountering. I found myself experiencing what seemed

to be the numb, deadened world of these women, and there I recognized the same feeling of deadness that had arisen in my analysis. I could see, clearly now, that it was not mine. I saw that I had, indeed, not deadened myself but rather had been the recipient of their deadness, or at least a deadness that they carried into the situation. The deadness was inherent in that disturbed and disturbing situation and it seemed to me now that it was inevitable that I would have ended up carrying it away with me.

I continued the process by allowing a full immediate experience of this particular quality of deadness to permeate my awareness; allowing myself, in a sense, to be possessed by it. This is the phase of the process that seems to unravel the grip of the displaced experience, which in this case I had lived with for over 50 years. After just a few moments of this embodied and intense experience of the dead numbness, I felt it subside as is usually the case. Then suddenly and unexpectedly I saw and felt a vivid image of my mother's breast. Here was the imaginal memory that had seemed so elusive. Here was my own nursing experience. Here was my mother's beautiful, full, welcoming, ripe, nourishing, living breast. With the spontaneous arrival of this image, I found myself swept into an erotic experience of life and fullness, of desire and satisfaction. Now filled with energy, aliveness, and pleasure, I had myself back. I had returned to my own experience unfettered. I had regained access to the intimate connection I had shared with my mother long ago. I had regained what they had not been able to tolerate; what they had needed to block. It

seemed again, as it has at other times, that through the application of this process, when I felt into the experience of deadness deeply and fully enough, into the distressed predicament that was the source of the displaced experience, receiving the intolerable distress, which in this case was a sense of deadness, it totally resolved. Then, once I was no longer obstructed by an activation of that deadness which had long ago become linked to my experience of nursing through the traumatic weaning, I could easily and vividly remember my own experience with all of its rich vitality.

I also suspect that this numb deadness was a major factor in causing the weaning situation in the first place. I can easily imagine that they lived with, but could not tolerate feeling, exactly the deadness I had encountered. I have no doubt that they lacked any support to express or experience this horrible condition. Being confronted by the vital living intimacy in the nursing relationship between my mother and me was likely too much to bear. It would have rubbed against that repressed deadness like sandpaper; it would have thrown a glaring spotlight on what was lacking for them. So they needed to deaden our experience, to stop the aliveness of it. This would have relieved them in two ways: First by ending the ongoing pressure the nursing situation caused them and secondly by sending that deadness into us. In this way they would be at least partially relieved of its burden. Another way of looking at their need to project that sense of deadness into my mother and me is that it was

the only avenue of communication available. The only way they could communicate their numb deadness was by causing us to feel it.

When these suffering women orchestrated my weaning they stopped my mother and I from finding our own way forward which, along with our pain, was the simple and direct effect of what they did. They also gave us the experience of deadness that was most likely an integral part of their need to stop our intimate, sensual, affective, alive, loving nursing relationship. In that way they passed on this obstacle, to me and probably to my mother as well, which partially blocked our experience of what we had. But now it is as if it never happened. Of course the weaning itself did happen and it prevented us from going on with whatever we might have done otherwise. But I have regained what matters most. I have found the living image in memory of my loving nurturing full breasted mother, the one who held me and fed me and gave me life; and with that I have recovered the memory of myself being fed, held, loved, and enlivened.

I recognize the similarity between what I did and the therapeutic process of being with one's own pain and trauma. The ability to open experientially to the fullness of a painful event, with adequate support, is healing. However my experience in this work has been that when the difficulty lies in a displaced experience from the occurrence of projective identification, no amount of feeling into the problem as one's own history, one's own experience, will bring the relief that I have described. I had certainly done my best to be with this sense of deadness in the presence

of my quite adequately supportive analyst as if it were my own. I had felt open to the experience of it, shared it, felt it, and it went nowhere.

My experiences with this approach to the resolution of the pain and difficulties resulting from activated displaced experiences are the field of my current inquiry. My years of prior investigation have led me to these findings and understanding, and I am now faced with the need to explore, integrate, and explicate them. The many years of prior work have been founded in a depth exploration of my own experience and my further study will continue in the same manner. I find that I can join Jung in saying, "It is only as an empiricist, and never as a philosopher, that I have been concerned with depth psychology" (1949/1969, p. 11).

#### *History of My Desire to Deeply Understand Projective Identification*

The long and arduous road to this page began well over fifty years ago when a very small girl began to notice that there were things amiss in her family, things that no one spoke of and no one, not even her parents, understood. I was that young girl, and in the everpresent lucid world of the imagination, I still live in that childhood house, feeling those strange unspoken undercurrents—but now I meet and greet that little girl again and together we begin to find words for what was unspoken, for what was mostly unseen, and for what was at most barely, faintly conscious.

The process I used to resolve the deadness I felt in the case above and the new understanding of projective identification that led me to that

process are the results of a lengthy personal investigation. Its earliest reaches lie in that first awareness that there were some unmanageable problems in the adult world. Decades later, an inquiry into intractable problems came into clear focus and became the central endeavor of my mind and heart. This inquiry and my current research began when I found myself suddenly thrown deep into a horrible pit of desperate pain and darkness. Circumstances grabbed ahold of me and seemed to shatter everything I knew. It was in this dark and frightening time that I came face to face with an urgency to understand these seemingly intractable problems and my heuristic depth inquiry into the dark phenomenon of projective identification began. Clark Moustakas in his groundbreaking study *Loneliness* (1961), in which he developed and launched the use of a heuristic methodology in psychological research, describes this kind of beginning in a way that reminds me of my own experience.

I first began to discover the roots of my own loneliness during a family crisis when neither man nor reason could assuage the searing pain in my heart. This crisis was the instrument through which I plunged deeply into an intensive and timeless experience of the self. (p. ix)

This journey began for me over 16 years ago when an unanticipated series of shocking revelations led to the realization that my son and two stepdaughters had been victimized by perpetrators of ritualized sexual, emotional, and physical abuse. The horror of this knowledge pierced me like nothing else ever had. In those first days I fell totally apart and came together all at once. The dire situation demanded effective response and

my partner's own abuse history left most of the demands for this on me, even though the ground had fallen away from beneath my feet. I was shattered and galvanized. For years the subsequent struggle for safety, healing, and recovery consumed me. Far too often during this critical time I found myself in a maelstrom of uncertainties and confusion. It was hard to know what was real, what had happened, what to do.

Thankfully, I have always been drawn to the unknown. My earliest clear childhood memory is of a deep man's voice singing a lullaby about the stars and the moon as I lie gazing up through a small window into the night sky. My mother later recalled and confirmed the recording of Paul Robeson that I would have heard when my crib was under that small high window. As I looked up and out into that small square view of the sky, his rich, loving voice sang, "Do you want the stars to play with, the moon to run away with." I could see stars, but no moon. There was no moon anywhere in that little window of sky. I was filled with wondering about that absent moon. It was as if my whole body was thinking and feeling, "Where is the moon?" This early experience of wonder is my first memory of being filled with an unanswered, engrossing, and, for the time being, unanswerable question. This foreshadows many of the paths I have taken over the course of my life; paths inspired and guided by wondering about the unseen, the missing, and the present but invisible. This grew into a deep fascination with the workings of the unconscious and other less than obvious aspects of the natural world, both human and other than human.



This earliest childhood memory also suggests the evident beginnings of an ability to face and hold uncertainty. This was an ability that I would sorely need during those dark years of ritual abuse recovery.

It came to light that both of my step-daughters' parents were also victims of childhood ritual abuse. Not long before this crisis erupted, my son and I had come to live with their mother. Our three children attended the same preschool, which is how we originally met. Following the initial shock of the disclosures of the abuse, I embarked on a long journey that required confronting the ongoing revelations while grappling with the effects of the brutal traumas. Some long standing problems now made sense and some symptoms lessened, but there were many painful and troubling moments. Along with the understandable difficulties there were others that were profoundly confusing. We seemed to live in an intricate web of interpenetrating experiences that moved through our family like telegraph messages along unseen wires. Like new mothers and their infants we seemed to share inner experiences, but too many of these were painful and destructive. Moreover, they often resulted in significant interference with the intimate bonds so necessary for healing.

These dark and disturbing experiences echoing through our family often seemed to match the traumatic residues experienced by our oldest child and her mother. These were not the symptoms of trauma which they could easily access and share, but rather the ones that were most hidden and hardest to express. These were also the experiences that were most

tenacious and unresponsive to therapy. They seemed to persist, resistant and unrelenting, in the face of the provision of safety, family care, and good therapeutic support. At the time of these events I had been working as a mental health professional for over 22 years and yet these painful, disturbing, destructive, and persistent experiences drove me to the limits of my understanding of trauma and recovery. There were certain painful recurring problems that did not change, not at all, no matter what I did or didn't do. These problems were causing far too much trouble, adding pain and hardship when there was already far too much of both. I was utterly determined to do something helpful, something that would relieve us of these recurring destructive experiences, but I had no idea what. I needed to find out what would make a difference, and that need inspired the question that guided my many years of subsequent inquiry. I simply couldn't help but wonder and ask, "What in the world is going on here?"

My penchant for wondering about the unknown and my ability to abide uncertainty, along with a powerful and enduring desire to help my children, my partner, and myself, enabled me to stay tenaciously engaged with this question, although answers did not come easily. If I had been less personally involved I might have never grappled with this question, and even if I had I suppose I would have turned to other concerns after so many years of little progress. I was, however, deeply involved in every possible way and the circumstances of my life compelled me to continue; I could not abandon the inquiry.

I was seeing signs of something that looked like a capacity for the direct communication of experience. I was witnessing what appeared to be a phenomenon of one person directly experiencing the experience of another; experiencing it as an immediate inner perceptual reality that felt like his or her own experience. I saw that these experiences were entirely convincing to the receiving person who would not have any idea that they were not originating in their own experience of life. I watched how these transmitted experiences, powerful and compelling, would often motivate the receiver to say or do things that were uncharacteristic of them, things that were sometimes later regretted. These destructive instances of this mysterious process of the transmission of experience captured my full attention. I closely observed what I could discern, which was very like watching the movement of leaves to determine how the wind is blowing. It was clear to me that I was observing the effects of some unseen force. It was also clear to me that this unseen force and its effects were at the core of at least some of the worst and most persistent problems that had resulted from the horrific abuse that we were still dealing with.

Beyond the desire to understand what was going on, I was also hoping to find the means to resolve these painful events. My strongest desire was to help those I loved. Success in this way was very slow in coming. Perhaps the first glimmer of relief came after it dawned on me that some of these persistent problems closely matched the feeling states that I imagined must have been active in the perpetrators during the

abuse. In other words, the symptoms of the distress seemed to echo the exact details of experiences that may have been driving the perpetrators during the abuse. This fit the transmission of experience that I had been observing. During the abuse there must have been a passing on of the intolerable experiences that were driving the perpetrators. On some occasions sharing this insight with whoever was being most directly tormented by the transmitted experience seemed to provide a measure of limited relief. However, it was in no way a cure nor did it prevent further episodes of the same problem. Nonetheless, the relief that it apparently offered was welcome in the absence of any other aid. A number of years later, as I continued to struggle for more understanding and for more effective remedies, I came upon a description, for the first time, of the phenomenon of projective identification.

Projective identification has been described as a necessary means for communicating otherwise incommunicable experience and it has also been described as a defense against the experience of intolerable affects. It has been seen as a mode of defensive attack, as well as an attempt to control or to harm the recipient. It can cause, in the recipient, a feeling state or experience that does not seem to be responsive in the usual ways to expression, self-reflection, feeling into, association to seemingly related memories, and so on. In my view, it is an experience that is not one's own, which turns out to be originating in someone else. Experiences are apparently transmissible. We can, in this way, experience the experiences

of others as an inner perceptual knowing that seems to be our own. This is reported both in and out of therapy and can play havoc with intimate relationships and interfere with healing and recovery when it is not seen for what it is. Through a gradual integration of the array of information that I found on the phenomenon of projective identification with my own findings and experience I began to formulate an understanding that I hoped would lead to a more effective response to the problems I had been confronting and experiencing so vividly in my own family.

The notion of the existence of an unconscious and of our actions being motivated by unconscious contents is not new. I was familiar with these ideas long before any of my investigations into this phenomenon began. It is clear that various unseen forces may be contributing to our impulses, motivations, viewpoints, and so on, even when we have other apparently adequate conscious explanations with which we are satisfied. For a long time I had known that I was dealing with something more than personal unconscious forces. Understanding projective identification takes us a significant step beyond the personal in investigating the conceivable sources of what appear to be our feelings, thoughts, motives, impulses, and so on; in a word, our experiences. Not only do these often arise from aspects of our own lives of which we are unaware, from our personal unconscious, they can arise from the experiences of another. I had seen this reality and lived in the confusion and trouble it causes. I had also experienced the deeply confounding fact that until these mysteriously

transmitted experiences are recognized as being from another, from the originating person, they absolutely appear to be one's own. They are experienced as coming from "in here," not from "out there." They are persuasive and compelling. Perhaps this is because they involve real and true feelings connected to an authentic experience (albeit not one's own). They do not arrive as apparent messages from another but rather they emerge within our own inner experiencing, our own sense of self.

The search for a truly helpful response to this problem was central to my quest. As the years progressed I found that I too was vulnerable to these displaced experiences. The recovery of my partner was very difficult and she was often gripped by extremely disturbed states of mind. She was unpredictable, sometimes verbally abusive, physically threatening, and even occasionally assaultive. Between handling her volatile condition and managing the recovery of the children, the stress of my position took a large toll. I found that I was beginning to have some of the same distressing feelings that I had observed in her. My desire to uncover a remedy became stronger than ever. I did what I could to uncover the forces at work and I continued to gain insights into the phenomenon. My depth of understanding grew but I continued to fail to find any method of real resolution. These repeated failures did not dissuade me from trying everything I thought might help. I learned from each failed attempt but this seemed to bring me no closer to what I sought. Without a sense of progress, I seemed to be wandering endlessly over the same ground.

Then suddenly I realized I had found it. I had finally come upon something new and remarkable. It had been 13 years since the erupting distress in my family had caused me to ask, "What in the world is going on here?" Since then my understanding had grown enormously but now for the very first time I discovered that I had apparently arrived at something that was strikingly effective. A few weeks earlier I had been musing deeply over one particular displaced experience that had been plaguing me for a few years. It was an unusual and very distressing state of anxious tension with an intensely disturbing bodily component that felt electric. I had felt traces of it many times when my partner was in the grip of it and she had often described it to me. I had only begun to be bothered by it myself after some events with her that were very traumatic for me. It had then become an irritating and constantly recurring event in my life. Several times each week I would find myself suddenly gripped by its extreme unpleasant sensations. There was no doubt in my mind as to its origin for I had practically observed its direct transmission from her to me. I knew that it was a displaced experience that had been passed to me through her unconscious use of projective identification.

On an afternoon drive, I had spent a period of time thinking deeply about this problem and exploring in my mind, in a detailed way, what the exact experience was like. In the course of these musings I felt that I had come to a deeper understanding of the experience, which I hoped would be of value when I found myself in its familiar grip the next time. After

this, for the first time, I was actually looking forward to its recurrence. I was eager to see if my new level of understanding would help dispel the distress I always felt during these events. Days and then weeks went by without any chance to try out my new insight. After weeks of fruitlessly waiting for an occurrence of this very familiar condition, it dawned on me that I must have stumbled on something new, something that worked far better than anything I had previously tried. For the first time I had found a way to actually resolve the problem. This serendipitous success left me with the new quandary of figuring out what I had done. It took me a few months of further investigation to replicate this success and that was the beginning of the development of the process I am now using.

I found that an empathic availability and openness is the requisite solution. It is the same openness and empathy that heals the distress of a hurt child or allows an adult in therapy to recover wholeness and health after trauma. The crucial difference is that it is essential that this needed openness and embodied empathic receptivity be applied directly to the projected experience and not directed toward the receiving person who is in its grip. It is my impression that empathic receptivity to "my" distress when experiencing this condition would not have relieved me of it. It has now been more than three years since that memorable summer afternoon when, as I was deeply contemplating the embodied feeling of that one problem, I unraveled that displaced experience. I have never once had another occurrence of that particular miserable experience even though,



before that day, it had been a reliably frequent and stubbornly tenacious part of my daily life. Since then I have continued my explorations, refining my understandings, checking and rechecking what I found, and seeking to determine which elements of what I did that afternoon are essential in order to arrive at the complete resolution that I stumbled upon.

This is the very process that I refer to above in my description of resolving the deadness that had blocked my recollection of the intimacy of nursing in my own infancy. Some years before I arrived at the realizations that have made it possible to resolve these persistent and destructive conditions, I wrote a poem that was in part an outpouring of the dark landscape I had come to inhabit and yet also a foreshadowing of the understanding that was to come (see pages 415-417). It is called "Do Not." Alongside the pain and the struggle I was experiencing, it speaks of the enduring value of this empathic receptivity. It is in Appendix A which also includes a later poem, on page 418, "Rainmaker" (Rose, 2005, p. 6) speaking of the intimate process of transformation involved in the opening to, receiving, and resolution of projective identification in therapy.

I can reflect now on the many years of pain, hardship, and struggle with a sense that there was some deep value beyond the obvious in my tenacious hold on the problem at hand. In a very real sense I just had no choice, as my own well-being and that of my children hinged largely on my ability to stay present in the fray of all that we were enduring. For that alone it would of course have been worth it. Beyond that, it seems to

me that my perseverance has borne other fruit. I stayed with the darkness that had come into my life, and I found a new light. I am reminded of the power of going down into the depths, of embracing as much as possible the painful, dark, and sometimes deathlike realities that come. Hillman (1983) speaks of this as he discusses the importance of the depth dimension, "The true revolution (in behalf of the soul) begins in the individual who can be true to his or her depression" (p. 53).

This personal initiation into an understanding of the existence, effects, and remedy of projective identification has been through my own direct compelling experience and I agree with Ogden (1982) that

Projective identification is not a metapsychological concept. The phenomena it describes exist in the realm of thoughts, feelings, and behavior, *not* in the realm of abstract beliefs about the workings of the mind. Whether or not one uses the term or is cognizant of the concept of projective identification, clinically one continually bumps up against the phenomena to which it refers. (p. 1)

Projective identification is as real as the tides and its effects shape our life experience whenever we come under the sway of its force. My inquiry into this phenomenon has always included a profound desire to find solutions. I have sought understandings that would allow for the full recovery from this transpersonal aspect of trauma, this mysterious visitor that arrives unannounced as if by magic through a doorway that opens into the center of our own inner experience, taking up residence there too often to our detriment. Now, at this point, I want to understand the phenomenon and the application of this process of resolution more thoroughly and deeply,

and I also hope to integrate my findings and understandings with those of others, and to articulate and convey these ideas coherently.

*The Relevance of a Depth Psychological Understanding of Projective Identification to the Practice of Clinical Psychology*

Within the therapeutic relationship the patient and therapist each have their own history, inclinations, and complexes; as well as conscious and unconscious experiences. Beyond this, the ability of the therapist to receive the experience of the patient is a crucial ingredient in the creation of the therapeutic opportunity for healing. This involves a willingness and ability to move deeply into the dark and painful confusion of the patient's difficulties, to welcome and contain the affects and impressions that lie at the threshold of the patient's unconscious. It also involves the ability of the therapist to stay grounded in his or her own perspective, at the same time as entering as much as possible into the patient's experience. This allows being with, feeling into, and thinking about the unfelt, unintegrated contents of the patient's psyche. Effective therapy is a meeting between the being of the therapist and the being of the patient in a closely shared awareness of the patient's experience.

Projective identification has, in its capacity to directly convey the inner experience of the patient to the therapist, a great potential to enrich the therapeutic process. Conversely, any blindness to its presence may seriously obfuscate understanding and result in significant confusions. If,

for instance, a therapist receives the patient's otherwise unexpressed anger but mistakes it for his or her own, this may provoke an impression of being annoyed or angry at the patient, while completely missing the opportunity for insight. An increased understanding of this phenomenon and its effects could facilitate a broader awareness and recognition of it among clinicians which would help to alleviate these therapeutic confusions and contribute to an increase in clinical efficacy.

The effects of unrecognized projective identification on clinicians in the form of compelling states of mind can be troubling and disruptive to the therapeutic relationship. Discussing these disturbing potential results of projective identification Shur observes that, "Deeply disturbed patients . . . bombard us with symptoms that potently move us to react, that seem to cry out for control or retribution or distancing" (Shur, 1994, p. 8). When these forces are not recognized and understood, there is the risk that they will be repeatedly acted upon, even if with some containment, and that is almost guaranteed to be counterproductive in therapy.

Similarly the effect on our patients of the burden of displaced experiences resulting from projective identification that has been visited on them in the course of their lives may constitute some of the most persistent and troubling elements of the difficulties they bring to therapy. Indeed, these compelling effects constitute states of mind that are so gripping and impactful they can seem as though one were possessed by something more potent than one's own nature. I cannot help but wonder

if Jung (1951/1978) was actually, without realizing it, referring to these displaced experiences in the following description of the shadow. "Closer examination of the dark characteristics—that is, the inferiorities constituting the shadow—reveals that they have an *emotional* nature, a kind of autonomy, and accordingly an obsessive or, better, possessive quality" (p. 8 [CW 9 Pt. 2, para. 15]). If some of these dark and too often destructive elements of distressed human experience are in actuality the manifestation of displaced experiences resulting from the process of prior projective identification, then a deeper understanding of this phenomenon could point the way toward more efficacious treatment.

It is widely recognized (e.g., Apprey & Stein, 1993; Scharff, 1992; Schore, 2003) that the quite often bewildering phenomenon of projective identification is viewed in significantly differing ways by various theorists, and that there is very little consensus in describing how it functions. "The term is used in different ways by different clinicians and theoreticians, and thus one cannot be certain of the specific meaning that applies to the term in any given instance" (Gabbard, 1999, p. 3). In my years in the field of psychotherapy, as a student and a practitioner, I have found that an understanding of projective identification and its effects is rare and any application of awareness of the phenomenon in the classroom or clinical setting, outside of psychoanalysis, is unusual. Perhaps its obscurity is in part due to the absence of coherent, accessible descriptions of its form, characteristics, and actions. My hope is that a new depth psychological

understanding may contribute to a more comprehensive and explicit description of this important psychic function and thereby contribute to a wider awareness of projective identification and an application of that awareness in both education and clinical work.

An increased understanding of projective identification may also significantly improve treatment outcomes in many specific difficult clinical situations, such as the occurrence of persistent guilt and shame in sexual abuse or assault recovery, the recurrent return by a victimized partner to an abusive situation involving threats and/or domestic violence, and in situations involving intimate victimization by a sadistic partner. The action of displaced experiences resulting from projective identification may be highly significant factors in these and other situations that involve intractable, dangerous, and destructive therapeutic challenges.

For survivors of sexual abuse or assault the reassurance and understanding that they were not responsible for the sexualization of these encounters or for the violating acts of the perpetrators may be inadequate to resolve or dispel intractable feelings of guilt and shame. It is very likely that sexual perpetrators lack the ability to tolerate their own affective experience. Furthermore, in most cases, while they are engaged in committing these violating sexual acts they will have to defend against experiencing their own profound feelings of shame and guilt. These real, congruent, intolerable feelings of shame and guilt over the harm they are compulsively causing are apt to be unconsciously directed into the victim

during the abuse or assault. Pre-existing guilt and shame may also be among the forces behind the urge to commit the violation. Part of the urge to violate another in these cases may be the need to find someone who will become the receptacle in which to rid oneself of these intolerable feelings. Therefore, the shame and guilt experienced by the surviving victim is most likely the affective experience of the perpetrator, displaced into the victim at the time of the assault. When this is the case, attempts to resolve the feelings as if they belong to the experience of the victim may fail, for the experience is not the product of his or her own psyche. However, when the persistent experience of shame and guilt is seen as a displaced experience, the result of projective identification, it can be felt into as belonging to and coming from the perpetrator. Then it may lose its grip. It can be seen for what it actually is: a coherent and vivid source of information about the feeling state and condition of the perpetrator. As insight into the actual affective abuse situation, through insight into the perpetrator's condition, it adds to the healing rather than persisting as a devastating and debilitating obstacle. A new depth understanding and an accessible coherent description of the workings of projective identification in these situations, for clinicians who are working with patients recovering from sexual abuse and assault, might be extremely useful.

Although shame and guilt may also be important factors in ongoing abusive relationships such as those involving domestic violence, feelings of powerlessness may be even more critical in the clinical work with this

population. Perpetrating partners in abusive relationships are apt to have defensively inflated feelings of false competence and power with disowned underlying intolerable feelings of helplessness, powerlessness, and deep dependence on the victimized partner who is controlled through coercion, violence, and intimidation; and through the perpetrator's intolerable feelings of helplessness, powerlessness and dependence which are directed into the victimized partner, effectively disempowering them.

If at some point an attempt is made by the victimized partner to escape the relationship, the threatened absence of their victim, upon whom they are vitally dependant (in part because of their need for someone into whom to project these intolerable feelings), can trigger panic and disorientation, as well as a sense of desperate need in the perpetrating partner. Then these even more extreme experiences of powerlessness and desperation are also thrown into the victimized partner who is now trying to leave, or to stay away. This defense protects the perpetrator from becoming overwhelmed by these intolerable extremely disturbing feelings. It further is apt to prevent the threatened departure by overwhelming and disempowering the victimized partner who will take the experiences of panic, disorientation, desperation, and dependence on the partner to be his or her own. These displaced experiences may significantly contribute to the frequency with which people in abusive relationships fail in their attempts to escape, and return instead to the perpetrators. Furthermore the perpetrator's relief when the victim returns



will also be intolerable for the perpetrator, as it is linked to dependency needs, and it will further solidify the return when it, too, is directed into the victim who will be convinced that this is his or her own great relief at being reunited with the partner. A better understanding born of a depth perspective and a clear and accessible description of the destructive workings of projective identification in abusive relationships could be of great benefit to those offering clinical care to this population as well.

The lore of vampires tells us that they can be found out when a mirror is at hand because they have no reflection. To my mind this represents the absence of an authentic engaged experiencing self. Similarly sadistic partners, lacking an adequate sense of self, cannot risk the mirroring of real intimacy any more than vampires can risk the light of day. Like vampires, sadistic partners mimic the intimacy of love while injecting their intolerable, hidden, desperate, deathlike condition into their victim partners and robbing them of their vigor, their lifeblood. The victims in these exchanges become entranced by the projection into their experience of the powerful relief and pleasure obtained by the sadistic partners when they succeed at securing a victim, which convincingly mimics their own pleasure. Ironically the high intensity of the need and therefore the intensity of the relief may convince the victimized partner that this experience of "love" and "pleasure" is far more intense and therefore more "real" than other, healthier, relationships they have been involved in. They often hopelessly devote themselves to trying to love and

care for these sadistic partners, while being perpetually drained of their own creative capacities. They may feel absolutely dependant on their partner for life itself; this being the actual experience of the sadistic partner who is unable to maintain their own sense of aliveness without possessing the life of the partner. Actual love, growth, caring, change, and healing are not possible until there is an ending of the exploitation and the true dynamics of the situation are revealed. Having a deeper understanding of projective identification might make it possible to sort out the intricate and confusing dynamics of this type of destructive relationship in a patient's current or past experience.

I am inclined to think that projective identification is the most significant unseen and underlying causative factor in all of the various intractable problems of living and loving. I have specified certain clinical situations, above, in which this phenomenon seems to me to be vitally important, both for the understanding of the dynamics of the situations and for successful treatment. In the larger field of human experience, whenever a person is in any traumatic and intolerable situation, lacking a supportive other who could assist them in being with (hence processing) that experience, it may of necessity become displaced through the action of projective identification.

If this is the case then we may now be living in a world that is highly saturated with these unresolved displaced experiences moving through families and groups, transmitted from person to person by the

action of projective identification. These displaced experiences are likely being acted upon by those burdened with their presence as if they are as authentic and compelling for the recipient as the original intolerable situation actually was. This may be a pandemic and vastly unrecognized, underlying causative factor in uncountable instances of misery and suffering. Many theorists, among them Joseph (1987) and Sandler (1987), have stressed the impact of projective identification on clinical work while others (e.g., Clarke, 2003; Grotstein, 1981; Young, 2003) have gone further, proposing that the discovery of this unconscious function of the human psyche is as significant as the original "discovery" of the unconscious at the beginning of the last century.

The notion that projective identification has been recently discovered, however, may be akin to Columbus' alleged discovery of the Americas. Many indigenous cultures have described various psychological events such as voluntary and involuntary possession states, casting of spells, and so on. These may constitute earlier descriptions of what we now call projective identification. In the following comment by Stevens (1993) on early conceptions of illness, physical and mental, there are suggestions of this projective identification transmission of experience.

In many traditional cultures illness is regarded as a manifestation of the archetype of the evil intruder—that is to say, it is thought to be an external force or object which has intruded into the body. Such an alien force or object is not merely the cause of the illness: it *is* the illness. Healing consists in removing it. (p. 108)

He goes on to add the following critique of our modern view. "By replacing demonic theories with neuroscientific theories, much practical progress has been made, but in the process we have devalued the spirit and lost touch with the meanings enshrined in the old therapeutic rituals and myths" (p. 110). Perhaps some of that lost meaning can be recovered and contribute anew to the healing power of therapy.

There is a cloud of confusion around this phenomenon and strong disagreement about how it actually functions. Perhaps for these reasons it is therapeutically underutilized. A grave lack of clarity over its means of action and its effects, as well as a dearth of useful strategies for dealing with its often disturbing and destructive impact on relationships, may have effectively prevented the growth of a broader familiarity with the phenomenon among clinicians. It is my hope that this investigation into an understanding of the workings and effects of projective identification from a depth psychological point of view, as well as an exploration of solutions to the problems it creates arising from this understanding, will contribute a measure of clarity which will encourage an increase in the utilization of an awareness of this phenomenon by a larger base of students, teachers and practitioners of clinical psychology.

In terms of the relatively frequent lack of familiarity with projective identification and its effects, in the field; as well as its underutilization as a vital therapeutic concept, Ogden (1982) comments that,

Resistance on the part of therapists and analysts to thinking about these phenomena is understandable: it is unsettling to imagine experiencing feelings and thinking thoughts that are in an important sense not entirely one's own. And yet, the lack of a vocabulary with which to think about this class of phenomena seriously interferes with the therapist's capacity to understand, manage, and interpret the transference. (p. 1)

And while it can be unsettling to imagine having experiences that are not exactly one's own, it may even more disturbing to be in the midst of this experience. Here is an image offered by Yalom and Leszcz (2005) that effectively suggests the confusing nature of these situations: "Projective identification resembles two distorting mirrors facing each other producing increasing distortions as the reflected images bounce back and forth" (p. 366). Further, the *DSM-IV-TR* definition of projective identification by the American Psychiatric Association (2000) ends with, "Not infrequently, the individual induces the very feelings in others that were first mistakenly believed to be there, making it difficult to clarify who did what to whom first" (p. 812). It may be difficult to think clearly about what is going on in such a situation, and this may contribute to the lack of attention given to projective identification by many practitioners and educators in the field. It is my hope that this depth perspective may offer more clarity and open the way for an increased professional engagement with the phenomenon.

Along with a need for improvements in the clinical practice of therapeutic recovery from abuse, trauma, and various destructive and disabling states, there is a need for a clearer understanding of what will

promote psychological health, indeed a need for more clarity about what exactly constitutes mental health (Siegel, 2005). It seems to me that when people experience themselves as whole, healthy, centered, clear, or coherent they are necessarily in touch with their own experience and able to speak in their own authentic voice which emerges congruently from that experience (see also Gilligan, 2002). It may only be when someone's own experiencing awareness and authentic voice are not obscured by other compelling experiences and expressions (the displaced experiences from received and unrecognized projective identification) that this coherence is possible. In our ongoing search for health and wholeness, and for the necessary knowledge, skills, and understanding to help others to that same end, it seems vitally important to consider the action of projective identification. It may be a major source of the destructive conflicts that interfere with our well-being and with the health of our relationships. When it is active, it is often overlooked. The action and various results of projective identification constitute an unavoidable, compelling, and haunting presence that lives far outside of our awareness while it impacts the most intimate of our experiences. For this reason an increased understanding of this phenomenon and the means for the resolution of its destructive effects may be an unparalleled path to the restoration of authenticity, freedom, and intimacy.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review of the Topic

This review of the literature relevant to a depth psychological understanding of projective identification is organized into six sections. The first addresses the use of a depth psychological approach. The next section reviews literature on the phenomenon of projective identification. The following two sections review literature related to two areas of uncertainty: the enigmatic nature of projective identification and the controversy regarding how it occurs. Then there is a section summarizing the need for research on this topic within the field of clinical psychology. The last section is the statement of the research problem and question. Literature reviews relevant to my specific theoretical approach to this research can be found within the Methodology and Procedures section.

### *Literature Review of a Depth Psychological Approach*

The current theory and practice of depth psychology emerged during the twentieth century. Yet some far earlier works reveal a similar perspective. Among the most ancient is the Taoist classic *The Tao Te Ching*. Its author, Lao Tzu (circa 500 BC/1996), is said to have written this when he paused at a mountain pass as he walked out of the known world, ending his historical life. In Verse 41 we find the following:

The brightest path seems dark  
 the quickest path seems slow  
 the smoothest path seems rough  
 the highest virtue low  
 the whitest white pitch-black  
 the greatest virtue wanting  
 the staunchest virtue timid  
 the truest truth uncertain  
 the perfect square lacks corners  
 the perfect tool does nothing  
 the perfect form is shapeless  
 the Tao is hidden and has no name  
 but because it's the Tao  
 it knows how to start and how to finish

Drawing from this early text, I would describe the unconscious as dark, slow, rough, low, pitch-black, wanting, timid, uncertain, lacking corners, doing nothing, shapeless, and nameless. Of course any attempt to conclusively describe the unconscious is apt to be futile, as Lao Tzu may have been suggesting when he wrote, "The Tao that can be described is not the eternal Tao" (Verse 1).

To delve into the seeming darkness of the unconscious in order to encounter and shed light on a psychological phenomenon, is to function in a quintessentially Taoist and paradoxical manner. This path also suggests a hermeneutic inquiry that moves repeatedly away from the known into the unknown in order to arrive at some hitherto undiscovered awareness. Although this approach brings with it the challenges and uncertainties of any attempt to explore unmapped territory, it also offers potential access to new, previously untapped, areas of experience, knowledge, insight, and understanding that would otherwise be inaccessible. When the area of



inquiry involves an unconscious psychological process that exists almost entirely outside of awareness and only becomes accessible through its partial intrusions into consciousness, such as projective identification, then the use of a depth psychological approach to that understanding is not only fitting, but may be indispensable.

Although Bleuler is given credit for the first use of the term depth psychology (tiefen-psychologie), Freud is most often called the father of depth psychology (Ellenberger, 1970, p. 490) because he developed an awareness and appreciation of the significance and value of what is called the unconscious, or depth dimension of experience, which far surpassed any that had been articulated before him. While he was not the first to identify the existence of an unconscious (Hunt, 1993), Freud did develop, practice, and teach a new approach to psychological treatment that relied on gaining awareness of what was not being consciously experienced. He used various techniques for accessing and understanding the depths of a person's being, the contents of the unconscious; and these techniques have informed the field of depth psychology since the beginning of the last century with his major publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900/1994). In his own description of his work Freud (1959) made it clear that his approach was "a psychology of those processes in mental life which are withdrawn from consciousness" (p.127).

Freud's exposure to the work of neurologists Jean-Martin Charcot and Hippolyte Bernheim (Mitchell & Black, 1995), who utilized forms of

hypnosis and suggestion to the unconscious during hypnosis, contributed to his development of a psychology of unconscious processes. His work was enriched through collaboration with Breuer who, with his patient Anna O. (Bertha Pappenheim), had discovered some efficacy through the use of a form of cathartic revealing conversation which involved sharing of hitherto unshared disturbing experiences that were associated with the inception of hysterical symptoms. Freud also developed his theory of the unconscious and his psychoanalytic method through self-analysis as well as through his work with patients. His contributions to an understanding of the unconscious, to depth psychology, gained further development in the later work of many of his colleagues, students, and others who were influenced by his ideas. Some of these became well known for their own contributions. Practitioners and theorists such as Jung, Adler, and Rank continued their own development from Freud's fundamental insight into the power and value of the unconscious. The body of knowledge and practices that have grown from these beginnings is known as depth psychology and includes a wide variety of ways of working with that deep dark realm of experience that is outside of our usual awareness.

In his work on the history of the unconscious, Ellenberger (1970) says, "depth psychology claimed to furnish a key to the exploration of the unconscious mind" (p. 490). Furthering that exploration has been the central practice of depth psychology and continues to offer insights of many kinds to those who venture into the psychological realm of what we

know but do not know that we know. The methods used in the practice of depth psychology have grown to include many approaches that aid in the exploration of the unconscious such as "dream analysis, imagery, writing, body movement, free association, various kinds of tests, stimulus words, and so on" (Ferrucci, 1982, p. 36). These techniques of depth psychology share with dreams themselves the attribute of bridging the gap between the conscious mind and the unconscious, or those aspects of the self, memory, and experience that are outside our awareness. Johnson (1986) sums up the value of depth psychology when he says that "the dialogue of conscious mind with unconscious gives rise to the transcendent function, the self, that stands as the synthesis of the two" (p. 140).

Perhaps the value of a depth approach is not in how much we discover or learn about the unconscious but, rather, in the fact that the unconscious knows so much about us. It is, by definition, the accumulated knowledge and wisdom regarding our lives that is beyond our usual grasp. For this reason we have much to gain from any approach that allows us to increase our access to our own unconscious material. It may, in fact, be a dire mistake to neglect the depth, or unconscious, dimension. As Hillman (1983) points out, "a society that does not allow its individuals 'to go down' cannot find its depth and must remain permanently inflated in a manic mood disorder disguised as 'growth' " (p. 51). This inflated growth that has lost touch with its roots in the unconscious has little real vitality.

Unconscious personal material includes memories that are not recollected consciously, desires and motives of which we are not aware, dreams and wishes that we have forgotten exist, and more. These are among the unseen, unknown forces that have a powerful hand in shaping our impulses, viewpoints, choices, actions, reactions, and so forth. These contents of the unconscious may be far more accurate in explaining our feelings and actions than the conscious ideas we have when we think we know why we do what we do and feel what we feel. Not only are there aspects of our personal history that lie below the surface of awareness and are yet to be seen and known, but our current thoughts, feelings, desires, impressions, and actions are capable of disappearing from our conscious view. Recognizing this psychic reality brings an awareness that is both empowering and humbling. This awareness can inspire and deepen our receptive sensitivity to the vital significance of anomalous personal information. These are the signs that point out the errors in our conscious ideas about what is actually going on in our lives. This awareness will empower our engagement in various productive, albeit sometimes challenging, inquiries into the hidden regions of our own experience, and can lead us into a deeper understanding of both our own and of shared human experience. Progoff (1956) made reference to this when he said that "Depth psychology [is] the study of man and all that pertains to him in terms of the magnitude of the human personality and the dimensions of experience that underlie and transcend consciousness" (p. 23).

### *Literature Review of Projective Identification*

Projective identification has most often been described as a means of communicating otherwise incommunicable experience (e.g., Grotstein, 1981; Joseph, 1987; Schore, 2003; Spillius, 2002). At times it has also been described as a defensive attack or as an attempt to harm or to control the recipient (e.g., Feldman, 2002; Gabbard, 2000; Grotstein, 1981; Klein, 1946). This dichotomy is summarized by Segal (1992).

It can be a very powerful means of communication of feelings (used by babies or small children before they can talk, for example). It can also be used as a destructive attack, with nasty or unbearable or 'mad' parts of the self evoked in other people in order to destroy their comfort, their peace of mind or their happiness. (p. 36)

This seems to match the various uses of vocal language which can be used as a means of communication and in other instances as a means to attack or to control another. In either case projective identification has been observed to be a powerful and compelling unconscious process that has a noticeable and significant impact on the people toward whom it is directed (e.g., Cashdan, 1988; Feldman, 2002; Gabbard, 2000; Klein, 1957, Scharff & Scharff, 1991). It is described as a rather mysterious phenomenon that is fairly pervasive, sometimes unavoidable, at times destructive, and potentially valuable.

The term projective identification was first used by Klein (1946) in her article "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms." She discussed the existence of this phenomenon in her description of splitting processes in

early infancy. She considered it to be "the prototype of an aggressive object-relation" (p. 102). Since then the concept of this phenomenon has been developed by many Kleinian object relations theorists as well as members of other schools of psychoanalytic psychology.

Projective identification occurs within the mother-infant dyad where the mother and the preverbal infant take part in a mutually projecting and receiving shared experience, as the primary way for the pair to effectively communicate in rich and intimate, albeit verbally unarticulated, detail (e.g., Schore, 2003; Segal, 1992). This is also a primary means whereby mothers are able to help their infants to manage their distress (Schore, 2003, p. 65). Through the infant's use of projective identification painful experiences can be received, held, and contained by the mother. The infant receives the benefit of the mother's ability to tolerate the distress. Without this process the infant could be left experientially alone and the distress would become far more overwhelming or traumatic.

The phenomenon of projective identification and its various consequences continue to occur throughout the human life span in a wide range of forms from empathy to abuse. It is possible that it is involved in a variety of psychic occult phenomena, including instances of possession (Bilu, 1987) or psychic attack. It may be the way in which sensations are shared during heightened moments of sexual intimacy when the distinct sensual pleasure or arousal of one partner is directly experienced by the other. This may also be the vehicle being used by those who practice

certain psychic activities such as channeling or the offering of psychic readings. It could be a factor in some cases of psychic healing, since a person who is relieved of some intolerable experience of distress, by someone who is capable of both receiving and processing it, might find that they experience a somatic relief as well as a psychic one.

In the Object Relations school of psychotherapy a great deal of attention has been given to the presence, signs, and action of projective identification within the therapeutic relationship and its relevance to clinical work (Bion, 1962/1983; Cashdan, 1988; Scharff, 1992; and others). One aspect of the therapeutic value of the phenomenon is described by Spillius (2002) in the following way:

Although everyone agrees with Klein that the patient should not be blamed for the analyst's deficiencies of understanding, we are now much more prepared to believe that patients attempt to arouse in the analyst feelings that they cannot tolerate in themselves but which they unconsciously wish to express and which can be understood by the analyst as communication. (p. 62)

The patient, having neither access to an awareness of these intolerable experiences nor the articulation necessary to convey them verbally, can nonetheless, through projective identification, communicate their experiential state effectively to the therapist. This communication is greatly improved when the therapist becomes aware that they are receiving these communications via projective identification rather than experiencing them as if they are their own reactions and hence mistaking their origin. "If the analyst on the receiving end is really open to what is

going on and able to be aware of what he is experiencing, this can be a powerful method of gaining understanding" (Joseph, 1987, p. 67).

*Literature Review of the Enigmatic Nature of Projective Identification*

Many theorists and practitioners have noted the rampant confusion and wide disagreements that surround the clinical concept of projective identification (e.g., Apprey & Stein, 1993; Clarke, 2003; Hamilton, 1996; Scharff, 1992; Schore, 2003; Staltaro, 2003). This aura of confusion and uncertainty may have predated the original explicit description of the phenomenon in the field:

The introduction of the concept of projective identification by Melanie Klein in 1946 was set against a rather confused and confusing background of literature on various forms of internalization and externalization—imitation, identification, fantasies of incorporation, and many varieties of projection. (Sandler, 1987, p. 13)

It is conceivable to me that, due to its effects, the existence of the phenomenon of projective identification itself, even before it was recognized and described by Klein, may have contributed mightily to the confusion that Sandler describes.

This confusion and the difficulty in understanding projective identification have not been easy to ignore since the phenomenon continues to present itself in ways that attest to its importance. In conversation with Anna Freud, Sandler (1985) remarked "One day we



shall have to get to grips with what the Kleinians are trying to encompass under the concept of projective identification" (p. 458).

*Literature Review of the Controversy over How Projective Identification Occurs*

The phenomenon of projective identification may involve an intersubjective mutuality of experiencing selves in a shared field of awareness. On the other hand some contend that the phenomenon is not a direct transmission but rather occurs only through concrete physical, interpersonal interactions. Whatever the actual process entails, we know that in therapy the patient may project intolerable experiences into the experience of the therapist who will experience these as if they were his or her own. "It is often experienced by the recipient as coercive. There is no choice: one not only finds oneself playing a role in someone else's internal drama, one feels unable to stop doing so. The recipient feels controlled from within" (Ogden, 1989, p. 26). In this ongoing controversy of divergent opinions about the actual mechanism of transmission a western individualist, materialist cultural view may tend to assume that there must be various nonverbal and verbal physical cues to cause the effects that have been observed. Other more collective and spiritualist cultural views might be more apt to allow for the possibility of direct noncausal transmission of experience between people without assuming the need for material means of action.

Whatever the means, it seems clear that something is going on here; and that it involves a potent and effective interaction between the consciousnesses of at least two people. This controversial interaction blurs the boundaries of identity. "Projective identification is understood as a psychological-interpersonal process in which there is a partial collapse of the dialectic of subjectivity and intersubjectivity" (Ogden, 1994, p. 9). It has been thought that the main purpose of projective identification is for the person with whom it originates to be able to get rid of experiences that they cannot bear to hold as their own, and in that case the whole thing could be taking place within that one person. However, the results that so reliably occur in the recipients, reflecting the projected material, raise some doubts about this intrapsychic idea.

We could say that, from the point of view of the individual who uses such mechanisms strongly, projective identification is a fantasy, and yet it can have a powerful effect on the recipient. It does not always do so and when it does we cannot always tell how the effect is brought about, but we cannot doubt its importance. (Joseph, 1987, p. 66)

It seems to be widely agreed upon that, whatever the means of action, projective identification is at times at least a two person phenomenon with relevance to both the sender and the receiver.

For the recipient one of the hallmarks of the occurrence of these displaced experiences that arise as a result of projective identification is that they do not in any way seem to be coming from the other person. They do not arise with any experiential tag informing the receiver "This is

not my own." On the contrary they are felt and experienced, vividly and convincingly, as authentically one's own; as immediately real and arising within oneself. The experience that projective identification engenders in the recipient does not come from what is generally felt to be the outside, or another person. This singular characteristic of the phenomenon, that it seems to come from within, must be considered in any attempt to identify what is occurring. It may be that these projected experiences are arising as an authentic experience which has in no way been "owned" as yet. Since the person originally having the experience was unable to tolerate having it, the phenomenon may involve an experience that in some sense is seeking an owner. Perhaps, therefore, the experience arrives in the field of the recipient with all of the experiential attributes of a present time, happening-now, event, still waiting to be fully experienced.

The question of whether there is some form of direct transmission of immediate experience between people rather than a mediated and hence evoked responsive experience in the recipient may be crucial in coming to understand what is really going on when this phenomenon is involved in our interactions. We know that therapists and patients in clinical work are engaged in an intimate and mutually impactful exchange encompassing both conscious and unconscious elements. This mutuality is an essential part of the therapeutic process. The underlying nature of that mutuality is relevant to the discussion of projective identification. Do we only partake of the experience of the other through signs and cues? Is

there a way in which we may be able to directly contact the experience of another? Is it possible that, when we are impacted by these instances of projective identification, there is a direct sharing of experience? Further, in some instances are both the sender and the receiver experiencing a third entity, an autonomous previously displaced experience? We may never be able to thoroughly plumb the factors involved in the depths of interconnection between therapist and patient, between mother and infant, between lovers, just as we may never fully understand nor explore the furthest depths of the sea or of the earth's core. Nonetheless, any serious investigation into the nature of projective identification raises this issue of intimate connectedness and the depths of intersubjectivity within which experience unfolds.

Grotstein (2000), with a materialist view of the phenomenon, still suggests the term projective transidentification, with which he attempts to integrate some of the recent views on "the mutually interactive field of subjectivities" (p. 237) with Klein's (1946) original formulation. Holding more to the idea of a shared field of consciousness and the existence of psychic reality, Field (1991) suggests:

If we accept the view that in dealing with projective identification we are entering an imaginal world—not an imaginary one, not fantasy, but an alternative dimension of knowing and being—then we can engage in the therapeutic encounter from a standpoint somewhat different from classical analysis. (p. 193)

Bosnak (1996), working extensively with the imaginal in an embodied form of dreamwork, often in a group setting, refers to occurrences of affective experience being transmitted between people. Ehrenwald (1948) made some early forays into theorizing that some form of telepathy was occurring within psychoanalytic situations. A consideration of projective identification inevitably raises these questions.

Recent developments in quantum physics and some closely related theoretical disciplines<sup>3</sup> (Bohm, 1980; 1999; McTaggart, 2002; Mishlove, 1993; Radin, 2006; Shel Drake, 2003; Talbot, 1991, Targ & Kutra, and others) may be helpful in navigating this controversy. Because of these advances in physics we may now be uniquely situated to begin to be able to arrive at new and more explanatory models of the means of action of projective identification.

*The Need for Research on a Depth Psychological Understanding of Projective Identification in Clinical Psychology*

As the literature review above demonstrates the phenomenon of projective identification has been the object of a great deal of attention by numerous theorists and yet remains in many ways obscure. Descriptions vary, ideas regarding the means of its action and its actual results are divergent. Furthermore, much of the literature devoted to projective identification is framed in complex and clinically exacting language that

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<sup>3</sup> See the section on Embodied Imaginal Practice, including quantum-psychology, beginning on p. 210.

neither invites nor allows the engagement of a wide spectrum of clinicians working from various theoretical positions and/or in an array of clinical settings. This makes it relatively inaccessible to many professionals in the field. Also, the descriptions of this phenomenon often miss the mark of fully embracing the reality of its direct experience. Even while some descriptions vividly portray the actual experience of the phenomenon, many of these go on to offer explanations that are at odds with the actual experience within the phenomenon, disputing for instance the reality of the sense that one is possessed or being controlled. Contributions from an experience-near, depth psychological understanding of this phenomenon could add clarity, and help to integrate an understanding of projective identification into a wider field of clinical practice.

Furthermore, there is evidence that many problems of living and relating are tenacious and difficult to treat, with the situation of world events attesting to this (Hillman & Ventura, 1992). Certainly in various arenas of clinical attention (such as addiction recovery, treatment of anxieties and depressions, and in cases involving violence and abuse) there is a pervasive call for increased treatment success and for the understandings that would contribute to this improvement. In terms of those difficult psychological experiences that prove to be the most difficult to treat, I will quote Jung (1951/1978) in his discussion of the shadow. In

the following passage Jung highlights and describes the qualities of experience that remind me of projective identification:

Experience shows that there are certain features [of the shadow] which offer the most obstinate resistance to moral control and prove almost impossible to influence. These resistances are usually bound up with *projections*, which are not recognized as such, and their recognition is a moral achievement beyond the ordinary. While some traits peculiar to the shadow can be recognized without too much difficulty as one's own personal qualities, in this case both insight and good will are unavailing because the cause of the emotion appears to lie, beyond all possibility of doubt, in the *other person*. No matter how obvious it may be to the neutral observer that it is a matter of projections, there is little hope that the subject will perceive this himself. (p. 9 [CW 9 Pt. 2, para. 16]).

The persistence in these cases of a conviction that the cause lies in the other person, matches one of the telling characteristics of the condition one finds oneself trapped in when in the grip of the effects of projective identification. These compelling and absolutely convincing qualities of those experiences that are evoked by this phenomenon are practically its signature. This suggests to me that this line of inquiry, investigating a depth perspective of this phenomenon, may indeed shed light on these difficult and clinically challenging aspects of human experience.

To further highlight this possibility I quote again from Jung (1960/1981). In this passage he speaks of what he considers the only real problems of psychic life, which are those difficulties involving an experience of being at odds with oneself.

The psychic life of the individual [child] is governed largely by instinct, and few or no problems arise. Even when

external limitations oppose his subjective impulses, these restraints do not put the individual at variance with himself. He submits to them or circumvents them, remaining quite at one with himself. He does not yet know the state of inner tension induced by a problem. This state only arises when what was an external limitation becomes an inner one; when one impulse is opposed by another. In psychological language we would say: the problematical state, the inner division with oneself, arises when, side by side with the series of ego-contents, a second series of equal intensity comes into being. This second series, because of its energy value, has a functional significance equal to that of the ego-complex; we might call it another, second ego which can on occasion even wrest the leadership from the first. This produces the division with oneself, the state that betokens a problem. (p. 391 [CW 8, para. 757]).

We might, indeed, call it a second ego-complex, perhaps because it is exactly that. As I have grappled with my experience and understanding of projective identification, it increasingly seems to me that in every instance within which a person is caught in the grips of an internal conflict (at odds with oneself), an experience of the results of projective identification (wherein someone is at odds with another) may actually be occurring.

There is as yet no clear, comprehensive and accessible description of the phenomenon of projective identification from a depth psychological perspective that includes an understanding of its action and results, as well as means for the resolution of its damaging and destructive effects.

### *Statement of the Research Problem and Question*

I will identify the specific focus of my inquiry in the following three subsections. In the first I describe my current understanding of the



problem that I address in this study. This is followed by a section in which I identify the primary research question and some auxiliary questions relevant to this present work. The final section is a definition of the main relevant terms.

*The research problem.* The problem that occupies me in this present work involves the pervasive yet often unrecognized and incompletely described occurrence of the phenomenon of projective identification and the likelihood that it is a major factor in a variety of situations involving human suffering as well as difficulties in healing and recovery from trauma and abuse. It is my impression that the widely divergent descriptions of this process and the controversies over the means of its action, the extent of its effects, and the means to its resolution may be obstacles to a wider familiarity with the phenomenon and its clinical relevance, and to effective responses to it in therapy.

The theoretical confusion about projective identification may result, in part, from the nature of the phenomenon itself, for it is inherently misleading. When projective identification is active the receiving person will usually have no idea, at least initially, that any such process is going on. This is a necessary facet of the exchange since it is the direct personal engagement with the transmitted experience that gives the receiver an intimate access to the subjective reality that is being projected. There seems to be no observer distance, no objective viewpoint. The projected

experience has an immediate and fully engaging effect on the receiver, as if generated from within. In this way, at least at first, it misleads the receiver as to what is going on. Furthermore, the person who is utilizing projective identification will be unconscious of the experience that is being projected since the purpose of the process is to project into others the experiences that cannot be consciously tolerated. Adding to the confusion, the person using projective identification may continue to experience the feelings associated with the projected-away experience but will feel them as if they are a response to the actions of the receiving person. For these reasons interactions involving the use of projective identification tend to be extremely confusing for those involved.

It seems that the theoretical confusion may result, at least in part, from the personal experience of individuals in relationships where this phenomenon is active. Perhaps my heuristic exploration of the experience of projective identification is well suited to illuminate the roots of this confusion directly. I recall one day as a child, when on the advice of an older swimmer, I dove for the first time beneath a breaking wave in the ocean. The peace and calm astonished me as I moved through that deep water under the rushing, chaotically crashing wave above. This memory supports my hope that the present depth psychological inquiry into the often chaos-producing experience of projective identification will allow a view from a vantage point within and yet beneath its effects and lead to more clarity and understanding of the phenomenon.

Projective identification was originally identified and named by Melanie Klein (1946) and since then it has been explored and described by a number of other theorists, most of them continuing to work from an Object Relations perspective. I am attempting to understand the direct experience of projective identification, as it occurs in living relationships. In this way I hope to develop a substantive viewpoint which will allow a description of this phenomenon that will be accessible to those unfamiliar as well as familiar with the Object Relations model. Through developing a theoretical description from this heuristic depth perspective I hope to help to bring an understanding of projective identification into a wider and more accessible position in the field.

This direct inquiry into the experience of the action, results, and possible resolution of projective identification leads me to reconsider other elements of current psychological understanding. For instance, I am questioning the force behind what have been thought to be one-person psychological defenses. I am wondering if projective identification is involved more pervasively than has been thought and whether it plays a causative role in these defenses. It seems to me that when a person functions in a defensive manner which is not a response to the existence of an actual present time threat, which would explain and necessitate the defense, projective identification may be active. In cases of a realistic present time threat the person's defensive functioning is invariably useful and helpful to them, even if it does not appear to be so to an observer

who is ignorant of the actual situation being defended against. Other instances of defensive functioning, when there is no actual present time threat, often seem to be destructive or restrictive for the person enacting the defense, as well as for others with whom they interact. Could it be that in these cases the defensive actions are enactments of an activated displaced experience that is originally arising in another person in a different time and place? This original situation would involve an actual serious present time threat that does necessitate the defense.

I wonder if other experiences can be understood to exist in each of these two categories: Those which are directly relevant to the ongoing immediate and actual experience of the experiencing subject, and those others which are activated experiences that were previously displaced and have their origins in another's situation. If this is so, there may be many commonly held psychological ideas that could benefit from a rethinking. For instance, it could be that the idea of "self-destructive behavior" is an oxymoron. Perhaps when people act in such a way as to create any real harm to themselves (contrasted with sacrifice wherein the harm is off-set by a greater gain) they are acting out a displaced experience. If that is the case then it would not be a truly self-generated harm. This might be an important understanding when dealing with suicidal patients, or those who inflict other forms of harm on themselves.

This research problem calls for me to deepen my personal heuristic understanding of the phenomenon of projective identification, explore the

implications of this understanding, and relate to the theoretical position it now occupies in the field. I will attempt to develop a coherent description that will contribute to the available body of knowledge and understanding of this phenomenon, and provide avenues for the effective application of that knowledge and understanding in the therapeutic setting.

*The research question.* My research question is: What is a depth psychological understanding of projective identification? I think that this formulation of the question is the explicit expression of the implicit core of my quest from the beginning of the preliminary investigations that began over 16 years ago. In those early years I had neither the language nor the experience to consciously identify what I was seeking. As I have said earlier, my conscious formulation at the inception of this study was something akin to, "What in the world is going on here?" I am still asking that same question; now in this more consciously articulated form, one that has grown out of my years of discovery.

At this point I am continuing to develop and integrate this depth understanding of projective identification into an increasingly more useful, grounded, and coherent form. I will continue to integrate my experience and understanding of this phenomenon with the work of others and to develop and refine descriptions that adequately express my discoveries and make it possible for others to investigate further. A number of other,

auxiliary questions have contributed to my thinking over the course of this study and continue to add to my explorations. Some of these follow here:

What is the personal experience of using this depth understanding of projective identification to attempt to deal with personal difficulties that seem to be the effects of displaced experiences?

Given this depth understanding of projective identification, what are some of the clinical situations in which this understanding could offer new possibilities for treatment?

What are the implications of this depth understanding of projective identification for understanding various relatively intractable psychological problems, such as addictions, compulsions, obsessions, entrenched psychological defenses, and persistent relationship problems?

What circumstances are apt to result in displaced experiences being generated and/or perpetuated through projective identification?

What findings and developments in the field of quantum physics may suggest possible means of action of this phenomenon and support this depth psychological understanding of projective identification?

What are some of the major confusions and controversies regarding the phenomenon of projective identification and in what ways can this heuristic depth understanding offer alternative viewpoints and insights that may contribute to resolving these?

How does this depth understanding of projective identification explain actions that appear to be self-injurious or harmful to others and what are the implications for treatment in these cases?

How does the phenomenon of projective identification relate to descriptions of various described phenomena in non-industrial tribal cultures, such as possession states, channeling, magic, and so on?

In what way is this depth understanding of projective identification relevant and helpful in understanding the phenomenon of evil?

*Definition of terms.* I will define depth psychology, projective identification, and displaced experience.

**Depth Psychology:** This is the branch of psychology that rests upon an awareness of unconscious processes and the importance of respecting and considering these processes and their products when attempting any understanding or assessment of human experience. It is that field of study and practice that is engaged in developing skills and knowledge related to human experiential development, health, and healing, with a focus on the importance and power of unconscious processes.

**Projective Identification:** I will begin with the definition put forward in "Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein" by Segal (1964/1974): "In projective identification parts of the self and internal objects are split off and projected into the external object, which then becomes possessed by,

controlled and identified with the projected parts" (p. 27). In terms of the person utilizing it, "When its purpose is defensive, projective identification aims really to *disavow* identification, and perhaps would be better called projective *disidentification*" (Grotstein, 1981, p. 131). Many definitions can be found of the process known as projective identification. For the purposes of this study I will begin with this definition: An unconscious process whereby one person rids themselves, at least partially, of an intolerable experience by seeming to deliver it into another person, who is then very likely to have that experience.

Displaced Experiences: This is the term I have coined to refer to experiences that apparently move from one person to another in the process of projective identification. It is my strong contention that these experiences exist, having an autonomous life of their own in some sense. The experiences that occur for the recipient from the action of projective identification are often referred to as countertransferential experiences. The specific results are often called "projective identifications" which I find to be an inexact and obscure term that does not shed light on what is actually being transmitted. For the purpose of this work, a "displaced experience" refers to an experience that seems to arise from within one's own psyche but is actually the product of projective identification.

I find the concept of displacement useful in a number of ways. In the originating traumatic situation, the original person who was not able



to tolerate experiencing the situation they found themselves in can be thought of as not having enough psychic space, not enough room, for the experience. It can be thought of as being displaced the way water in a full tub will be displaced when something is added. It also speaks to the experience of the possessing quality of the experience for the recipient. Being in the grip of the effects of projective identification can feel, though the experience is compelling and convincing, in some ways odd or alien. Thinking of this as being in the grip of something that is displaced from elsewhere fits this aspect of the experience.

Since this term refers to a major foundational concept in my understanding of projective identification I will follow in the footsteps of Jung (1951/1978) when he said:

In describing the living experiences of the psyche, I deliberately and consciously give preference to a dramatic, mythological way of thinking and speaking, because this is not only more expressive but also more exact than an abstract scientific terminology. (p. 13 [CW 9 Pt. 2, para. 25]).

And so: What is a displaced experience? It is the soul of an unrelieved horrific moment living on waiting to be felt into and felt with. It causes turmoil as it reenacts again and again in the lives of its hosts. It is the experience someone somewhere had at some time, echoing in our lives now as it replays repeated reflections of its original configuration. It is speaking to us in the only language it has: our experience. It is a trauma that someone could not contain because they were too alone and too

hurt. It migrates once or many times, still fresh, still original, still potent, and still willing to be heard and healed. Melanie Klein called it projective identification. People have pointed to it and said someone was cursed, or possessed. It is contagious, passing through interactions like a desert wind, often leaving havoc in its wake. When we are confronted with the havoc it creates we try again and again to change ourselves and others. We fail and it returns. Whatever misery we have been heir to continues to visit us as it reenacts again and again. It is an uninvited yet familiar guest at almost every table. It moves among us unrecognized and, like the wind, unseen but for its effects. Like a specter haunting families through generations, it colors the histories we seem doomed to repeat. It is the major and minor troubles that plague us; those nagging ruts that we repeatedly find ourselves in, regardless of the many fine attempts we make to escape them. It is what is the matter with us.

### Chapter 3 Methodology and Procedures

This heuristic theoretical text and experiential based study with creation based augmentation is in an embodied imaginal style. As dreams are sensory affective experiences, so the authentic imagination involves our whole experiencing selves. An embodied imaginal experience is an innate way of knowing, a way of being with phenomena in a timeless, placeless intimate landscape. It offers an engaged intimate contact, a meeting with the living qualities of the studied phenomenon. As Hillman (1989) points out, "Attention to the quality of things resurrects the old idea of *notitia* as a primary activity of the soul. *Notitia* refers to that capacity to form true notions of things from attentive noticing" (p. 101).

Heuristics is a method of discovery that involves attentive personal experience, exploration, self-inquiry, and self-reflection. In describing this method, Moustakas (1990) refers to the need "to enter into a process rooted in the self" (p. 17). This approach calls for an intimate engagement with an experience of the topic of study while following the unfolding of hermeneutic circles such as those from the unknown to the known to the still unknown, from the whole to the part and back to a new sense of the whole, from the immediacy of direct experience to a derived conceptual understanding and back to a new direct experience and so on. A wide

variety of ways of engaging experientially as well as theoretically are relevant to the development of understanding and insight within a heuristic study.

The heuristic process challenges me to rely on my own resources, and to gather within myself the full scope of my observations, thoughts, feelings, senses, and intuitions; to accept as authentic and valid whatever will open new channels for clarifying a topic, question, problem, or puzzlement. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 13)

This approach is extremely well suited to the intimate emergent nature of the paths I have already traversed in my lengthy personal discovery of the existence of the phenomenon of projective identification, and it suits my continuing inquiry. The heuristic approach may be unique in allowing an insight into and development of a richly useful understanding of this deeply experiential and otherwise invisible phenomenon.

This description of my methodology and procedures continues in the following five sections. The first section, which includes a literature review, describes my general embodied imaginal approach. The second section describes heuristics, my specific methodology, which also includes a literature review. The third section describes research procedures and the augmentation with creative work, primarily in the form of poetry. The fourth section is an exploration of various considerations relevant to my personal predisposition to the topic. The fifth section elaborates the delimitations of my study and provides the original tentative plan for the organization of the completed work.

*Embodied Imaginal: Research Approach with Literature Review*

Imaginal psychology has been described (Romanyshyn, 2002) as an intersection between Jung's psychology, which asserts the reality of the psyche, and a self-reflective phenomenology, which is neither tied to an out-there material world nor an in-here mental world but rather deeply partakes of both through its engagement with the in-between world of the spontaneous authentic imagination. This awareness of a reality that exists neither only inside nor only outside of oneself is touching on the arena of interpersonal subjectivity that has been explored by Atwood and Stolorow (1984) in their movement toward a more intimately interpersonal view of the therapeutic relationship, which they call intersubjective. It also touches on the field of action of projective identification which involves a profound interpenetration of experience, a connection between what we usually think of as inside ourselves and outside in another person.

Severely disturbed patients have the capacity to put their internal agitation into their therapists. Indeed, this is a feature of their psychopathology in that they project disruptive feelings into external objects. This is a method that helps them maintain some degree of equilibrium. Therapists feel these patients' pain and misery because they are forced to absorb them. (Giovacchini, 1994, p. 201)

In his heuristic approach to research, Moustakas (1990) emphasizes the importance of imaginal conversations. The method developed by Jung (1958), which he termed active imagination, is one formal approach to this imaginal collaboration. Watkins (2000), Kast (1993), Singer (1994), and Johnson (1986), have all discussed the

spontaneous, revealing, integrative, insightful and informative effects of active imagination. Another instance of imaginal engagement is the repose of deep reverie, when we allow the borders of consciousness to become permeable, misty, and available to images from elsewhere.

Here is a reflection on the imaginal approach that emerged in one of my imaginal self-dialogues:

Trust yourself. Trust the path of the embodied imaginal—that is the road you are traveling, not the one that you run down (that is the everyday road of dysfunction, disorder and disease), but this other road—this road that Rumi found, that poet's everywhere walk down, this road that is the body that knows what it knows before we know anything.

Material, such as the self-dialogue above, which arises within embodied imaginal practice often contains rich poetic descriptions that invite hosting and re-hosting, thinking and re-thinking; that invite a process of opening deeply to their inherent meanings. I find that I learn the ways of the imaginal from the imaginal figures who journey with me and from my engagement with them. I have come to consider these inner dialogues foundational to this process of inquiry and discovery. These figures comprise a living network of mutual trust, insight, questioning, and collaboration that sustains, supports, and challenges me to new thoughts, new experiences, and new fields of exploration.

What Goodchild (2001) calls "This in-between world of visionary feeling" is in itself an alternative way of knowing. It is a way of being with phenomena in a landscape that is akin to the dreamworld. "These are the

in-between places, difficult to find and even more challenging to sustain. Yet they are the most fruitful places of all" (Moore, 2000, p. 34). An embodied imaginal approach to research enlivens the process of discovery and heuristically creates its own paths as the work unfolds.

Engaging in imaginal exploration requires a sensory embodied presence. It partakes of that experientially verifiable unity of the body and mind, of sensation and awareness, of being and knowing, that has been described by Dychtwald in his unified theory of the bodymind (1986) and vividly presented by Abram (1996):

To touch the coarse skin of a tree is thus, at the same time, to experience one's own tactility, to feel oneself touched *by* the tree. And to see the world is also, at the same time, to experience oneself as visible, to feel oneself *seen*. Clearly, a wholly immaterial mind could neither see things nor touch things—indeed, could not experience anything at all. We can experience things—can touch, hear, and taste things—only because, as bodies, we are ourselves included in the sensible field, and have our own textures, sounds, and tastes. We can perceive things at all only because we ourselves are entirely a part of the sensible world that we perceive! (p. 68)

This ability to sensibly perceive through participation is the ground of an embodied imaginal exploration. It is this ability that enlivens awareness and provides direct experiential avenues of understanding. Events of projective identification profoundly affect the experience of its subjects. In order to adequately meet the phenomenon in its own territory and in its own phenomenal integrity, and hence hopefully to find a more accurate, substantial, and relevant understanding, I have sought a method that brings my whole self to the inquiry.

In contrast, the limitations, failures, and the pitfalls of irrelevance that are associated with more distant, currently mainstream, theoretical explorations are evident in this commentary by Stephen Hoeller (2002):

Our civilization has increasingly committed itself to a worldview based on the daylight world of physical data and on the rational theories that can be deduced from them. We are trapped in the harsh, sun-drenched world of daylight consciousness where we gather more and more facts that, paradoxically, still do not add up to greater happiness. We learn more and more about less and less. (p. 218)

The drawbacks of this approach to physical data can be transcended through an awakening to the immediacy of sensory imaginal experience. "Something in us longs to be awakened from our anesthetic sleep" (Romanyshyn, 2002, p. 68). And, something in us is willing to do the awakening, restoring a sense of vitality and aliveness where there had been numb indifference. With that awakening comes awareness of the sensual, of the body. This may be crucial in light of the following: "When what people say and what their bodies reveal are in conflict, it is usually the body that's accurate" (Rubinfeld, 2000, p. 19).

The approach available through the embodied imaginal requires just such an awakening to what the body reveals. "When we begin to consciously frequent the wordless dimension of our sensory participations . . . hitherto unnoticed or overlooked presences begin to stand forth from the periphery and to engage our awareness" (Abram, 1996, p. 63). Projective identification is an often unnoticed and overlooked presence,



living in the periphery of our awareness. In order to become aware of the workings of this phenomenon we must bridge the chasm between our conscious awareness and our knowing but unknown unconscious. The ability to do this is held in what Jung termed the transcendent function (1958). This function exists in that in-between realm that touches both the conscious and the unconscious (Jung, 1997) and is most accessible through embodied imaginal practices such as active imagination. This is just what is needed in order to explore the reality of an unconscious phenomenon like projective identification.

Furthermore, since projective identification occurs as a sensory affective experience that emerges unconsciously, an engagement with embodied imaginal processes is particularly relevant to the study of this phenomenon. "Because affects are psychobiological phenomena and the self is bodily based, the coping strategy of projective identification represents not conscious verbal-linguistic behaviors but instead unconscious nonverbal *mind-body communication*" (Schore, 2003, p. 63). The embodied imaginal, which lives where body and mind are one, is the natural arena for this study.

Hamilton (1942) refers to a mythic past when she says that "the imagination was vividly alive and not checked by the reason, so that anyone . . . might see through the trees a fleeing nymph, or . . . behold in the depths a naiad's face" (p. 13). The imagination can be revived and released from any unnecessary constraints of reason. We can regain the

mythic world, reconnect with the magic of our bodies, and know the embodiment of magical realms accessible to us through our imaginative capacity. "When the mind rests on imaginal firmament, then thinking and imagining no longer divide against each other" (Hillman, 1989, p. 66). Beyond that, "no psychic phenomenon can be truly dislodged from its fixity unless we first move the imagination into its heart" (p. 180).

*Heuristics: Research Methodology with Literature Review*

When we must deal with problems, we instinctively resist trying the way that leads through obscurity and darkness. We wish to hear only of unequivocal results, and completely forget that these results can only be brought about when we have ventured into and emerged again from the darkness. But to penetrate the darkness we must summon all the powers of enlightenment that consciousness can offer. (Jung, 1960/1981, p. 389 [CW 8, para. 752]).

The emergent organic development of this research project originated entirely within the exigencies of my personal life experience. It arose as a barely perceptible problem that was potent but largely obscured. It was at first utterly confusing, yet undeniably compelling. Although I might have been tempted to search for easy solutions and clear results, I was forced to deal with the darkness of my own experience. I was not even able to determine what the problem was, let alone derive or discover answers. It is largely for this reason that I have found heuristics to be the single method that has presented itself as uniquely suited to support, contain and further inspire this unfolding process.

Heuristics is a method of discovery developed by Moustakas (1961) as he found himself driven to explore the experience of loneliness and its impact. It is a research method that derives from personal experience, exploration, self-inquiry, and self-reflection. In a later work in which he articulates this methodology Moustakas (1990) describes this foundation.

I begin the heuristic journey with something that has called to me from within my life experience, something to which I have associations and fleeting awarenesses but whose nature is largely unknown. In such an odyssey, I know little of the territory through which I must travel. (p. 13)

This journey of inquiry and discovery involves an ongoing process that follows the course of various hermeneutic circles.

Fundamentally, understanding is always a movement in this kind of circle, which is why the repeated return from the whole to the parts, and vice versa, is essential. Moreover, this cycle is constantly expanding, in that the concept of the whole is relative, and when it is placed in ever larger contexts, the understanding of the individual element is always affected. (Gadamer, 1986, p. 167)

These cycles include a movement from what is now known to the as yet unknown and back to the new known and so on. This willingness to delve into the darkness of the unknown or the unconscious is essential to this process and fundamental to any hope of new knowledge. The actual path traversed over the course of the research will also, in part, be a product of heuristic discovery. Thus the inquiry and the discovery of new methods of inquiry form another hermeneutic circle.

This approach is demanding in that it requires a willingness to live one's topic. Yet, paradoxically, when one has been, in a sense chosen by a

topic that has moved into the heart of one's life, there is relief and a sense of freedom from settling into a methodology that acknowledges, accepts, and understands that situation. Moustakas (1990) makes clear that this method, which embraces personal experience, also requires a rigorous self-searching and a persevering self-reflection:

Through an unwavering and steady inward gaze and inner freedom to explore and accept *what is*, I am reaching into deeper and deeper regions of a human problem or experience and coming to know and understand its underlying dynamics and constituents more and more fully. The initial "data" is within me; the challenge is to discover and explicate its nature. In the process, I am not only lifting out the essential meanings of an experience, but I am actively awakening and transforming my own self. (p. 13)

To enter into this method of research is to live fully in the topic and to live intimately with the question. This can at times take the form of an actual dialogue with various aspects of the phenomenon. Such dialogues can be entered into repeatedly as the questioning and understanding of the studied phenomenon deepen. "In heuristics an unshakable connection exists between what is out there, in its appearance and reality, and what is within me in reflective thought, feeling, and awareness" (p. 12).

The spirit and qualities of this methodology are an excellent match for my own temperament and tendencies. In fact, the arrival of this topic in my life in the first place was largely facilitated by the same processes and ways of being that inform this self-reflective research methodology. In the following passage from an earlier (1974) work by Moustakas I recognize this spirit and flavor:

I have chosen to be alone, to respect my own inner life and to pursue my own sense of direction. I have chosen to be with others, in utter silence, in dialogue, in wide ranges of color, texture, movement, sound, taking the path of the heart, trusting invisible messages, forever and always believing in each person's potential for growing, in each person's right to find himself and to find others. (Moustakas, 1974, p. 118)

This echoes the circuitous movements in my own life that led to my first glimmering hints of awareness of the hidden phenomenon of projective identification. The process of heuristic research seems to comprehensively define the conception as well as the ongoing development of this intimate form of exploration. Furthermore, on an encouraging note, Moustakas (1990) suggests that in the final culminating phase of heuristic research "a comprehensive expression of the essences of the phenomenon investigated is realized" (pp. 31-32). A comprehensive expression that did manage to clarify the phenomenon of projective identification would be a very satisfying integration of all that I have devoted to this journey.

### *Research Procedures*

There are six phases articulated by Moustakas (1990) that guide the process of heuristic inquiry and discovery. First there is an initial engagement with the topic, which is the discovery of a passionate curiosity reflecting personal and social implications. It is the arrival into a deep relationship with a powerful question. This is a phase of receptivity, willingness, and discovery. The next phase is an immersion in the topic,

when one enters intimately into the life of the topic. Both introspectively and in interactions with others, one is in a sensitized state of exploration and attention to the question. This is a phase of sustained focus and intimate engagement. The third phase is an incubation of the question, which is a state of suspended activity, a retreat from the prior intense engagement. This is a phase of gestation and unconscious activity. The next phase is an openness and receptivity to illumination, which is the breaking through of new insights and understandings. This is the phase when something crucial and previously missed is added to the experience of the topic. The fifth phase is an explication of relevant themes, qualities, and components, which involves both introspective and interactive engagement to reveal the layers of meaning inherent in the now more fully experienced phenomenon. This involves reflecting, re-examining, and deepening understanding. The last phase is a process of creative synthesis, in which the arrived at understandings are integrated and expressed in a creative form. This is a phase of creative expression of the essences of what one has discovered. It is my sense that the cycle of these phases of engagement are entered into repeatedly in the course of an investigation, as well as describing the overarching process.

There are also a number of concepts and processes that promote a creative and productive engagement with the research problem, the topic, and the question. One of these is identifying with the focus of the inquiry through immersion in experience of the topic and an inverted perspective

of identification with the phenomenon in question. Another central process is self-dialogue, a deepening of one's experiences through inner inquiry and exchange. This can include various forms of imaginal dialogue. The avenues for accessing tacit knowing, like these imaginal dialogues, are crucial processes involving the revelation of knowledge that exists but has not yet been recognized. The use of intuition is an intermediary bridge between tacit knowledge and explicit observable and describable knowledge. The process of meditative indwelling involves a patient enduring inward gaze which is reflecting meditatively on the phenomenon. This allows a gradual process of increasing apprehension. Focusing, as Moustakas describes it, is a technique akin to the therapeutic technique of the same name developed by Gendlin (1978). It involves a sustained process of arriving at ever more central meanings of an experience through inner focus and an awareness of bodily shifts. Lastly Moustakas refers to an identification of the internal frame of reference, which involves an awareness of the experiential context of our understandings whether derived from introspection or from engagement with others.

I will also be engaged in creative expressive art processes (Rogers, 1993) in order to amplify insights, deepen awareness, more fully embody understandings, and enrich articulation. In keeping with my prior artistic development, these will be primarily poetic. I find that poetry especially aids me in clarifying my own understandings and inspiring new vision and

insight. Some of my relevant poetry is woven into the body of the work and more of it can be found in Appendix B on pages 408-427.

### *The Researcher's Predisposition to the Topic*

As I reflect on my approach to this topic I am reminded of my formative intellectual beginnings as a child in dialogue with my father. In these early encounters I was far too young and inexperienced to identify my father as a philosopher, an intellectual, a warm hearted skeptic, a Marxist, and an atheist. Yet these attitudes, orientations, and abilities of his profoundly influenced my world-view and my growing sense of myself as a valued person capable of explorations within the mind. He reflected my ability to question, understand, and articulate experience. Along these lines, I remember one conversation with him when I was about five years old. I had been noticing, thinking and feeling the striking differences and similarities between waking life and dreaming. I knew that when I was in a dream the entire experience seemed real and complete, just as waking life did. Talking with my father, I posed the question that was forming itself in my young mind. Could waking life also be a dream? I did not expect an answer and I did not get one. What I did get was his interest in my question, in my thinking, in the movements of my mind. He let me know that he thought that this was a very good question. He was clearly and warmly attentive, and obviously quite interested in what I was saying



and thinking. He welcomed the opportunity to join me in wondering where my thoughts on this might take me.

This touchstone memory reflects the intellectual atmosphere of my growing years. It was always a good thing to question and to wonder. Perhaps an answer would be forthcoming, perhaps not. Either way some new ideas and valuable understandings would surely proceed from any thoughtful engagement with a sincere question. Furthermore, any aspect of experience that caught my interest was a valid and potentially valuable point of departure for an inquiry of the mind. This approach has largely guided my inquiry thus far and continues to do so now. Beyond guidance, it has offered sustenance in times of too little progress, deep confusion, and too much pain. My heritage in this sense has given me a strong well-spring of trust that inquiries into the unknown are worth the time and effort, and worth sustaining the difficulties of confusions and troubling frustrations. Perhaps most of all it has given me a sense of companionship in that often isolating territory of intellectual frontiers. Without this deeply embedded, enduring sense of companionship along the way I might well have despaired of ever arriving at any worthwhile end.

In retrospect have I come to see how relatively rare my upbringing was in this regard. A powerful absence of religiosity and dogma lent a deep clarity and openness to the conversations I grew into. Harris (2006) cites the United Nations' "Human Development Report" of 2005 as finding

that the least religious countries on earth are also those with the lowest incidence of social ills (p. 43). In contrast, "The United States is unique among wealthy democracies in its level of religious adherence; it is also uniquely beleaguered by high rates of homicide, abortion, teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and infant mortality" (p. 44). Beyond these measurable instances of human distress and dysfunction it is arguable that religiosity can interfere with rational inquiry. "One of the truly bad effects of religion is that it teaches us that it is a virtue to be satisfied with not understanding" (Dawkins, 2006, p. 126). Harris in considering this problem adds, "We desperately need a public discourse that encourages critical thinking and intellectual honesty. Nothing stands in the way of this project more than the respect we accord religious faith" (p. 87). Rosa Brooks (2005) reported on a study by evolutionary scientist Gregory S. Paul which looks at the correlation between religiosity and social health indicators in 18 of the prosperous democracies.

Paul ranked societies based on the percentage of their population expressing absolute belief in God, the frequency of prayer reported by their citizens and their frequency of attendance at religious services. He then correlated this with data on rates of homicide, sexually transmitted disease, teen pregnancy, abortion and child mortality.

He found that the most religious democracies exhibited substantially higher degrees of social dysfunction than societies with larger percentages of atheists and agnostics. Of the nations studied, the U.S.—which has by far the largest percentage of people who take the Bible literally and express absolute belief in God (and the lowest percentage of atheists and agnostics)—also has by far the highest levels of homicide, abortion, teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. (p, B16)

Brooks concluded that “we shouldn’t shy away from the possibility that too much religiosity may be socially dangerous. Secular, rationalist approaches to problem-solving emphasize uncertainty, evidence and perpetual reevaluation. Religious faith is inherently nonrational” (p. B16). My earliest experiences of discourse on the nature of reality were profoundly supportive of courageous rational inquiry that does not find satisfaction in supernatural explanations, and that can continue to wonder and inquire even if the understandings are difficult to come by.

The other original influence that has shaped my approach comes from the contributions of my mother, an artist and humanist. While she shared and enjoyed the intellectual freedom and inquiry that my father delighted in, she brought her own artistic vision, creative process, and profound personal love and interest in human beings of all sorts. When she let me know how little she thought of the coloring books and paint-by-numbers sets so common among me and my friends in my early years, she showed me that she preferred my own compositions. She painted and drew and sculpted, but more than that she saw with an artist’s eye, telling me about the blue shadows in my brown hair and lifting spiders up to see them more clearly. From the beginning, as mothers do, she shaped my vision of the world and gave me the sense that there was always more to be seen in even the simplest things.

This heritage of creativity, love of life, and courageous, persevering inquiry into the nature of the phenomena of living without the acceptance

of foreclosing explanations that invoke religious dogma has been vitally necessary as a pre-condition for this inquiry. The tenacity of mind and depth of curiosity that this allows and supports has kept me afloat in many dense foggy seas of uncertainty as I attempted to locate, plumb, and find clarity in the hidden recesses of the working of the unconscious phenomenon of projective identification.

On the other hand, the main difficulties I may face at this point in the work have to do with my closeness to the topic. My emersion in this area of inquiry has been profound and enduring. While this has certainly given me the opportunity to arrive at views and insights that might well have been inaccessible from a more distant vantage point, it also limits my familiarity with a broader perspective. In particular, my engagement with the phenomenon of projective identification is informed by a very personal, intensely motivated inquiry into this murky and mysterious realm of unseen yet potent interpersonal effects. Throughout the first years of inquiry I was not even aware that the phenomenon I was engaged in studying had been previously recognized and described. This reveals the profoundly personal nature of my quest

The value of this intimate approach has included a freedom of exploration that has allowed me to formulate hypotheses without the cognitive constraints that might have been in place had I known more of the prior work done by others. However, having forged my own path in

this psychological wilderness, I am highly identified with my own findings. I may be too quick to dismiss or disregard the thoughts and perspectives of others who may seem to be approaching the phenomenon from a more distant viewpoint. I can see that this could lead to my neglecting valuable insights and awarenesses.

Continuing along these lines, it is likely that others will be in a much better position to critique my formulations since I have been so intimately involved with their development. In this regard I do have the strength of my own willingness to continue to question and my awareness that I am attempting to understand things that are in many ways obscure and hidden. In this way I can reconnect with my sense of not-knowing, of wondering, and revitalize the openness that allowed my inquiry in the first place. I am aware that thoughtful critique can only serve to clarify and remedy error, and I expect to welcome that process. Nonetheless I will need to be alert to any irrational stance on my part that might stem from a desire to defend the validity of my understandings. The strength and depth of commitment and personal cost that has accrued as I have followed this inquiry could lead me to this kind of reactivity. I hope to be able to resolve this if it occurs and to remain open to other viewpoints.

Here is an example of my tendency to become closed to other views: I find it quite difficult to consider the notion that this phenomenon of projective identification occurs only through the use of overt verbal and

nonverbal cues. I have seen so many instances of the apparent effects of projective identification in situations where visible physical cues were impossible or negligible. I have also had numerous experiences of other phenomena that have convinced me that the unseen forces related to consciousness are equal to, as real and potent as, physically tangible and visible forces. This predisposes me toward a closed mind on the issue. The problem with this is that it could result in a tendency on my part to be dismissive of the views of others who think that this is a purely material phenomenon. It could also preclude a valuable rethinking. That would be unfortunate even if my thoughts on the means of effect are accurate. I hope to be able to remain open to the insights of others even when we differ on significant points. I also hope to be open to renewed debate on areas of difference and the potential this can bring for new insight and synthesis. It is very important to me that the hard-won insights and understandings that I have gained do not become ossified into a dogma that resists further development. I will need to avoid the opposing pitfalls of, on the one hand, clinging too tenaciously and reactively to my own findings and perspective, and on the other hand failing to fully present the confidence that I do have in the validity of my work. The passion and perseverance with which I have engaged this topic might press me to be overly or rigidly convinced of my own position, while the relative isolation within which much of my ideas and realizations were formed might tend to diminish my confidence in presenting my ideas to others.

### *Delimitations and Organization of the Study*

My first and perhaps most important decision regarding the scope of the present work is to continue with a personal heuristic exploration and not involve the use of any experimental subjects. While I think that the application of my understandings clinically could be tested for efficacy in clinical experimental studies, this is not the province of this work. By containing my explorations within the sphere of my own experience I will maintain the focus that has been productive thus far. I will, of course, include descriptions of situations that involve others but I will do so experientially and theoretically, not experimentally.

While I will endeavor to integrate my own understandings with those of others in the field, it will not be possible for me to do this in a complete and comprehensive manner. I will attempt to review a thorough representative sample of other theorists and to consider the works of those who have devoted entire texts to this phenomenon. I will also attempt to include a diversity of relevant viewpoints.

While the avenue of self-exploration offers new perspectives, deep insights, and rich experience-near understandings, it is somewhat limited in its capacity to provide assurance of validity and reliability. My findings will be available for others to assess. In this way I hope that my insights, understandings, and claims will generalize into other settings as food for thought and avenues for exploration. While I will offer a certain degree of

confidence in my findings, I will not be able to formally demonstrate that I have arrived at definitive, valid, reliable conclusions.

While I will explore some cross-cultural connections with my own understandings of this phenomenon, these will not be comprehensive. My perspective on this work is from the position of a middle-class, white, American clinician in the field of depth psychology, and I will not attempt to extend my understandings far from this vantage point at this time.

My tentative plan for the organization of this study includes the use and expansion of all of the sections of the original proposal. I will include comments on the auxiliary research questions I have proposed. There will be, hopefully deep and rich, descriptions of the problem I have confronted, the process and experience of my inquiry, my findings, and the theoretical and practical implications of these findings. I will attempt to present a clear, comprehensive and concise explication of my findings which I will attempt to provide in an accessible form, easily understood by any interested and relatively informed person, both lay and professional.

I also hope to convey through this study some of the vitality and passion that arises in me as I explore this topic. I hope to do justice in this way to the power and energy of the phenomenon itself, and to the long tradition of explorations into the psyche, that wild natural world of experiencing selves. In my investigations of the phenomenon of projective identification I have a sense that I am engaged with both the human and



the more than human world. As Hillman (1972/2000) says, "Pan's vision of our humanity is that we, too, are pure nature in whom the volcanic eruptions, the destructive seizures and typhoons also reside" (p. 82). Pan and Pandora, figures of the natural and the human world may have much to say to us about the many troubling aspects of our lives and the call for remedy. They may have insights to offer us about the very nature of our experience, of consciousness itself. Referring to deep ecology, Hillman (1995) explores this larger view of consciousness:

The Gaia hypothesis holds that our world, this planet, is a breathing organism. It is all and everywhere alive and enjoys degrees of consciousness, where consciousness is no longer defined as an exclusive property of human beings and so no longer restricted to location only inside human skins and skulls. Although the Gaia hypothesis is recent and uses biological, physical and chemical evidence, the idea is as old as the pre-Socratic philosophers, Stoic cosmology, the Neoplatonic world soul (*anima mundi*), the universal dreaming Soul of Leibniz, and is founded in strata of myths of the earth which the name Gaia, Greek earth Goddess, deliberately indicates. (p. 77)

Pandora, whose name as I said above has been associated with that of Gaia, came to earth as a human woman to live in the intimacy of marriage, but she came from the gods. Our capacity for shared consciousness, for experiencing the experience of others, while perhaps exposing us to much suffering, is something sacred. It has the potential to offer us new understandings of ourselves and each other, and new insights into the nature of experience. Perhaps it has the potential to lead us into a new way of living

## Chapter 4 Love Obscured: A New View of Projective Identification

In this chapter I bring together the core of my findings and the central descriptions of the understandings that have come out of this research into the phenomenon of projective identification from a depth psychological point of view. For me, my findings reflect the following.

The greatest thing seems incomplete  
yet it never wears out  
the fullest thing seems empty  
yet it never runs dry  
the straightest thing seems crooked  
the cleverest thing seems clumsy  
the richest thing seems poor  
activity overcomes cold  
stillness overcomes heat  
who can be perfectly still  
is able to govern the world

(Lao Tzu, circa 500 BC/1996, verse 45)

A new appreciation and understanding of Taoist wisdom has grown in me over the course of this endeavor. When I read the above passage now, it does not seem abstract or idealized as it perhaps once did. Now I think of one moment of perfect stillness rather than an unattainable lifetime of it.

I want to share some sense of what writing this material has been like for me and how I have approached the project of writing. Here is a passage I noted down one day as I was working on this material.

Now I sit, calm and solid, feeling my body resting on the chair and floor and hence on the earth. The air moves gently around me touching my face in soft flutterings. There are some birdsounds, although it is mostly quiet outside. In here the refrigerator makes its odd noises and there is the sound of these keys, my laptop keys

as I strike them. One bird sends out a clear note again and again with the briefest pause between—ah, now it fades, still sounding, just less audible becoming faint—does he move further away or simply wind down? The many trees outside these windows cloister me. I want to write the words that emerge from my body, from the wildness of my bodymind, from the presence of this living self that is this body, this moment, this being that I am—not some abstraction of thought but an emergence of thought.

Months later, I came upon an article (Anderson, 2002) on the practice of embodied writing.

Embodied writing brings the finely textured experience of the human body to the art of writing. Introduced into research praxis in an effort to describe human experiences more closely to the way in which they are truly lived, embodied writing is itself an act of embodiment, entwining in words our human senses with the senses of the world. Developed as an alternative to scientific and professional writing that seems parched of the body's lived experience, embodied writing attempts to "presence" the embodied experience of the writer for readers as they read" (p. 40).

This entire research project from its inception and early development through all of the later stages has been an experiential, heuristic engagement with the lived phenomenon of projective identification and its reverberations in lived experience. Hence this embodied writing, this natural mode of expression grounded in direct present-time experience, is well suited to maintaining the integrity of this project. Anderson goes on to say that, "Attempting to describe human experiences—and especially profound human experiences—as they truly are lived, embodied writing tries to give the body voice" (p. 41).

Questions of relevance, reliability, and validity are always important in scientific inquiry. In the case of the findings that I describe and develop

here, I am hopeful that others will be inspired to engage in research that will test the trustworthiness of what I propose. Perhaps at some point in the future, quantifiable studies will put some minds to rest. For the time being I have satisfied my own need for adequately honoring the healthy skepticism that ensures one is not entirely off base.

Intuitive and sympathetic understanding can lead researchers not only to elementary laws but also to an appraisal of the validity of their work as a whole. Willis Harman (1992) recommends, as an additional test of the discernment of the trustworthiness of one's findings and conclusions, looking for an internal feeling of certainty, a noetic, intuitive, and persistent feeling that one's knowledge is true. (Braud, 1998, p. 221)

I do have just such a persistent and foundational feeling that what I offer here is true, reliable, relevant, and will prove to be verifiable by others.

The following chapter has three sections. First an exploration of the theoretical underpinnings, the context and background, in other words the foundation, in practice and theory, of my findings and developments. The second section is an overview of the new theory I am presenting. The third section is an exploration of the main qualities of practice that have contributed to these developments. There are redundancies throughout and overlapping ideas are at play. Thus the structure and style of this work reflects the focus of my study as well as the qualities inherent in my findings. I am not working with strictly bordered entities, but rather with the rich semi-permeable boundaries of intimately lived experience.

Feminine receptive consciousness does not experience the border as a tidy boundary separating what is sensed as 'me' from what is sensed as 'not-me.' The border is not a fixed barrier demarcating a

clear sense of individual identity in opposition to the other, who is felt to be the object of heroic action. Rather the border is permeable, easily penetrated by empathic sensing of the other, a capacity to feel with and to share the other's emotional presence. (Perera, 1981, p. 72)

I hope this writing is both clear and welcoming enough to invite moments of direct experience of what I have to share. I also hope that it provides enough clarity of thought to allow for both accord and critique.

The central image of my theory is the displaced experience, its effects when it is activated and enacted, its call for resolution. Below, in what I read, in part, as a foreshadowing of my research, Corbett (1996) seems to describe this same phenomenon from another point of view.

Collapse of the self occurs when the experience of soul is dependent on the preservation of the selfobject tie. As von Franz (1980, p. 30) indicates an unconscious complex which is heavily affect-laden is often responsible for such states. They correspond to the shamanic notion that the soul has been stolen by a spirit – psychologically, by the archetypal core of the complex. . . . Jung (CW 8, 590) also refers to the emergence into awareness of material which is not normally conscious because it belongs to transpersonal levels of the psyche. These “spirit complexes” are felt to be alien and uncanny . . . “possession” by spirit complexes (archetypal elements which are totally unhumanized) requires therapeutic help because they are unassimilable. This seems to correspond to states of mind typically found in borderline or psychotic people in which the individual is barraged by affective storms and archetypal images which are uncontainable. (p. 122)

Certainly the barrage of affect storms is a common theme in my field of inquiry. Linking these ideas with what I will present in this chapter, here is the definition of “possession” offered by Guiley (1991): “The taking over of a person’s mind, body, and soul by an external force perceived to be a deity, spirit, demon, entity, or separate personality” (p. 457).

Not all depth psychological practitioners and theorists think along these lines, of course. Notably within the current body of work on what is often termed the mechanism of projective identification there are many points of view that would not be amenable to my findings.

Having read his work,  
I went to his talk  
on projective identification.

At the end I spoke to him saying,  
I was doing a dissertation  
on projective identification,  
mentioning that  
I was not doing it from  
An Object Relations point of view.  
He  
Looked  
At  
Me  
And He Said  
But It Is An Object Relations Concept.  
And I thought  
But did not say  
Because he had already  
Turned away  
No  
It's not.  
It is not a concept.  
It is real.  
It is a phenomenon.

I find more accord with my approach in the writings of Carl Rogers (1980). He says, "I have been . . . voicing my concerns about our very sick society and the near fatal illnesses of our culture" (p. 235). Similar concerns have led me to experientially engage my whole self, as much as I have been able, in this attempt to directly understand the actual living phenomenon of projective identification and to gather understandings

from lived experience that might make some real difference. My work is personal and experiential, which in my view means that it is inclusively ecological, political, and psychological. My further hope is that it is radical enough, in the sense of going deeply to the roots of a problem. It is my sense that only a truly radical vision, understanding, and response will adequately address the serious challenges of our current world.

In *Through the Looking Glass* (Carroll, 1871/1960), Alice finds out that she is just a pawn and that she must traverse the entire enormous chessboard that makes up the whole of the looking glass world, and then she will become a queen herself. Just as she is about to set off on this magical journey, the Red Queen gives her some advice. "Speak in French when you can't think of the English for a thing—turn out your toes as you walk—and remember who you are!" (p. 148). If we could only do that! Not the part about the toes or the French, but remember who we are. If the confusing and confounding attributes of rampant activated displaced experiences are clarified, maybe we will be able to do just that. Carl Rogers (1980) seems to have thought we would find a way:

This new world will be more human and humane. It will explore and develop the richness and capacities of the human mind and spirit. It will produce individuals who are more integrated and whole. It will be a world that prizes the individual person—the greatest of our resources. It will be a more natural world, with a renewed love and respect for nature. It will develop a more human science, based on new and less rigid concepts. Its technology will be aimed at the enhancing, rather than the exploitation, of persons and nature. It will release creativity as individuals sense their power, their capacities, their freedom. (p. 356)

*Let Be: The Homeopathy of Displaced Experiences*

"I think I'll go and meet her," said Alice, for, though the flowers were interesting enough, she felt that it would be far grander to have a talk with a real Queen.

"You can't possibly do that," said the Rose: "I should advise you to walk the other way."

This sounded nonsense to Alice, so she said nothing, but set off at once towards the Red Queen. To her surprise she lost sight of her in a moment, and found herself walking in at the front-door again.

A little provoked, she drew back, and, after looking everywhere for the Queen (whom she spied out at last, a long way off), she thought she would try the plan, this time, of walking in the opposite direction.

It succeeded beautifully. (Carroll, 1871/1960, p. 143)

The Tao moves the other way  
 the Tao works through weakness  
 the things of this world come from something  
 something comes from nothing

(Lao Tzu, circa 500 BC/1996, verse 40)

In modern physics we have come to realize that phenomena cannot always be explained in terms of a cause and effect chain in which a cause leads to a predictable effect, but that they have to be understood in an entirely different sense as quasi-individualistic parts of a grand total of an encompassing pattern. An example of this is what is defined as an energy field. (Whitmont, 1980, p. 16)

Like Alice, seeking the queen in that magical energy field garden, people often attempt to resolve difficulties in a rational, straightforward, and forthright manner, plunging ahead to find the Queen. Then, to our puzzlement and dismay we too often find that we are just as unsuccessful in these attempts as she was. The approach of allopathic medicine to the treatment of disease through the eradication of symptoms is an attempt of this kind. The limitations, failures, and frequent—sometimes seriously



damaging—side effects of these treatments are widespread and common enough to be called epidemic. Then with treatment following treatment as doctors and patents alike attempt to remedy the damage caused by prior treatment, we too often find ourselves in an addictive cycle of treatment and disease. The same worsening cycles of intervention and harmful side effects are encountered in many other arenas of modern life: economic, political, social, environmental, and so on. In times like these we may need the Taoist wisdom reflected in a suggestion offered by the elder Jungian analyst Robert Johnson (1990): “If you don’t know what to do, stop. If you still don’t know what to do, sit down.” When we find that we have been going in the wrong direction, no matter how right it may have seemed, stopping and doing nothing can be a necessary remedy; after which we may be able to allow the beginning of something new.

Although it is easy to recommend stopping it may not be so easy to accomplish. With the continuing escalation of environmental degradation and the increasing personal, political and social ills in the world around us, we may once more join Alice, this time in her plea for breath.

“Would you—be good enough—” Alice panted out, after running a little further, “to stop a minute—just to get—one’s breath again?”

“I’m *good* enough,” the King said, “only I’m not *strong* enough. You see, a minute goes by so fearfully quick. You might as well try to stop a Bandersnatch!” (Carroll, 1871/1960, p. 199)

Indeed, many of us seem to be good enough, but not “strong” enough to remedy the ills that too literally take our breath away. Still, this pandemic problem of destructive side effects and unintended harmful consequences

cries out for solution, no matter how difficult it is to achieve. This is our confrontation with the released contents of Pandora's Box. The current Pandora (2007) entry in *Wikipedia* states, "in modern times, Pandora's Box has become a metaphor for the unanticipated consequences of technical and scientific development" (online). The too often pervasive lack of health and wholeness in our own bodies, our families, our communities and in the larger natural world all reflect the dangers inherent in the usual modern approaches to treatment and progress.

The recently publicized (Angier, 2007; Barrionuevo, 2007; Morford, 2007; Robinson, 2007) loss of honeybee colonies stands out for me as an emblem of the untoward and destructive side effects of so many of our common practices. The impact on the bees also has a mythic dimension: "Demeter, the Great Mother<sup>4</sup> of Greek mythology, was depicted as a bee, representing the feminine, transformative power of nature, and . . . her priestesses were called *Melissae*, or the bees" (Corbett, 1996, p. 119). "The phenomenon, dubbed Colony Collapse Disorder [CCD], has wiped out a quarter of the hives of commercial beekeepers since last summer, according to the American Beekeeping Federation, and set off a flurry of debate about how to stop it" (Robinson, 2007, online). Greg Hunt (2007), of the Entomology Department at Purdue University, describes it as a "rapid dwindling of bee hives in fairly large areas" (online). The critical

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<sup>4</sup> Pandora is also the Great Mother in pre-Hellenic myth (Spretnak, 1978).

importance of these small and previously ubiquitous creatures for the pollination of many plants adds to the significance of their plight.

"One-third of our daily diet is based on crops produced by honeybee pollination," says Eric Mussen, an entomologist and bee expert at UC Davis who believes Colony Collapse Disorder has the potential to threaten U.S. food production. Crops that rely on bees, he says, represent "the lion's share of our fruits and vegetables." (Robinson, 2007, online)

Speaking with humor, and yet serious in his intent, Morford (2007) points out that "The stories are as alarming and mysterious as they are easy to brush aside as Just Another Essential Natural System We Screwed Up and Now Have to Scramble to Fix" (online). Indeed even finding the cause is proving to be very difficult. "Researchers are also scrambling for clues, any clues, into the recent, baffling disappearance of honeybees across the United States" (Angier, 2007, online).

First reported last autumn in the U.S., the list of afflicted countries has now expanded to include several in Europe, as well as Brazil, Taiwan, and possibly Canada. . . . Perhaps the most ominous thing about CCD, and one of its most distinguishing characteristics, is that bees and other animals living nearby refrain from raiding the honey and pollen stored away in the dead hive. . . . Among the possible culprits behind CCD are: a fungus, a virus, a bacterium, a pesticide (or combination of pesticides), GMO crops bearing pesticide genes, erratic weather, or even cell phone radiation. (Dearman, 2007, online)

Concern over the etiology of the problem has led the U.S. Department of Agriculture Research Service (ARS) to collaborate on formation of a study group. I quote now from their recent progress report:

In early 2007, ARS teamed with university scientists and state departments of agriculture to form a Colony Collapse Disorder Working Group. The first task was to sample affected colonies.

Initial sample analysis revealed a large number of disease-causing organisms, with most associated with "stress-related" diseases (*Nosema*, European foulbrood, and others), but no specific cause was determined. The magnitude of detected infectious agents in adult bees suggested some type of bee immunosuppression. (Pennsylvania State University, Colony Collapse Disorder Working Group, 2007, online)

Suppression of the immune system, which has become a pervasive problem in human health, has now apparently struck the bees. When the very methods and approaches that we are using to try to solve problems and improve life, whether they are advances in agricultural practices or medical interventions, end up damaging our life force and our ability to be healthy and protected from disease, something is seriously wrong.

Because here's the bottom line: Regardless of whether we figure it out, Colony Collapse Disorder is merely one more of those charming warning signs, one of those increasingly frequent messages from the gods writ large across the sky of humanity's arrogance and merciless abuse of nature's integrity. It's an abuse we've engaged in for so long, we don't even really think about it anymore. (Morford, 2007, online)

At this point it seems to be essential that we do stop and recover our ability to think about what we are doing to ourselves and our world.

When the sight of one honeybee  
is cause for celebration;  
Not from some  
meditative awakesness  
appreciating each grain  
of miraculous sand,  
but simply  
because they have become suddenly rare:  
It must be time to stop.  
Sit down.  
Take one breath.  
One breath that  
is not heading anywhere.

Take another.  
In this flurry to fix  
that threatens to consume us,  
It must be time to stop.

When we can stop and begin to breathe again, perhaps we can join Alice and try the plan of walking in the opposite direction.

In medicine the homeopathic approach to treatment does turn and go the other way. Rather than striking out in a forthright manner meant to defeat disease by winning a war against symptoms, homeopathy works by accepting, befriending and joining with the symptoms of the disease. Referring to the founder of current homeopathic practice, Josephson (2002) points out that "Hahnemann recognized two methods of treating illness: one by way of opposites and the other, preferred method, by way of similars" (p. 4). This method involving the use of similars is grounded in an understanding that even the most troubling symptoms are *signs* of a problem rather than the problem itself. "Symptoms are not the disease. Symptoms *accompany* disease. Symptoms are evidence of disease. But treating symptoms is like killing the messenger for bringing bad news" (Cummings & Ullman, 1997, p. 6). Furthermore, when we have killed too many of these symptom messengers we may well find that we have also damaged our own vitality and depleted our own innate potential for healing. With the bees, we may find ourselves with gravely suppressed immune function. Homeopaths Panos and Heimlich (1980) point out that "adverse drug reactions rank among the top ten causes of hospitalization.

As many as 28 percent of the 30 million patients hospitalized annually may suffer an adverse reaction. Serious drug reactions are estimated at from 5 million to 10 million a year" (p. 29). It seems that too often our cure is killing us.

This vital concern over the dangers of suppressive treatment was evident in the early development of homeopathy. Even when treatment outcomes were apparently successful the dangers of harmful side effects were seen as significant.

Hahnemann strongly criticized conventional medical therapies of his day that suppressed symptoms. He frequently noted that the many "successes" of conventional medical treatments were only temporary and often harmful, since the symptoms often returned or more threatening symptoms manifested as the body sought to reestablish its internal harmony. (Cummings & Ullman, 1997, p. 6)

The conventional approaches that are currently dominant in the medical landscape continue to focus on symptom suppression; a practice firmly grounded in an opposition to symptoms. This allopathic approach can look like a war waged on the battlefield of the body, where even a successful triumph over disease leaves the battlefield-body scarred and broken.

I think there are essential elements missing in this straightforward, antagonistic approach to treatment. One could be curiosity. Curiosity, a trait shared by Pandora and Alice, is known for leading us into trouble but it is also capable of leading us through it. The homeopathic approach to treatment is profoundly curious about the minute living details of the symptoms, of the person, and of their experience. It does not lend itself

to rote prescribing of medications based on a generic diagnosis. Nor is it based on the continuous development and production of new techniques, methods, and medications. On the contrary, it is an approach that is curious and takes the time to ask, truly ask, "How are you?"

Too many words, too many pages:  
bookstores, libraries, second-hand store shelves  
overloaded, groaning  
from the burden of words.  
Yet the streets are silent.

'How are you?'  
'Fine'  
'Not so great.'

Drowning under verbage,  
over-literate;  
We try to teach babies to read,  
but no one talks.

We stand in lines,  
silent;  
when someone speaks  
we don't know what to say.

Newspaper under our arm,  
magazines on the coffee table,  
email inbox full of messages,  
bookshelves creaking,  
but really,

How Are You?

When an approach lacks this active curiosity that inspires an inquiry into the unique details of each individual experience of distress, the deeper factors underlying that distress are apt to be missed. And when treatment is not grounded in an acceptance of and engagement with the deep reality

underlying the symptoms an essential understanding is lost and it cannot be replaced by any medicine or technique no matter how intelligently conceived. It seems to me that what is essentially missing also involves a sense of the sacredness of the body, a respect for the wholeness of the organism, of the one who is ill. This could be called soul<sup>5</sup>. Many of us may be searching for this missing quality. "People are looking for a healing method that respects and honors the inherent wisdom of the body and the individuality of each person, that stimulates the body's natural ability to heal itself" (Josephson, 2002, p. xviii). In our bodies and in our lives we are hungry for a more wholesome approach to healing.

We may be yearning for a return to practices that are akin to those that have long been common in tribal indigenous cultures. Frazer (1959) begins his classic review of world mythology with a chapter on the roots of magic. He indicates he has found a widespread belief in homeopathic practices in traditional cultures worldwide:

Analysis shows that magic rests everywhere on two fundamental principles: first, that *like produces like*, effect resembling cause; second, that *things which have once been in contact continue ever afterwards to act on each other*. The former principle may be called the Law of Similarity; the latter, that of Contact or Contagion. . . . Practices based on the Law of Similarity may be termed Homeopathic Magic. (p. 7)

Frazer did not in any way suggest a modern application of these practices as he clearly states his view that they were based on "a false conception

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<sup>5</sup> Soul, "From Proto-Germanic *saiwalo*, meaning 'coming from the sea, belonging to the sea,'" (Barnhart, 1988, p. 1037) referring perhaps to that which is deep, largely unseen, whole, and fundamental.



of natural law." His critique of the "primitive magician" further contends that, "He knows magic only as a practical thing, and to him it is always an art, never a science" (p. 7). Science, in the sense that Frazer understood it, is undoubtedly the approach that has brought us allopathic medicine and modern agriculture. In contrast, Whitmont (1980) suggests the emergence of a different science.

The idea of material entities pushed around by energy has been replaced by the concepts of form and field. Let us define field as a configuration of energy, an activity potential which becomes manifest through the behavior or arrangements of the particles under its influence, a form-potential that becomes actual in the visibility of material manifestation. Form, or shape, as the a priori organizing potential rather than the shape of a material 'thing' becomes the *basic unit of existence*. These forms without content incarnate themselves, move from potentiality into actuality by manifestation through, or rather *as*, matter.

This view amounts to a *psychology of matter*. We find essentially the same concept of form rather than thing as unit of functioning in Jung's mature formulation of the archetype. (p. 53)

So, in light of many recent developments, on the one hand in terms of the accumulation of damaging side effects that inundate us personally and globally and on the other hand the insights of depth psychology and the advances in quantum physics<sup>6</sup>, we may have reason to reassess Frazer's critique and to reconsider the potential value, practicality, and scientific validity of this art of homeopathic magic.

How many magical moments  
fade before the indifferent gaze  
of science gone mad.

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<sup>6</sup> See the section on Embodied Imaginal Practice, including quantum-psychology, which begins on pp. 210.

A world of science where it is news  
to discover that babies feel  
and mothers know

A world of science where medicines  
are poison, where doctors of mind and heart  
work to make torture more effective.

This world  
where progress  
may destroy this world.

With Pandora, who looked a second time into the box once all the forms of suffering had flown out and hence uncovered Hope, we may be called to look again more deeply into the sources of our difficulties. In *The Field*, her review of the current inception of what she sees as a revolution in science, McTaggart (2002) describes her own journey of reconsideration as having been initiated by, among other things, studies of homeopathy.

Randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled studies—the gold standard of modern scientific medicine—showed that you could take a substance, dilute it so much that not a single molecule of the substance remained, give this dilution—now, nothing more than water—to a patient and the patient would get better. (p. vii)

She goes on to point out the profound implications of these and similar studies. “If something like homeopathy worked, it upended everything we believe about our physical and biological reality. . . . Nothing less than a new biology, a new physics, seemed necessary to embrace what appeared to be true about so-called energy medicine” (p. vii).

The troublesome, damaging consequences of our current paradigm add emphasis and deeply highlight the necessity for this re-evaluation of science. The condition of our world is calling us to a deep rethinking. In

that regard I find the following passage, once again describing the plight of the bees, particularly poignant.

Unlike the great bee die-offs of the past, when mites or other deadly pathogens left mounds of bee corpses lying by the hives, in the newest crisis there are as yet no bee bodies to forensically explore. The bees are simply flying off by the billions as though into the void. When beekeepers check affected nests, the combs are filled with pollen and honey, but there is almost nobody home: the workers have largely vanished, leaving the queen in an unnatural state of quiet near-solitude, helpless on her own. (Angier, 2007, online)

When Angier speaks of there being "almost nobody home" I am reminded of our loss of connection to soul, to the wholeness and deep fundament that allows us to be at home in the world and at home in our own bodies. This queen bee is the center and source of the hive. Like the soul she is seldom seen directly, residing deep in the dark heart of the hive. Like the deep ocean is to life on earth, like the soul is to the life of a person, the queen bee is the birthplace and center of the life, health, and wholeness of the hive. This description of the result of the current crisis of colony collapse tells of the queen left abandoned and helpless. This speaks to me of the condition of our soul. The deep innate wisdom of Soul, which gives us life, has the capacity to offer us health and wholeness but cannot do so when we persist in fighting against her. We may be leaving her "helpless on her own." Perhaps in our current race to progress and our battle to overcome ills and symptoms, we too are flying off "into the void."

In *Walden: or Life in the Woods*, his acclaimed treatise on living a more natural and self-reliant life, Thoreau (1854/1939) took a strong stand against this race toward progress and betterment.

If I knew for a certainty that a man was coming to my house with the conscious design of doing me good, I should run for my life as from that dry and parching wind of the African deserts called the simoom, which fills the mouth and nose and ears and eyes with dust till you are suffocated, for fear I should get some of his good done to me—some of its virus mingled with my blood. No—in this case I would rather suffer evil the natural way. (p. 80)

I would guess that Thoreau would not be surprised by Colony Collapse Disorder. He might also anticipate the apparent absence of the problem among beekeepers using organic methods. Although the evidence for this is not yet conclusive, there are numerous reports that seem to indicate that organic beekeepers are not experiencing this devastating problem. Mackintosh (2007) writes,

Sharon Labchuk is a longtime environmental activist and part-time organic beekeeper from Prince Edward Island. . . . In a widely circulated email, she wrote: "I'm on an organic beekeeping list of about 1,000 people, mostly Americans, and no one in the organic beekeeping world, including commercial beekeepers, is reporting colony collapse on this list." (online)

Once again we may be seeing an example of homeopathic magic since organic farming practices are more apt to be in harmony and accord with natural processes.

We may urgently need to reclaim this other, more wholesome, way of seeing the world and of responding to our problems. We may need to reconnect with this approach in which art and science are not entirely

separate. This is the viewpoint of that primitive magician who understood homeopathic magic and who may have also been, contrary to Frazer's view above, truly scientific in approach. We seem to have lost touch with something that this primitive magician, who was an artist and a scientist, understood intimately. To regain this we may need to return to some of the basic qualities of experience that are associated with soul, such as curiosity, acceptance, collaboration with natural processes, and love.

If love were a commodity  
 would it even sell these days?  
 Not loud enough or new enough  
 not promising the power of victory  
 not promising the balm of salvation.  
 Only growing, almost imperceptibly  
 in some corner, fragrant and delicious.

These qualities are reflected in homeopathic medicine that, in a sense, *loves* the symptom. Rather than promising victory over our illnesses, rather than rescuing us from disease, rather than promoting attempts to defeat our distress, homeopathy offers a radically different approach to treatment. "Homeopaths operate on the assumption that the organism creates the best possible response, based on its present abilities, to whatever stresses it is experiencing" (Ullman, 1988, p. 191). This is a radical respect for the wisdom of the organism and for the meaningful validity of its response. It is also suggesting an understanding that the symptoms are the signs, the direct indicators, of that response. This leads to the use of remedies that align with the organism's own innate healing response through the similarity of their action with that of the symptoms.

By aligning with the organism's expression through the symptoms we are aligning with the body's own wisdom, connecting with that deep wholeness that underlies the disease. In this way homeopathic medicine moves toward the soul, toward the fundamental wholeness that underlies illness and symptoms. This wholesomeness is suggested when Cummings and Ullman (1997) reiterate the value of homeopathic treatment and attest that "the best reason to use homeopathic medicines in self-care is that they work. When the medicines are prescribed correctly, they act rapidly, deeply, and curatively, stimulating the body's defenses rather than simply suppressing symptoms" (p. xvii). Given an understanding that "every human being is endowed with inherent self-healing resources capable of meeting a wide spectrum of physical, emotional, and mental stresses" (Josephson, 2002, p. 3) a homeopathic response that is based in the law of similars becomes the epitome of reason. When we act in accord with these innate self-healing capacities, we are aligning ourselves with the most potent source of health. Furthermore, it seems that the dangers of unintended destructive side effects may be precluded.

*A homeopathic remedy does not cause side effects.* When I prescribe a remedy, I don't have to worry, Is this drug safe? I have never heard of a homeopathic medicine being recalled for causing adverse side effects, which is an enviable record considering that these remedies have been in use for more than 150 years. (Panos & Heimlich, 1980, p. 29)

Even when a homeopathic medicine or remedy is prescribed incorrectly, no negative results ensue. "Generally if there is no improvement after

four doses, you should assume that the remedy is incorrect. There is no harm done, other than the fact that you have lost time and the illness may have worsened" (Josephson, 2002, p. 35). "Homeopathic medicines are exceptional, as they can greatly enhance deep healing without the harmful side effects so commonly caused by conventional medicines" (Cummings & Ullman, 1997, p. xvii).

In contrast, if we neglect to align ourselves with our own bodily healing response and find ourselves situated in the more usual opposition to the symptoms of disease, we do run the risk of negative side effects. Perhaps even more significantly we will have set ourselves against that which is fundamental to our own being. We will be set on a path that, while it may appear to lead toward improvement, is apt to take us away from our own sense of soul and I suspect that we may find ourselves lost.

"Where do you come from?" said the Red Queen. "And where are you going? Look up, speak nicely, and don't twiddle your fingers all the time."

Alice attended to all these directions, and explained, as well as she could, that she had lost her way.

"I don't know what you mean by *your way*," said the Queen: "all the ways about here belong to *me*."

(Carroll, 1871/1960, p. 144)

We may need to realize, as that primitive magician probably knew, that all the ways truly do belong to that inborn wisdom which is the seat of our own innate healing ability, to that fundamental wholeness of soul. When we turn toward the symptoms of our distress and begin to recover this awareness it leads us to a more respectful understanding of what is called

for when we find ourselves faced with suffering and disease. The organic farming practices that may be protecting the bees and the approach of homeopathic medicine are both rooted in that respectful understanding.

We must find a way to root ourselves in just such a respectful understanding. In order to heal our ills we must arrive into an awareness and understanding, a point of view and an approach to living, that grasps this deep, fundamental, ancient, and natural wisdom.

What do we stand on,  
stand for, stand with?

Where do we sit  
or lie down to rest?  
Where do we find ourselves;  
these bodies needing comfort  
and repair after so long  
in squared off spaces  
with flat inert floors.

Where do we plant our feet  
stamp our feet  
dig our heels down  
into earth, into sand;  
toes curling over rock,  
moss, leaf mulch.  
Where do we find the time?

Not this time, not that time,  
but *the* time.

Here, I attempt to reach down and back to an awareness that precedes, prefigures, and continues to sustain this modern world; an awareness that lives *in* the cycle of seasons rather than *by* the ticking of a clock.



To further bring forward the qualities of this awareness, I quote at length from a now classic anthropological work on a relatively undisturbed indigenous culture, *The Forest People* by Colin Turnbull (1961).

The pygmy needs no stimulant in the honey season. He is drunk with the forest, with its beauty and abundance, and with the love it showers on its people. Every night that tiny camp resounded to songs of joy and praise, accompanied by the ringing of the *ngbengbe* sticks as they were clapped together in complex cross-rhythms by boys and girls alike. And every night Masisi told his family, which had steadily grown ever since the beginning, stories about the past. And every night we went to bed content, knowing that the morrow would be even better; for each day we discovered fresh growths of mushrooms, trees full of different kinds of nuts, and each night the chameleon gave its long, sad cry, to tell us that on the morrow we would have more honey.

One night in particular will always live for me, because that night I think I learned just how far we civilized human beings have drifted from reality. The moon was full, so the dancing had gone on for longer than usual. Just before going to sleep I was standing outside my hut when I heard a curious noise from the nearby children's *bopi*. This surprised me, because at night time the pygmies generally never set foot outside the main camp. I wandered over to see what it was.

There, in the tiny clearing splashed with silver, was the sophisticated, Kenge, clad in bark-cloth, adorned with leaves, with a flower stuck in his hair. He was all alone, dancing around and singing softly to himself as he gazed up at the tree-tops.

Now Kenge was the biggest flirt for miles, so after watching a while I came into the clearing and asked, jokingly, why he was dancing alone. He stopped, turned slowly around and looked at me as though I was the biggest fool he had ever seen, and he was plainly surprised by my stupidity.

"But I'm *not* dancing alone," he said, "I am dancing with the forest, dancing with the moon." Then with the utmost unconcern he ignored me, and continued his dance of love and life. (p. 244-245)

We need to return to this basic reality; we need to join this loving dance of intimate connectedness that seems so far removed from our modern

alienated world of allopathic medicine, corporate chemical agriculture, and the usual condition of our modern psyches.

Whitmont (1980), a Jungian analyst and a homeopath, in his *Psyche and Substance: Essays on Homeopathy in the Light of Jungian Psychology* indicates the dawning of a possible avenue of return to this practically lost awareness when he points out that "post-Einsteinian science . . . holds a view of a world which operates in terms of energy activity and process, or what one might call the differentiation of spacetime in terms of fields" (p. 52). This awareness of energy fields is surely the position from which Kenge knew that he was not alone as he danced in the forest with the moon and the trees. This view can hopefully remind us of our own intimately embedded position in nature and help to usher in a more respectful human relationship to all of the various creatures of the natural world, including our own bodies, minds, and hearts; our own experiencing selves.

Imagine the universe as a huge soup of electromagnetic energy swirling and pulsing, absorbing and emanating, displaying its hundreds of hues. Imagine there is no such thing as solid matter, only greater and lesser concentrations of energy which appear to be solid or invisible. (Cox, 1986, p. 1)

This view is deeply relevant to any understanding of the workings of homeopathic magic or medicine. Homeopathic remedies clearly do not act in a purely Newtonian way to directly cause change. "There is clearly an energetic principle at work in healing with homeopathy, one reason why it has aptly been called energy medicine" (Josephson, 2002, p. 9). In fact

the homeopathic view is fundamentally focused on field dynamics and energy processes. Illness itself is understood as a problem of energy patterns rather than some mechanical failure, defect, or malfunction. "It uses those symptoms that are indicative of the disturbed energy field, namely, of the individual physiological reaction or expression of reaction" (Whitmont, 1980, p. 17). And then it responds with an energy medicine.

As Kenge's intimate dance in the forest was profoundly relational, homeopathy offers a profoundly relational view of health, disease, and treatment. Mindell (2000) discusses the ways in which developments in physics and depth psychology also support the essential relevance of this relational view.

In the new physics and psychology, the fundamental process is not elementary particles or parts of the personality such as ego or Self, but dreaming. This fundamental dreaming process reminds me of Richard Feynman's seminal text on particle physics, *The Theory of Fundamental Processes*. His title stresses that the particles themselves are not the roots of physical reality; instead, the true roots are the interactions, invisible relationship processes between particles. (p. 581)

In homeopathy, the symptoms associated with disease are seen as signs of the organism's attempt to restore a healthy interrelationship with the intimate and often subtle conditions of its life, whatever those may be.

"The symptoms are used to indicate the presence of an otherwise imperceptible energy disturbance" (Whitmont, 1980, p. 17). A disturbance which is then deeply met, not fixed or eradicated. Giving historical context

to the emergence of these ideas, Whitmont recounts the revolution in understanding that is occurring in both physics and depth psychology.

Eighteenth and nineteenth century rationalism and positivism, fellow travelers of mercantilism and industrialism, could think only in terms of mechanistic causation and survival usefulness. The idea that form and patterns are a play of nature with no purpose other than their own fulfillment was utterly foreign and unacceptable to them. Yet processes of form, we have discovered in microphysics as well as in Jung's work in depth psychology, underlie the basic dynamics of both matter and psyche. (p. 7)

This recent reconnection with the "play of nature with no purpose other than their own fulfillment" is a return to the dance of Kenge in the forest, a dance not of things, but of energy and delight<sup>7</sup>.

In the field of psychological disturbance and distress we face the same paradox regarding treatment that I have been discussing in regard to medical interventions. Once again like Alice, we are unlikely to find the queen of healing or cure by heading forth straight toward the eradication of symptoms. Theorists and practitioners of depth psychology have long appreciated this fact. Rather than striving to suppress or destroy the myriad symptoms of psychological distress we have sought to understand the underlying causes embedded in the experience of our patients. In this way depth psychology is aligned with homeopathy. As the homeopathic practitioner and teacher Ullman (1988) points out,

Modern psychoanalysts, like homeopaths, understand that symptoms are not 'the problem' but only manifestations of the

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<sup>7</sup> See also *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* by William Blake (1793/1963) for a powerful rendering of similar ideas.

problem. Sigmund Freud laid the groundwork for this perspective by uncovering the sublimated and unconscious nature of psychological disorders and the manner in which they are expressed. Carl Jung extended this perspective by showing how those sublimated psychological patterns also contain symbolic representations of transpersonal unconscious materials. Wilhelm Reich showed how these patterns are locked into actual physical states. (p. 199)

This accounting of depth psychological insights could be extended and we would still find that each one shares the basic perspective that to truly treat and care for those suffering the torments of psychological problems we must forego simply trying to block or remove the symptoms that present themselves and instead begin to turn toward those same symptoms and what lies beneath them.

Whitmont (1980) shares this view: "Whenever the . . . response is one of maladaptation which induces suffering ('pathein') and thus in a 'pathological' way threatens the functioning of the total organism, a rapprochement has to be sought, not against, but *within*, this individual response pattern itself" (p. 45-46). He further points out that when we engage in an approach that does not seek this accord but fights against the symptom, "The very attempt, more likely than not, will add to the already existing trouble" (p. 45). With this in mind, whether we seem to be dealing with the diseases of the body or with disturbances of the psyche, it is crucial for us to understand that "symptoms represent the body's best effort to heal itself. Hence, instead of suppressing symptoms, therapies should stimulate the body's defenses to complete the curative

process" (Cummings & Ullman, 1997, p. 5). This necessity leads to the use of therapeutic means that, in their actions, mimics or matches the relevant symptoms—which brings us back to Frazer's homeopathic magic and what he termed the law of similarities.

In homeopathic practice the selection of remedy is guided by the symptoms of the response through what is known as the law of similars. "The term homeopathy (sometimes spelled homoeopathy) comes from the Greek *homoios* ('similar') and *pathos* ('suffering' or 'sickness'). The fundamental law upon which homeopathy is based is the *law of similars*" (Panos & Heimlich, 1980, p. 11).

The *law of similars*, which states: Let likes be cured with likes, in Latin: *Similia similibus curentur*. This means that a remedy can cure a disease if it produces in a healthy person symptoms similar to those of the sick person. (Josephson, 2002, p. 4)

By producing the symptoms in a healthy person, which is called a proving of the remedy, it is demonstrated that the substance will join with and support the organisms own specific healing response when the disease involves those same symptoms. The beginning of modern homeopathy lies in Hahnemann's recognition of a homeopathic remedy when he was investigating a contemporary treatment for malaria.

After taking successive small doses of [cinchona bark], he developed a reaction: his array of symptoms was strikingly similar to those of malaria. Hahnemann deduced that the curative power of cinchona bark lay not in its bitter qualities but in its ability to create the symptoms of malaria in a healthy person. (p. 6)

The symptoms that Hahnemann catalogued for this and many other remedies during subsequent provings include a wide range of mental, emotional, and psychological states as well as sensations, and visible, tangible physical conditions. This has led to a holistic view of the person that transcends the divisions of mind, body, and psyche. In homeopathy, the determination of an appropriate remedy is not arrived at through any theory of illness or cure, but rather through a deep trust in the symptoms, which are the expression of the whole being. Through the law of similars those symptoms which arise in any given case of disease are matched to a catalogue of provings that are simply a compendium of careful and quite detailed observations of the action of various substances on the condition of a healthy person. The symptoms listed in this compendium include every kind of disturbance a person might experience. These range from clearly physical manifestations to distressed emotional states and mental disturbances of every kind. The unity of the body and mind is a daily reality in homeopathic practice. Through a scientifically validated return to the understanding of primitive homeopathic magic we may find a new integration of knowledge based in form, energy, and pattern; and within this integration we may also find a more realistic, holistic, and relational view of living beings.

Homeopathy . . . presents us with a veritable treasure house of practical data, utterly confusing at first and mindblowing to traditional scientific thought. If these data were accepted as verifiable they would call for a revision of many basic assumptions in physiology, psychobiology and pathology.

Chemistry and mechanics could no longer be considered the fundamental regulators. Form, images—as archetypal, autonomous indeed transcendental patterns prior to and playing with substance, directing the life force and hence biochemistry, physiology and psychology—would prove to be the basic regulators. These autonomous form patterns transcend as well as include what we are in the habit of separating into compartments of within, without, of soul and body, man and nature, of health and pathology, of solid substance and impalpable energy. (Whitmont, 1980, p. 7-8)

We begin to see ourselves again as integrally related to all of life. “We must attempt to understand *the connection between our biopsychological organism and the containing fields which envelop it*, so that a conscious relationship may be developed between them” (p. 51).

In light of these transcendent understandings bridging many areas of knowledge that are more commonly segregated, I find it fitting to learn that Hahnemann was a pioneer in the area of mental health practices as well as in the treatment of physical disease. The following account by Ullman (1988) shows that Hahnemann was an early advocate for the humane treatment of mental patients.

In the late 1700’s, insanity was considered possession by demons. The insane were regarded as wild animals, and treatment was essentially punishment. Hahnemann was one of the few physicians who perceived mental illness as a disease that required humane treatment. He opposed the practice of chaining mental patients, granted respect and human dignity to them, and recommended simple rest and relaxation. Although this type of care may seem obvious today, it was revolutionary in its time. (p. 185)

As the development of homeopathy continued, the treatment of mental and emotional symptoms through application of the law of similars was an integral part of the practice. “An integrated view of mind, emotions, and



the body is a central aspect of healing with homeopathy and has been from its very beginnings" (Josephson, 2002, p. xx). As I indicated above, this is an inevitable outgrowth of the practice of relying on the direct observation of provings to determine the usefulness and application of each remedy. When the proving of a substance elicits any mental and/or emotional symptoms along with physical ones, these become part of the treatment signature, or symptom picture, for that substance. Thereafter, through a process of matching the symptom picture with the symptoms of the patient, that particular substance will be utilized to treat those particular mental and emotional symptoms as well as the physical ones. The law of similars applies to all aspects of health.

At this point I want to touch on the wide significance of this law of similars, both through time and across disciplines. To begin with, this law of similars has a long, rich, and multi-cultural history.

The law of similars has roots that can be traced to the cultures of ancient India, China, and Greece. In 400 BC, Hippocrates described this natural law: 'Through the like, disease is produced, and through the application of the like, disease is cured.' Paracelsus, the sixteenth-century German physician whose writings would later influence Hahnemann, described this principle as well. (Josephson, 2002, p. 5)

Ullman (1988) in his accounting of this history also makes reference to Goethe, Shakespeare and the Delphic Oracle who, it is said, proclaimed, "That which makes sick shall heal" (p.7).

Once again, this is the central fact of homeopathic treatment: that the remedy is one that promotes rather than fights the specific healing

response that can be found in the symptoms of the disease. We can see this same principle reflected in other areas of life as well. For instance, many martial art practices are currently being taught in the United States. The majority of these, such as various forms of Kung Fu, Judo, and Karate are methods of fighting or combat. This is no surprise since the English translation of this category of activity, "martial", derives from Mars the Roman god of war (Barnhart, 1988, p. 636). Yet Aikido, another form of martial art, has developed in a very different direction. It is only used to defend and/or disarm attack and it is a notable exception.

The martial art, aikido, is based on the principle that by using the force of the attacker against himself, a person is better able to defend himself than if he attempts to butt up directly against the attacker's blows. Aikido practitioners are known to blend and flow with the force of the attacker and, without much effort, are able to throw an attacker to the ground. In a similar vein, homeopathic medicines are chosen for their ability to match and mimic the symptoms of the sick person and thereby go *with*, rather than *against*, the body's effort to heal itself. (Ullman, 1988, p. 8)

Aikido<sup>8</sup> is an example of homeopathic magic, in which the practitioner responds to any attack by joining with it to bring about resolution. Watching practitioners of Aikido, I have been struck not only by the effectiveness of their techniques in diffusing attacks but also by the harmony and grace in the way a person goes down. Aikido practice includes falling beautifully; in a sense, joining with that aspect of the situation as well. Aikido is another expression of the law of similars.

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<sup>8</sup> Aikido is often called the Way of Peace which derives from the meaning of the three characters: "*ai* with each other, together + *ki* spirit + *do* mastery, art" (Barnhart, 1988, p. 21), perhaps the art of being with each other in spirit.

We can also find examples that express this principle in the basic elements of the natural world. Consider water in its ability to mimic and join with others. It will easily and immediately shape itself to whatever comes in its way. Water is a great homeopath.

Nothing in the world is weaker than water  
 but against the hard and the strong  
 nothing excels it  
 for nothing can change it  
 the soft overcomes the hard  
 the weak overcomes the strong  
 (Lao Tzu, circa 500 BC/1996, verse 78).

Water, in its ability to dissolve a substance, demonstrates an intimate joining in which it practically becomes that substance, or more accurately becomes saturated with that substance. Just such an intimate meeting, joining with, responding in accord with and matching the details of any problem is the essence of the homeopathic law of similars.

This approach can be seen as a practical expression of compassion, which comes from the Late Latin "compati" meaning "to suffer together with" (Barnhart, 1988, p. 196). Supporting the principles of Aikido, in the *Tao Te Ching* we find that, like water "compassion wins every battle and outlasts every attack" (Lao Tzu, circa 500 BC/1996, verse 67). In light of the fact that "the basic assumption behind homeopathy is that symptoms of illness are not simply something 'wrong' with the person but are actually responses and efforts of the organism to defend and heal itself against infection and/or stress" (Ullman, 1999, p. 7), joining with the symptoms is the most reasonable path. This compassionate approach is

an attitude toward those responses, those symptoms, that is deeply and fully collaborative and cooperative through seeking a remedy that would cause those same symptoms in a healthy person and hence one which will support their healing intent in the case of disease.

It seems to me that the essential stance of empathic receptivity and responsiveness in the therapeutic relationship is based in this same wisdom, expressed by the law of similars. Empathy is another instance of homeopathic magic. Within the experience of empathy the therapist does not attempt to eradicate the unpleasant, painful, or disturbed feelings and experiences in the patient but rather through deep understanding and connection seeks to feel these *with* the patient, to "suffer together with." We could say that, like water, the therapist becomes saturated with the experience of the patient. Rollo May (1989) expresses the importance of this when he places empathy at the center of all healing:

The fundamental element of all healing is empathy . . . a kind of subtle communication. In empathy there is a nonverbal interchange of mood, belief, and attitude between doctor and patient, therapist and client, or any two people who have a significant relationship. (p. 108)

Thus the foundation of healing rests in joining with the other, with the symptoms of the other's distress. May concludes with this: "It is with true understanding, gained through empathy, that all effective healing takes place" (p. 110). Through empathic connection, compassionate joining, feeling with the other, a true understanding of what is present can be reached, and this allows and supports healing to emerge from what is.

An ancient account of the healing power of this homeopathic joining with another in an empathic connection is found in the earliest known writings extant on our planet. These are the Sumerian cuneiform clay tablets that were excavated from the ruins of Nippur, the spiritual center of Sumer in Mesopotamia. This is the land that is often called the cradle of civilization. In these tablets, which date back to approximately 1750 BC, there is an account of the descent and resurrection of Inanna, the moon goddess later known as Ishtar<sup>9</sup>. The relevant passages occur soon after Inanna's descent to the underworld where she has met and been killed by her sister, Ereshkigal, the queen of the underworld. At this point in the tale Inanna's grandfather Enki, the god of the waters and of wisdom, is instructing the two creatures he has created and will send to resurrect Inanna. He offers them the following directives, which I read as the earliest known recorded lesson in psychotherapeutic practice. Here is the transcription and translation by Wolkstein and Kramer (1983).

Go to the underworld,  
 Enter the door like flies.  
 Ereshkigal, the Queen of the Underworld, is moaning  
 With the cries of a woman about to give birth. . . .  
 When she cries, 'Oh! Oh! My inside!'  
 Cry also, 'Oh! Oh! Your inside!'  
 When she cries, 'Oh! Oh! My outside!'  
 Cry also, 'Oh! Oh! Your outside!'  
 The queen will be pleased.  
 She will offer you a gift.  
 Ask her only for the corpse that hangs from the hook on the wall.

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<sup>9</sup> Inanna is also known as the morning and evening star (Wolkstein & Kramer, 1983, p. 41) and as Queen of Heaven and Earth (p. 152). As Earth Goddess and in rising from the underworld she is linked to Pandora, also Earth Goddess, who can be seen arising directly from the earth (Panofsky & Panofsky, 1956/1962).

One of you will sprinkle the food of life on it.  
The other will sprinkle the water of life.  
Inanna will arise.  
(p. 64)

He is instructing them in empathy, in the law of similars. He predicts that once they join with her in her painful symptoms, healing will occur. Given the support of their expressed empathic connection with her suffering she will offer them the gift of that which has been previously destroyed and then, and only then, it can be revived, and life restored.

The resurrection of Inanna is relevant to my consideration of the myth of Pandora as a central reference for this phenomenon of projective identification and how our experiences are shaped by its presence in our lives. Scholars (Bell, 1991; Grimal, 1987; Panofsky, D. & Panofsky, E., 1956/1962; Spretnak, 1978) have noted that Pandora in more ancient times was associated with the Great Goddess in the forms, for instance, of Rhea or Gaia. Spretnak points out that "the *kore*, or maiden, form of the Earth-Goddess is Pandora. She is pictured on ancient vessels as a figure rising from the earth with outstretched arms" (p. 48). Her designation as Earth-Goddess coincides with her name, Pandora or "All gifts" whether interpreted as bringing all gifts, or as having been given all gifts. These divergent interpretations of her name actually come together in a tale of Inanna's early life, when she receives a huge bounty of gifts of various

powers from Enki and then, after fighting to keep them, bestows them on her people, humankind (Wolkstein & Kramer, 1983, p. 146-150).<sup>10</sup>

Back to our tale, when the creatures encounter Ereshkigal they find her moaning as Enki foretold. In her cries we can imagine the cries of any suffering soul. In fact, the various symptoms of disease and distress are themselves cries, albeit often nonverbal.

Every disturbance of health . . . is a 'cry for the remedy' or as Hering put it, a cry for the process that is its macrocosmic form analogon and that can restore balance when brought into confrontation with the disease process. When the outer and the inner process are brought into confrontation, they seem to cancel each other. Yet it is more than a canceling: underactivity is stimulated, overactivity is calmed. Imbalance is illness, confrontation restores balance and heals.  
(Whitmont, 1980, p. 10)

Just so, Enki has sent his emissaries to be the "form analogon" to compassionately confront Ereshkigal's suffering. They proceed to demonstrate their authentic understanding of his instructions on empathy by going beyond any rote application of his directions. They reflect each of her many complaints. So, after echoing the pain of her inside and her outside they continue to meet, match, and join with each symptom in its content and quality:

She groaned:  
    "Oh! Oh! My belly!"  
They groaned:  
    "Oh! Oh! Your belly!"  
She groaned:

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<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the tale of Inanna's resurrection can be read as a path to restoring Pandora's original form as life affirming Earth-Goddess, the bearer of all gifts; transforming the patriarchal image of an Eve-like temptress, source of all harm.

"Oh! Oh! My back!!"  
 They groaned:  
 "Oh! Oh! Your back!!"  
 She sighed:  
 "Ah! Ah! My heart!"  
 They sighed:  
 "Ah! Ah! Your heart!"  
 She sighed:  
 "Ah! Ahhhh! My liver!"  
 They sighed:  
 "Ah! Ahhhh! Your liver!"  
 Ereshkigal stopped  
 She looked at them.  
 She asked:  
 "Who are you,  
 Moaning—groaning—sighing with me?  
 If you are gods, I will bless you  
 If you are mortals, I will give you a gift."  
 (Wolkstein & Kramer, 1983, p. 65-66)

And then the tale continues with the foretold resurrection. Perera (1981) links the above passages to the process of therapy in a description that also points out the magic involved in this work.

What they are told to do by Enki is just what therapists do in those abyss places . . . where psyche and body meet on the borderline, where all is timeless and spaceless and the patterns of the magic level of consciousness hold. These creatures move in close to the goddess. . . . They witness and they mirror with empathy. . . . They see and feel, and they groan with. Honoring the goddess. . . . They affirm her in her suffering. They have been taught by Enki to trust the life force even when it sounds its misery. (p. 70)

And they have been taught to sound back, to become similar, feeling as if they are experiencing her pain. I suspect that most people these millennia later can identify with the relief and gratitude that Ereshkigal apparently felt when she was met and consistently accompanied in her pain. Even the Queen of the Underworld is subject to the law of similars.



This law of similars is related to the phenomenon of resonance.

Ullman (1999) reports that "homeopaths have long assumed that homeopathic remedies are 'energy medicines.' Akin to concepts of energy, 'chi', or 'ki' in acupuncture, homeopathic medicines are thought to resonate with the energetic essence of the individual to elicit a healing response" (p. 13). In an earlier work (1988) he describes how piano strings will reverberate in resonant sympathy with other plucked strings, but only those of the same note. "In music theory (and physics), there is a basic principle that two things resonate if, and only if, they are 'similar'" (p. 13). The chanted exchange above, translated from ancient Sumerian tablets, is an example of empathic resonance. Ullman (1988) also describes a childhood experience of recharging a weakened magnet, as another example of resonant effect. "Place similar poles next to each other; eventually the magnet will be recharged. . . . As in homeopathy, like recharges/regenerates/heals like" (p.7). It is the similarity between the two things that allows resonance. The idea of resonance is also expressed by May (1989) in his elucidation of empathy:

Empathy is the experience of understanding that takes place between two human beings. If you go into a music shop and pluck one string of a violin, each of the other instruments in the store will resonate with sound. Similarly, human beings can resonate with each other to such an extent that they can exchange understanding at a subtle level. (p. 108)

It may be that whether mythic creatures are rescuing a goddess, an empathic therapist is helping a patient, or a wise doctor is treating

disease; resonance is at work, homeopathic magic is at play, and the ancient law of similars is demonstrating its power to heal.

It seems to me that what I have come upon through the course of my research is a natural development of the application of homeopathic principles. I did not, however, come upon these findings through any conscious application of those principles. Nonetheless, my background does include some experience and familiarity with various forms of energy healing and with the use of homeopathy in family home care. This has undoubtedly influenced my thinking and my praxis as I made my way, exploring the psychological wilderness of projective identification. I know that certain homeopathic principles, such as a basic trust in the healing capacity of the organism and the conviction that better and safer results can be obtained by working with symptoms than by fighting against them, have been deeply influential in the development of my thinking all along. Furthermore, my clinical experience, which has been from a depth psychological perspective, has put me in touch with the law of similars through the essential requirement that I find ways to effectively engage in developing empathic receptivity, resonance, and responsiveness to the disturbed states and painful experiences brought into therapy. I have needed to develop the ability to "suffer together with" those who seek my support. My engagement in psychoanalytic psychotherapy, both as a practitioner and as a patient immersed in my own healing and recovery from trauma, may be fundamentally homeopathic in other ways as well.

"The psychoanalytical process involves the patient in reexperiencing those unconscious dynamic elements that lie at the basis of the pathology. This recreating or mimicking of an original submerged experience is clearly homeopathic-like in the largest sense" (Ullman, 1988, p. 199).

This intimate association that I have had with the law of similars and other homeopathic principles through my own experience of personal healing has been the source of deep insight and learning, shaping my skills, knowledge, and understandings of life, trouble, health, and help.

If I deprive myself  
they tell me  
I will be thin and happy.

This ravening hunger  
that seeks chocolate and butter  
smells out pasta thick with cheese  
craves teeth buried in texture;

This hunger  
tells me  
something else

What if I ask,  
what if I listen?

How have you become  
so insatiable?

What do you seek?  
What is happening to you?

Saying Yes instead of No.

Developing the ability to say yes to my own symptoms has been the primary crucible of my own intimate introduction to an understanding of homeopathic attitudes and awarenesses. These homeopathic insights

have permeated my process and informed my research, even if they have often been outside of my conscious awareness.

Here I will digress to emphasize the importance of accepting the negative, painful realities of life as an essential part of the practice of homeopathic magic. Like moaning with Ereshkigal in her agony, saying no *with* oneself or another, not *to* oneself or another, is part of saying yes. To adequately reflect and provide the necessary empathic connection requires openly facing the painful realities that underlie distress. Just as we must not react against the presenting symptoms, we also must not ignore the pain and misery, nor the injustice or violation that may have caused it. Furthermore, we must avoid making something of the distress, in other words using it for other ends. This reflects Karen Horney's theory of neurotic trends (1945/1972). She suggests that these trends take the form of each of three rigidly held positions, which are: moving toward, moving against, or moving away from others (pp. 34-47)<sup>11</sup>. Denial of painful realities is a way of moving away, symptom opposition such as in allopathic medicine is moving against, and co-opting of another's distress to fulfill some other need is a way of neurotically moving toward. Empathy is none of these; it allows a shared experiencing presence from a position of simple unbiased awareness, connection, and compassionate care.

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<sup>11</sup> Horney (1945/1972) sees these neurotic trends as "attempts at solution" (p.40) rather than innate or destructive impulses or conditions. This is clearly a homeopathic point of view.

Once again I find that Lewis Carroll's Alice (1871/1960), with her gentle and naïve engagement, points the way.

"Isn't he a *lovely* sight?" said Tweedledum.

Alice couldn't say honestly that he was. He had a tall red night-cap on, with a tassel, and he was lying crumpled up into a sort of untidy heap, and snoring loud—"fit to snore his head off!" as Tweedledum remarked.

"I'm afraid he'll catch cold with lying on the damp grass," said Alice, who was a very thoughtful little girl. (p. 166-168)

At least in her own mind Alice does not turn away from the unpleasant sight of the Red King. She does not reject his snoring crumpled form nor does she engage in overly solicitous demonstrations of concern to prove her worth. She sees him as he is, and she cares. Perera (1981) referring to Inanna's resurrection shares that "as therapists we are like those little, nonoppositional yin creatures, servants of the god Enki, in our work at this level of the psyche. We are present and accepting and letting be, expressing the truth of the dark affects" (p. 70). Yin is letting be.

Something changes  
when things are let be.

Untrampled sprouts grow  
tides come in, go out,  
come in again  
blood finds its way  
into tissues and out  
pressed by the heart  
and the movement  
of long muscles.

We fall in love  
the heart muscle  
also opens  
drawing in the blood  
that will soon

be pressed out  
we grow older.

Our children age  
and elders die  
seasons retreat behind us  
or approach, depending on our view;  
gazing into the future  
looking back at what was.

Here we stand  
and when  
we let ourselves be,  
just be, just here  
no matter how here is  
when we just let be  
yes here  
just be,  
something changes.

Tolle (2003) in *Stillness Speaks* emphasizes the importance and value of this when he says that "acceptance of the unacceptable is the greatest source of grace in this world" (p. 71).

In my personal healing, in my therapeutic work, in my experiences of and in the wilderness, in every area of my life including finally in this research inquiry into the phenomenon of projective identification, I have found the thread of homeopathic magic, that essential law of similars. It is everpresent and compelling, calling me again and again to turn and go inward, to go toward the unknown, toward the source of trouble, toward the intimate connection, toward the heart of the matter.

Turning the other way  
takes no time  
since it is  
stepping out of time.

There is a call,  
from within  
or from out there.  
Maybe an illness  
or an insistent animal.

It says here now  
not later  
not someday.

It says hello

and it expects  
to be answered.

This is the quality of homeopathic magic: it is the experience of call and response, of need and answer, of meeting and joining with the other. It is what Kenge knew and what Colin Turnbull (1961) realized in that moment of contact in the forest when Kenge's eyes, certainly compassionate while confronting, looked at his poor Western friend conveying that he "was the biggest fool he had ever seen." Then Kenge spoke and said, "But I'm *not* dancing alone. . . . I am dancing with the forest, dancing with the moon" (p. 245). This is the interrelational dance that is both healthy and healing.

Here then, for me, is the golden thread: relationships. It is our capacity to merge, to become at one, however briefly, with ourselves, with each other, and with life in a larger sense. Healing, wherever and however it occurs, brings each person and humanity as a whole toward a more inclusive, more unobstructed relatedness to all that is emerging in this adventure of life. (Moss, 1989, p. 37)

The core findings of my research are deeply rooted in this homeopathic relational perspective and the results I am seeing stand in my mind as strong confirmation of its reality, accuracy, and power.

The approach<sup>12</sup> I have found for the effective resolution of relatively intractable difficulties through an inner intimate receptive connection with the specific relevant displaced experiences underlying those difficulties is an approach that is, as I have said, deeply embedded in a homeopathic tradition, both in its attitude and its method. Now I have arrived at this stage of the work, wherein I am reviewing my journey, recollecting the experiences and the results I have gathered along the way, reassessing my understandings, and integrating my findings. As I do this, I realize that these homeopathic principles and practices are far more deeply relevant to my work than I had previously realized. This is most likely the result of my approach to the research which has been highly experiential and practical, with very little review of established theory, even this homeopathic perspective which is so close to my own preferences, intuitions, and experience. I confess that, at this juncture, I find it profoundly satisfying to discover the depth of connection that exists between the details of my findings and the homeopathic view.

As I evaluate what I have discovered and compare and contrast it with other practices and understandings, I find that there is a strong and specific correspondence with current homeopathic treatment practices and a rich representation of homeopathic principles. For example, I have come to see, more deeply than ever before, that even the most extreme forms

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<sup>12</sup> A description of this method can be found on pages 193-207 and again in Appendix A on pages 399-407.



of apparently self-destructive acts are, at their core, the person's very best attempt to respond in a productive way to their circumstances. While I have long had the outlook that people are doing their best, there have always been extreme cases, such as suicidality and sociopathy, that have been hard for me to reconcile with this point of view. This new depth psychological understanding of projective identification, which includes an understanding that activated displaced experiences will impel actions that are beyond the personal necessity of the individual who is under their sway, gives me a stronger base from which to understand that even these extreme cases of harm do not violate the principle that these are still the person's best attempt to navigate their circumstances. With my current perspective I can now see that the circumstances that are being handled in these cases include these compelling experiences of extreme situations actually occurring to another person, in another time and place. These intolerable experiences are crying out to be received, just as Ereshkigal cried out in agony, moaning, groaning, and sighing in the depths of the underworld. This resolves the problem of reconciling the extreme forms of harm that a person may inflict on themselves (or on another without any gain other than the harming of the other itself) with the knowledge that the person is doing their very best to manage their given situation; a situation which is profoundly transpersonal and relational.

Another aspect of my findings that closely parallels homeopathic practices and principles involves the actual method of resolving these

often very destructive activating displaces experiences. The principle that gives homeopathy its name (like cures like) is perfectly and powerfully represented in this practice of resolving displaced experiences. Here I will repeat the previously quoted definition of this law of similars.

The *law of similars*, which states: Let likes be cured with likes, in Latin: *Similia similibus curentur*. This means that a remedy can cure a disease if it produces in a healthy person symptoms similar to those of the sick person. (Josephson, 2002, p. 4)

In this case the remedy is not a substance that causes the like effect, but rather the direct experience of the symptoms by the practitioner. It is through allowing oneself to be possessed by the exact qualities of the originating traumatic experience, and to feel for a moment *just like* the person caught in the trauma feels, that resolution is achieved.

Form implies pattern, analogy and even esthetics. Hence the perception and recognition of analogical forms requires a special sensitivity that is not ordinarily a part of our scientific training. Yet it can prove itself an eminently useful means of unraveling functional interrelations and pointing up directions of energy and manifestations. Over and above mechanical and chemical dynamics, form patterns are expressions of symbolic correlations, correlations of analogy or similarity, of 'as if'. . . . Depth psychology has discovered that symbolic images and correlations are among the most powerful transmitters of energy, capable of 'moving mountains'. (Whitmont, 1980, p.7)

This experience of feeling "as if" one is in the traumatic condition, feeling as if one is suffering the extreme states of the original experience, feeling just like the person from whom the displaced experience is emanating, is an instance of deep empathic resonance much like that which is a part of effective traditional psychotherapy. The small, simple, yet absolutely

crucial difference is that the empathic resonance arises between the practitioner and the original traumatic experience, rather than the practitioner and the one who may be suffering its activated results.

Another important corollary involves the arena in which the work takes place. In the method which I have been using the entire operation of resolution of the displaced experience takes place within the field of consciousness, without the necessity for any overt communication, even with the person who brings the complaint. This is analogous to what is thought by some practitioners to occur in the case of the homeopathic treatment: that cure is achieved through a resonance of the energy of the remedy and the consciousness of the patient. Regarding the action of homeopathic remedies, Josephson (2002) points out that "the idea that nonphysical aspects of our makeup, such as human consciousness, are connected to physical health is an ancient concept but is relatively new in contemporary Western culture" (p. xix). Once again we are touching on the long tradition of homeopathic magic. "Whatever doubts science may entertain as to the possibility of action at a distance, magic has none; faith in telepathy is one of its basic principles" (Frazer, 1959, p. 19). This point of view leads to another facet of homeopathic tradition which I find reflected in my own work. "One of the great merits of homeopathic magic is that it enables the cure to be performed on the person of the doctor instead of on that of his victim, who is thus relieved of all trouble and inconvenience, while he sees his medical man writhe in anguish before

him" (Frazer, 1959, p. 13). Frazer's bias inclines him to refer to the recipient of such treatment as a "victim" but otherwise he describes a situation that, in a fundamental way, is quite akin to displaced experience resolution process work. When I do this work, however, I do not find that I need to overtly "writhe in anguish" or otherwise endure any prolonged agony. It is enough to feel the anguish briefly and empathically.

This leads to another correspondence between the process of working to release activating displaced experiences and the current practice of homeopathy, which is the principle of the minimum dose.

Numerous examples from physics and biology confirm the power of infinitesimally small substances, such as trace elements. Within the human body these essential substances are barely detectable, yet their absence would result in serious illness. We also know that thyroid hormone is present in our blood at only one part per 10 billion yet is sufficient to regulate our entire metabolism. (Josephson, 2002, p. 10)

Despite the validation above, this aspect of current homeopathic practice often strains the credibility of those who have not witnessed the efficacy of the remedies firsthand. There is an exacting many-step process that is used in the making of these remedies. Preparing a homeopathic remedy from a given substance involves the following procedure.

A controlled process of successive dilutions alternating with succession (shaking), which may be continued to the point where the resulting medicine contains no molecules of the original substance. These small doses are called *potencies*; lesser dilutions are known as low potencies and greater dilutions as high potencies. As strange as it may seem, the higher the dilution, when prepared in this manner, the greater the potency of the medicine. (Panos & Heimlich, 1980, p. 12)

In recent years there have been some studies that may point toward an explanation of how it is that these higher dilutions, with repeated shaking, gain greater and greater potency. For instance Ullman (1999) describes findings by Shui-Yin Lo at the California Institute of Technology, which he reports have been replicated by physicists at other major universities numerous times, indicating the presence of "a nonmelting ice crystal that maintains an electrical field" at room temperature in a substance that is diluted and shaken in the manner of a homeopathic preparation (p. 12).

The passage below is an excerpt from one of my inner imaginal dialogues that seems to relate to a world where ice crystals hold their form at room temperature. In this case I was listening to the voice of what seemed to be a bright fairy light.

There is the magic world and it is grander and more secret than any suspect. Now you will see it, now it is gone. You must recreate yourself moment by moment to meet us. This is where you will glimpse the images of your phenomenon. This is where the freshest clearest thoughts reside—in forms that are prior to thought. Come again, and again, and again. Inspiration is here.

This magic world is perhaps the shared field of consciousness in which power has nothing to do with size but rather with energy, form, pattern, and meaning. It seems to be a world where crystals of water maintain their identity and integrity at room temperature, and microscopic particles with their subtle energy patterns<sup>13</sup> are extraordinarily powerful. "The dose

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<sup>13</sup> Developments in quantum physics inform us that matter and energy, particle and energy pattern, are not distinct and different but rather exist within field, form, and wave function; where matter/particle and energy/wave may be best seen as unified in vibrating strings, or music (Greene, 1999; Kaku, 1994).

of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> used to treat certain anemias contains a millionth of a gram of cobalt" (Panos & Heimlich, 1980, p. 12). Maybe vitamins and hormones are in and of this magic world. Perhaps we all are.

Regarding this principle of the minimum dose, I have found through the refinement of my research findings that a mere moment of empathic voluntary possession, of deeply feeling the displaced trauma, is adequate to effect a complete resolution of that previously ongoing, troublesome, repeatedly activating, displaced experience. I have come to this unsought conclusion only after a great deal of experimentation. In the early period of practice with the technique I had stumbled upon, I devoted a relatively long time for the preparation of each discrete application of the process of resolving a displaced experience, and a substantial period of time on the process itself (see Appendix A, pp. 399-407). It was through gradual steps of experimentation and refinement that this changed. In the first period of practice the refinement was actually one of dropping various aspects of the technique that I found to be nonessential in terms of achieving a successful resolution. Then in the next period, once I had gotten down to a truly bare-bones approach and found it to be just as effective as the earlier more complex approaches had been, I began to experiment with the duration of application. I found that a longer period of sustaining contact with the experience did not seem to be useful in adding any efficacy. It became clear to me that once an actual present time, fully embodied, affectively rich, empathically attuned connection

was made with the state of being and feeling that exists in the displaced experience the duration of time of maintaining contact with that state was apparently irrelevant. In fact, it is difficult to stay for long with resolving displaced experiences. One fully resonant moment of feeling is adequate.

It was only through many repetitions and a preponderant bulk of experience that I came to accept this fact, since it seemed to dramatically contradict common sense. I had long assumed that extremely traumatic experiences, especially if their effects have been long-standing, would require lengthy intervention at best. This is far from the case. Once again the similarity to the development of homeopathic practice, which I have only realized in retrospect, is striking. The following passage refers to the early days of modern homeopathy.

Hahnemann's patients began responding quite well to the new form of treatment. However, he was concerned about the toxic side effects some patients experienced. He hoped that giving even smaller doses might remove the side effects. He began to experiment with diluting medicines in increments until the side effects were removed. At first he was disappointed when the medicines appeared to lose their effectiveness. Then he discovered that by vigorously shaking the solution and diluting it alternately in progressive steps, he was able to attain results that exceeded his expectations. Not only were the side effects gone but his patients were restored to health more quickly than before. . . . Much to his amazement, the more highly diluted and succussed substances acted more powerfully. (Josephson, 2002, p. 9)

In the case of the application of an attuned empathic awareness, concern over toxicity is probably unnecessary. Still, if my findings in regard to this instance of the principle of minimum dose prove to be valid and replicable it will certainly have significant clinical relevance.

I also find it of interest, as well as personally satisfying, that the development of the practice of modern homeopathy occurred along lines that are quite similar to the development of the insights that have led to my current understanding of projective identification, the existence of displaced experiences, and an awareness of this new method for their resolution. My trajectory has been deeply experiential and rather seriously lacking in theoretical formulation or assessment, prior to this late stage of the work. "The homeopathic approach is a *phenomenological* one. Hahnemann developed his theory not on the basis of speculation but as the result of pure observation" (Whitmont, 1980, p. 40).

When faced with an apparent problem of disease or distress, the straightforward and most common impulse may be to try to get rid of it, to eradicate the problem, which can readily lead to an opposition to the symptoms. Staying in touch with the often complex reality of the situation by maintaining a consistent continuing observation, or thinking more deeply about the source of the difficulty, will usually reveal the wrongness of that blunt approach and the necessity of finding another way.

At intervals throughout the unfolding drama of life, we are brought face-to-face with inner aspects of our being that are blocked or stuck. Like a river obstructed by a boulder, our life's course may be able to bend around an obstacle until it becomes too clogged with debris. The water swells behind the blockage, pressure builds, and there is stagnation. When nothing flows illness develops. Bailing out some water may reduce the swelling, but only temporarily. Clearing away the surrounding debris may also give relief, until it builds up again. To truly restore the dynamic flow, however, the obstacle must be removed. (Josephson, 2002, p. 14-15)



The other way of responding to troubles is to seek to truly remove the obstacles. This is a way that works. It is to join with the problem so effectively that it no longer needs to exist. In homeopathy, the support that the remedy offers to the organism helps in its healing response, bringing the symptoms to their natural conclusion which is the success of recreating harmony and health. The creatures sent to the underworld by Enki did the same thing to Ereshkigal's distress, joining and supporting it so thoroughly that it was relieved. Because of their empathic response, her cries and moans succeeded in bringing her back into harmony, into relationship. The application of an empathic awareness to the feelings of a displaced experience allows it to succeed at recreating relationship and at re-establishing connection. Then, having succeeded, it is no more.

This brings to mind another significant parallel that I imagine exists between my understandings regarding projective identification with its displaced or dispossessed experiences<sup>14</sup> and the workings of homeopathy.

The theoretical foundations of homeopathy could not and 'must not' be true according to orthodox scientists. They thought this way not because it does not work, but because it 'could not possibly work' on a priori grounds of biased conviction. Medical and biological scientists consequently refused to investigate the claims of homeopathy by clinical trial. Those few who individually tried became convinced homeopaths.

One is reminded of the time of Galileo, Copernicus and Kepler when the idea or possibility of the earth rather than the sun being the moving body was rejected out of hand as

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<sup>14</sup> The term "dispossessed experience" was suggested by Kaia Rose (personal communication, May 18, 2007) as being perhaps a more accurate descriptor of the phenomenon.

heretical. Galileo's clerical contemporaries refused to even look into a telescope to verify the moons of Jupiter he claimed to have discovered. Scriptural tradition made no reference to Jovian moons, therefore, they could not, must not exist. (Whitmont, 1980, p. 8)

I am probably not amiss in imagining that the claims I am making regarding the existence of autonomous displaced experiences, their extensive incidence, the severe repercussions of their recurrent activation, and the simple method for their resolution with its widespread relevance and profound results are claims that will be rejected by many people without benefit of any substantial testing. Perhaps I am wrong in this, but sadly history suggests otherwise. Homeopathy has a substantial body of evidence as to its efficacy and there exist practically no arguments from any quarter about its striking lack of destructive side effects, and yet it is far from the treatment of choice for most people. On the contrary, the widely accepted and widespread use of allopathic medications which have been largely untested for long term consequences is unquestioned and freely applied by both doctors and laypersons in all arenas of healthcare, even with the harmful side effects that routinely occur.

Homeopathy is still an anachronism, a premature child of a time that is still to come. The resistance to Homeopathy is deeply rooted, historically, psychologically and spiritually. Homeopathy is part of an approach into the mystery of existence that as an overall attitude would be a necessary complementation to our prevalent, basically materialistic and rational orientation.

This step towards a rounding and deepening of our outlook on life and science has but begun in some disciplines. Its general

and over-all acceptance still belongs to a future day. (Whitmont, 1980, p. 48)

Perhaps that day is coming.

If so, it will finally be a time of ascendancy for the wisdom that has followed the thread of homeopathic magic through the ages. In one of the widely recognized repositories of our collective cultural wisdom I have found references that echo some of the themes I have been dealing with here. I am speaking of the works of William Shakespeare, in particular *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*.

Hamlet: Give me your pardon sir, I have done you wrong,  
 But pardon't as you are a gentleman, this presence knows,  
 And you must needs have heard, how I am punnisht  
 With a sore distraction, what I have done  
 That might your nature, honor, and exception  
 Roughly awake, I heare proclame was madnesse,  
 Wast Hamlet wronged Laertes? never Hamlet.  
 If Hamlet from himselfe be tane away,  
 And when hee's not himselfe, dooes wrong Laertes,  
 Then Hamlet dooes it not, Hamlet denies it,  
 Who dooes it then? his madnesse. Ift be so,  
 Hamlet is of the faction that is wronged,  
 His madness is poore Hamlets enimie.

(Shakespeare, 1604/2007, Act V Scene 2)

Was it Hamlet who wronged Laertes or did his madness do it? If, as he attests, it was his madness then isn't it also true that he and Laertes were both wronged and that this madness is, as he says, as much an enemy of Hamlet's as of Laertes? Over 400 years ago, Shakespeare may have been describing the condition that captured my attention a decade and half past. It is the condition of being taken over by a madness that wrongs us, as it cries out its misery and pain. If these states of madness are the

result of autonomous displaced experiences crying out through our experiencing selves, then they are not simply the troubles of life, but rather they are the *outrageous* troubles, the ones that truly plague us.

To be, or not to be, that is the question,  
 Whether tis nobler in the minde to suffer  
 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
 Or to take Armes against a sea of troubles,  
 And by opposing, ende them.

(Shakespeare, 1604/2007, Act III Scene 1)

So, shall we oppose this outrageous fortune, these outrageous troubles, or would it actually be more effective to suffer them—at least, if we know how to approach that suffering in such a way as to bring about a real resolution. Homeopathic tradition suggests that opposition will surely get us no where good and possibly somewhere worse than we began, and that we might instead better consider the possibility of suffering them, in the sense given by the Latin root *ferre*, meaning to carry (Barnhart, 1988, p. 1088); to suffer, to carry, or perhaps to let be.

Horatio: If your minde dislike any thing, obay it. I will forstal their repaire hether, and say you are not fit.

Hamlet: Not a whit, we defie augury, there is special providence, in the fall of a Sparrowe, if it be not to come, it will be now, if it be not now, yet it well come, the readiness is all, since no man of ought he leaves, knows what ist to leave betimes, Let be.

(Shakespeare, 1604/2007, Act V Scene 2)

Death will come, now or later, and there is much that we don't know. But perhaps we do know, along with Hamlet, that it is best to "Let be." This is Hamlet's last conversation with Horatio before the final encounter in

which so many die. The next time he speaks to Horatio, in fact, it is to tell him "Let it be. Horatio, I am dead" (Act V Scene 2)<sup>15</sup>.

The following words are excerpted from a popular song that recently represented that wisdom, "Let It Be."

When I find myself in times of trouble  
 Mother Mary comes to me  
 Speaking words of wisdom, let it be

. . .  
 Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be  
 Whisper words of wisdom, let it be

And when the broken hearted people  
 living in the world agree  
 there will be an answer, let it be

for though they may be parted  
 there is still a chance that they will see  
 there will be an answer, let it be

(McCartney, 1970/2007)

It is said that McCartney wrote this song following a dream of his mother, Mary McCartney, who died of cancer when he was 14 years old. There is wisdom in letting things be what they are. With the difficulties of our own lives, this can be a great help. When we are saddled with the extreme difficulties of another's life it may be an even greater help. Once we have followed Hamlet's advice to let be, we can join with the difficulty of that other, resonating empathically. The Gnostic gospels apparently agree:

When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below . . . and when you fashion eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and a

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<sup>15</sup> Toby Shaw brought Hamlet's "Let Be" and its connection to the famous "To be or not to be" soliloquy to my attention (personal communication, August, 2006).

likeness in place of a likeness; then will you enter [the kingdom].  
(Robinson, 1990, p. 129)

When we voluntarily allow ourselves to be possessed by the anguish of another's intolerable pain, or the terror of another's endangerment, or the grief of another's calamity, we become those hands and feet in place of the other's hands and feet, and that eye in place of an eye.

*The Etiology, Existence, and Resolution of Displaced Experience*

This section is my attempt to comprehensively describe this new view of psychological distress and relief. It has grown out of my research on the phenomenon of projective identification and my findings regarding the existence and the resolution of displaced or dispossessed experiences. In this section I intend to provide an account of this new view in a manner that I hope will be clear and concise without the need for any familiarity with scholarly descriptions of the diverse phenomena of depth psychology, including projective identification. I am aware that this new view emerges from a profoundly non-ordinary viewpoint and yet I am hopeful that it will resonate in a deep way with the experiences of living that are familiar to all humankind. I am encouraged in this hope by the fact that everything that follows has arisen from a long and deep inquiry into hidden reaches of my own experience, and not through any intentional application of existing theory.

Here is something precious  
and unbelievable.

Don't waste your mind  
trying to believe it.

Think instead.  
Think what if  
and may be.

If you ask me whether  
I believe it;  
I will say No,  
I know it.

The question of how we can know anything is a fundamental one that we each resolve for ourselves in various ways as we make our way through the circumstances of living. Can we trust our senses? Is there a real world "out there" the way it seems to be? Is the Red King really dreaming all of this, us included, as Tweedledum and Tweedledee claim in *Through the Looking Glass* (Carroll, 1871/1960, p. 167)? For myself, I have decided to trust the evidence of my senses, through which I observe and participate in reality, whatever it is; with what I hope is a healthy dose of checking and rechecking. In this, I find myself in accord with Meg Urry (2007), the newly appointed chair of the physics department at Yale University, in her recent writings on the discovery of Dark Energy.

What excites me personally is how the discovery of Dark Energy illustrates that science is not a set of beliefs that one constructs. Instead, scientists observe nature, then develop theories that describe their observations. Science is driven by nature itself, and nature gives us no choice. It is what it is. (p. 5)

As is always the case in scientific inquiry, there are some things known and still others as yet unknown. "Dark Energy makes up two-thirds of the universe—and we don't know what it is" (p.4). She points out that " 'Dark'

is code for "we have absolutely no clue what it is!" " (p. 5). She makes it clear that this is no deterrent to an ongoing investigation. Indeed the very discovery of such a mystery inspires a deep engagement in the quest for new knowledge and understanding. Along these lines, as I entered into a deep inquiry into the mysterious phenomenon that I will now attempt to describe, I had absolutely no idea what I was dealing with. I only knew that something significant was happening and that I was determined to understand it. Now, many years later, I can comfortably claim that while there are still many things in life that I do not understand, as much as I can say I know anything, I know this.

I have found something rare and beautiful, something liberating and exquisitely simple. I have found that it is finally possible to change the unchanging, to move the immovable. I stayed in a place of failure upon failure for so many years, with little sign of progress, without any reason to hope that I would ever succeed at understanding what I was studying and yet I was unable to turn away. I felt myself unable to go elsewhere when this investigation was clearly where my whole life up to that point had brought me. It was as if I had been washed by fate onto a barren shore and I needed to somehow find sustenance, although none was evident. I stayed on that seemingly barren shore; I stood facing what seemed to be an insurmountable cliff. Through this time, like a plant with only the barest shoots visible above ground, while its roots are vigorously developing, I gained steadily in experience and tentative understandings.



Then one day something unexpected and unimaginable finally arrived. Suddenly, what I had been trying for so long to understand came clearly into focus with an opening to surprising new possibilities for healing. At last I had the discovery that completes the round of my inquiry into this apparently barren land of intractable problems. This is a discovery that makes the seemingly impossible possible. While I realize that these are large claims, I am only giving voice to what I have found. It is possible that others will not find the same power in this discovery that I have. They are welcome to their view; this is mine. I see a world transformed, able to be free from the human destructiveness that has near destroyed the planet. I see people helping each other around kitchen tables and firesides without the need for experts at every turn, without needing to struggle uselessly with suffering. I see an insight as powerful as a major technological breakthrough and yet as simple as a common paperclip.

As is so often the case, this discovery arrived in accord with a new and deep understanding of the problem. So I begin here with one attempt to describe the problem as I now see it.

Bridging the past and present  
with the weight of years  
we turn trouble into tragedy.

Layers of trauma  
lay themselves down in our lives,  
calling out still alive  
from distant times and places.

The friends or lovers or enemies  
who hurt us in heartless moments

or violate us with ill intent,  
become more than they are.

Become parent, grandparent,  
grandparent's parent,  
back without end.

All the unheard voices  
still crying out to be heard,  
from their place alive in our soul,  
in our world, in our mind and heart,  
reaching us through our bodies  
until we weep their tears,  
and shriek their cries.

We find them, these ghosts  
that haunt our nights and days,  
in the details of our misery  
in the fabric of our conflicts  
in thoughts and feelings  
so like our own,  
seeming like our own,  
but a bit too rigid, a bit too extreme,

Vastly unhelpful thoughts and feelings,  
that cause us to turn  
troubles into tragedies.

I am going to describe a new way of looking at our worst experiences and then, given that new view, an entirely different and more successful way, than what has mostly been thus far available, to effect the changes that we most want to see in ourselves, our relationships, and our world.

To begin with, let me try to make clear what I mean by intractable problems. I am not referring to an abstract idea of what is wrong with our world or with our lives. I am referring to those experiences that we all have at times that practically or actually, even if temporarily, drive us mad. These are the experiences where we are apt to say in retrospect,

“What was the matter with me?” or that drive us at the time to exclaim, “What is the matter with you?” These are those persistent and painfully familiar problems that happen over and over, usually no matter how hard we work to end them. These are the problems that seem to be nearly impossible to handle, even with the best support or techniques.

If you want to identify one of the problems that I am referring to, think of anything that has caused you trouble in the past that still feels disturbing when you think about it. Often these are situations that keep recurring, that always feel bad in the same way, or memories of difficult experiences that still feel bad when recalled. There are, of course, those times when it is not necessary to think of anything in order to identify one of these sorts of problems, because one is happening and making itself known loud and clear, always in a very unpleasant way. Here are some of the reliable signposts of these apparently intractable problems: They never make us happy or satisfied; they are very difficult to get out of or resolve once they begin to happen; they are downright contagious and the people we are interacting with at times like these have an uncanny ability to make matters worse. These problems often strike when we are otherwise down and out. In contrast when we are at our best, feeling strong and centered, they are less apt to get ahold of us. When we are in the middle of one of these difficulties, all our best intentions to do things differently next time tend to disappear and leave us helplessly acting out our part of the same old tiresome, maddeningly repetitive, and painful

situation. Other people in the situation, even when they are different people than before, generally act out their part just as predictably. These are the problems that engender unreasonable blame of others and anger at ourselves. These are the times we find ourselves caught in worsening spirals that bring us into the worst states of mind. These torturous states of mind include shame, guilt, anxiety, depression, envy, greed, and so on. They also include abusive, destructive, and apparently self-destructive acts. In other words, these really are what is the matter with us.

We do our best to resolve these problems and in the end we usually resort to trying to avoid the situations that seem to cause them. We may end up restricting our lives in various unfortunate ways to avoid the pain and misery they cause. Sometimes the only relief we can find is in some drug or medication. At other times we are grateful to find that, as we heal and grow in therapy or otherwise, they seem to fade into the background. But it can then be maddening when, after some period of respite, one of these appears again and shows itself to have all the same unpleasant characteristics it always had. Sometimes one of these does really resolve completely, in therapy or through some spiritual experience, but we are hard pressed to discover how to reliably repeat our success.

It may seem that I am describing every sort of human problem under the sun. This is only half right. I am describing half of the problems under the sun, the really bad half. The other problems are the ones that do not cause the perpetuation of misery and abuse in the world. These

others are simply our own personal difficulties resulting from our own encounters with the troubles and deficiencies in our life. We are actually quite well equipped to handle these personal problems with any real support. These are the problems that get a lot better when you tell a friend, share your feelings with a therapist, or even just sit with them compassionately, caring for yourself. I am not, in this work, concerning myself with these problems because we are already handling them well enough. There is only one reason that it appears that we aren't handling them well enough, and that reason is the destructive effects of the other problems, the truly troublesome and seemingly intractable problems.

These other misery-inducing persistent problems, the ones I am concerning myself with in this work, are not ours. They are not our own personal problems. We have all been suffering a great deal because of problems that are not, in any basic way, our own. I have come to call the cause of these problems activated displaced or dispossessed experiences. To explain this phenomenon I will digress for a bit. Many of us have seen a young child, being cared for by someone they aren't intimately close to, who will stop themselves from crying when they get hurt. Then, minutes or even hours later, when mom or dad or some other truly close person arrives they burst out crying and will, if they can, show the hurt place. It is as if it just happened. Then when they are really heard, held, and cared for they feel all better. We are all young children in that regard. We long to be able to share our hurts with someone we trust. Sometimes we have

someone to reach out to and sometimes we don't, but if the hurt is really bad we don't just want someone, we need someone. Seriously painful situations are really too much to bear alone. This is why we say they are overwhelming or intolerable. But we all know that many people are alone in seriously painful situations. Or are they? Perhaps our experiences are not so isolated and separate as they may seem. Consciousness itself is not some spark of light trapped inside each of our heads. Consciousness is more akin to a shared field within which we each experience a unique point of view. When any of us experiences an overwhelmingly painful or intolerable situation and we do not have any close person to whom we can turn for support, we turn nonetheless—waiting like that young child waits for someone to finally arrive who can hear us and hold us and care for us, so we too can feel all better. Like that child who can wait for hours or the therapy client who has waited for years, these unmet intolerable overwhelming experiences wait through the generations.

They do not wait silently. They cry out. They cry out in our lives. They reach out through the avenues of relationship. When someone who is associated, by way of these avenues of relationship, with that original hurt person is in a current situation that is similar enough to that original intolerable event, the original experience becomes activated. We could say that the hurt person cries out. It is at this point that we are caught. At this point we are in trouble, their trouble. We are possessed; there is

something the matter with us. We may say, "I am beside myself" and at this point we are altogether or partly mad.

"But I don't want to go among mad people," Alice remarked.  
 "Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat: "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad."  
 "How do you know I'm mad?" said Alice  
 "You must be," said the Cat, "or you wouldn't be here."  
 (Carroll, 1865/1960, p. 65)

This is perhaps what is meant by the human condition. These are the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" that Shakespeare's Hamlet (1604/2007, Act III Scene 1) bemoans. This is the unseen reality behind so many instances of misery and torment, of harsh and seemingly endless frustration. This is what we call "inner conflict."

What if  
 we never  
 fight ourself.

If conflict, never inner,  
 is always with another.

What if standing between  
 our current condition  
 and the peace we crave,  
 is merely the mistaking of ghosts  
 for ourselves and each other.

And we do mistake them. They do not announce themselves in any usual overt way, and we think that it is nobody but us.

When a displaced experience is activated in our field of awareness we become possessed by its pattern, its form and energy. We feel what it feels like, what the person from whom it is emanating feels like. We have impressions and thoughts and perspectives and bodily sensations that

come from this other place. All of it seems to be our own. At the time or in retrospect, we may have a hint that we are "over-reacting" and that the actual situation doesn't truly warrant all of our responses. We need to learn to recognize the signs of these possessions.

In this condition  
all is impossible.  
We strive endlessly  
suffer hopelessly  
try and try  
and try.

Now, it is time to stop.  
This is the moment to accept fate.

Who knows  
where it comes from  
or how it arrives?  
We only know it cannot be denied.

Now is the time to notice  
the difference between living  
and being possessed.

Living is not sterile, without potential,  
repeating the same horrors  
over and over and over and over.

Who calls out, possessing us?  
Who shows us their pain,  
crying out again and again?

You have been busy  
re-enacting their suffering,  
ignoring their cries  
and *being* their pain.

This is quite literally what I think is so often occurring in many common situations that are resistant to change. These are the times when we are not kind to each other, when we lose our compassion and understanding.



These are the times when we feel and act as if there is an urgent reason that we must do as we do, feel as we feel, act as we act, and say what we say. Even though we may later regret it, even though we will probably do it again, even though those urgent reasons don't seem so valid in the clear light of a calm moment (if we ever even manage to reflect on these experiences in a calm moment); we continue each time to enact the same hopeless unsatisfactory round of events.

Many of us have taken these experiences into therapy sessions or other places that we go to get help with our lives. We work to understand, to analyze, to feel through to a deeper reality—and we usually have some success. But it is a lot of work, slow going, and often incomplete.

No flowers bloom on this stalk,  
it is not flowing with sap.  
It has no life in this world.  
It is here, ghostlike,  
an ephemera with power:  
The power of some horrendous  
moment of isolated pain and misery.

With that power  
it haunts us,  
stalking our every move  
waiting for the moments  
when our living  
matches that horror;  
just a little,  
just enough,  
and then  
a doorway opens.  
In comes  
all that horror,  
all that pain and misery.

Needing someone.

Needing companionship,  
Meanwhile  
making do with repetition.

Such events of being possessed by activated displaced experiences are epidemic in these times, perhaps in part due to the fact that we no longer practice tribal rituals that may have been effective in processing collective experiences of unresolved trauma and hence handling these problems at their source. Whether for this reason or others, relationships of all kinds in this modern world are disrupted and often destroyed by the painful and compulsively driven relationship ruptures that these displaced experiences will cause when they are acted out unknowingly in our own lives. There is, however, a simple remedy. It is in many ways akin to indigenous healing practices but it does not require any training or familiarity with forgotten ways of working. My sense is that most people will find the process that resolves these problems relatively easy to do, although it may seem odd and somewhat counter-intuitive at first since it involves moving toward, in a welcoming way, the very feelings that are so disturbing and distressing.

This remedy for the destructive effects of activated displaced or dispossessed experiences suggests the possibility of a deep and rapid recovery, since the very people who are most heavily affected do not need to engage directly in the work to remedy the problem. We can and we already do receive each other's distress in a vivid, direct, simple, and effective way. Once we know how, we can offer it the reception it needs

and relieve ourselves and each other of the damaging consequences that predictably ensue when these distressed cries are not received.

When a person is alone in a horrifically painful or threatening situation, unless they have a solid sense of connectedness and support that they carry with them into the situation, they will find the experience absolutely intolerable. These are the sorts of experiences that continue to resonate, to live; in a sense to wait. They continue to seek the necessary help of another person who can share in and hold that intolerable hurt. The good news here is that it is an entirely different matter to hold such feeling "as if" one were in the situation. Consider the difference between being tortured and letting yourself imagine what it must feel like to be tortured. Neither one is pleasant but only the first is truly intolerable. We need to be able to keep track of who we are. Are we actually the one in the grip of an intolerable situation, or are we only feeling *as if* we are?

At last the Caterpillar took the hookah out of its mouth, and addressed her in a languid, sleepy voice.

"Who are *you*?" said the Caterpillar.

This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, "I—I hardly know, Sir, just at present—at least I know who I *was* when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then."

"What do you mean by that?" said the Caterpillar, sternly, "Explain yourself!"

"I can't explain *myself*, I'm afraid, Sir," said Alice, "because I'm not myself, you see."

"I don't see," said the Caterpillar.

"I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly," Alice replied, very politely, "for I can't understand it myself."

(Carroll, 1865/1960, p. 48)

Yet, as confusing as it is, we can tell the difference. There are tell-tale signs that signal when an interaction we are involved in is being driven by a displaced or dispossessed experience.

We all need sanctuary  
for the hurt times

Be that sanctuary  
for those who have gone before

Offer your bodily heart  
to that ghostly pain  
whistling through your house,

Turning joy to dread,  
causing the closest friends  
to lose all agreement.

Do not rail against fate.

Open your inner heart,  
feel the blood move  
the breath enliven  
What is wanted here  
is your earthly heart  
the one that loves sex  
and hates harm.  
The fleshy heart  
that knows fear  
and longing,  
and grief.

Give yourself over  
to this possessing pain  
to this unendurable misery  
for a moment.

You will find  
that you can  
easily endure  
this unendurable agony,  
because you  
are only listening.

You are not actually the one  
caught in its grip.

Although  
if you do not listen  
you will be.

This is how to resolve a trauma from another time and place, living and enacting through us here and now—communicating itself to us in the only way it can: through our own embodied experience.

Indeed this is the magic that is at hand. When we are clutched in the grip of one of these experiences, everything feels utterly entirely real. Terror is terrifying, anger is enraging, determination is unstoppable, the urge to defend oneself lashes out ferociously and all of it is really exactly how we feel. Or is it? Would our own feelings ever drive us to such harsh and self-punishing ends? These are not the situations where our beautiful anger protects us, or our powerful vulnerable fear leads us to safety, or our ability to stand strong, even strident, in the face of opposition gains us a needed advantage over some injustice. No, not at all. These are the situations where anger runs roughshod over us and our loved ones alike, where fear prevents us from even knowing where we really are or seeing what is happening, where defensiveness shreds apart loving connections that would otherwise survive. Perhaps you could experiment with taking my word for it when next you are caught in one of these disturbing and disturbed experiences. One in which you cannot easily set aside your reactions for reflection. Unless, of course, you are in a real present time

emergency when setting aside your responses would be madness! Rather, when you only feel *as if* you are in an emergency; when you feel as if you must act and it is barely possible to think, to stop, breathe, and sit down to reflect: I would suggest that you are probably possessed. Furthermore, if the feelings you have and the actions that you are so strongly inclined to take will end up making you and those around you feel worse and worse, again you are most likely in the hands of another time, another place, another person. Furthermore still, if you and the others involved are especially able in this moment to do and say exactly the things that perfectly inflame the situation and reliably escalate whatever difficulty is occurring, then surely you are all being affected by the pattern; by the atmosphere, the energy, the form, the presence, the vivid being of an unresolved trauma that is visiting you from elsewhere.

We strive and strife and strike  
believing we do our own bidding;  
but being actors in a play.

Each moment of enactment  
privy to a secret script laid down  
in another person,  
in another time,  
in another place.

I eat from another's hunger  
I rail from another's woe;  
I tremble from another's fear  
and writhe in another's pain.

One day, after I shared my findings and the resolution process with a friend, he succinctly summed up the experience of being possessed

saying, "You feel like you are responding to a really big situation even though the one you are in isn't big." He went on to add that you only realize the one you are in isn't big "in retrospect" because when it is happening you can't tell much of anything about it at all<sup>16</sup>.

Here I want to mention another signal symptom of these activated displaced experiences, which is an underlying sense of sterility. There is a pervasive atmosphere that is almost the opposite of tangible since it is an absence, almost an anti-atmosphere, one of unrelenting lack. The hope for a good outcome, a sense of positive or creative possibility, is so utterly absent that you can feel and almost see the void that its absence creates. With some experience in identifying these conditions, these situations, a certain sensori-affective intuition develops about when they are occurring. There is a quality of futility as if the outcome is fated, is already laid out in stone, in blood, in history—which, of course, it is.

Bleak futures,  
sterile situations  
empty of any good out come.

We can tell  
when we are in them  
that no good will come.

But we are possessed  
and cannot stop ourselves

Unable to stop,  
we continue our part  
in the unfolding  
familiar catastrophe.

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<sup>16</sup> Offered by David Kitz (personal communication, September, 2006).

The very one  
we would have  
predicted.

I do hope that these descriptions are rich enough, real enough, fleshy and emotional enough, and simple enough to reveal the presence of activated displaced experiences to any reader who wishes to have a direct and actual understanding of the phenomenon I am describing.

In spite of our commonly taken for granted assumptions about the characteristics of human nature and the sources of our difficulties, the very things that torment us most do not exactly exist. At least they do not exist for us in the way that they seem to.

"Are there any lions or tigers about here?" she asked timidly.

"It's only the Red King Snoring," said Tweedledee.

"Come and look at him!" the brothers cried, and they each took one of Alice's hands, and led her up to where the King was sleeping.

"Isn't he a *lovely* sight?" said Tweedledum.

Alice couldn't say honestly that he was. He had a tall red night-cap on, with a tassel, and he was lying crumpled up into a sort of untidy heap, and snoring loud—"fit to snore his head off!" as Tweedledum remarked.

(Carroll, 1871/1960, p. 166-168)

The problem is that we feel sure he is about to snore *our* heads off, which of course he cannot do.

In her collection of essays, *Anything We Love Can Be Saved*, Alice Walker (1997) reports on a conversation with Samuel Zan, then general secretary of Amnesty International in Ghana. When he was a young child, he had been taken without warning, assaulted, cut and ritually scarred.



"Did it hurt very much?"

"Yes," he said. "It did. But it was the surprise of it, the betrayal, that hurt the most."

"I can still see it," I said. "The small boy's hurt surprise, in your eyes."

"My son looks at me fearfully sometimes, and asks if the same thing is going to happen to him. I tell him no. But he still has anxieties." (p. 32)

Zan's son, I would guess, is not anxious or afraid of it happening to him even though he thinks he is. He is afraid of it happening to his father. He is anxious with the unresolved fear of his father and his father's fathers, with the not yet fully held and received, and thereby healed, fear that his father felt as a child when this was happening to him. This is a fear that his father, and father's fathers, still feels in the place where each terrified child still lives, still waits, still needs someone to be there, to really and truly be with them in their pain, fear, anger and sense of betrayal. This cannot be assuaged by Zan when he tells his son that the same thing will not happen to him, even though this may be entirely and reliably true; and his son may know that. The anxiety, as anxieties do, keeps right on being. It cannot be solved by present time, here in this place, solutions. It is not a present time, here in this place, problem. It is only here in this place, and now in this time, because we are still connected to all those other times and places, just as Zan is still living in some sense now as that child he was then, still hurting, still frightened and alone, still needing the companionship and reassurance of someone meeting him there and then, in that place and that time, in that experience, not this one.

I realize that I am making some rather sweeping proclamations here. I am suggesting that many of our so called experiences are second hand, or unconsciously empathic, and not our own as we suppose them to be. Moreover, the very experiences that I am referring to are, without exception, highly charged emotional states that have a way of demanding our attention, like a hurt and as yet unheard child would do if they could. Their demand communicates itself to us through a sense of strong affect and intense compelling impressions. Imagine for a moment that someone who knows you is in a dire situation, needing very badly to communicate their entire intense immediate experience to you; but unable to do so by any usual means. Imagine that the only way they have to communicate to you is to magically cause you to feel, sense, see, think, want, and know everything that that they feel, sense, see, think, want, and know. Next, imagine that these magical means are so perfect that you do not just get a similar set of impressions, but that you receive the exact impressions that make up that fully embodied intense experience, exactly as it is, exactly as they are experiencing it. Now imagine that everything I just suggested to you is true and real and happening to all of us far more often than you might imagine.

This does suggest something paradoxical about these intense and compelling, conflict-producing and commonly occurring, states of mind, body, and heart that overtake us when we are in the grip of one of these magically communicated experiences. It suggests that the states of mind

and the conditions of our body at these times are not entirely real, or at least not real in the usual sense of actual, genuine, authentic (Barnhart, 1988, p. 891). This can be a somewhat disorienting thought.

"I *am* real!" said Alice, and began to cry.

"You won't make yourself a bit realler by crying," Tweedledee remarked: "there's nothing to cry about."

"If I wasn't real," Alice said—half-laughing through her tears, it all seemed so ridiculous—"I shouldn't be able to cry."

"I hope you don't suppose those are *real* tears?"

(Carroll, 1871/1960, p. 166-168)

The passage in *Through the Looking Glass* wherein Alice meets the Mock Turtle, touches on the same theme. It could be that our emotions at these times are only as real as Mock Turtle soup, which has no turtle in it.

They had not gone far before they saw the Mock Turtle in the distance, sitting sad and lonely on a little ledge of rock, and, as they came nearer, Alice could hear him sighing as if his heart would break. She pitied him deeply. "What is his sorrow?" she asked the Gryphon. And the Gryphon answered . . . "It's all his fancy, that: he hasn't got no sorrow, you know."

(Carroll, 1865/1960, p. 90-91)

Just so, in some of our worst moments when we are feeling the most devastatingly grief-stricken, or rageful, or terrorized, or anxious, or any other of an unending list of gripping affective states, it's all in our fancy so to speak and we haven't got no sorrow or whatever it happens to be. But of course it is there and we cannot just will it away. It is probably more accurate to say that it has us than we have it. In other words, when I am truly sad over a loss of something precious to me, then I am sad and no uppity Gryphon could rightfully say that I have no sorrow. But when I am gripped by grief from some tragedy in another time, place, and person,

the Gryphon would be right. I have no sorrow, but sorrow has me. And it is not about to let go until it has its say. In that sense it is very real. It is a matter of point of view. When a displaced or dispossessed experience is active in our lives, in our bodies, minds, and hearts, it is utterly real and actual as what it is; it is an authentically genuine, viscerally vivid, and potently compelling expression of a true and coherent experience in that other time and place, of that other person.

There is a further complication in that these displaced experiences do not just start singing, or more likely screaming, in our lives at random. The magic avenue they traverse involves resonance. Like a violin string that begins to sound when another one with a similar pitch is plucked, we will be overtaken by these activated displaced experiences at the very moment that we, ourselves, are having a similar feeling—one that can resonate with the other person, place, and time trauma. So the Gryphon was probably wrong in part. The Mock Turtle most likely had a bit of his own sorrow at the same time. At least he could have had his own sorrow if it weren't overshadowed entirely by the enormity of the one that isn't his. This is our condition. Just like the Mock Turtle, caught in a deep and unrelenting depression far surpassing any sorrow of his own, when we mistake these displaced experiences for our own and act them out in our lives, in our interactions with others, all hell breaks loose or at least a bit of hell, and our own experience is entirely overshadowed and obscured.

I will recount some of the pathways that have led me to these realizations and insights, but first I want to acknowledge that what I have been proposing may seem preposterous. It may stretch the limits of what can be considered reasonable and real. You, reader, may find it difficult if not outright impossible to believe that what I am describing is actually taking place in our lives, especially to the extent that I am suggesting that it is. With that in mind I take us back to Alice once more.

"Now I'll give *you* something to believe. I'm just one hundred and one, five months and a day."

"I can't believe *that!*" said Alice.

"Can't you?" the Queen said in a pitying tone. "Try again: draw a long breath, and shut your eyes."

Alice laughed. "There's no use trying," she said: "one *can't* believe impossible things."

"I daresay you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast." (Carroll, 1871/1960, p. 176)

So, taking the advice of the queen to heart, I suggest that you take a deep breath and close your eyes, and then imagine that what I am saying might, just might, be true and real and verifiable.

More than 16 years ago I suddenly found myself in a terribly painful and challenging situation in my own family. Naively I thought I was well equipped to deal with the trouble, since I had many years of training and experience in the fields of both education and psychology. I soon found, however, that all of my experience, education, and training were totally insufficient. While I was able to help in many ways and offer support and even therapeutic understanding to my loved ones, there were certain

aspects of the situation that were impervious to my touch. These often involved real and painful breakdowns in intimacy and communication just when we all needed the sanctuary of connectedness more than ever. My motivation to increase my therapeutic skills and abilities was huge. In hindsight I can say that I gave it my all. There were many positive results of my efforts and many significant fruits borne from the care, compassion, and empathy I felt for us all. Still in the face of these particular intrusive, recurrent, and always painful parts of the situation, I was helpless. This began my quest. I became determined in my passionate, even stubborn, desire to find out why some things got better and other things did not.

After a dozen years of steadfast determination, with less success and more struggle than I wish to recount here, it came to me suddenly, like a lightning bolt from an otherwise clear sky, that the object of my inquiry had application far beyond my personal quest. What I had taken to be a set of grave problems confronting me and my loved ones were, in fact, of the same character as many of the hardest problems confronting others and their loved ones. At that point I realized that my long journey was not only a personal one. As important as this was in my own life, it would probably be just as valuable to others. The problem was that I still had precious little to offer in the way of a remedy. Being almost entirely focused on this one area of inquiry for all of these years had brought me a great deal of understanding. I knew inside and out what these intractable problems looked like. I knew their flavor, their atmosphere, their early

warning signs, and their unhappy results. I knew that these intractable problems were the result of activated displaced experiences. If my intent had been merely to become expert at differentiating and describing these particular sorts of problems I could have celebrated my success. But all along my main intent was to find a way to make a difference, to be able at long last to offer real aid when these sorts of difficulties showed up. At this, I was approximately where I had started. What was I to do?

I have reflected that if my inquiry had been less deeply personal, less captivating of my soul and spirit, I would probably have succumbed to the persistence of the problem. Other endeavors would have seemed far sweeter and more apt to bear fruit. But I did not have that choice. The need for a remedy lived with me. If I failed at resolving this it would be through time and eventual death or disability, not through turning aside.

Then, quite out of the blue, on a lovely afternoon of the following summer, I stumbled unwittingly on a truly useful and effective solution to these sorts of problems. At the time, ironically, I had no idea that I had arrived at a solution. While on a solitary drive along the backroads of the Santa Ynez Valley, I had been thinking deeply about one particular stuck problem that had been plaguing me directly. I had been focusing on the exact and specific way that it made me feel. I was bringing to mind the feelings and sensations that would overtake me whenever this problem was occurring. I knew that this was a somewhat different line of thought than I had previously taken and it felt useful and productive. It seemed to

me that for the first time I was gaining a more immediate embodied feel for the experience in those particular disturbing moments, dominated by this one particular intractable problem. I came to a sense of satisfaction from this new kind of thinking about the problem, and it occurred to me that my new level of understanding might prove useful the next time this particular problem grabbed me as it so often did. It seemed to me that this journey of thought and feeling had brought a new level of knowing and I would be ready to face the problem in some different way when it arose again. I became curious to see what that difference might turn out to be. So for the first time, since it involved very uncomfortable feelings of anxiety and dread, I was actually looking forward to finding myself in the midst of this particular problem again. I have a strong empirical bent and I love to experiment, discovering what's what. So I looked ahead with interest, assured that my opportunity would come soon since I had been gripped by that particular problem repeatedly and regularly, for years.

When that specific problem utterly failed to recur at all, it dawned on me that I had found a solution at last. I was stunned. I was surprised and happy. And I was confused: What was it? What had I done? It must have been something in the way I had been thinking, something in the way I had approached the problem. Fortunately I had been driving alone and silently navigating that journey of thought, feeling, and sensation and had done nothing else. My confusion would have been greater if I had also been doing and saying things at the same time. I would probably



have assumed that this success at really ending one of these problems must have been the result of something I *did*. I don't think I would have been prescient enough to realize that it was solely the result of something that had taken place silently within my own body/mind. But as things were, the knowledge that this had occurred was thrust upon me.

So, I set about attempting to recreate what I had unknowingly accomplished on that leisurely and now memorable sojourn through the green fields and fragrant chaparral hillsides. I easily identified numerous other intractable problems that plagued me, each in their own distinctive way, but with the same stubbornly persistent and recurring character as the one I had so totally resolved. Finding and identifying them was simple enough to do. I began a ceaseless effort to recreate what I had done by thinking about these in what seemed like a reconstruction of the ways of thinking that I had spontaneously traversed that day. I tried approach after approach determined to replicate the sequence that had led to this first real success, constantly wondering "What was it? What did I do?" After years of fruitless pursuit, I was not about to let this first and only success slip away without finding out what made the difference. As I look back now, with 20/20 hindsight, I find it amazing that what I had done was so elusive. From this perspective it seems obvious that my sensate focus on the feeling of the particular problem was the single new and effective element. But at the time I did not know that this was what had made the difference. The only thing that I knew for sure was that the

change had occurred at some time during about an hour of contemplation of that particular problem, during that drive. I had actually felt it happen although I had not accurately identified what occurred. I had experienced what felt like a subtle and yet significant shift. It was that sense of a shift that made me think that my experience of the problem might be different following this period of contemplation. I had never before felt anything quite like that shift and I had never before experienced one of these terrible troubles vanishing. That these two events were linked in a meaningful way was evident to me. I never doubted that. So I endlessly tried repeating everything I could recall that had gone on during that hour. I applied these attempts to other examples of intractable problems, as I have said, since that particular one was no longer available for study. I was never able to experience it again, even when I tried, which I did.

Almost two months later I had my second success. The results were equally complete and conclusive. I still wasn't sure what I had done that was making the difference, but I was beginning to narrow the search. By the time I succeeded a third time I had a pretty good general idea of what was working. It involved arriving at a fully embodied, affectively rich connection; being in touch with the displaced experience directly. Now I realize that this moment of connection with the displaced experience can be arrived at in a very direct and simple way. However, I was still finding my way in the unknown territory of this new way of working. I held onto the entire regimen that had gotten me to the successful results, not sure

which parts of the process I was doing were essential to the efficacy and which parts were merely additional and unnecessary effort. If, at that time, I had consulted my future self for advice in finding the necessary part of what I was doing, I suspect that I would have argued back at first. "No way! It can't be that simple. You can't be telling me that it has taken all these years of struggle and searching to finally find out that all I need to do is feel it." To which my future (now current) self would certainly have had to answer, "Yes; that is exactly what I'm telling you."

The following passage from T. S. Eliot (1942/2007), describes the circuit of my explorations and also the process of resolution that I found.

We shall not cease from exploration  
 And the end of all our exploring  
 Will be to arrive where we started  
 And know the place for the first time.  
 Through the unknown, remembered gate  
 When the last of earth left to discover  
 Is that which was the beginning;  
 At the source of the longest river  
 The voice of the hidden waterfall  
 And the children in the apple-tree  
 Not known, because not looked for  
 But heard, half heard, in the stillness  
 Between the two waves of the sea.  
 Quick now, here, now, always—  
 A condition of complete simplicity  
 (Costing not less than everything)  
 And all shall be well and  
 All manner of things shall be well  
 When the tongues of flame are in-folded  
 Into the crowned knot of fire  
 And the fire and the rose are one. (online)

Since that time I have been able to reliably reproduce these successful results, for myself and for others. It has been three years since that drive

through the California hill country and I have significantly winnowed the work, casting off more and more of the unnecessary steps as I continued to experiment to find out which parts of what I was doing were actually crucial. Within this past year, I settled on the simple approach I now use. This approach, which is also relatively easy to do, continues to bring the same results as that first unexpected resolution which so took me by surprise when, over time, I came to realize what that subtle shift I had felt actually indicated. I have used this method of resolution for displaced experiences or intractable problems<sup>17</sup>, personally and professionally on a very wide variety of persistent problems in my own life and in the lives of others, trying and retrying the solution with many different people and in many different situations. Although it has not been possible for me to experimentally verify the results of each instance of its use, it seems to me that it continues to be unwaveringly effective. I can subjectively attest to the personal changes in my own life as a result, and these changes have been wide ranging, deeply satisfying, and stunningly liberating.

I will describe the process that I am using to respond to the call of these activated displaced experiences in more depth but first I will touch on some related issues. Remember that young child who was hurt and not crying until mom or dad arrived? Even after a number of hours intervened the tears come fresh and full when there is a safe haven for them. Time is

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<sup>17</sup> I have come to use these terms practically interchangeably as it seems, incredible as this may sound, that I cannot find any persistently recurring psychological problem that does not respond to this method of treatment.

irrelevant. Intimacy is not. Therapists sitting with people many years after a traumatic injury, perhaps of the heart or the soul, are familiar with this timelessness. If the receiving other is a good enough intimate partner and can hear the pain, and can feel and think along with the child, then the hurt is resolved and the child goes on unencumbered. In the context of a trusting confiding intimate connection, whether between friends, lovers, parent and child, therapist and patient; healing happens. It does not ever matter one whit whether two hours or twenty years lie between the event and the receptive awareness of the other who opens their heart mind body to feel and think along with the one who hurts.

This timelessness has a more far-reaching relevance than we have yet wrapped our minds around. What happens to the hurt of the injured child who has no one to tell at present? It seems to stay with that child, in some way, waiting patiently. So, what happens to the hurt, perhaps much more grave, of a person who has no hope of anyone to tell; who never in their life has any hope of having a compassionate intimate partner who will hear their story of pain. This could be someone, for instance, who dies alone of some calamity. It could be someone imprisoned and tortured or tormented without hope of release. Does their pain and injury just vanish into nothingness; does it simply disappear one day, tired of existing? Or does it also wait, in some way, like the hurt of the child waiting for the healing reunion with the trusted parent? Does the conservation of matter and energy apply here as elsewhere? I would say that it does.

Just as the injuries of the heart that are sustained by one person will stay with that person, in a way that is mostly outside of the person's conscious awareness, awaiting a time when a trusted other can bring the caring, feeling, receptive presence necessary for healing, so those injuries that have no apparent hope of being received during the life of the person sustaining them, those injuries too great to be held by that person alone, will stay waiting, in some way as well, for that same end. Those extreme experiences that have occurred over the course of history that have as yet not been offered the caring reception necessary for their resolution are all, every one of them, waiting in some way.

To continue, I will briefly discuss self and consciousness. While we often speak of ourselves as if we were containers who have certain things "in" us, such as experiences, feelings, thoughts, and so on, I suspect this is actually a very poor representation of our real selves. Those who have introspectively inquired, myself included, have not generally come upon these containers. In fact the search for a concrete sort of self seems to be quite futile. Instead, a look inward<sup>18</sup> reveals an ongoing alive experiencing self that is much more akin to a point of view than to an object. We could say that we are each a unique point of view, a living experiencing point of view. I am inclined to say that we are each a vast point of experiencing awareness—which seems paradoxical since a point has no volume at all,

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<sup>18</sup> With "inward" meaning a sense of direction that goes toward the sense of self, an experience of interiority, perhaps also related to experiences within the body; rather than meaning a concrete location inside of a container that is the self.

no volume in linear space, and yet we are vast in the timeless dimension of consciousness and imagination. Furthermore, consciousness itself is not a commodity, a substance that sits inside of some elusive container of the self. Consciousness is much more like a field in which we all partake, each from our own point of view. I am suggesting these ideas at this point because the notion that we exist as unique and in some ways vast and timeless points of view within a shared field of consciousness evokes for me an image that is more commensurate with the findings that I am working with regarding projective identification and these, invisible until activated and yet potent, displaced experiences.

Where is an experience of injury that is waiting to be heard, if it is not inside a "container" of the self? Perhaps it exists in the shared field of consciousness in an intimate association with anyone connected to the one who experienced the injury. It could be that there is something very real about the idea of "unfinished business" or what I would prefer to call unresolved trauma. For instance, consider the initial example of parents returning in a few hours to the tears of their child. When they hear, see, and feel with the child's experience it is just as it seems to be. That good-enough parent or other intimate companion who seems to be feeling what the child experienced is doing exactly that—since, through the intimate connection with the child, there is a real and direct connection with the actual experience. A good-enough therapist will do the same thing, often many years after the originating event, and the connection is just as real,

just as vital, just as effective. It seems to me that when we approach someone empathically and begin to connect with what we can hear and see of how they are feeling, we are bringing ourself into alignment with their experience by evoking similar feelings in ourselves. This however is just the beginning. Once we have done that aligning, or tuning in, to the other person we then become similar enough in our state of mind and body to be available for a real resonance to occur. Once that resonance is happening I suspect we are in direct contact with their actual experience and no longer feeling similar to the way that they feel, but feeling their experience itself embodied in our own.

These descriptions of self and consciousness also suggest a possible avenue of resolution for the seeming paradox of our multiple selves (this part of me feels such a way while that part of me feels a different way entirely, and so on) and the distinct sense of oneness and singularity that we also experience (I am me and no other). Perhaps our singular and yet plural point of view is capable of embodying the vast array of experiences we ourselves and others have had, resulting in the multiplicity that makes our inward lives so rich and varied. We are apparently capable of fully embodying states of mind and body that originated in all the various ages of our own lives<sup>19</sup> as well, I have found, as those that originate in the lives of others; even people we have never consciously known.

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<sup>19</sup> Possibly even future selves through the timeless avenues of real imagination.



When there is no way for a too-painful experience to be shared with another through telling and/or showing and hearing and/or seeing, my sense is that it will nonetheless be shared. However, this sort of sharing through unrealized activated displacement is only an intermediate solution—it is a waiting game. The interminable continuing weight of the encumbrance of the injury will not be relieved until the experience is fully received by an intimate other in an aware focused connection between the original consciousness of the injurious event and the responsive receptivity of another. For the receptive other this will be a hearing, seeing, sensing, feeling, and thinking along with the qualities of the originally sustained injury. Something will be the matter until then. And it will go on being the matter with person after person; passing along the lines of intimate connection (including the vulnerable links of abusive intimate wounding) on through years or generations. Could this be the real reason, as James Hillman and Michael Ventura (1992) suggest, that even though we have had over a hundred years of psychotherapy, the world is apparently getting worse?

Ghosts  
hovering in layers  
over the heads  
around the sides  
under the feet  
in the faces  
of all these people  
young, old,  
alone, with family,  
with friends  
living, yet carrying the dead

being, yet unable to be;  
longing in the same way as,  
needing in just the same way as,  
aching with aches that  
still live  
in these dead companions,  
these ghosts still suffering  
still yearning  
still unseen,  
unheard, unfelt  
still waiting  
as they did in their lives,  
for someone  
to stop  
and see them.

There is more that I can and will say about the consequences of these displaced experiences when they are not resolved, but instead left as they usually are these days, to enact in our lives, in our relationships. First however, I want to share the details of how to proceed with the process that does bring resolution.

As I have said, in telling my story of the journey I have been on that led to these realizations, the form that the process has grown into is very simple and direct. It has grown much the way a sculpture sometimes grows under the carving tools of an artist who sees, vaguely at first, the form within the stone and then gradually removes all of the excess until the form is revealed. In this case the form is feeling.

Feeling is the key.  
What do I do  
to resolve these crazy conditions?  
I feel.  
That's it.  
I think first,  
but only in preparation.

The real deal is  
I feel.  
I feel the situation, the impact, the reaction,  
I feel the usually unknown person  
the one who feels  
the situation, the impact, the reaction,  
I feel what they feel.  
I feel it all for just a moment—and then it's done.  
Then it's done for good.

The method is to feel and the way to know what to feel is to feel. The first thing is to feel out and identify one of these displaced experiences, to find one and choose to work with it.

I will begin with a hypothetical example. If, for instance, in some relationship or another, you notice (by feeling it) that there is something that bothers you. Do not become a generalist here. It will not work well, to begin with, for you to settle on the notion that what bothers you most is all the many upsetting things the other person does. This is actually something that can be worked with in this way, but it wouldn't be a good place to start. Pick something specific. Pick one simple discrete disturbing experience that can easily be brought to mind, a situation that bugs you, upsets you, bothers you, or disturbs you in some way. Since I assume that you are not reading this at the same time that you are having some encounter with this person, I will assume that whatever it is you have thought of, it is something that bothers you when you think of it. Again, just like the general upset, a disturbance that occurs in the midst of an encounter would be a fine one to work with in this way, but not the best place to start. So, settle on one situation, one whatever-it-is that you

have thought of, this something that happens or happened which does bother you now, even when you just think of it.

Next, for the sake of a bit of objectivity, make a few notes for yourself about what the situation is and how it bothers you. This step is absolutely unnecessary as a part of a successful resolution of a displaced experience. I will tell you why I suggest that you do this. When the process works, if it works, and the disturbing displaced experience is resolved, it will seem as if the problem never existed. There is never any recovery period. There is just a subtle possibly perceptible shift and then there is only the absence of that interference. I have witnessed numerous occasions in which the person who was most affected by one of these activating displaced experiences thinks that nothing has changed at all after the resolution, at the same time that the other people around the person who have just been interacting with that person all agree that the change is dramatic and complete. This is the reason for writing the notes that I ask you to make. They are for your own benefit so that you can use them to check to see if anything has changed. So, write down a brief description of the disturbing situation you have chosen and a few key phrases to describe the main disturbing feeling that you become aware of. This can be along the lines of, "I feel like yelling, and I feel tense and tight and angry" or "I just want to get the heck out of there, and I feel a lot of pressure, as if I want to run" or "I feel sunk and hopeless as if nothing is going to make any difference, and I feel kind of numb about it

all." Obviously the possibilities are endless; just make a few brief notes identifying whatever it is you do feel, the main disturbance, when you think of the situation that you have chosen.

This is the "I think first" part of the poem above. Just a little bit of thinking in order to choose some disturbance and then noting what the disturbance feels like in yourself, in your bodymind. It is possible to skip this entirely or almost entirely and just start with an upset feeling and go directly into the process of resolution, but I don't recommend it at first. Now is a good time to use the Red Queen's advice on believing impossible things: take a nice deep breath and close your eyes. Neither of these is required of course, but closed eyes do deter distraction and breathing is always a good idea. Then bring the chosen situation to mind so that you will start to feel the disturbance you noted down. Next forget about the situation for the most part and focus on the feeling of disturbance in yourself, in your bodymind, in your current experience. Open yourself to the particular disturbance that you feel, allowing it to grow stronger. Just let yourself feel it<sup>20</sup>. It is sometimes helpful before starting this part, which is the actual resolution, to consider for a moment that you are opening to an experience that someone somewhere had (and probably, in some very real sense, is still having) and that all you need to do is to let them share it with you. This is a way of listening through the body, attending to the feelings as they arrive within you. You do not have to

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<sup>20</sup> For a detailed description of this process, see Appendix A on pages 399 to 407.

make this happen, not at all. These feelings are trying very hard to happen to you; they are beating at your door. All you need to do is open the door, even just a little bit. Simply let them come all the way in.

That's it. You are done.

Sometimes I notice a certain sense of flowering, as if the feeling experience I have opened myself to begins as a bud and then, over the course of a few brief moments, the bud opens and becomes full, and then drops its petals. Sometimes there are impressions or images. These can be very intense and disturbing but only vicariously and only for those brief moments. These impressions are sometimes very specific, which can be interesting in terms of family history and so on. None of this, however, is essential. One moment of experiencing the feelings in an embodied way is enough. It makes no difference whether there are impressions, a subtle sense of completion, images, or nothing. Trust me here<sup>21</sup>. It is very hard, even for me; even after years of experiencing this over and over again in a wide variety of situations, to hold in mind the reality that this one simple moment of feeling is enough to completely undo something that has often been causing predictable, recurrent, seemingly perpetual harm, often to many people.

"Dear, dear! How queer everything is to-day! And yesterday things went on just as usual. I wonder if I've been changed in the night? Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost

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<sup>21</sup> By "Trust me" I do not mean you should assume I am right. I mean to suggest that you take my word for this as a possibility and then check it out for yourself.

think I can remember feeling a little different.  
(Carroll, 1865/1960, p. 28)

At this point you can return to your notes and see if they can help you to decipher whether or not something has changed. The note that reminds you of the situation you had chosen is the place to start. Use it to remind yourself of that exact situation. It will not do at all if at this point while you think you are checking for any change, you are actually moving on to another, possibly similar or related but different, situation. So return to thinking of the same situation you began with. Notice how you feel when you think of it now. Compare this with the notes you made to see if you still have the feeling that was prominent then, the one that you noted down. It is fairly common to have more than one disturbing feeling in an upsetting situation. Greeting, meeting, and welcoming one disturbance will not resolve all the others, if there are others. The single thing to look for if you want to actually determine whether a change has occurred is to look to see if you still have access to that one disturbance which was the most prominent one you began with, the one you noted down. The reason I say "have access to" is because you may discover something interesting if it has changed. You may find, as I have, that not only is it not arising the way it spontaneously did when you thought about the situation before the resolution process (and the way it spontaneously arose within the situation itself), but you cannot find the disturbance no matter how you try. That is the most striking thing about this process, to my thinking, and

very suggestive in terms of supporting the notion that these disturbances really are the experiences of someone who is distressed and needing to be heard, someone who is all better now. Where would you find the crying child after the parent has listened and held them? You would not find the crying child, no matter where you looked, because they would not be crying any longer. "How puzzling all these changes are! I'm never sure what I'm going to be, from one minute to another!" (Carroll, 1865/1960, p. 57). Yes, I know. (For implementation details see pages 399 to 407.)

If the situation you worked with is one that does involve more than one disturbed state of bodymind, it is simple enough to do a series of these processes. As you might imagine, a few minutes is enough to do a number of these once you get a feel for how they go. You can just return to thinking of the situation once you have completed a process and see what other unpleasant feeling spontaneously emerges. If you think about these as calls for help from elsewhere, then you can just answer the calls you hear. If your experience is anything like mine, in a relatively short time you will begin to see radical changes taking place in your life as a result of this work. Paradoxically it will not feel anything like what we usually think of as change. There will be no upheavals, no transition, no need to readjust to anything new or different. It is just the dissolving of obstacles that were once in the way.

If you find, as I have, that this work has the results that I describe then you may find it worthwhile to explore the possibilities of reducing the



obstacles to health and wholeness for other people in your life. One radical aspect to this work is that obstacles are not personal possessions. In other words, when there is a displaced experience that activates in an interchange, it will reliably affect everyone involved to at least some extent. The appearance is one of contagion. It is as if people catch a dose of the problem from each other. The radical corollary of this in terms of treatment is that any person who has been touched by this contagion can stop, turn, and welcome the experience for a moment, for an embodied moment. The resolution is effective for everyone who has been under the sway of that problem. It is as if it does not matter how many doors are being knocked on, only one need answer. When the child stops crying, the sound of the cry does not stop for the caring parent alone, but for anyone and everyone who heard it while it was going on. Resolving a displaced experience is attending to the source of the disturbance for everyone.

The *Tao Te Ching* of Lao Tzu (circa 500 BC/1996) offers advice that is relevant to this work.

Thirty spokes converge on a hub  
 but it's the emptiness  
 that makes a wheel work  
 pots are fashioned from clay  
 but it's the hollow  
 that makes a pot work  
 windows and doors are carved for a house  
 but it's the spaces  
 that make a house work  
 existence makes something useful  
 but nonexistence makes it work  
 (verse 11)

There may be thirty people who are being disturbed and distressed by the action of one of these displaced experiences as it is trying to make itself known, and yet it only takes one opening in the hub for an axle to enter and then the wheel turns. It is not that anyone needs to do anything heroic about these displaced experiences. Generally, in fact, heroism of all sorts has been tried and tried again. It is a moment of emptiness, of allowing and welcoming in, that makes the difference. It is the hollow, the space, the receptive non-action that is called for. It is the nonexistence that makes this work. When we are caught in one of these without knowing it, we will feel as if there is a great deal going on. If it is a displaced experience that involves fear, we will be certain that there is something to be afraid of and that decisive action is necessary. If it is a displaced experience that involves some need, that experience of need will be irrefutable, and so on. Yet, the reality is that none of this exists. It is as the Gryphon said; there just isn't no cause for fear, no real need, no urgent matter that needs any action of any kind. When we see this, we are free from the urgent constraints that a moment before compelled us to act. Then, it is the nonexistence of the thing that makes it possible for us to easily welcome the experience.

To elaborate on that point, I will use another hypothetical example. Suppose that a displaced experience that I am impacted by originated in a war situation where someone was suddenly mortally wounded and dying without aid or hope of aid. When that displaced experience is activated,

possibly when I hear sudden loud noises, or when I am injured, I will feel horribly hurt and bereft and possibly rather desperate in my urgent sense of need and despair. If someone tries to tell me that these feelings are unfounded I will probably only feel worse as that will resonate with the sense of isolation and aloneness. If I attempt to just be with the feelings, thinking them to be my own, it will be very difficult because within them there is an urgency that screams out the reality of the situation, the desperate need, the horror, the intolerable pain – and I will feel all of that as if it is my own authentic experience. This will not be conducive to calm reflection or acceptance. Yet, if I consider that I might be feeling someone else's experience, a new possibility is born. No matter how horrible their situation is, and no matter how vividly I feel what they feel, there is no urgency for me to do anything. In fact it is absurd to try. I cannot patch a wound, or staunch the flow of blood that is happening who knows where, when, or to whom. I cannot reach through time to prevent a war that may have happened centuries ago. But I can stop it here, relieve it now, prevent its continuing misery; by simply being the one who listens.

Can you hold fast your crescent soul and not let it wander  
 can you make your breath as soft as a baby's  
 can you wipe your Dark Mirror free of dust  
 can you serve and govern without effort  
 can you be the female at Heaven's Gate

(Lao Tzu, circa 500 BC/1996, verse 10)

These questions ask if we can be open, free from prejudice, unbiased, non-intrusive; can we be receptive yin beings with no agenda that would

interfere with a clear reflective, receptive presence. That sounds pretty hard to do. Most of all, it sounds difficult to sustain in the course of living, in the midst of all the challenges we face. But what if all that is needed is just a moment or two? Suddenly the impossible is possible. After all, it does not say "Can you be the female at Heaven's Gate for 40 hours every week, with overtime on Sunday?" I think that most people are capable of this quality of receptive awareness, if it is only necessary to maintain it for such a brief time. It is, after all, a natural state of being. It is how we are when we gaze at something beautiful, when we enjoy music, when we look at someone we love in simple appreciation, or when we pick up a hurt child, hold them, and just listen.

Wear the undyed and hold the uncarved  
 reduce self-interest and limit desires  
 get rid of learning and problems will vanish  
 (verse 19)

Suddenly the idea of selflessness is not so idealized. Can we simply be present with the undyed and uncarved raw reality of someone's ancient or recent pain and set aside our own interests and desires for just a few moments? Can we stop trying to solve these problems and can we forego all our intelligent devices for just a moment? I think we can.

Find our True Yearnings  
 by suffering through  
 the insanity;  
 this insanity  
 we are juggling  
 person to person

Stop

sit  
be  
feel

Be a Chalice  
with the clarity  
of a Blade

Do Not Fight Phantoms  
Do not engage in  
Battles against history

Stop, sit, be, feel

Receive experience  
and suffer it to be.

Then we begin  
to trust ourselves

To know the sane  
from the insane

To hold the destroyed moments  
of insanity's soul

To suffer through  
to clarity and freedom

We will find our selves like newborn flesh  
Alive, responsive to This moment

Then, sane, Our True Yearnings,  
our liberated desire

Ends war.

And that would be a good thing, a very good thing indeed.

Returning for a moment to what happens when we don't stop to do  
this, I want to add a note about the effects of resonance and feedback.

This is in the way of an additional highlighting of the signs that can be

used to identify these displaced experiences in our lives. I will begin here with a contrast. Imagine a person experiencing a hurt of their own that does not involve the activation of these, not entirely real yet almost everpresent, displaced troubles. Then imagine that person turning to a companion for help. As long as that companion is relatively healthy and able, things will probably go quite well and some help will be forthcoming. If, for instance, the person was feeling grief, the companion will likely be consoling and feel kindness and compassion. If, on the other hand, the person is feeling afraid, the companion will likely be soothing and reassuring, and so on. There are of course many variations possible and things do not always work out so well even without the interference of displaced experiences, but I suspect that most of the time interactions like these would proceed much as I have suggested if it weren't for the pandemic of displaced experiences in our lives. On the contrary, when a person is gripped by one of these contagious displaced experiences, companions have a hard go of it. Even when the other person starts out with good intentions and a warm heart they are very likely to find themselves struggling as well, soon enough. If, for instance, the person is gripped by grief and loss, and feeling perhaps bereft and alone, the companion to whom they turn will probably begin to feel that they are not able to make good contact with the suffering person and begin to feel really quite upset by that and then, feeling very alone themselves, they will find that they can offer very little help, instead beginning to need it

for themselves as well, as they are beginning to feel quite grief-stricken over how badly it is going. If the person is taken by a displaced experience that causes them to feel great fear, then that fear will be contagious and those to whom they turn for help, if they do, will become frightened themselves. What occurs at these times is akin to what happens when an instrument and an amplifier are too near each other and the feedback of the sounds layers together to create horrible screeching noises. Really awful arguments in intimate relationships often look just like this with each person getting more and more distressed until there are only incoherent screeching sounds to be heard. I believe that this is always the result of interference from the action of activated displaced experiences.

What will it take  
to set the world on fire?  
to reawaken love,  
to set loose that friendly beast  
the erotic body of being;  
What will it take to rescue us  
from this insanity of deadness  
opposing our work, our lives  
our loves – tearing families asunder  
burying them beneath the weight  
of centuries. What will it take?

I suppose it is obvious what I think it will take. I think it will take the application of these understandings to the contagious problems we are experiencing. I think it will take a few people and then more and more finding out that it only takes a moment to turn the tide of destruction aside. I do not mean to suggest here some overnight conquering of

Goliath by one enlightened David. What I do imagine is a groundswell of healing. People who have the opportunity and the desire to try this will begin with themselves, their loved ones, friends, co-workers, and so on. Then at some point they may consider the possibility of doing a bit of this work with a group they belong to. Unlike most other kinds of work, this can easily be brought forward in almost any situation. It requires very little time, no special place or equipment, and it can be done either outwardly, sharing it with others, or silently without any need to navigate a situation that wouldn't be open to it.

The access to these trouble spots is always at hand. As I have said, in a situation when displaced experiences are active, the relevant feelings are highly contagious. This is a good thing once a person knows what to do about it. There is no need to look very far afield to find the necessary starting point. Simply expose yourself to the situation, actually or in your imagination, and then notice how you feel. You have found the doorway in. You have found the opening; and no matter what your gender you can "be the female at Heaven's Gate" (Lao Tzu, circa 500 BC/1996) by pausing for a few moments to let your bodymind open to the distress and resonate with the experience, an experience that has been waiting for someone, often for a long time. It will not cost you much in effort or in time, and it will help in ways you won't ever know about.

One of the hardest things about this work is that it will seem like you are doing nothing. It will seem like you have done nothing. It will



seem like nothing has happened. It is for this reason, as I said before, that I recommend keeping a few notes, at least in the beginning; so you can check and see if it really is so that nothing is happening. Perhaps it is. Perhaps that is what we need. Perhaps we need a bit more nothing. We have certainly had a lot of something, and it hasn't been working out very well. John Lennon and Yoko Ono (1971) imagined what a bit more nothing might look like, and this method of resolving displaced experiences might just pave the way; or more accurately *unpave* the way and allow the way, the Tao, to unfold in its own wiser fashion.

Imagine there's no heaven,  
it's easy if you try,  
no hell below us,  
above us only sky.  
Imagine all the people,  
living for today.  
Imagine there's no countries,  
it isn't hard to do,  
nothing to kill or die for,  
and no religion too.  
Imagine all the people,  
living life in peace.  
You may say I'm a dreamer  
but I'm not the only one  
I hope some day you'll join us,  
and the world will be as one.  
Imagine no possessions,  
I wonder if you can,  
no need for greed or hunger,  
a brotherhood of man.  
Imagine all the people,  
sharing all the world. (online)

Historians tell us that Pandora was once the Earth Goddess arising from fertile ground, and Eve certainly descended from Inanna, the Sumerian

Queen of Heaven and Earth, beloved of the early peoples of Mesopotamia, that land between the Tigris and the Euphrates that is currently being obliterated. Pandora, whose name means All Gifts, apparently set loose every sort of misery when she, the first woman, arrived. Like Eve with the snake and Alice following the rabbit, curiosity has led us into every kind of trouble. It is probably time to return to the garden. It is probably time to stop destroying our world. It is probably time to stop destroying the other than human companions who share this world with us. It is probably time to stop destroying ourselves and each other. It is probably time to stop hurting and hating ourselves. It is time to stop believing that we are at war with our own nature. It is time to turn and go the other way. It is time to return, time to come home.

Maybe liberation is not just the province of saints and extraordinary people in extraordinary circumstances. Maybe the innate human capacity to simply be with each other is all we really need.

Once we can be here  
 really here  
 truly here  
 just present  
 just being  
 not enacting the rituals  
 of generations of trauma  
 unaware  
 re-enacting over and over  
 redundantly recreating  
 the misery and pain  
 that have yet to be felt into  
 felt with

Once instead we can be here

really here  
truly here  
just being  
just present with each other  
with the myriad other beings  
all here all now

Once we can be here  
no longer not knowing  
what we are doing  
no longer  
re-enacting all the misery  
that has been left unseen  
unfelt  
no longer carrying on  
the countless family curses  
that so plague our lives

Once we can really be here  
with each other  
without the ravages  
we recreate;  
we will be.

*Embodied Imaginal Practice: Quantum-, Shamanic-, and Eco-psychology*

In terms of practice, there are two fundamental categories of therapeutic intervention. One is in the realm of doing and the other in that of being. These are the yang and yin of therapy. The first involves actions which inevitably require evaluation, decision, and adjustment; for they can be done too little, too much, at the wrong time, or in the wrong way. For instance, when questioning a patient it matters when, how often, and in what way this is done. Self-disclosure by the therapist can also be wrong in quantity, content, or timing. The list of actions in psychotherapy that require good judgment in order to insure that they are effective and

harmless is endless. Interventions in the other (yin) category can only become a problem due to not enough of them. These cannot be ill-timed or excessive. This is the category of offering those qualities of relational being such as respect, kindness, care, presence and understanding. It is categorically impossible to harm with too much respect. There is never a wrong time to care. It is inconceivable that one could misjudge by being too fully present in the therapy session or too aware. There is no end to the benefits of an ever deepening understanding of the patient. A lifetime spent increasing the capacity for experiencing and expressing these essential qualities of being will never go too far.

Furthermore, being is fundamental to doing. Action is rooted in existence. When we are lacking in our connection to these core qualities of being, we are prone to err in our actions. Whereas, when we don't know what to do, simply being present and doing nothing will almost always be good enough. While we must be in order to do, we don't have to do anything in order to be. Although certain activities can help us to develop our presence, they tend to be reflective, meditative activities with a strong component of non-doing incorporated within them. On the other hand we would do well to rely on increasing our being-ness whenever we want to become more effective at doing. When we nurture and develop such qualities of being as empathy, awareness, presence, compassion, joy, honesty, patience, creativity, love, understanding, and authenticity

we insure that our actions will become ever more effective, sensitive, accurately responsive, safe, and helpful.

The coexisting fields of quantum psychology, shamanic psychology, and ecopsychology reside for me within the context of an embodied imaginal practice grounded in the yin qualities of relational being. This approach to both theory and therapy draws on wisdom that is available through embodied relationship with the other than human, other than materialistic, and other than rational worlds.

Dreamlike states of consciousness are the basic substance of the universe. Matter is created from dreaming. These states are basic to moving in and out of the physical form, they are basic not only to shamanism and psychology, but also explain mathematics and physics. (Mindell, 2000, p. 14)

Perhaps the receptive yin qualities that are the foundation of this approach are native to the dreaming world where the power and wisdom of the other than conscious world sustains and supports and creates life.

*The Black Wings*

Growing out of my shoulder blades  
Large, strong, and supple;  
Anchored deep in the muscles of my back.

I had dreamt many times of flying  
But never wings like these  
Body of my body  
Feathers emerging from flesh  
Flying, flying  
Flying like deep dancing  
Muscles of my back  
Moving in sensual rhythm  
With the flapping of strong black wings

I had dreamt many times of flying

But never with wings at all,  
 Swimming through the air or floating  
 Sometimes soaring;  
 This dream, this dreaming of substantial  
 Living Wings growing from Deep in my Body  
 Beating the air in a rhythm like sex  
 Rhythm of flying, flying

This body I knew for the first time  
 Muscles like mountains, like rivers  
 Moving as artfully as a cougar  
 Moving through air through flesh  
 Through soul, then down  
 Onto a high plateau  
 An upland meadow  
 Grass and green  
 And entirely  
 Peaceful.

This dream came to me many years ago and lives in me still, strong and radical in its effects on my being. It was prescient, as dreams so often are, and in retrospect I feel that I know now why those wings were black. For one thing I would soon enough need to go far and deep into the dark of unknown territories, without map, without light, without guide.

Thomas Kuhn (1962) in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* says the following as commentary on the process of radical discovery.

Discovery commences with the awareness of anomaly, i.e., with the recognition that nature has somehow violated the paradigm-induced expectations that govern normal science. It then continues with a more or less extended exploration of the area of anomaly. And it closes only when the paradigm theory has been adjusted so that the anomalous has become the expected. Assimilating a new sort of fact demands a more than additive adjustment of theory, and until that adjustment is completed—until the scientist has learned to see nature in a different way—the new fact is not quite a scientific fact at all. (pp. 52-53)

I encountered this passage for the first time recently. Identifying and tracing the process of a discovery that requires a paradigm shift, Kuhn accurately describes just what the process of the past sixteen years has been like for me. I spent a good long time in that extended exploration of the anomaly that had presented itself to me as powerfully as a dream.

The oddest part of it all was that, whenever she looked hard at any shelf, to make out exactly what it had on it, that particular shelf was always quite empty, though the others round it were crowded as full as they could hold.

"Things flow about so here!" she said at last in a plaintive tone, after she had spent a minute or so in vainly pursuing a large bright thing, that looked sometimes like a doll and sometimes like a work-box, and was always in the shelf next above the one she was looking at. "And this one is the most provoking of all—but I'll tell you what—" she added, as a sudden thought struck her. "I'll follow it up to the very top shelf of all. It'll puzzle it to go through the ceiling, I expect!"

But even this plan failed: the "thing" went through the ceiling as quietly as possible, as if it were quite used to it.

(Carroll, 1871/1960, p. 178)

I can truly say that I know exactly how Alice felt, having been there myself, following dreamlike impressions, grasping at chimera, and failing at every strategy for so long. I often felt lost in the course of this inquiry, so often that lost itself became a familiar landscape.

*Lost* by David Wagoner (1999/2007A)

Stand still. The trees ahead and bushes beside you  
 Are not lost. Wherever you are is called Here,  
 And you must treat it as a powerful stranger,  
 Must ask permission to know it and be known.  
 The forest breathes. Listen. It answers,  
 I have made this place around you.  
 If you leave it, you may come back again, saying  
 Here.  
 No two trees are the same to Raven.

No two branches are the same to Wren.  
If what a tree or a bush does is lost on you,  
You are surely lost. Stand still. The forest knows  
Where you are. You must let it find you.

Indeed, my ability to stay present when lost, to remain available for finding, to continue to take in the intimate details of my experience even when that experience was incomprehensible to me; these abilities were essential. Fortunately I had spent many years strengthening this level of trust in the basic processes of living.

For many of my earlier years I was devoted to recovering and deepening a connection with wilderness, with the world beyond the city of my childhood. I meandered, I hiked; I slept out in the woods, on the seashore, in the desert, and on back porches under the stars. I ate wild plants and collected medicinal herbs. I talked with the animals I met, and with plants and spirit presences. This essential endeavor was far more fortuitous and necessary than I had any way of consciously knowing, although I did feel, in some deep way, that it was an imperative, an absolute requirement of my life. Something wild and natural in me was gradually awakening, something that was in touch with the intricacies and strengths of the natural world. I would end up, in the recent later years, needing all the strength, power, and intimate connectedness that I had harvested through those experiences in nature. Most of all I needed the experience of myself that had developed, a self that was rooted far away



from plans and projects, away from clocks and calendars, away even from people and most of the things that people have made.

my mind is so foolish  
 so simple  
 others look bright  
 I alone seem dim  
 others are certain  
 I alone am confused  
 receding like the ocean  
 waxing without cease  
 everyone has a goal  
 I alone am dumb and backward  
 for I alone choose to differ  
 preferring still my mother's breast  
 (Lao Tzu, circa 500 BC/1996, verse 20)

I had sought to recover what Chellis Glendinning (1994) calls "our *primal matrix*: the state of a healthy, wholly functioning psyche in full-bodied participation with a healthy, wholly functioning Earth" (p. 5).

Somewhere between the chaparral coastal mountains of the Santa Monica range, the deserts to the Southeast, and the Madrone and Oak landscapes further to the North; between dwelling and gardening in the countryside and hiking for days or weeks, often alone, something vital came alive in me.

Growing up in Los Angeles,  
 and then leaving:  
 my university was the wilderness  
 sagebrush chaparral, lizard,  
 and seasonal stream  
 flashing deep when the rains came.

Years later, a new mother,  
 I chewed my son's first food  
 cleaning him with saliva  
 and leaving him naked

at home and by the sea.

The ocean, the Artemesia,  
the slender racer snake  
sleek and alert  
had taught me how to be.

The lost wisdom of my ancestors  
brought back to me by Raven  
Hawk and the flowering  
Dodocatheon arriving each spring.

The Ceanothus blossoms, called lilac,  
will turn soapy rubbed in water,  
and the Mugwort leaves  
scrubbed with creek water  
will wash away the oil of poison oak,  
leaving no sign.

The rabbit standing stillness  
watching me, the lizard I caught  
in a grass noose or bare hand  
relaxing as I spoke.

The thin snake coiling through  
my fingers against my bare chest  
the sun barely warming in winter  
hot against my browning skin  
in the garden in summer—  
These,  
these gave me back my life.

And somewhere in the days and nights of those years, in the repeating  
cycle of the seasons, in the garden, in the canyons; I became a mystic.  
Me, the kid with the curls from L. A., who loved the Beatles, dropped out  
in the 60's, and worked teaching in a state mental institution for fifteen  
years at the same time that I was recovering my own sanity. This was not  
a mysticism from any text other than the rain clinging to leaves or the  
tracing of geologic time in the rocks. It was a personal communion with

the magic and mystery I encountered in nature and it carried me through living in the world of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and helped me to find a different path<sup>22</sup>. It was a path that included birthing at home singing out full so that years later I would hear that everyone in the neighborhood of that hot day in July, with the windows wide open, shared in that birth. It was a path that included numerous numinous experiences with out of the ordinary unexpected realities that opened my mind to the unknown even further than my unconventional upbringing had already done.

So the world of the unconscious, of the body, of shaman and poet, of rock, tree and ocean, of quantum physics and the imaginal; these had become my home. I began my practice as a therapist in classrooms and camping trips with my students who had found their way, mostly much against their will, into locked or unlocked wards in that huge state mental hospital. Later, after the birth and infancy of my son, I started to practice my hand and heart with the very, very young; working with toddlers and their families. Without any conscious intent I was collecting a very wide range of psychological experience and it would all become essential to the work of these later recent years.

The application of my understandings with clients, family, and with myself, led me to the limits of my understanding, and eventually beyond.

Like curiosity and the hot stove,  
We see the trouble in our clients  
our family, friends, and lovers;

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<sup>22</sup> See related works by Ryan (2002) and Smith (1997) on shamanism and Jung.

we reach out and get burned.

Reach this other way,  
feeling the fire and  
doing no harm.

It will look like magic  
when you walk into  
that burning place  
and out again.

It is magic, actually, like so much of real life. When I was first arriving at the findings that I am reporting on here, I did feel a bit apprehensive over the extremely nonordinary quality of what I had come upon. I do not think that I am naïve about how easily this work could be rejected by most people without even being considered, let alone actually tested for veracity. I even found myself trying to imagine a way to present the findings while masking how extraordinary they are, and keeping silent about my own far reaching conclusions. Those imaginings led to dead-ends; my thinking flat and my feeling numb, and they were, at any rate, unrealistic. Even if I had really wanted to do it, I doubt that I could have found any way to present this material and make it seem normal.

To review briefly: I have been able to identify the presence of activated displaced experiences, the results of projective identification, as the central factor in possibly all of the intractable problems of human relationship. I differentiated these from the other present-time problems that we all have by a number of relevant and reliable indicators, such as their persistence and recurrence in essentially unchanged form. They

occur in predictable situations due to activation through resonance when situations similar to that of their origin occur. They are compelling and hence lead to compulsive actions. This results from both the intensity that actually existed, or rather exists, in the original situation and the need and desire for the hearing that will bring resolution. A situation dire enough to be so intolerable it can not be contained but must be projected out into others will evoke very compelling impulses. These displaced impulses, like a child<sup>23</sup> in a rage or a panic, demand expression regardless of the current destructive outcomes that ensue. In fact, any consistent repetition of actions that cause destructive outcomes is itself an indicator of the presence of an activating displaced experience. Another reliable indicator can be found in the responses of others, in the contagion. When a displaced experience is activated in the field of a person's experience, other people in the situation will find themselves reacting in ways that make matters worse. It is as if the displaced experiences themselves are effective at negotiating the interactions so as to increase the extent to which they are experienced. This reverberation of distress in everyone involved in the situation is also a window into understanding the unique particulars of each displaced experience. The feelings evoked in everyone in the situation will invariably be the same ones that are experienced by the person who was first affected by it, and those feelings will also be

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<sup>23</sup> The use of "child" in this case is not to suggest that these states are "primitive" but rather to make use of the fact that children tend to be more vigorous in their attempts at expression, having had less accumulation of repressing experiences.

identical to the qualities in the original event that is being displaced. In contrast, when someone is experiencing present-time distress over some real and actual-in-this-world problem, other people in the situation can much more easily continue to have their own caring, empathic responses; feeling along with the distress and not finding themselves compelled to react. Therefore, in these present-time problem situations those who are less distressed will generally be able to respond in soothing, supportive, reflective, or otherwise helpful ways.

The situations, fights, tragedies, abuses, and horrors that result from the unconscious enactments of displaced experiences combine to form the plague that is threatening to overwhelm the life of this world.

Scapegoating is everywhere.  
 Even doing our best,  
 possession is inevitable.

Our only choice is:  
 Do we go willingly  
 into that condition,  
 bringing all of ourself  
 bodymindsoulspiritbeing  
 to meet this other  
 without restraint  
 and emerge whole and healed,

or do we go unknowing  
 kicking and screaming  
 doing battle with ghosts  
 and enacting misery  
 on our own bodies  
 and on those  
 we love.

The good news is that these activating displaced experiences that are currently running rampant through our lives, are very much like a dream. They are absolutely real in their own world, not in this one.

Once when my son was very young, we were talking together about dreaming. Our earliest conversations happened before his birth so this was not unusual. I was pointing out that it is impossible to actually get hurt in a dream in one important way, because no matter what happens in that world, when you wake up here, you are fine. Injuries do not cross over. He took it to heart as he did so many things, and not long after came his telling of a monster dream in which he told the monster "Put away those claws!" The monster suddenly had boots on and took my son flying high over the familiar sights of our home town. Injuries do not cross over, and that is a very good thing to know.

"I'm afraid he'll catch cold with lying on the damp grass," said Alice, who was a very thoughtful little girl.

"He's dreaming now," said Tweedledee: "and what do you think he's dreaming about?"

Alice said "Nobody can guess that."

"Why, about *you!*" Tweedledee exclaimed, clapping his hands triumphantly. "And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?"

"Where I am now, of course," said Alice.

"Not you!" Tweedledee retorted contemptuously. "You'd be nowhere. Why, you're only a sort of thing in his dream!"

"If that there King was to wake," added Tweedledum, "you'd go out—bang!—just like a candle!"

"I shouldn't!" Alice exclaimed indignantly. "Besides, if *I'm* only a sort of thing in his dream, what are *you*, I should like to know?"

"Ditto," said Tweedledum.

"Ditto, ditto!" cried Tweedledee.

(Carroll, 1871/1960, p. 166-168)<sup>24</sup>

Of course Alice is a thing in a dream and she does go out—poof—each time the book is closed; and so are these displaced experiences. They are of that world, the timeless non-local world where interpersonal contact can bridge miles and millennia through no known medium and taking no time (Braud, 2003; Ehrenwald, 1948; McTaggart, 2002; Radin, 1997, 2006; Rhine, 1937; Sheldrake, 2003; Sinclair, 1930/2001; Ullman & Krippner, 2002; Vasiliev, 1963/2002; Warcollier, 1948/2001; Wilkins & Sherman, 1951/2004). The experience of being possessed by a displaced trauma, an activating displaced experience, is a non-local event. The contact we experience puts us in a very good position to know a great deal about that other world, that other person, place, and time; and the horror that is occurring to them<sup>25</sup> in that experience. However it also puts us in a safe place if only we realize it. My son, had he felt and thought differently when he was faced with that dream monster, could have spent the rest of the dream in terrified flight, rather than scenic and spectacular flight, and woken up crying and distressed. The monster would still not have been able to harm his body in this world directly, but the hormones released by the experience would be ravaging him internally.

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<sup>24</sup> See Magallon (1997) on explorations of shared consciousness in dreaming.

<sup>25</sup> The use of present tense "is occurring" refers to the experience in their world and their time. In that sense, a person's great-great-grandfather who was killed in the American civil war is being killed now in that world; this certainly seems to be the case if the experience has not yet been received and processed.



This is exactly the case with displaced experiences in our lives. Most people do not realize that these powerful states of mindbody are of another world; another person, place and time. The visceral and potent emotional information about that other world, that other situation, is misunderstood as belonging to us, here. Then, like a dreamer running from a monster, people begin to do crazy things. The actual harmlessness of the event is lost on us when we are confused in this way, and in our intense reactivity, as we are driven by the strong feelings and impulses, we end up doing ourselves and each other a great deal of harm. I am fully convinced that this is the only reason we ever do ourselves real harm of any kind. We are otherwise not so uncaring, not so contrary to our own well-being. The implications of this in terms of a new understanding of addictions, compulsions, and any form of self-inflicted harm are vital and radical. Taking it a step further, while remaining true to reality as I know it, the same holds true for all harm of another, unless it is a realistic, necessary protective act, preventing a greater harm. We are after all body of one body, beings of one earth, and ultimately harm is harm to all. When we are caught in a day/nightmare, possessed and enacting some displaced experience, what we sorely need is a new, more accurate view of our own situation. This will give us space to pause, to breathe, to feel, to think, to notice; and perhaps to know, in a real and meaningful way.

This embodied imaginal approach to living and knowing is grounded in the bodily<sup>26</sup> human and other than human world, not only in the world of a supposedly “objective” science. As an indication of the ontology that guides my thinking, I quote from *Radical Ecopsychology: Psychology in the Service of Life* in which Andy Fisher (2002) describes a position on knowledge that I share wholeheartedly.

We can all agree, I presume, that nature is a matter of interpretation. My general ontological outlook—which I call *plural realism*—is that there are innumerable ways of disclosing or interpreting reality. This position does not naively suggest, however, that all perspectives are equally valid; it does not rule out criticism and debate. What it does do is seek a “middle way” between the extremes. Most notably, it is neither objectivism nor relativism. That *different* interpretations are possible, that many truths can coexist, refutes objectivism. That *better* interpretations are possible, that our experience can always adjudicate the truth or falsity of an assertion, or lead us into more satisfying contact with reality, refutes relativism. Hence, to think of truth in plural terms is not to say that anything goes. In other words, as a plural realist I hold that many different interpretations of a phenomenon are possible, but also that these will not all be equal in their truthfulness or openness to the phenomenon in question (as Simone Weil writes: “Every being cries out to be read differently”). (p. 93)

It is a pleasure for me to find such a beautiful description of a viewpoint that so matches my own. The inclusiveness of pluralism, with the rigor of realism (which avoids relativism and objectivism) is my preferred outlook.

My study of the phenomenon of projective identification has been heuristic with a grounding in the sensitivities of creative arts. It is infused

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<sup>26</sup> The inclusion of a bodily sense of experience in the theory and practice of psychology has gained much recent attention in the work of many theorists, such as Adler, 2002; Bloom, 2006; Bosnak, 1996; Gendlin, 1978; Goldenberg, 1990; Hendricks & Hendricks, 1993; Kabat-Zinn, 2005; Keeney, 2007; Kurtz & Prester, 1976; Rubinfeld, 2000; Sheets-Johnstone, 1992; and Sidoli, 2000.

with the attributes of a radical embodied imaginal position encompassing eco-, shamanic-, depth-, and quantum-psychological perspectives. Fisher (2002) refers to the “deeply *embodied* nature” (p. x) of direct experience which is the ground of phenomenological inquiry. In order to deepen and widen that core ground of experience, and work toward a more truthful understanding that is ever more open to the reality of the phenomenal world, I have devoted myself to an embodied imaginal practice.

Learning to swim  
eyes half-closed  
in the foggy depths,  
the murky caverns.

Do not attempt  
dredging and raising  
the dead;  
go instead  
into that other world  
becoming half aware  
almost sleeping,  
find the knowing  
that doesn't know  
what it knows,  
breathing it in  
swimming, sinking,  
go deeper,  
let go of memory  
let go of order,  
they belong to that  
other world  
left far behind,  
now dropping down  
inside your eyes  
down bone marrow  
in darkness and density  
Finally settle  
Someplace real,  
Someplace the body knows.

Through just such a dark depth of half-consciousness I found the gem of this research, which is the resolution process<sup>27</sup> that so gently and easily resolves, essentially dissolving or dematerializing, displaced experiences that are so seriously infecting our world. Numerous obstacles can be removed or resolved in a breath or a heartbeat through the truly magical simplicity of this process. This offers a new possibility for healing with implications for every field of human endeavor, as well as for the concern of the other than human creatures of the world over the dire destructive impact humankind is and has been having on all the rest. This resolution process is a thoroughly embodied imaginal practice, alive with feeling. It makes full use of our capacity for symbolic thinking and in that way it is akin to the homeopathic practice of constitutional treatment.

Imaginal and symbolic thinking is moreover eminently helpful in grasping the constitutional 'remedy pictures' of the homeopathic materia medica. Beyond that it may open our eyes to a new view of existence helping us conceive how psyche and soma, man and earth function as different aspects of one integrated field. As such this view is no longer new today. It is talked about among environmentalists and those interested in humanistic and transpersonal psychology as well as Eastern religions. But in terms of specific application, this viewpoint has not advanced too far beyond a sort of new romanticism, a philosophy of life, which may be important and valuable, but with the exception of some brain research, it has had as yet relatively little influence upon practical scientific work. (Whitmont, 1980, p. 7)

These homeopathic remedy pictures are very like the rich sensory, affect laden, distress clusters that are caused by the activation of

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<sup>27</sup> This process is described in detail on pages 193-207 and also elaborated in Appendix A on pages 399 to 407.

displaced experiences. These are usually thought of as nothing but trouble when they occur, much as disease symptoms are reviled by most people, most of the time. These very symptoms however are the best avenue for healing. In the case of the troublesome states that emerge from activated displaced experiences, they offer the possibility of almost instantaneous remedy. Since the homeopathic remedy pictures that are used in homeopathic medicine seem to me to be an exact analog of the distressing states of bodymind that are involved in the problem and the resolution of displaced experiences, I will quote at length from another passage by Whitmont (1980):

A field is defined not as it "is" this or that but only indirectly—that is descriptively—through the patterns and forms of matter that manifest its influence. . . . We cannot say what it is—we do not know. We can only say how it behaves. We do this by describing a number of phenomena and facts which make up a patterned grand total—a picture. And this is precisely the way in which the homeopath goes about assaying what he deals with in illness. He arranges, assays, collects, a picture. We speak and think in terms of *remedy pictures*. We assay that expression of an energy field of the illness, unknown per se, but found and manifesting itself in the way it arranges the symptoms—or shall we say, the expressions of the disturbed physiologic functioning—and we compare this field effect, this grand total image, with a similar field effect which has been observed by exposing the organism to the energy field of the drug. Thereby we establish the exact drug action and drug energy in the form of a drug image. The therapeutic thinking in terms of such a phenomenologically descriptive field which thereby addresses itself, not to the cause and effect chain, but to the grand constitutional total manifested in the field phenomenon, leads to what we call constitutional prescribing. In practical terms it means that Homeopathy never deals with an overt disease manifestation—with an infection, shall we say—but with that disturbance which enables the infection to take hold, *contains* it, as it were, as a partial element. It does not deal with an effect of changed

chemistry, but with that energy, that ordering element, which permits this change of chemistry to occur. (pp 16-17)

I am neither a medical doctor nor a biochemist, but I strongly suspect that this description of homeopathic treatment, having an impact on the energy which underlies the change in chemistry, is an exact description of what is occurring with the use of the remedy process that I describe.

While there are many explorations into the mind and body connection, the energy of consciousness transcending space and time (e.g. Aczel, 2001; Braud, 2003, Sheldrake 2003, and others), and the links between these phenomenon and psychological theory and practice; these connections are often disregarded. We may attribute to chemistry what is actually more simple and fundamental. "Our difficulty in dealing with the non-measurable, the intangible, leads us to attribute to the external and material the power that belongs to the psyche" (Ramos, 2004, p. 137).

One thing that I am sure of is that we do not need more of the same. We do not need more technological solutions with unintended consequences that wreak more havoc than they were designed to solve, or more medications to alter biochemistry in order to change distressing experiences and make them tolerable while possibly increasing the risk of sudden unprovoked violence or other devastating side effects, or more agricultural chemicals and genetically modified pesticide-producing plants to increase crop yield while possibly killing off the bees necessary for

pollination<sup>28</sup>. What we do need is an embodied presence in our own lives. We need to stop and listen to our own experience and to each other. We desperately need to begin to listen for the stories that are crying out in our symptoms. We need to hear the unspoken stories and the neglected cries. We need to listen to the dead.

"Advice to Myself" by Louise Erdrich (2003/2007)

Leave the dishes.  
 Let the celery rot in the bottom drawer of the refrigerator  
 and an earthen scum harden on the kitchen floor.  
 Leave the black crumbs in the bottom of the toaster.  
 Throw the cracked bowl out and don't patch the cup.  
 Don't patch anything. Don't mend. Buy safety pins.  
 Don't even sew on a button.  
 Let the wind have its way, then the earth  
 that invades as dust and then the dead  
 foaming up in gray rolls underneath the couch.  
 Talk to them. Tell them they are welcome.  
 Don't keep all the pieces of the puzzles  
 or the doll's tiny shoes in pairs, don't worry  
 who uses whose toothbrush or if anything  
 matches, at all.  
 Except one word to another. Or a thought.  
 Pursue the authentic—decide first  
 what is authentic  
 then go after it with all your heart.  
 Your heart, that place  
 you don't even think of cleaning out.  
 That closet stuffed with savage mementos.  
 Don't sort the paper clips from screws from saved baby teeth  
 or worry if we're all eating cereal for dinner  
 again. Don't answer the telephone, ever,  
 or weep over anything at all that breaks.  
 Pink molds will grow within those sealed cartons  
 in the refrigerator. Accept new forms of life  
 and talk to the dead

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<sup>28</sup> Which is only one of innumerable, mostly as yet unknown or unrecognized, reasons why we need bees in the world, indeed why the world needs bees—the most important of which is simply because they are the only bees there are.

who drift in through the screened windows, who collect  
 patiently on the tops of food jars and books.  
 Recycle the mail, don't read it, don't read anything  
 except what destroys  
 the insulation between yourself and your experience  
 or what pulls down or what strikes at or what shatters  
 this ruse you call necessity. (online)

I can speak with authority of the horrors that displaced experiences  
 cause when they go unrecognized, unheard in their real call; when they  
 are acted out in our relationships. I have seen the ravaged battlefields in  
 the minds and hearts of everyone involved. I have felt the empty sterile  
 hopelessness of uselessly trying to change the unchanging. I have tried to  
 talk sense to the senseless, and care to the uncaring; and then, worse  
 than any simple failure, I have watched as that contagion of senseless  
 uncaring crept into my own soul, leaving me ranting and useless; and no  
 longer even harmless. With its flavor of the misery and the potential for  
 healing that my work has encompassed I will include here one long poem.

Winter is open and welcoming  
 wet drenching the hills  
 but I am late summer's dry heat  
 breaking into autumn  
 parched and withered against the hard ground

I have no nourishment to give  
 no nectar no ambrosia—  
 you can eat ashes and dust  
 and quench your thirst  
 with aching memories of water.

Do not come knocking expecting  
 answers and condolences—  
 The only response will be the creaking  
 hinges and splintering wood.  
 You will be empty handed when you leave.



If not, settle down slowly on the dirt floor  
and I'll tell you a story:

There was a kingdom long ago  
That had no king  
It did not know how lucky it was.  
We call it "Kingdom" because  
in later years the kings came—  
One, after another, after another,  
often by blood or treachery.  
This is a story about a time  
before stories. When rivers were  
rivers and not borders or outposts.  
Do you hear my story? Have you  
Settled down far enough into the  
dirt floor, into the dry heap of dust  
that barely remembers rain?

Come, you must visit me again,  
once you awaken from this dream you're having—  
Bring back something from the dream—a shell,  
perhaps, or the name of a feather that wasn't  
there when you looked. We all need our dreams  
and each other's in these dark dusty days that  
ride on relentlessly as if there really were  
some ever out there *There* to get to.

What is your destination? Have you set your sight  
on some vision of never ending glory; Some perfect  
illusion or escape? Anywhere else but *Here*.  
That train is crowded and has no light;  
worse still is the way its track twists into its own  
collision; defying time and space to run headlong  
into its own flight. Stop here. Wait for  
the next train. The one going nowhere.

You will recognize it when it arrives because  
it is silent and without wheels. It has no track,  
and refuses passengers. Get on and let it take you.  
The lover has a ticket and no baggage—  
which is fine as there is no baggage car.

It will still be winter when you arrive  
unless summer is turning to autumn or the

early spring morning has begun to appear  
in the eastern sky. It will be when it will be  
and you will sit and hear my story  
of a land before Kings,  
before borders and armed resistance.  
You will tell me of the battles you have  
fought to arrive once again awake and  
dreaming, on the dirt floor, behind  
the splintered wooden door.

How can we live  
with all these faces of deprivation—  
haunted by loss at every turn?

How can the blood flow still  
through tightened or withered veins  
How can the passion rise seeking something real  
through the ravaged flesh of broken bodies?

I have come knocking  
demanding answers  
shrieking against the winds that rage  
I have heard the echoing silence like  
an ancient crypt or grave.

I have tumbled  
into darkness  
floundering,  
falling, into pain  
wandering wondering  
empty handed  
seeking nothing,  
once again.

Let us sit beside each other  
on the dry and dusty floor  
it is winter and it is summer  
dawn and dusk and night and noon  
I am dreaming we are broken  
You are dreaming we will mend  
and the dream that dreams each other  
weaves us waking  
here, my friend.

It is in the dreaming that new possibilities so often emerge. The practice that is developing around the resolution process I am describing is one that enters that imaginal realm lightly, deeply, and often.

I call the realm of psychology, shamanism, and physics—where things exist before they are seen—the sentient realm. The psychologist C.G. Jung called it the collective unconscious. The Nobel Prize-winning physicist, Werner Heisenberg, called it the world of tendencies, of the quantum wave function. Indigenous people call the same world—where things exist before they are seen—the world of dreaming. (Mindell, 2000, p. 14)

Entering the dream state in order to effect change is a long standing tradition. Kanutski (2007) is referring to this and other aspects of indigenous ethics and practice when he said, “We could call it the old way, but I think what it is, is the good way. It’s always been there and it’s in every culture” (p. 15). A return and recollection of this tradition is much needed now as we seek an understanding and practice that truly supports life, health, and healing. “Indigenous people have always combined the fields of psychology, physics, group work, and bodywork in shamanism or what today some call aboriginal science” (Mindell, 2000, p. 27).

As I collect the materials and ideas that have come together in support of these insights and understandings, and as I organize and express the ideas and impressions that are most important to me, I am appreciating the unique opportunity that I have had to engage in this doctoral work through an institution that has deep commitments to the unfolding developments of depth psychology, and its commitment to real

healing and wholeness. Related to and highlighting my appreciation, I recently came upon this provocative statement by Carl Rogers (1980).

I believe that until we develop this authentic human science, we are but developing a technology for the use of planners and dictators, not a true understanding of the human condition. Perhaps our graduate departments, those bastions of traditionalism, have kept us from bringing about this change. The Ph.D. thesis has, in most universities, become a travesty of its true purpose. To follow one's informed curiosity into the mysteries of some aspect of human nature, and out of that rigorous, personal, independent search to come up with a significant contribution to knowledge—this is the true picture of the Ph.D.; but this is *not* an accurate description of most doctoral dissertations of today. We have settled for safe mediocrity, and frowned on creativity. If our concept of science is to change, our departments must change. If that change does not come about, psychology will become more and more irrelevant to the search for the truth of man. (p. 240)

Because it is so striking for me, I repeat this phrase, "To follow one's informed curiosity into the mysteries of some aspect of human nature, and out of that rigorous, personal, independent search to come up with a significant contribution to knowledge." That is exactly what I feel I have done, and what I know I have been supported in doing. This is a rare and precious wholesomeness. Perhaps, in contrast to Rogers' concern over a growing irrelevance, therefore, I can feel supported in my hope that this work will prove to be as relevant and helpful as I imagine it to be.

Perhaps in the coming generations of younger psychologists, hopefully unencumbered by university prohibitions and resistances, there will be a few who will dare to investigate the possibility that there is a lawful reality which is not open to our five senses; a reality in which present, past, and future are intermingled, in which space is not a barrier, and time has disappeared; a reality which can be perceived and known only when we are passively receptive, rather than actively bent on knowing. This is one of the most exciting challenges posed to psychology. (Rogers, 1980, p. 256)

Past, present, and future intermingle in the above as Rogers predicts so much of what I am discovering; it is shared knowledge that resides in the many dark recesses we refer to almost glibly as the unconscious.

These awarenesses of interconnectedness pre-date quantum physics in the magical perspective of shamanism, and in other than human ways in the various intelligences of the natural world, and finally, perhaps most fundamentally, in the depths of wisdom imbuing every living bodily cell. Every cell resonant, responsive, interconnected with semi-permeable integrity; sensitive and filled with feeling—that is the real human condition, the one we return to whenever we are able. Bryant (1863/2007) in his poem “The Poet” strongly recommends this sensory embodied awareness to anyone wishing to compose poetry. The same is needed in the poetic art and science of healing. Here are some excerpts:

The secret wouldst though know  
 To touch the heart or fire the blood at will?  
 Let thine own eyes o'erflow;  
 Let thy lips quiver with the passionate thrill;  
 Seize the great thought, ere yet its power be past,  
 And bind, in words, the fleet emotion fast.

...

Yet let no empty gust  
 Of passion find an utterance in thy lay,  
 A blast that whirls the dust  
 Along the howling street and dies away;  
 But feelings of calm power and mighty sweep,  
 Like currents journeying through the windless deep.—

...

Before thine inner gaze  
 Let all that beauty in clear vision lie;  
 Look on it with exceeding love, and write  
 The words inspired by wonder and delight.—

...  
 Scale, with the assaulting host, the rampart's height,  
 And strike and struggle in the thickest fight.—

...  
 And they who read shall say:  
 "What witchery hangs upon this poet's page!  
 What art is his the written spells to find  
 That sway from mood to mood the willing mind!"—

The willing mind, the one that opens to a poem, willing to be swayed, is the same variety of mind that can open to a feeling state, to a voluntary possession, so to speak, and be swayed by whatever mood is reaching out its emotional hand to be met and welcomed and held..

In most cultures . . . there is a distinction between dysfunctional possession and possession that occurs voluntarily, usually in a religious context. Numerous religions, like Spiritualism, are possession-oriented religions, in which a central feature is the voluntary possession by members of what is believed to be a deity, a spirit, or a deceased person. These religious functionaries may periodically become possessed, usually in a ritual context, during their active lives, but without the otherwise dysfunctional consequences so evident in pathological possessed states. (Melton, 1996, p. 942)

Just as there are great poets, there are great shamans. But that does not mean that the rest of us have no poetic sense, or are totally lacking in shamanic abilities. I think that most human beings, even considering the many layers of trauma and distress that handicap us, are capable of small acts of shamanism, just as we are capable of poetic and artistic moments, if only as a responsive receiver of poetry or beauty. It is that capacity to simply receive that is required here. I want to make a strong case for this part of my text. Given the condition of the current political, social, and environmental landscape I do not think we can afford to wait for the great

shamans or the great poets. I do not think that we will be rescued by one stone thrown at the Goliath that dominates our world. But I do see a great possibility for change in the simple kitchen table usage of this new method for relieving possession states. We can relieve these displaced and hence unreal conditions of distress that leave us broken and bereft, that strip us of our time and power, and leave us in their wake with no one the better for it, only to return another day, still a hungry ghost, still unheard, unseen, unknown, and so, still doomed to haunt us.

We can become a new world with many folk healers in this age of unprecedented distress, destruction, and disease. We will still be grateful for our gifted luminaries who can do great things. But I think the world, which does in fact need saving, will not be saved by great things so much as by a tide of small recoveries that can sweep us back into an embodied harmony with ourselves, each other, and with the diverse domains of the more than human world. Fortunately this can happen in next to no time.

Between the extremes of nonordinary and ordinary reality, the shaman works . . . moving back and forth between the two realities in order to help people experience the deeper harmony within themselves, to heal pain and disharmony.

A related distinctive feature of shamanism, as compared with certain contemporary self-help methods of healing, is that the shaman intercedes for someone other than himself. This concept of compassionate intervention is a key feature of shamanism and is found at all levels of practice. Even the most advanced shamans typically have other shamans who work on their behalf when they need help. (Harner, 1989, p. 137)

Compassionate intervention is what this work is all about. We are never actually working directly with the person who is most in need of help,

since that person is not available to us directly, but only through his or her impact on us and on those around us. No matter who is apparently suffering in our world, when these intractable conditions strike, the real victim of actual real tragedy and present-time real suffering is not here but elsewhere. It is as simple and reliable as that.

We tend not to believe in magic in Western civilization. And so we've largely forgotten the place of magic. Most magicians end up performing somewhere like Las Vegas. They see themselves as "illusionists"—as people trying to create the illusion of magic. But they themselves don't believe in magic. What a sad state the craft of magic has fallen into in the world. It would be as if most musicians and concert artists didn't really believe that real music existed. (online, Abram, 2006)

Real music does, of course, exist and so does real magic. Real suffering also exists and it is essential that we deepen our understanding of what it actually is, where it comes from, and what to do about it. It is essential that we discover or rediscover ways of responding to suffering that do not wrest us further from our own souls, from the living world within and around us. It is essential that we find ways of being that accept and encompass the deep and often unconscious realities that underlie our experiences. This movement back into a harmonious relationship with ourselves, each other, and the rest of the natural world is the salvation we so longingly seek. The embodied imaginal practice that I have been describing is grounded in this magical intimate reality.

It is not by being abstract intellects that we are going to fall in love again with the rest of nature. It's by beginning to honor and value our direct sensory experience: the tastes and smells in the air, the feel of the wind as it caresses the skin, the feel of the ground under



our feet as we walk upon it. And how much easier it is to feel that ground if you allow yourself to sense that the ground itself is feeling your steps as you walk upon it. (Abram, 2006, online)

This reciprocal, participatory, intimate reality of living is the arena in which displaced experiences move between worlds. The havoc they wreak upon our lives is merely their unanswered call. It is a call for our magical, shamanic, natural human capacity for empathic resonance and response.

It is my belief that everyone, not only the "experts," is capable of participating in, exploring, and developing cutting-edge theories and experiencing the unification of shamanism, psychology, and physics.

It is my firm belief that each of us is, potentially, a "modern shaman." That means we must be able to personally experience the theories and ideas in these sciences. Only then can we participate in the future of physics and psychology. They depend upon our ability to move between worlds. (Mindell, 2000, p. 31)

The in between world of dreaming, the timeless realm where this work resides, is everpresent and accessible. This is both how and why displaced experiences always succeed in reaching us with their irrefutable clarion call of unresolved trauma in all its rich sensory, emotional, imaginal detail. Then the quality, character, focus, and intent of our response will determine how events will unfold for us here, in our world and in our lives. We can participate openly, receptively, responsively and move to join compassionately in receiving the offering of experience to be felt, heard, and healed; and then get on with our own lives. Or, we can mistake it all for chaos and confusion, allowing involuntary possession and its resultant compulsive enactments to continue to be the insanity that wreaks havoc on, within, and between us all.

In order to conceptually situate these realizations I will add here my impressions regarding the physics of this phenomenon. In my view, the displaced experience resolution process is a direct expression of the fundamental relationship between energy, matter and light. When we say that something is the "matter" with someone, we are speaking far more accurately than we realize. This matter is quite literally what is going on. Consciousness is a fundamental, universal energy moving at the speed of light, perhaps a form of light itself. Since time slows as the speed of light is approached, time ceases to exist in any linear fashion at the speed of light. This accounts, I believe, for the evident timelessness of psychic reality. In the displaced experience resolution process described above on pages 193-207 (and in Appendix A on pages 399 to 407), the moment of efficacy, which utterly resolves the problem or "matter", occurs when the consciousness of a receptive other meets the consciousness of the original experiencer of that matter ( $mc^2$ ). The result is reliably and predictably a complete resolution of the matter, an utter dematerialization, which then leaves only undifferentiated energy in its wake ( $e=mc^2$ ).

The notion that time slows down as speed increases has been verified experimentally. A display on this phenomenon in an exhibit reviewing Einstein's life and work at the Skirball Museum and Cultural Center (2005) in Los Angeles, suggested that if Einstein himself had left earth at the time of his birth, in 1879, and had traveled since that time at 99.99999% of the speed of light, and then returned in 2005, he would be

17 years old. Compared to what we are normally used to, time would have been moving very slowly indeed. But how slowly I wondered would time move at 100% of the speed of light? In other words, what is Time to Light? The question seems absurd because mass increases at increasing speeds while time slows. So, at the speed of light an object's mass would be infinite. No one can travel at the speed of light<sup>29</sup>.

No one? Well, that is obviously not exactly accurate. The reality is that we know that there is one who can, perhaps only one. And that one is light itself. Light clearly does move at the speed of light. So what if we ask Light about Time? What is Time like to Light? In other words, how does Light experience Time? Clearly at that speed Time slows down so completely that it ceases to have any speed at all. To Light Time is One Still Moment that contains everything. Is it possible that synchronistic events, apparently simultaneously occurring non-causal non-local events, are the product of light, and hence perhaps consciousness, experiencing all things coexisting in One Eternal Moment?

"Modern physics seems to indicate that we live in a spiderweb of space and time, in which both the future and the past are tugging on the present" (Targ, 2004, p. 89). Developments in quantum physics, reported by Chopra (1989), Dossey (1989; 1996), Herbert (1993), Radin (2006), and others are rapidly lending support to the views held through the ages

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<sup>29</sup> Speculations on the possibilities of faster-than-light travel notwithstanding for the moment (Herbert, 1988; Magueijo, 2003).

by healers and shamans working with energy, dreaming, and shared consciousness. The world can be intimately known and a non-mechanistic worldview offers a more accurate rendering of reality.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), a poet and leader of the English Romantic movement, was adamantly opposed to . . . a mechanistic materialist ontology, a world to be explained in terms of "insentient matter acted on by external forces." Coleridge dismissed this as an "obsession with matter" (Bamford, 1994) and proposed instead an ontology much more in accord with Leibniz's notion of monads of pure force. Coleridge, in fact, anticipated the ontology of process philosophy, where time and action are fundamental to the nature of the world (Perkins, 1994). Process ontology offers a radical approach to understanding the mysterious relationship between matter and mind, and opens the way for a solution to the long-standing mind-body problem. (de Quincey, 2002, p. 137-138)

Working in an embodied imaginal way, dealing with the transmission of displaced experiences, is to enter that relationship of mind and matter. It brings us into a recognition that the activity in time that is communicating itself from elsewhere to us here through our feeling senses is real and alive, and that our ability to meet and receive that experience in our embodied awareness is all important.

I conclude this consideration of an embodied imaginal practice, incorporating shamanic, quantum reality, depth and ecopsychological views and understandings, and what that practice might look like for me and others, with a poem that is particularly dear to me. It came to me many years ago, after several days and nights walking and dwelling alone in the magical, mutually experiencing, conscious and creative, beautiful,

diverse, and awe-inspiring wilds of the California mountains between the deep Pacific Ocean and the wide central valley.

I watched eight birds fly  
All as one  
Each swooping and soaring  
Toward the setting sun

I watched a small winged insect  
And then watched another  
Each tracing their path  
In one swarm they all hover

All these trees are one forest  
Though no two are the same  
When asked in their language  
They each have a name

So the grasses and breezes  
And flutterbys too  
The waters and seasons  
And so me and you

Each dancing our own special  
Strange dance here in time  
Moving one motion  
Creating one rhyme  
Singing one song.

And, finally, this from David Abram (2006):

In indigenous, tribal, or oral cultures, magic is the way of the world. There is nothing that is not in some way magic, because the fact that the world exists is already quite a wonder. That it stays existing, that it continually keeps holding itself in existence, this is the mystery of mysteries. Magic is the way of the world. (online)

## Chapter 5

## Eros &amp; Evil: Origin of Conflict and the Implications for Theory and Practice

Insidiously, and by remote ways, as well as by the power of stick and stone and clout of hand, were the shackles of White Fang's bondage being riveted upon him. . . . He knew only grief . . . and a hungry yearning for the free life that had been his. (London, 1903/1933, p. 119)

It is at the same time indubitable that the replacement of the pleasure-principle by the reality-principle can account only for a small part, and that not the most intense, of painful experiences. Another and no less regular source of "pain" proceeds from the conflicts and dissociations in the psychic apparatus during the development of the ego towards a more highly co-ordinated organization. . . . The details of the process by which repression changes a possibility of pleasure into a source of "pain" are not yet fully understood, or are not yet capable of clear presentation, but it is certain that all neurotic 'pain' is of this kind, is pleasure which cannot be experienced as such. (Freud, 1920/1924, p. 5-6)

My contention is that the conflict born of incompatible attitudes constitutes the core of neurosis and therefore deserves to be called *basic*. And let me add that I use the term *core* not merely in the figurative sense of its being significant but to emphasize the fact that it is the dynamic center from which neuroses emanate. This contention is the nucleus for a new theory of neurosis. . . . Broadly considered, the theory may be viewed as an elaboration of my earlier concept that neuroses are an expression of a disturbance in human relationships. (Horney, 1945/1972, p. 47)

The question of why we, human beings, suffer neurotic pain is one that has garnered the attention of many theorists. We readily turn against ourselves, we harm ourselves and each other. We so often act and feel as if we are in conflict with ourselves. The observable fact of the existence of neurotic conflict raises important fundamental questions. Fromm (1973) notes this in *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. "I started with the

study of aggression and destructiveness because, aside from being one of the fundamental theoretical problems in psychoanalysis, the wave of destructiveness engulfing the world makes it also one of the most practically relevant ones" (p. 15). Aggression that is in the service of survival, that helps us in our lives by protecting us from harm, is not so difficult to understand. It is the existence of unredeemed destructiveness that raises the fundamental questions that prove so hard to answer. How can we reconcile the necessary, essential, and innate presence of the primary life-affirming, survival urges with the existence of forces within us that are apparently at odds with our welfare? There have been many attempts to understand how this destructiveness comes about. As I have reflected on my findings regarding the existence, persistence, and the effects of the activation of displaced experiences, I have come to believe that this is the source of all neurotic conflict. While I understand that this is a broad and sweeping statement, extended contemplations on this have only led me further into this view. In short, I believe that there are two sorts of experiences that occur in life. More to the point, I believe that there are two ways of experiencing. The first is the diverse experiencing that arises from the direct immediate engagement in our present-time circumstances, while the other is the express product of possession by activated displaced experiences that originate in severe traumatic other time, place, and person circumstances. The first kind of experiencing which is in a very real way our own, engages us in flexible, coherent

relatedness even when the circumstances are painful. The second kind of experiencing is invariably rigid, repetitive, overpowering of our sense of self, and acutely expressive of a persistent traumatic conflict. This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first I will elaborate on this view of the etiology of conflict. In the second section I will discuss my impression of how this origin and transmission of conflict takes place. Finally I will discuss my thoughts on the implications for treatment.

*Innate or Displaced: A New Understanding of the Origin of Conflict*

In considering the origin of neurotic conflict<sup>30</sup> I begin with the relatively unconflicted world of a healthy, well cared for infant. A feeling quality that often arises for a healthy infant is delight. This is a delight in the contact with something seen, felt, tasted, heard, smelled, dreamed, or otherwise noticed. It can equally arise as delight in one's discovery of oneself, one's own body, internal sensations, movements, actions and achievements. This pleasure of contact, joy of relatedness, is linked to a healthy sense of pride. There is delight in the immediacy of experiencing aliveness, of being alive, of being oneself in the living world. An infant fortunate enough to have a mother (and/or other caring adult), who is not too burdened by distress, lives in a world suffused with these qualities of Pride and Delight. The child's joy in being (Being Me!) is received and

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<sup>30</sup> With Freud, Jung, Horney and others, I use conflict as its derivation suggests, meaning "strike together, clash, fight" (Barnhart, 1988, p. 205) and not merely in reference to problems such as hunger or hurt.



reflected in the mother's pride and delight in her child (I Love You being You!). She sees and welcomes the child's entire being in these moments. The connection between them is without qualification or assessment. This pride and delight has nothing to do with requirements or judgments of any kind. Work is not the issue in these moments, love is. These life affirming qualities of pride and delight are erotic, loving, sensual, and affectively rich states of being that infuse the bodymind, whole self, with one's aliveness in the present moment and a sense of healthy power. It is the empowerment of Eros, of aliveness and vitality. Hence, this loving delight in oneself and one's life, in one's aliveness, is an innate experience arising in the context of relatedness. When there is a relatively healthy birthing situation without too much interference, it is often the very first experience of relatedness after birth when there is little else but delight, pride, and a sense of miraculous empowerment for parent and infant as their eyes and bodies meet in this world for the first time. This is the fundamental erotic pleasure of being, of experiencing.

A child thrust too soon and too often out of that garden of delight into a world of judgment and requirements to do, and to be something particular, will suffer a loss of delight, a loss of pride, a loss of power. This too often becomes a lifelong tragedy of repeated failures in both love and work—for one cannot do truly good work when love is obstructed. When work, or the attempt to do or to be something particular, is divorced from love, the erotic pleasure of pure experiencing; when accomplishment is

severed from the ground of being, endeavors and activities will inevitably be doomed and destructive. Our current world is gravely inundated with this dire dissociation. So, why are so many of us hampered in our ability to freely mother or parent in this way? What is the burden that so obstructs love? What is it that, too often, prevents us from receiving our children into our minds, bodies, hearts, and souls without restrictions and requirements? What blocks our delight? And furthermore, what does the child carry with them as they are thrust out of the garden, that goes on to obstruct their own pride and delight, their own freedom to be, to love?

I suggest that it is not traumatic hardship alone that so devastates our lives. Love can survive poverty or calamity unobstructed. It is the burden of the layers of unresolved trauma from other times and places reverberating through the shared field of consciousness that derails our present life experience. These many unresolved displaced experiences of trauma overburden and too often tear apart relationships, obscuring the love that would otherwise be evident and shared. I am convinced that the usual sorts of therapeutic interventions, which are consistently aimed at attending to our own traumas and our own distress, while successful at their intent, will never adequately address these displaced experiences. We need a new and different approach, one that does and will unburden people to love and hence to live. We can return to the garden; we can once again be whole. It is not as distant or as difficult as it seems. The way that leads to a recovery and a recollection of being-alive-in-oneself,

of true Pride, authentic Delight, and healthy Power is neither laborious nor lengthy. It simply requires a new and entirely different approach, one that recognizes and addresses the real source of neurotic conflict, the actual cause of what falsely appears to be an inner division within the self.

The strength of my convictions is a direct outgrowth of the intimate personal reality of my research. I have not investigated these phenomena abstractly, but in the necessity of seeking my own survival and well-being and that of my children. In a recent dream a woman friend, referring to the word "rude," asked, "Is that true for your life?" I found myself saying, "Yes, it has been rude." Then, as my eyes filled with tears and my heart and body with deep sadness over what has been so painful, I continued, "It's so hard. They get you where you don't know if you can take it—your children." I am sure that this applies equally to my actual children and to the vulnerable child within, who was so devastated by the extremely rude experiences I was forced to endure. The wisdom of dreaming surpasses, as always, any conscious awareness I've had about my history. I would not have used that word to describe the torment of ritual abuse and of living for so many years with a deranged sociopathic partner<sup>31</sup>. However, when I look into the derivation of the word "rude" I find the following.

Old French . . . from Latin *rudis* rough, crude, unpolished, unrefined, unlearned; of unknown origin. Latin *rudis* is related to *rudus* broken stones, rubble, which may be cognate with Middle Irish *ruad* ruin. Old Icelandic *reyta* to tear down, pluck out, and Middle Dutch *ruten* to tear, plunder. (Barnhart, 1988, p. 942)

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<sup>31</sup> See Stout (2005) for an overview of sociopathic personalities in everyday life.

Yes, that is what it was like. My life for many years was rude. I lived, and tried my best to breathe, in a thick constant oppressive atmosphere of neurotic conflict. I was inundated by it and eventually filled with it. I am sure that I came close to dying of it. There is no doubt in my mind that many times over, the intention aimed at me was my destruction. While being so intimately close to a phenomenon does not necessarily result in clarity or understanding, it does offer a direct embodied experience that constitutes a unique opportunity for finding one's way to real knowledge, insight, and understanding. I did my absolute best to take advantage of that opportunity. I believe this saved my life.

I was living in a laboratory of neurotic conflict, and I soon learned that the variety of therapeutic assistance that was available was far from adequate to resolve the horrors I was witnessing and experiencing.

I see the signs  
of the absence of thought;  
indications that this thing is loose again,  
this horror is upon us.

In a guise of being us  
it pretends to be living,  
but it is a walking death.  
It pretends to be speaking,  
but it is a spider's web.  
It pretends to be thinking,  
but it attacks thought.

It is an envious vengeance  
leaving behind only  
a shadow of what  
could have been,  
would have been,  
if thought had lived.

No one seemed to know any more than I did about how to handle the ongoing recurrent trauma that had become my home-life. As so many others have done in similar situations of chaotic strife, I did all I could do to keep the horror at bay and make room for our children to have some peace and room to grow. And, I became a student of evil, determined to solve the puzzle of human destructiveness.

How can we fight  
the evil that possesses us  
without,  
becoming it.

More recently I have begun to review the theories and thoughts of others, and to consider how the findings of my quest relate to existing ideas and understandings of the origin of destructive conflict.

In *On Dialogue*, Bohm (1996) surveys the field of destructiveness and locates the origin of the difficulty in a problem with thought itself.

What are the troubles of the world? They seem so many that we can hardly begin even to list them. We can see wars going on, starvation, torture, pillage, disease, all sorts of dirty tricks played in politics. . . . There are biological and chemical weapons, and other kinds of weapons that have not yet been invented, but surely will. And we have the danger of ecological destruction—destruction of agricultural land and forests, pollution, the change of climate, and many other things. . . . Then we have the growth of crime and violence everywhere—drugs and so on—indicating that people are very unhappy, not satisfied. . . . Why have we accepted this state of affairs which is so destructive and so dangerous and so conducive to unhappiness? It seems we're mesmerized in some way. We go on with this insanity and nobody seems to know what to do. . . . I am suggesting that underneath it there's something we don't understand about how thought works. . . . Thought has done all the things which we are proud of. . . . Yet thought also goes wrong somehow, and produces destruction. (pp. 48-49)

There is certainly something wrong with thought in the instances of human destructiveness that he points to and in those I have witnessed, but it is not clear whether this is a cause or a symptom.

Try to explain  
the source of evil,  
without resorting to a trick.

Such as: In the beginning  
God had an evil twin,  
or  
it was an Accident along the way,  
or  
Humankind is prone  
to bad habits.

Or finally, as some say,  
There is no such thing;  
Evil does not exist.

But, we have seen it.

Unprovoked sadistic violence,  
devastating heartless cruelty,  
pointless destruction.

Something exists.

The struggle to try to understand the source and cause of evil in the world has had no easy solution. Without resorting to a dark version of "and then a miracle happened" most of us are left throwing in the towel, deciding that it just can't be understood, the cause just cannot be found.

We have to say Evil cannot be explained. . . . At least Evil cannot be explained by any purely rational means. In my studies I have noted that some doers of profound evil throughout history have had the same characteristics as monsters found in mythos. Often, there is high intelligence coupled with excellent intuition about others' secret desires, i.e. others' weakest points of entry. These

are purposely sought out. There is an extraordinary uncanniness, a kind of psychic prescience about one's potential victims, and about human nature in general. This is put to evil use. There is personality charm that inexplicably degenerates into cruelty and atrocity for a sick pleasure's sake. . . . But when trying to explain Evil's motives, the roots of its existence, the why of it, I find that no rational explanation, explains it. Whichever way you turn it, evil cannot be elucidated in any way that makes sense to an unruined heart. (Estes, 2003, p. 19)

This claim, coming from someone who can so effectively and eloquently describe the phenomenon of evil, is compelling. This is clearly not a casual conclusion from someone unschooled in the reality of the situation. It is also not without company. Perhaps the best we can do is deal with what we cannot understand. "We of the ministering professions shall not be delivered from evil. But we can learn to deal with it" (Guggenbuhl-Craig, 1971/1999, p. xxv). Or along with Morrow (2003) in his in-depth study, *Evil: An Investigation*, perhaps we simply shouldn't understand it.

If understanding everything means forgiving everything, then the decent conscience has reason, as an act of moral obduracy, to say, I refuse to understand evil, I refuse to grant it the dispensation of comprehending analysis and sympathy. Evil makes its bed. Let it lie there. (p. 38)

Turning away from any attempt to understand evil is tempting for a less morally defensible reason, which is simply frustration. Turning away, in one way or another, from an awareness of the existence of evil, evil acts, and people committing these evil acts, is a common enough strategy for people living in a world that inexplicably includes human destructiveness.

If we search the literature for a clear explanation of the cause of evil in the world, we are likely to end up empty-handed. The explorations

and investigations into the phenomenon of evil that I have surveyed (Batchelor, 2004; Beebe, 2003; Goldberg, 1996, 2000; Griffin, 1992; Russell, 1977; Sanford, 1981; Simon, 1996; Staub, 1989; Stevens, 2004; Zweig & Abrams 1991; Watson, 1995; and others) catalogue a widely divergent discussion over the possible causes. They seem only to agree that there is no agreement to be had on the topic. Summing this up in one way while reaching back over two millennia Shermer (2004) tells us,

A philosophical conundrum that has plagued theologians and moral philosophers is known as the "problem of evil." The Greek philosopher Epicurus, in his *Aphorisms*, stated it as early as 300 BC:

The gods can either take away evil from the world and will not, or, being willing to do so cannot; or they neither can nor will, or lastly, they are both able and willing. If they have the will to remove evil and cannot, then they are not omnipotent. If they can, but will not, then they are not benevolent. If they are neither able nor willing, then they are neither omnipotent nor benevolent. Lastly, if they are both able and willing to annihilate evil, how does it exist? (p. 66)

By replacing "The gods" with life itself, we have quite a neatly presented puzzle over the question of why evil exists, when life apparently works in every other way to promote and support itself. Simon (1996), while leaving aside the problem of self-destruction, asks the following regarding violence visited on others.

Can it be that virulent forms of self-centeredness and entitlement can account for the overvaluation of the perpetrator's self, producing contempt and devaluation of others that becomes the psychological engine for these atrocities and mass killings? If that is so, then how do people reach that point at which lethal self-centeredness overrides any tendency to be decent to others? Psychiatric concepts fail us miserably here. (p. 13)



And finally Goldberg (2000) tells us that most of what we may think we know or understand about human destructiveness is probably wrong.

The causes of destructiveness—despite the pervasiveness of violence in American society (Goldberg 1997)—have been poorly understood. Charles Silberman (1978), in his sociohistorical account of crime in the United States, indicates that most of what people believe about destructive behavior is either false or irrelevant, a reference to the knowledge of both behavioral scientists and the general public. (p. 207)

Now I will return to my own thinking on the matter.

The puzzle of human destructiveness is not only relevant to these extreme instances involving the evil perpetration of atrocities. In its more familiar garden variety we quite frequently encounter this conundrum in our lives. One place it regularly shows up is in our compulsive defenses<sup>32</sup>. When we have been through painful or traumatic experiences we can find ourselves reactively and rigidly defending ourselves from experiences that are even vaguely reminiscent of our painful past. This results in harmful disruptions of our current relationships and a reduction in our ability to engage in satisfying ways in our current life experience. Does our own pain and trauma cause us to defend against love, pleasure, intimacy, connectedness, and satisfaction? Are we so afraid of experiencing loss and pain again that we relinquish love in order to love, diminish our own ability to be with others in order to be able to be with them, distance

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<sup>32</sup> I distinguish these compulsive and hence rigid and destructive defenses from realistic flexible defense against hurtful current experience. One example of this life-affirming defense is the resistance of a person pressured to share information about past trauma with a person who is not empathically available and attuned. Repression until it is safe to recall is another form of realistic coherent defense.

ourselves from the people and situations in our lives so that we can be in and with those people and situations? I am aware that this is close to a commonly held view of psychological reality. Nonetheless it strikes me as tragic and insane, the tragedy of love being perennially obscured. Would we really sacrifice pleasure, freedom, and love, from fear of the pain of losing them again? Would a starving person refuse to eat rather than risk feeling the pain of starvation again if the food were to run out? No, it is not our own trauma that derails us. We are driven to these destructive positions by forces that compel us, forces that do not meet our own needs because they were not born of our needs. We are being compelled by the powerful forces of unresolved experiences given to us, projected into us, by others who, lacking support, cannot tolerate them. These displaced unresolved experiences go on generation after generation; horrific beastly experiences crying out to be felt, to be known, to be thought about. They cry out in the addictions and compulsions we feel and enact. They cry out in our defensive reactions. They cry out in a repetition of the unsatisfying relational re-enactments that they compel us to perform. They cry out until someone can turn and look, until someone can feel and think. They go on, crying out, until someone can stop and feel the displaced source, the real nature of the beast, and be that empathic other who was/is tragically absent in the original time and place, for the original person.

To further situate my understandings I turn now to Freud and his postulation of the existence of a repetition compulsion and of Thanatos, or

the death instinct. In his early formulation proposing the existence of two conflicting instincts (which he suggests as the origin of neurotic conflict), he terms them the ego instincts and the sexual instincts, with the latter aiming towards life and the ego instincts aiming towards death. Even he knew, as we will see below, that this formulation was problematic, but he was not able to think of any other adequate explanation for what he had often observed. Guggenbuhl-Craig (1971/1999) summarizes this aspect of Freud's view and links it to that shared by Jung.

Freud came to the conclusion that humanity is fundamentally guided by two instincts or drives: Thanatos, the death instinct, and Eros, the life instinct. Freud recognized the connection between aggression directed at others and that directed against oneself. The death instinct is the "longing" and drive toward death, toward the destruction of ourselves and others. Freud was not able to reduce this primary destructive urge to anything else. Both Freud and Jung recognized this "murderer and suicide in us" as something which is simply there and cannot be conjured away by any sort of theorizing. (p. 105)

Freud observed (in himself, in his patients, and in others) an inexplicable persistence of self-injurious actions. He seemed to see what appeared to be a repetition compulsion. This is the foundation of the development of his theory of conflicting drives, which is his attempt to understand the origin of conflict. The proposed existence of a death instinct, or an innate drive toward destruction for its own sake<sup>33</sup>, is a core theoretical construct that has been contested, with strong advocates both for and against, ever

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<sup>33</sup> It must be kept in mind that this is not referring to an aggressive or destructive potential that can be utilized to promote and protect life or valued aspects of life, but rather an actual innate urge toward death and destruction.

since. While it does seem to offer a possible explanation for the source of neurotic conflict, puzzling out the origin of a drive toward the destruction of the self is as difficult as determining the origin of conflict or evil itself.

These ideas are based on Freud's accurate observations; however, I think that he misunderstood the basic identity of what he was observing. The evident self-injurious actions are actually the signs and symptoms of the activation of displaced traumatic experiences, which are the actual source of conflict. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud (1920/1924) describes his theory of conflicting drives and the evidence on which it is based. I will quote at length from this important work and attempt to extract his main line of reasoning, as it relates deeply to my thinking.

Five-and-twenty years of intensive work have brought about a complete change in the more immediate aims of psycho-analytic technique. At first the endeavours of the analytic physician were confined to divining the unconscious of which his patient was unaware, effecting a synthesis of its various components and communicating it at the right time. Psychoanalysis was above all an art of interpretation. Since the therapeutic task was not thereby accomplished, the next aim was to compel the patient to confirm the reconstruction through his own memory. In this endeavour the chief emphasis was on the resistances of the patient; the art now lay in unveiling these as soon as possible, in calling the patient's attention to them, and by human influence—here came in suggestion acting as 'transference'—teaching him to abandon the resistances.

It then became increasingly clear, however, that the aim in view, the bringing into consciousness of the unconscious, was not fully attainable by this method either. The patient cannot recall all of what lies repressed, perhaps not even the essential part of it, and so gains no conviction that the conclusion presented to him is correct. He is obliged rather to *repeat* as a current experience what is repressed, instead of, as the physician would prefer to see him do, *recollecting* it as a fragment of the past. . . . When this point in the treatment is reached, it may be said that the earlier neurosis is

now replaced by a fresh one, viz. the transference-neurosis. . . . As a rule the physician cannot spare the patient this phase of the cure; he must let him live through a certain fragment of his forgotten life . . . this 'repetition-compulsion' which appears in the psychoanalytic treatment of neurotics. (pp. 17-19)

He goes on to comment that this repeating of past traumatic experiences continues even when it is painful, and seemingly without gain.

All these undesired happenings and painful affective situations are repeated by neurotics in the 'transference' stage and re-animated with much ingenuity. They struggle to break off the unfinished treatment, they know how to re-create the feeling of being disdained, how to force the physician to adopt brusque speech and a chilling manner towards them. . . . Nothing of all this could ever have afforded any pleasure; one would suppose it ought to bring somewhat less 'pain' if revealed as memory rather than if lived through as a new experience. . . . The act repeated in spite of everything; a powerful compulsion insists on it.

That which psycho-analysis reveals in the transference phenomena with neurotics can also be observed in the life of normal persons. It here gives the impression of a pursuing fate, a daemonic trait in their destiny. . . . The compulsion which thereby finds expression is in no way different from the repetition-compulsion of neurotics, even though such persons have never shown signs of a neurotic conflict resulting in symptoms. Thus one knows people with whom every human relationship ends in the same way: benefactors whose protégés, however different they may otherwise have been invariably after a time desert them in ill-will, so that they are apparently condemned to drain to the dregs all the bitterness of ingratitude; men with whom every friendship ends in the friend's treachery; others who indefinitely often in their lives invest some other person with authority either in their own eyes or generally, and themselves overthrow such authority after a given time, only to replace it by a new one; lovers whose tender relationships with women each and all run through the same phases and come to the same end, and so on. (pp. 21-23)

From these diverse and widely confirming observations he saw that he had to come to terms with something that was not a search for pleasure. He, quite understandably, concluded that there must be some innate urge

in people to repeat these painful events, even though there is no sign of any sort of rewarding outcome from this repetition.

In the light of such observations as these, drawn from the behaviour during transference and from the fate of human beings, we may venture to make the assumption that there really exists in psychic life a repetition-compulsion, which goes beyond the pleasure-principle. (p. 24)

From here he developed the idea of an urge toward death or destruction, since the repetition seems to be an urge to go back, to return to a prior state. Such an urge, he felt, would essentially aim at the original prior state which is inert, before life, non-existence, or death.

In what way is the instinctive connected with the compulsion to repetition? At this point the idea is forced upon us that we have stumbled on the trace of a general and hitherto not clearly recognized—or at least not expressly emphasized—characteristic of instinct, perhaps of all organic life. According to this, *an instinct would be a tendency innate in living organic matter impelling it towards the reinstatement of an earlier condition . . . the manifestation of inertia in organic life.* (pp. 44-45)

Hence, he arrives at his formulation of Thanatos, or the death instinct.

When we begin to see that this repetition of painful states is a potent communication, repeated when unheard, from distressed others who are crying out through their direct impact on our inner experience, our entire view changes. This is akin to the way a hurt child will cry out again and again through whatever means are available, until someone really listens. If the audible cries of the child are ignored or suppressed, enactments will follow in which the child will try to show us what they are suffering. If these painful repetitions in our lives are just such an attempt

at expressing suffering (differing in that the origin of the communication is not in this current time, place, and person) then we have no need to postulate an innate repetition compulsion at all, and certainly not an extrapolation of that to a notion that life is trying to destroy itself. Freud was also apparently not entirely at ease with his own formulation.

Our discussion so far results in the establishing of a sharp antithesis between the 'ego-instincts' and the sexual instincts, the former impelling towards death and the latter towards the preservation of life, a result which we ourselves must surely find in many respects far from adequate. Further, only for the former can we properly claim the conservative—or, better, regressive—character corresponding to a repetition-compulsion. For according to our hypothesis the ego-instincts spring from the vitalizing of inanimate matter and have as their aim the reinstatement of lifelessness. (p. 54)

Another problem also presents itself since the ego drives include those involved in maintaining the survival of the self. "We now find ourselves suddenly confronted with this question: If the self-preservation instincts are also of a libidinous kind, then perhaps we have no other instincts at all than libidinous ones. There are at least no others apparent" (p. 67). He attempted to resolve this dilemma by dissociating the idea of a death instinct from the notion of ego instincts, and began to speak simply of the death drive or Thanatos and the libidinal or life affirming drive, Eros. Yet, "It remains an awkward fact that analysis up to now has only put us in the position of demonstrating libidinous impulses" (p. 68).

Freud, remaining true to his observations, realized that his current formulations might not be the end story of this attempt to understand the

source of destructive conflict. "In the obscurity that at present shrouds the theory of instinct, we shall certainly not do well to reject any idea that promises to throw light" (p. 68). He also shares that, "We have not yet solved the problem of determining the relation of the instinctive repetition processes to the domination of the pleasure-principle" (p. 80).

Hints at another solution to the problem of neurotic conflict may be embedded in these excerpts from "Twisted", a jazz piece with lyrics by Annie Ross (1952/2007).

My analyst told me, that I was right out of my head.  
The way he described it, he said I'd be better dead  
than alive. I didn't listen to his jive.  
I knew all along that he was all wrong,

...  
I said, "Dear doctor, I think that it's you instead.  
I've got a thing that's unique and new,  
to prove it I'll have the last laugh on you.  
Because instead of one head, I've got two.

And you know two heads are better than one. (online)

Given Freud's intimate and insightful observations of his patients and the character of their experience, he found that he had to grapple with the puzzle of destructive conflict in the psyche. He came to think that there must be an innate drive toward death, and that this was in conflict with the libidinal life-affirming drive. Instead, I suggest that we do not have two conflicting drives, but rather we have two "heads" or more accurately two experiencing selves. The conflict, however, is not between these two selves. The original conflict is a product of, and entirely contained in, the actual outward conflict occurring within the circumstances of the other



person's present time (not our present time or place) traumatic situation.

Fromm (1973), in *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, seems to me to come close to the flavor of this view.

The distinction between benign-defensive and malignant-destructive aggression calls for a further and more fundamental distinction, that between *instinct* and *character*, or more precisely, between drives rooted in man's physiological needs (organic drives) and those specifically human passions rooted in his character. . . . I shall try to show that character is man's "second nature," the substitute for his poorly developed instincts. (p. 26)<sup>34</sup>

I propose that this "second nature" is actually a second, other, nature and not a divided self. His segregation of what he calls physiological needs from what he terms characterological ones such as the need for love is an artificial boundary that does not hold up well to evidence that our actual experience is not divided between body, mind, heart, and soul. This segregation also leads him to consider the needs for tenderness, love, and freedom within the same category as "the lust for destruction, sadism, masochism, the craving for power and property" (p. 26). He considers these to be existential, characterological needs as contrasted with the physiological needs. The destructive and supposedly existential needs, however, do not seem to serve to enhance existence in any way.

Biologically adaptive aggression serves life. . . . It is a drive man shares with all other animals. . . . What is unique in man is that he can be driven by impulses to kill and to torture, and that he feels lust in doing so; he is the only animal that can be a killer and destroyer of his own species without any rational gain, either

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<sup>34</sup> The reference here to "poorly developed instincts" reminds me of the way in which our own disabilities and woundedness serve as access for these displaced experiences; see the next section on resonance and affective proximity, p. 282.

biological, or economic. . . . Malignant aggression . . . does not serve the physiological survival of man. (p. 246)

Unless of course we realize that it is serving the physiological and existential, and otherwise inclusive, survival needs of *another* "man."

Here I will discuss an example of how a displaced experience can take the form of destructive conflict in our lives. I will take the lust for destruction or sadistic impulse, mentioned by Fromm above, as a case with which to illustrate the basic pattern of displacement. I will begin by considering whether in fact something like sadism is a natural and healthy part of a whole and healthy human being. It seems clear to me that it is, but only during extreme circumstances. Consider a situation in which one is confronted by a serious present time threat to some highly valued part of one's life; for example one's child is threatened by an assailant. The immediate potent impulse to destroy the assailant and protect the child includes a strong urge that has within it a potential for intense pleasure in the moment that one is successful at preventing the harm to the child by destroying, at least temporarily, the assailant.

I recall an incident in my life in which I was attacked by a large and vicious dog. Without warning the dog turned and lunged at my face and neck. I am generally a very peaceful, even gentle person. I am also quite fond of animals, and rarely find myself at odds with any, let alone having even a trace of a desire to harm them. In that moment, with no time for thought, I struck a powerful blow to the side of the dog's head, knocking

him brutally aside and hurting him badly enough that he ran away in pain. Even soon thereafter, once he had retreated, I felt some compassionate sorrow over having hurt him so severely, although I did not for one moment regret having done so. But more to the point, at the moment that I did strike the blow I do recall a very distinct sense of powerful satisfaction, indeed pleasure, even though it was very briefly felt. In fact, I do not think that I would have been capable of such an effective defense if I had not been fully available to that strong aggressive urge and the pleasure in its accomplishment. This does not make me a sadist. It does indicate that I was alive and relatively well and able.

Consider, however, if I had been in another situation where some severe harm was being inflicted on me or on someone I love, and I was in some way restrained and unable to act upon the strong aggressive urge to destroy (with its wholly life-affirming, protective intent), and hence was unable to successfully fulfill the urge which would be powerfully active within me, vigorously striving to be fulfilled. If such an experience became displaced and was then being experienced second-hand by someone who was not in an actual situation of threat, this could begin to look just like sadism. Especially if the original circumstances were very severe, so that the urge was extreme, or even more potently if there were multiple layers of such experiences<sup>35</sup> being displaced to one person. Then that person

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<sup>35</sup> Further explanation of the notion of layers of displaced trauma can be found within the next section on resonance and affective proximity at pp. 285-287.

could become gripped by an urgent and overwhelming compulsion to harm others which would, when acted out, include intense satisfaction and pleasure at the accomplishment of that harm: Hence, sadism.

This basic pattern is the template of destructive conflict in our lives. While being at the core an urgent attempt to communicate the extreme experiential condition of the original situation, when one is experiencing and unconsciously re-enacting these displaced extreme circumstances, it will inevitably impel actions and reactions that are contrary to the needs and well-being of people at the receiving end. The feelings and actions associated with these unconscious enactments will also make no real sense in the situation in which they are enacted. Legitimate terror in the original situation becomes unreasonable anxiety, profound and coherent grief over real losses becomes debilitating depression, vital real unfulfilled need becomes addiction, and so on. Each unique extreme traumatic situation, when displaced, translates into a unique unreasonable and intrusive experience for those receiving it. "She's in that state of mind," said the White Queen, 'that she wants to deny *something*—only she doesn't know what to deny!' " (Carroll, 1871/1960, p. 221). I imagine we have all had the experience of dealing with someone in just such a state, and have been in such a state ourselves. Perhaps it has been a state of mind filled with terror, only not knowing of what; or a state of mind that is filled with rage, only not knowing over what, and so on. These states of mind are also terribly persistent as they cannot be satisfied through enactment.

The central focus on traumatic experiences in psychotherapy is accurate, but we need to consider this new possibility regarding the origin of the traumas and to whom they, in a sense, belong. Early on, Freud (1909, 1910/1961) stressed the crucial significance of the impact of traumatic experiences and their effects in later life. "I should like to formulate what we have learned so far as follows: *our hysterical patients suffer from reminiscences*. Their symptoms are residues and mnemonic symbols of particular (traumatic) experiences" (p. 12). He went on to add the following. "This fixation of mental life to pathogenic traumas is one of the most significant and practically important characteristics of neurosis" (p. 13). His thinking regarding the existence of a repetition compulsion was only, in my mind, in error through missing the actual origin of what is being repeated and hence the reason for the repetition.

We are repeating  
the lives of ghosts.

Wake up and see this,  
or we will repeat ourselves  
into oblivion.

We could say that these "ghosts" are driven by a repetition compulsion, but I think it is more apt and experientially accurate to simply say they are repeating themselves, since they have not yet been heard.

Some other theorists have, I believe, come close to describing this phenomenon but without quite hitting upon it. These partial insights and understandings usually leave troublesome uncertainties or contradictions

indicating that something is not quite grasped. I will quote at length from *Power in the Helping Professions* by Guggenbuhl-Craig (1971/1999) since he does such a comprehensive review of various relevant ideas regarding the origin of conflict. He begins with a basic question.

What is behind this destructiveness? How can it be explained psychologically?

It is an unpleasant task to deal with humanity's destructive urge. Hardly anyone will deny that people are destructive toward themselves and others. But there are a variety of explanations for this phenomenon. (p. 100)

He goes on to enumerate a number of views on the issue beginning with the sociological-futuristic view that human destructiveness originates in the clash between the individual and harmful social and/or economic structures. Next he considers the genetic or zoological view that human destructiveness is innately given in our biology. He follows this with Jung's view on the three levels of the shadow. It strikes me that the idea that human destructiveness derives from the harmful experience to be had within the confines of such restrictive and unwholesome socio-economic structures begs the question of how such restrictive, destructive, and unhealthy structures came into being in the first place. Guggenbuhl-Craig himself notes that "all zoological explanations ignore the fact that human aggression . . . is generally coupled with self-destructive acts. This fact has also been ignored by most psychologists—although not by all" (p. 102). Then, after describing the personal shadow and collective shadow that contain or hold those aspects of the personal or collective life that for

various life-affirming, survival supporting reasons are not maintained in consciousness, we find the following description of the third shadow:

Linked with these two kinds of shadow and providing them with energy, yet fundamentally different, is the so-called *archetypal shadow*. Here the word shadow is actually misplaced. Graphically speaking, shadow is something secondary, since it is light which creates shadow. Conscious personal and collective ideals have their shadows, their dark other sides. In this sense the individual and collective shadows are not really independent. But the case of the archetypal shadow is different. A better word for it might be simply "evil," although this word conjures up too many collective moral associations.

Jung conceived of evil as something independent and not . . . merely the absence of good. In his terms it may be understood as "the murderer and suicide within us." (p. 104-105)

Guggenbuhl-Craig (1971/1999) goes on to link this notion with Freud's death instinct. It seems to me that taking this to be an innate given in human nature leads to some strange conclusions, such as the following:

Only he who has the freedom to destroy can freely turn to the world with love. Without the possibility of the sinful, destructive "No," we would be as we imagine the animals to be: we would simply exist, driven by our survival instinct, without any possibility of decision, without any sense of freedom. We would have no opportunity to evaluate, to become conscious, and to choose. The existence of the archetypal shadow may be a specific human attribute. (p. 107)

As an example of my doubts about this notion, it seems to me that a healthy enough mother, upon giving birth to her child, does not need to experience, even unconsciously, the "freedom" to destroy that child in order to feel love. It also strikes me as particularly short-sighted to assume that animals, and even plants and other beings of the natural world, are restricted in their ability to love due to the apparent absence of

destructive urges. Perhaps he also finds these conclusions a bit strange, as he soon expresses doubts about his own analysis.

I am now trying to make the existence of the archetypal shadow understandable, and in the process I am diluting it somewhat. My conceptualizing and explanations are only of limited worth. We can to a certain extent try to understand the meaning of this murderer and self-murderer within us, as I have attempted to do, but at the same time, we have no alternative but to regard this dark side of ourselves as something inexplicable, to recognize it as such, and to guard ourselves against it. We cannot really say whether the purpose of this "No" to creation is really only to give us freedom. (p. 107-108)

There are elements in these thoughts which seem to foreshadow or hint at the conclusions I have come to, without quite making the leap to the transpersonal dimension of displaced experience. There is, for instance, an urge toward freedom, an attempt to regain the lost freedom referred to by Jack London in the quote from *White Fang* at the beginning of this chapter, in every instance of these displaced experiences. This is not, however, any indication that human beings are the sole possessors of consciousness or of that sort of freedom which, perhaps, all beings value.

In *Our Inner Conflicts* by Karen Horney (1945/1972) I find relevant observations and questions quite closely connected to my own thinking. She saw that the apparent division within the self is profound and gravely interferes with a person's ability to act wholeheartedly upon their own drives and desires. I quote at length from this work, as I feel her thoughts are historic, notably worthy of attention, and foundational to my own.

A belief in a basic conflict within the human personality is ancient and plays a prominent role in various religions and philosophies.



The powers of light and darkness, of God and the devil, of good and evil are some of the ways in which this belief has been expressed. In modern psychology, Freud, on this score as on so many others, has done pioneer work. His first assumption was that the basic conflict is one between our instinctual drives, with their blind urge for satisfaction, and the forbidding environment—family and society. . . . My belief is that though it is a major conflict, it is secondary and arises of necessity during the development of a neurosis. . . . I do not believe that any conflict between desires and fears could ever account for the extent to which a neurotic is divided within himself and for an outcome so detrimental that it can actually ruin a person's life. A psychic situation such as Freud postulates would imply that a neurotic retains the capacity to strive for something wholeheartedly, that he merely is frustrated in these strivings by the blocking action of fears. As I see it, the source of the conflict revolves around the neurotic's loss of capacity to wish for anything wholeheartedly because his very wishes are divided, that is, go in opposite directions. . . . In spite of the fact that I consider the fundamental conflict more disruptive than Freud does, my view of the possibility of an eventual solution is more positive than his. According to Freud, the basic conflict is universal and in principle cannot be resolved: all that can be done is to arrive at better compromises or at better control. According to my view, the basic neurotic conflict does not necessarily have to arise in the first place and is possible of resolution if it does arise—provided the sufferer is willing to undergo the considerable effort and hardship involved. (p. 37-38)

Lacking an understanding of the displaced source of this apparent division within the self does leave the remedy almost out of reach, and requiring the considerable effort and hardship which she describes. I will return to Karen Horney's ideas in the next section<sup>36</sup> which deals with the structure of trauma and the way in which displaced experiences are transmitted, activated and resolved.

I want to point out that when the effects of displaced experiences are not seen for what they are, and are mistaken for innate aspects of a

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<sup>36</sup> See pp. 282-285.

person's own psyche, it can lead to assessments of the human condition that do not easily fit with what we generally know about the nature of living organisms and systems. Along these lines, it is common to come upon ideas that there is something inherently wrong with some aspect of our being, for instance our conceptual thought, or our sense of self or ego. These ideas lead to various approaches that are aimed at combating these "wrong" aspects of being. To cite one example I quote from

*Stillness Speaks* by Eckhart Tolle (2003):

When walking or resting in nature, honor that realm by being there fully. Be still. Look. Listen. See how every animal and every plant is completely itself. Unlike humans, they have not split themselves in two. They do not live through mental images of themselves, so they do not need to be concerned with trying to protect and enhance those images. The deer *is* itself. The daffodil *is* itself.

All things in nature are not only one with themselves but also one with the totality. They haven't removed themselves from the fabric of the whole by claiming a separate existence: "me" and the rest of the universe. The contemplation of nature can free you of that "me," the great troublemaker. (p. 78-79)

If the sense of self, of being "me," is a mistake that we must become free of, then apparently the wholesome nature he suggests we contemplate has made a serious error in the development of the human being. Beyond this there are other problems with this line of thinking. For one thing, on whose authority do we base the assessment that all things natural have no sense of self, nor any mental images? I don't suppose anyone asked the daffodil. My own experiences in the wilderness have suggested to me that I am being seen and heard as much as seeing and hearing. I have no reason to assume that I am any more of a self than the tree, the coyote,

or the raven. Also I see a grave problem with this idea that "the great troublemaker" is "me" which implies that oneself, or one's sense of being oneself, is the root of evil or at least of discord. If that were the problem then it seems to me, as I said above, that there would be something very wrong with nature, of which our sense of "me" is certainly a part. Bohm (1996) points out that this "notion of 'I' cannot be entirely wrong, or it probably would never have arisen. . . . How does this natural, useful distinction turn into the contradictions of the ego?" (p. 75).

Continuing with the example above, there is also a tendency to demonize feelings and emotions. For instance, "As long as the ego runs your life, most of your thoughts, emotions, and actions arise from desire and fear. In relationships you then either want or fear something from the other person" (Tolle, 2003, p. 90). In trying to understand the source of the sense of division and conflict that exists in our experience, fear and desire have become the scapegoats. There is an implicit suggestion that our fearing something or wanting something is harmful to us and to our relationships. This is an absurd notion. Our fear, our ability to be afraid, is crucial to our survival as is our desire and our urge to satisfy our desires. These mistaken assessments grow out of the misunderstandings that develop when destructive states resulting from displaced experiences are mistakenly seen as innate expressions of one's own person.

Do you experience frequent and repetitive drama in your close relationships? Do relatively insignificant disagreements often trigger violent arguments and emotional pain?

At the root of such experiences lie the basic egoic patterns: the need to be right and, of course, for someone else to be wrong; that is to say, identification with mental positions. There is also the ego's need to be periodically in conflict with something or someone in order to strengthen its sense of separation between "me" and the "other" without which it cannot survive.

In addition, there is the accumulated emotional pain from the past that you and each human being carries within, both from your personal past as well as the collective pain of humanity that goes back a long, long time. This "pain-body" is an energy field within you that sporadically takes you over because it needs to experience more emotional pain for it to feed on and replenish itself. It will try to control your thinking and make it deeply negative. It loves your negative thoughts, since it resonates with their frequency and so can feed on them. It will also provoke negative emotional reactions in people close to you, especially your partner, in order to feed on the ensuing drama and emotional pain.

(Tolle, 2003, pp. 95-96)

In the above passage, there is a rich description of the phenomena of activated displaced experiences. These unresolved displaced traumatic events, however, are misinterpreted as arising from the wrong-headed egoic needs of the receiving persons, or from the equally wrong-headed energy field from the past; and this leads to the attribution of ill intent all around. Our ego is seen as requiring periodic conflict to sustain itself, and also as being innately interested in unrealistic rightness over any sense of reality. The personification of humanity's vast history of pain has become monstrous and ravenous, needing to be fed with ever more pain, and determined to control us for no other reason than to perpetuate further pain. If nature included such urges I do not see how the evolution of species would have occurred. Life would have devoured itself in a frenzy of pain production long ago. I do not mean to be overly critical of Tolle

and his work, since ideas along these lines are widespread, and in fact his eloquent, insightful descriptions have made my commentary possible.

Klein (1936/1964) applied what seems to me to be a similar line of thought to the situation of the newborn baby.

When the baby is hungry and his desires are not gratified, or when he is feeling bodily pain or discomfort, then the whole situation suddenly alters. Hatred and aggressive feelings are aroused and he becomes dominated by the impulses to destroy the very person who is the object of all his desires and who in his mind is linked up with everything he experiences—good and bad alike. In the baby hatred and aggressive feelings give rise, moreover, as Joan Riviere has shown in detail, to most painful states, such as choking, breathlessness and other sensations of the kind, which are felt to be destructive to his own body, thus aggression, unhappiness and fears are again increased. (p. 58)

It seems to me to be so much more likely that when a baby is not being fed, or otherwise responded to in a satisfying way, there are apt to be conflicts afoot in the mother, or others, and these are likely to include activated displaced experiences which will then affect the baby. The hatred and aggressive, destroying impulses that Klein observed most likely originate in the mother or other adult, in the activated displaced experiences that are causing those feelings. The idea that this is not the case and rather that these destroying urges are innately given, vividly suggests a bizarre anti-survival urge in infants and stands in contradiction to the evident continuing existence of human life itself. Klein goes on to further describe the disturbances caused by destructive impulses.

The baby, to whom his mother is primarily only an object which satisfies all his desires—a good breast, as it were—soon begins to respond to these gratifications and to her care by developing

feelings of love towards her as a person. But this first love is already disturbed at its roots by destructive impulses. Love and hate are struggling together in the baby's mind; and this struggle to a certain extent persists throughout life and is liable to become a source of danger in human relationships. (Klein, 1936/1964, p. 59-60)

Once again, I think this description is actually referring to the conflict in the infant caused by activated displaced experiences transmitted from others. Rather than innate destructive impulses that will later cause harm in human relationships, I would say that these descriptions point to the harm already being caused.

This next passage from Segal (1964/1974) describing Klein's work is, for me, particularly revealing of the details of displaced experiences.

The immature ego of the infant is exposed from birth to the anxiety stirred up by the inborn polarity of instincts—the immediate conflict between the life instinct and the death instinct. It is also immediately exposed to the impact of external reality, both anxiety-producing, like the trauma of birth, and life-giving, like the warmth, love and feeding received from its mother. When faced with the anxiety produced by the death instinct, the ego deflects it. This deflection of the death instinct, described by Freud, in Melanie Klein's view consists partly of a projection, partly of the conversion of the death instinct into aggression. The ego splits itself and projects that part of itself which contains the death instinct outwards into the original external object—the breast. Thus, the breast, which is felt to contain a great part of the infant's death instinct, is felt to be bad and threatening to the ego, giving rise to a feeling of persecution. In that way the original fear of the death instinct is changed into fear of a persecutor. The intrusion of the death instinct into the breast is often felt as splitting it into many bits, so that the ego is confronted with a multitude of persecutors. Part of the death instinct remaining in the self is converted into aggression and directed against the persecutors. (p. 25)

I imagine that this is a description of the effects of layers of trauma that actually involve multiple perpetrators and violent death, real fear and

aggressive self-protective urges that are natural to those situations. Once again I am referring to original, other time, place, and person situations. Moreover, when these displaced experiences are transmitted to the infant we can assume that they have been enacted in some way, subtle or not. Therefore, there *is* a perpetrator. Someone has harmed or withheld care from the infant in some way or they wouldn't be drawn into the activation of the displaced experience. The actual present time injury or neglect, however, may be far less severe than the reactive experience warrants.

One of the reliable attributes of a displaced experience when it is activated is that it is thoroughly contagious<sup>37</sup>. I see this as a simple, direct product of the call to be heard that is being projected as loudly and widely as possible. I believe this is the reason that Melanie Klein and others have observed what looks like destructive urges in infants. The displaced states that are affecting their mothers and other care givers are given to them as well. This will reliably occur during the duress of any moments of harsh or neglectful treatment. The observations of the infant's reactions to this situation have led to mistaken impressions of the infant's early inner life.

Projection is the baby's first reaction to pain, and it probably remains the most spontaneous reaction in all of us to any painful feeling throughout our lives. Subsequent mental development enables each of us in a varying degree to check or control this instantaneous primitive and subjective reaction, and to substitute other methods better adapted to the objective truth and reality of the situation we are in. (Riviere, 1936/1964, p. 11-12)

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<sup>37</sup> This is the Contagious Magic identified by Frazer (1959), a "belief in the noxious and infectious nature of certain personal qualities or accidents" (p. 23).

My guess is that the reverse is true and that newborn infants are the consummate realists, only gaining the tendency to displace their painful experiences through projection after being bombarded with the projected states of the adults in their world. This would be consistent with the fact that infants learn about the real world more rapidly and readily than adults, or even older children. This implies a good contact with reality.

There are many other cases where a description seems to me to be pointing toward these displaced experiences, albeit unawares. I will cite a few. Bohm (1996) in *On Dialogue* is talking about the conflict in human experience when he says, "What has to be done, therefore, is to see this whole stream and get to the source of it. Somewhere, at the source of thought, it is being polluted" (p. 50). He goes on to add this.

You could say, in one sense, the wrong step was when people first started pouring pollution in. But the fact that we have kept on pouring it in is the main point—it's pouring in all the time. Therefore, the source is not in time—not back in ancient times when it may have started—but rather the source is always *now*. (p. 50)

Being possessed by an activated displaced experience feels as if one's experience is being polluted. Unprocessed trauma, like unprocessed sewage or garbage, is pollution. Burns (1995) in *The Psychology of Multigenerational Legacies* reports the following. "A woman I spoke with whose mother was a holocaust survivor said, 'There is no doubt in my mind that my mother's experiences in Germany live on completely intact in me. Opening that Pandora's box is something I am not sure I am



prepared to do. But even so, it continuously affects who I am in this world” (p. 16). Kernberg (1995) gives the following account:

Let us now explore some clinical manifestations of patients dominated by hatred and the related desire to destroy the origin of their suffering as they perceive it, that is, the hated and hateful persecutory object. The most important clinical manifestation of the dominance of hatred in the transference is the patient’s attributing to the therapist an intense relentless degree of hatred. By means of projective identification, the internal world of torturer and tortured, tyrant and slave are enacted in the form of attributing to the therapist the role of sadistic tyrant, and by means of unconscious efforts to provoke the therapist into such a role and to control him in order to limit his dangerousness, the induction of conditions in the countertransference that eventually tend to activate whatever role responsiveness the therapist possesses to fulfill the patient’s fearful expectations. (p. 69-70)

Although he doesn’t mean to be literal here, I cannot help but imagine actual sadistic tyrannical persecutors, torturers and slaves, being a real factor in such cases. In talking about mothers who may have difficulty with mothering Winnicott (1987) mentions “she is afraid of passing on to her baby some uncertainty belonging to the past” (p. 18). Stevens (1993) points out that “one greatly dreaded force widely believed to have the capacity for ‘getting in’ and causing disease, especially mental disease, is the force of evil (p. 109). Fordham (1947) refers to the fact that many difficulties of motherhood result from “wrong attitudes assumed many years ago, even generations ago and consequently deep-rooted in the mother’s and child’s nature” (p. 41). In “Explaining Evil” Estes (2003) offers these thoughts:

The recurring experience of people being tempted to inhumanity has made me wonder if there are innate and predictable patterns of

behavior for the ordering of things in malignant ways, already positioned, spring-loaded and fully-formed in the psyche—similar to the archetypal nodes of complexes that Jung wrote about as being inborn. If these fragmenting patterns are not consciously suppressed, mediated, rendered harmless, or transformed *before the fact*, do they, indeed *must* they, leap to life in predictable patterns, wreaking destruction all around—as evidenced by repetitive events throughout history over the aeons? (pp. 44-45)

Indeed the descriptions by Jung of the archetypes might, in at least some cases, refer specifically to these displaced experiences.

Looking then to Jung (1951/1978) I find this: “Whereas the contents of the personal unconscious are acquired during the individual’s lifetime, the contents of the collective unconscious are invariable archetypes that were present from the beginning” (p. 8 [CW 9 Pt. 2, para. 13]). From the beginning of what, I would ask. Perhaps they were not present from the start of all human experience, but rather in each case from the beginning of *that* particular experience. Continuing this look into archetypal material, here is Whitmont (1980):

Psychologically, growth of personality occurs through crisis and confrontation with archetypal, namely specifically typical human patterns, situations or problems such as dependence, separation, togetherness, competition, aggression, love; the complexes of father, mother, child, the hero, or of evil to name but a few. Psychopathology ensues when the challenges of these patterns are not adequately met with awareness. Then they may threaten to overwhelm us. Conscious confrontation, deliberate working through with full emotional and bodily experiencing and symbolic realization as in psychodrama or in encounter situations protects us from the compulsion of destructive “acting out”, from being victimized by our complexes. The potentially destructive impulses are “attenuated” through deliberate confrontation techniques; and through symbolic “as if” experiences a dimension of meaning, a quasi-spiritual core is activated

which leads to a new balance between ego and drives. (p. 10-11)

Or between ego and another ego, since balance is restored when the conflict from the other time, place, and person is resolved and the present time person is free to be in their own experience.

*Resonance and Affective Proximity: A Model for Understanding the Structure and Geography of Trauma and Recovery*

As I mentioned above, the experience-near theory and the vivid, realistic description of neurotic conflict, offered in *Our Inner Conflicts: A Constructive Theory of Neurosis* by Karen Horney (1945/1972) seems to me to be situated quite close to the point of view that I have developed. She insightfully explores the territory that I have traversed, even though the central phenomenon of projective identification, and the existence of displaced experiences, is not included. Because of this I will use passages from her work to help elucidate my view.

I see the basic conflict of the neurotic in the fundamentally contradictory attitudes he has acquired toward other persons. . . . To approach the problem genetically we must go back to what I have called basic anxiety, meaning by this the feeling a child has of being isolated and helpless in a potentially hostile world. A wide range of adverse factors in the environment can produce this insecurity in a child: direct or indirect domination, indifference, erratic behavior, lack of respect for the child's individual needs, lack of real guidance, disparaging attitudes, too much admiration or the absence of it, lack of reliable warmth, having to take sides in parental disagreements, too much or too little responsibility, over-protection, isolation from other children, injustice, discrimination, unkept promises, hostile atmosphere, and so on and so on. (p. 40-41)

To this description, I will attempt to add my understanding of the role played by resonance and the way that this affects the transmission of displaced experiences. I contend that along with the hurtful impact on the child of the various neglectful or injurious factors listed above, there is inevitably a second aspect of the problem that burdens that child. One image that occurs to me is the double helix of genetic DNA. In this sense the displaced experiences that burden us are linked, discrete trauma to discrete trauma, to our own adverse experiences.

To show this I will begin with one example. Imagine a situation in which a parent, due to the events in his or her own history, is burdened by a displaced experience that involves feelings of extreme isolation and abandonment. This parent is likely to act in somewhat abandoning ways toward their own child. Then, at the moment that the child is experiencing a sense of their own isolation and lack of support, there will be sufficient resonance between the original displaced experience and the child's own current condition. An affective link, a resonant sympathetic harmonic vibration, will occur between the child and the displaced experience, in other words between the child and the original sufferer. Until the very moment this occurs the child will not be under the sway of the displaced experience that is affecting the parent, but from then on it will affect the child as well. The parent in the interaction will experience some relief of pressure as the extreme sense of abandonment and isolation is shared with the child, but now (until it is resolved) they are both prone to the

activation of this displaced experience. The stress the child feels from the actual injurious treatment they received is now linked with the displaced experience, with the assuredly more extreme suffering of that other time, place, and person.

The displaced experience is predictably much worse than the event in the child's life, on the order of a life-threatening or identity destroying trauma. We know this just as we know, without needing to see the origin, that when water is pouring into a container it is arriving from another container at a higher level. Traumatic material is being displaced because it cannot be tolerated and contained at its source. It will seek a lower level. It will move to link with and fill someone who is more able to hold and contain it, neither equally impaired nor less able to tolerate it.

Harassed by these disturbing conditions, the child gropes for ways to keep going, ways to cope with this menacing world. Despite his own weakness and fears he unconsciously shapes his tactics to meet the particular forces operating in his environment. In doing so, he develops not only *ad hoc* strategies but lasting character trends which become part of his personality. I have called these "neurotic trends." (Horney, 1945/1972, p. 42)

But just as the event of the trauma was two-fold, the development of these neurotic trends is also two-fold. The child does, as Horney observes, grope for ways to manage their own unique actual situation, but along with the child's own tactics, the displaced experience has within it certain urges and sanctions, certain compelling forces toward some strategies and away from others. This will add significantly to the development of the rigid tendencies that most aptly can be called neurotic. As Horney

continues, she refers to her conceptualization of the three types of neurotic strategies people use to deal with contact with others:

From the point of view of the normal person there is no reason why the three attitudes should be mutually exclusive. One should be capable of giving in to others, of fighting, and of keeping to oneself. The three can complement each other and make for a harmonious whole. If one predominates, it merely indicates an over-development along one line.

But in neurosis there are several reasons why these attitudes are irreconcilable. The neurotic is not flexible; he is driven to comply, to fight, to be aloof, regardless of whether the move is appropriate in the particular circumstance, and he is thrown into a panic if he behaves otherwise. (p. 45-46)

The lack of flexibility, the drivenness, the insistent persistence regardless of whether it is in fact a successful strategy in the current situation—all of these are symptoms of a displaced experience. The child's own attempts to strategize, even when impelled by traumatic injury will not lead them into such compulsive self-injurious ways of being.

Another factor, and one that considerably widens the scope of the conflict, is that the attitudes do not remain restricted to the area of human relationships but gradually pervade the entire personality, as a malignant tumor pervades the whole organic tissue. They end by encompassing not only the person's relation to others but also his relation to himself and to life in general. (p. 46)

This last description provides a vivid portrait of the result of layers of displaced experience pervading a person's experiencing, hence impairing their sense of self and pervasively interfering with relatedness.

I refer above to layers of displaced experience, and I will attempt here to describe what I mean by this. If a person is traumatized by a

perpetrator who is driven by displaced experiences<sup>38</sup> and if, lacking adequate support, the victimized person is not able to contain and/or process that trauma, he or she will become the source of another layer of displaced experience. There will be further transmission and anyone who receives this displaced experience from that victimized person will receive at least those two layers. In practice the enactments, compulsions, rigid reactive defenses, addictions, persistent distressed states of being, and other intractable and destructive conditions people find themselves caught in, are often composed of multiple layers of similar, and hence resonant, displaced experiences.

This may sound like a barrier to treatment, but it is not. During the embodied experiencing of the resolution process, it is only necessary to be in touch with the main feeling quality of the presenting enactment, and then to open to the displaced experiences which communicate themselves through the voluntary possession that ensues. It is sometimes apparent that there are multiple layers of similar material, and at other times there is only a sense of the feeling involved without a sense of origin. Relief and resolution result in either case. (There are, of course, some cases of simple, single, displaced experiences that have had only one generation of transmission, with no layering.) As I mentioned, these layers, when they exist, are resonant. By this I mean that they are qualitatively similar

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<sup>38</sup> To my thinking this is a redundancy, since the perpetration of abuse only occurs when a person is compelled by the demands of a displaced experience. As I have been saying, this is the source of all neurotic or destructive conflict.

enough, the feeling of the experience is similar enough, to be functionally sympathetic. Here is a description of sympathetic resonance.

If one plucks a cello string, the matching string on another cello a few feet away will begin to vibrate, too. Striking a tuning fork will vibrate another with the same pitch some distance away. The resonance communicates and connects directly and immediately without intermediaries, except for the conduits of air and space. (Anderson, 2002, p. 41)

This is very important in terms of the layering of displaced experience, which is the transmission of trauma, as well as being the key to the resolution of these unresolved states of traumatic experiencing.

In situations of violating aggression and abuse, the underlying orchestration of the specific details of the perpetration lie in the need to establish a sympathetic resonance, in order to provide an avenue of transmission for the compulsively enacting displaced traumatic material. So, a perpetrator who is driven by intolerable feelings of desperate fear and helplessness, for example, will assault a victim in such a way as to make them feel both helpless and afraid. Once this is accomplished the intolerable distress will, through the avenue of sympathetic resonance, be given over to the victim. This does not result in the perpetrator becoming entirely free of the material, although in the moment of transmission they will be relieved of the overwhelming burden of carrying too much of it. What are being forged in these cases are lines of negative affinity. Just as close intimate connections create avenues of affinity, or affective links, abusive interactions create negatively charged affective links. These links



are the avenues that put us in direct contact with displaced traumatic material from other times, places, and people.

I have come to think of this web of connectedness as a geography of the soul, made up of avenues of affective proximity. The visible world presents us with a geography of space and time within which we move and experience various degrees of spatial and temporal proximity to the others in our world. It seems to me that there is another geography, a geography of the heart or the soul. It is the one we occupy in dreaming and it certainly transcends time and space. Proximity in this other case is measured not in meters but in matters; in how much we matter to each other. This is an affective geography in which we are nearest to those with whom we are affectively related or linked, regardless of time and space. These affective links can be positive and life-enhancing or negative and hurtful, but in either case they matter. This is the realm of action for these displaced experiences as well as for their resolution. This is how these traumatic experiences can be transmitted directly as if time and space were utterly irrelevant. In light of this understanding, I need to question my own terminology and consider that it may not be entirely accurate to call these experiences displaced (although the term does have some experiential validity). It may be more accurate to say that they are simply another's experience that we are in touch with through the links of our affective proximity. In this way I imagine that the connection through which experiences are transferred is actually a direct link with the original

person in the original situation, regardless of how many miles, or years, or even generations seem to stand between<sup>39</sup>. Thinking of it this way seems in accord with what is apparently happening when a displaced experience is activated. A resonant responsive reception is created for the actual immediacy of the other person's present-time experience as it is happening in their own time and place. Hence, what is felt is the actual original experience. Additionally, when a brief possession is voluntarily allowed during the process of resolving a displaced experience it seems to me that what is being experienced is also a direct resonance with the person in the original traumatic situation. It is not the case that it is as-if we are feeling what another person feels or felt, but significantly it is the case that we are actually feeling the other person's experience directly.

This resonant capacity for direct experiential knowing has been commented on by Anderson (1998) in regard to validity in intuitive research. The following passage applies to the content of my research findings as well as to the process of my inquiry:

The principle of sympathetic resonance introduces resonance as a validation procedure for the researcher's particular intuitive insights and synthesis. The principle suggests that research can function more like poetry in its capacity for immediate apprehension and recognition of an experience spoken by another and yet (surprisingly and refreshingly, perhaps) be true for the researcher, as well. The procedures, insights, data analysis, and synthesis of

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<sup>39</sup> This is directly related to the quantum physics description of the Zero Point Field which is well reported and documented in McTaggart (2002), *The Field: The Quest for the Secret Force of the Universe*. "What quantum calculations show is that we and our universe live and breathe in what amounts to a sea of motion—a quantum sea of light" (p. 21) and furthermore, "the Zero Point Field [is] a vast memory store" (p. 90).

transpersonal research may begin to approach the borders of understanding and communication that seem more like poetry than like conventional empirical science as we have known it in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. (p. 73)

The subject phenomena of my research suggest that the stance of an intuitive qualitative researcher is exactly what we are called to bring to these occurrences of displaced trauma. An intimate homeopathic link through an empathic connection is what is needed, not some heroic problem solving endeavor. It is our heuristic and qualitative ability to be with the experience of another that allows for a resolution to take place, rather than a continuation of destructive conflicts.

Building on heuristic methods advanced by Clark Moustakas (1990), intuitive inquiry positions the experience and interpretation of the researcher at the center of the inquiry regardless of whether the data themselves are qualitative or quantitative in nature, or a blend of both. For both the intuitive and the heuristic researcher, expressing a comprehensive understanding of experience seeks to speak directly to the inmost self of another. It is as if speaking our personal truths—however unique and passionate that may feel—transcends our sense of separateness and brings us suddenly, even joyfully together—at least for an instant. (p. 75)

The process and satisfaction of this intuitive, heuristic approach to research that Anderson describes is intimately akin to that of this approach to the resolution of displaced experiences.

I have by now thoroughly departed from the more commonly held view of projective identification, an example of which is expressed here by Meissner (1989):

Projective identification thus derives from the splitting of the ego and the projection of parts of the self into others, primarily the mother and her breast. It is a fantasy of the omnipotent expulsion

of bodily substances in order to control and take possession of the object. The object is then not felt to be separate, but is experienced as an aspect of the self (Klein, 1963). Klein refers to these processes as identification by projection (projective identification) and its complementary process, identification by introjection. (p. 37)

Relative to this formulation, here are some of my divergent impressions. The ego cannot be split in such a way that inner conflict results; whenever this appears to be the case, there is actually an *outer* conflict of another ego involved. I do not see projective identification as a fantasy but rather as a real phenomenon, wherein the intimate link between the people involved is one of real joining and direct experiential connection, not simply identification. The intent to possess the other is a function of the need the original experience has to be heard and received. The urge to control the other is an attribute of the person in the extreme traumatic situation. Affective links and proximity, resonance, feeling with another—these are the rhythm and poetry of an alive experiencing self. In contrast, the notion that we are born innately predetermined for conflict, innately at odds with ourselves, and that human destructiveness and evil are inborn fundamental aspects of who and what we are—this suggests a vacant deathlike emptiness that itself is most likely a product of re-enacting unresolved displaced traumatic experiences.

The displaced experiences that so overtake and overwhelm us are each autonomous beings, alive in their own time and place. Therefore, the healing process that is called for in these cases is essentially the same

process that individual people experience when they have the opportunity to effectively share their stories of pain and wounding. We talk with each other and hear the sounds of our speech through the resonant medium of the air that surrounds and permeates us. We can talk with these others through the resonant medium of the shared field of consciousness that surrounds and permeates us, and open our inner eyes to worlds beyond the apparent confines of time and space. In writing on the experience of women and what brings the changes we seek, Kim Chernin (1998) says,

A good story, told well, contains the dynamic power to bring about the type of developmental change women seek, often in vain, from psychoanalysis and other therapies. . . . Tell the mother-story so that it comes fully alive, excavates the past, delivers its transformative potential. (p. 39)

We need to allow the telling of the "mother" story, the story of the origin of whatever ails us, whether it is a story of our own personal history or that of another. When these stories are shared and come fully alive within us, real transformation and resolution happens, freeing us from the grip of their unmet need. These as yet untold stories of the horrific traumas of other times, places, and people are calling out to be told and heard. They are reaching out, grabbing us, and yelling at (or rather, through) us in order to garner our attention for their telling. They talk to us in the only way they can, in the deep resonance of our bodies, in the feelings that are brought excavated from their past and resurrected in us through our affective connection to their vital urgent reality. The stories of our own lives need time to tell. They have occurred to us in our time and we need

to give them our time in the telling. These other stories are not of our time and do not need our time. They need only our presence, and our embodied, empathic, receptive response.

Seeking the still unheld traumas  
that rage through our minds,  
shaping thoughts like clay;  
that saturate our bodies  
with the pain and torment  
of another time.

I no longer fight  
the inevitable possession of spirit  
that comes contaminating  
the inner recesses of being

Instead, I say Here  
and Welcome  
I say Come In  
I have been Looking for you,  
I am seeking these still unheld traumas  
with the open arms of my heart  
outstretched.

Each of these stories of unheld trauma can be told and heard, shared and resolved, in one rich affectively resonant sensate moment.

Meg Urry (2007), the new chair of the Department of Physics at Yale University, suggests that the discovery of dark energy is "the most important scientific breakthrough of the last 50 years" (p. 4).

A mysterious form of "energy" that opposes gravity and is causing the galaxies throughout the universe to move apart faster and faster.

It's as if you dropped this magazine and, instead of falling to the floor, it suddenly soared toward the ceiling. That would certainly signal the presence of an unexpected force of some kind. In the same way, the galaxies' accelerated expansion signaled the presence of a previously unknown entity in the universe. (p. 4)

It seems to me that this discovery of the existence of displaced traumatic experiences, the resonant affective field in which they are active and calling for our attention, and the way to their resolution is in some way analogous to the discovery of dark energy. The archetypal material, the complexes, the destructiveness, the conflicting drives, the paradoxical presence of evil in the world—these have all been as predictable in their troublesome effects as gravity is predictable in its consistent pull down towards the earth. Now they soar toward the sky.

*Reflections on a New Approach to Treatment*

Whatever in your life  
is without hope,  
There, aim your awareness.  
It is the best opportunity  
for change.

“Our own healing proceeds from that overlap of what we call good and evil, light and dark. . . . The place where light and dark begin to touch is where miracles arise” (Johnson, 1991, p. 111).

The view that I have been developing regarding treatment, in various contexts, is akin once again to the double helix of our genetic material. All of the useful understandings and approaches that have been developed in the field of depth psychotherapy continue to be valuable and necessary in treating the distress and disorders of psychological troubles. However, these methods and insights will, I believe, prove to be far more

effective when they are joined by the concomitant work of resolving the displaced experiences that are plaguing all of us. In fact, I suspect that we will discover that the currently available approaches and methods for psychological healing are far more effective than they have seemed, since the results of their application have so often been negatively mitigated or obstructed by the persistence of activating displaced experiences.

I think it is helpful, when approaching the task of integrating these findings into practical applications in our personal and professional lives, to recall that we are very likely reconvening understandings and insights (albeit from our unique perspective) that may have been commonly held by indigenous tribal cultures worldwide.

Our ancestral culture gave rise to spirited expression, communion with the divine, and healing encounter. Ancient rock art shows that the first people knew how to "work the spirit." They fostered a freedom to become extraordinarily excited and emotionally aroused, making their bodies tremble and shake. These masters of ecstatic experience knew how to awaken the mysteries of spirit. (Keeney, 2007, online)

The developments I am describing may be more of a retrieval than an advance. The opportunity here is to recover the lost power and value in these ancient healing practices while making them useful and practical in a modern context. Bradford Keeney continues about the vital importance of what we have lost touch with in our race toward progress:

As writing, agriculture, and technology evolved, we assumed that religion and healing also advanced. After centuries and centuries of people systematically destroying Earth and one another, we may ask whether this was an erroneous assumption. In the beginning, "medicine" essentially meant "spirit" and "shaking medicine"



indicated its moving presence within a person. Without shaking medicine, people became stuck, disoriented, dis-eased, and lost. (online)

The conditions he describes, being stuck and so on, are the same signs that indicate that one is in the hands of a displaced traumatic experience.

This focus on the shaking aspect of shamanic, traditional healing has a direct corollary in this work. As I developed the method for reliably arriving at a resolution of these displaced<sup>40</sup> experiences I discovered that I would shake quite noticeably during the moments of actually feeling the qualities of the experience. In other words, when I was involved in the effective moments of the work a perceptible shaking would spontaneously occur. As the practice has become more brief and simple, I find that the shaking has become more subtle; at times perhaps not visible to others, but still internally perceptible. When I have shown others how to do this process I have never suggested that they shake, since it is not something that I intentionally do. However, I think that it does occur to some extent. I suspect that there is a rhythmic resonance that will inevitably involve some degree of, at least subtle, shaking. At times during the practice of this method, when an unresolved displaced experience is particularly intense, I find myself shaking more strongly. This seems to be an innate

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<sup>40</sup> The nomenclature for these phenomena is in question. I sometimes prefer "dispossessed experiences" as that suggests that they have been sent elsewhere to become the possession states that receivers experience. I also consider "disowned experiences" since they are perhaps not able to be fully owned until they are shared. I shy away from the early formulation that I used which was "products of projective identification" since that seems awkward and seriously lacking in any vivid connection to the actual experience of the phenomenon itself.

aspect of the connection to these intense feelings. The shaking is vital, immediate, and satisfying. It accompanies the experience of the painful realities, emotions, and feelings that arise during the possession by the displaced experience. There is both a fully embodied direct experience of the distressed, traumatized condition embedded in the original experience and a freedom of release and relief at being able to empathically receive these feelings in the actual safety of current conditions. The shaking is something inherent in this process<sup>41</sup>. I am reminded of the descriptions of quantum mechanics and the virtual particles that only exist in transition arising and dissolving in the living field of always moving energy.

The ability to use all of our innate abilities, particularly those that connect us to spirit, has diminished as we have built philosophies, religions, psychotherapies, cities, gadgets, and bombs. We have lost our most vital link to the cosmos, our ability to be in direct communication with nature and the great mysteries of the divine. Yet the ecstatic shamans of the oldest living culture have not lost these connections. It is time for us to bring back the missing link so that we may find the guidance and inspiration that can transform us into being authentic agents of creative expression, peace, and love. (Keeney, 2007, online)

I share this encouraging outlook in terms of our absolute need for such a turning point to occur at this time, in terms of the new scientific support that exists, and in terms of the dawning of possibility that I have found.

Considering the shamanic aspects of psychotherapy Corbett (1996) links our indigenous history and our depth psychological understandings in the following way.

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<sup>41</sup> See Keeney (1994) for more on the healing aspect of shamanic shaking.

It is of course not surprising that we would find commonalities between healing practices across cultures, since at an archetypal level the elements of healing may be constant. The shamanic experience is a useful model for depth psychology, because, like the religious approach to the psyche, it acknowledges the reality of the archetypal realm and the reality of the psyche. (p. 121)

In a similar recollection, considering the connection between the ancient concept of karma and psychological experience, Bedi (2000) offers this:

Most people know the term "complex." Complexes have probably always been a feature of the human psyche. In times past, what we call complexes were often referred to as spirits, demons, or devils. After many years of clinical experience and much effort to integrate Western analytic concepts and Eastern Hindu spiritual concepts, I have observed that complexes and karma share fundamental similarities. . . . This convergence has led me to speak of "karmic complexes."

Jung called complexes "splinter psyches." The reality of complexes and their tendency toward autonomy and independence. . . . For most people most of the time, intense complexes typically behave and appear in several ways: personified as other people who "get under our skin," or as moods and emotions that take us over to some extent, so that we "aren't quite ourselves" and "don't know what got into us." (pp. 137-138)

This description fits my assessment of displaced experiences beautifully. It also reminds me of one of the diagnostic clues to the existence of an activated displaced experience. Since these are so contagious, in any interaction they will tend to influence everyone involved to some extent, regardless of who was originally impacted by the displaced experience. Then in a back and forth resonance, they amplify themselves through the interaction between the people involved. I have likened this earlier to the effect of placing an amplifier too near the instrument and beginning to produce that horrible screeching sound, much like the sound of people's

voices as they lose themselves in an escalating cycle of distress. So, when someone particularly gets under our skin, as Bedi mentions above, it is a very likely signal that we are in one of these feedback loops.

In the following intimate discussion of psychotherapeutic work with the complexes, Perera (1981) could equally well be referring to displaced experiences and the resolution work I am proposing:

Working with this modality often requires the therapist . . . to be willing to share, with feeling, the pain of the complex constellated first in the patient. It implies the possibility of psychic infection and the sharing of the complex itself. From such a mutuality can emerge that radical healing which only occurs where a complex is shared—where both patient and therapist have gone down until they came to a shared woe. Then healing is often accomplished when the therapist works on his or her own experience of and attitude to the complex, or it may come about for both parties through a shift in the patient's psyche. There is so little clear differentiation; we can only say the mutually constellated field activates primal energies that spur the healing process. (p. 74)

My sense is that when we go down together to a shared woe that is actually arising in the life of our time, place, and person, the process takes time. It is a gradual depth narration and an empathic attunement that together weave the path to that "mutually constellated field."

As I indicated, the psychotherapist is able to track the state of the patient's soul partly by means of the process of empathy, which Kohut (1971) describes as a process of vicarious introspection. The shaman of pre-technological cultures has an extraordinary capacity for such empathy, to the point of merger of his psyche and that of his patient. The result of the shaman's journey into the 'other world' – the realm of the unconscious – is described in vivid, dream-like imagery. To our ears, descriptions of these journeys sound like excursions into the *imaginatio*, that realm of the reality of the psyche analogous to Winnicott's transitional space, an area 'intermediate' (it is not amenable to spatial metaphors) between the inner and outer world. This *mundus imaginalis* is 'ontologically

as real as the world of the senses and that of the intellect' (Corbin, 1972, p. 7). This world requires its own faculty, that of imaginative power, which is a perceptual system whose cognitive and noetic function is as real as that of our five senses and intellect. (Corbett, 1996, p. 124-125)

This world of the imaginal is neither in time nor in space, and a journey there is not the same slow meandering process of mutual work that we are used to as psychotherapists. Harner (1989) from his own shamanic experience shares that, "One of the distinctive healing methods of the shaman involves entering an altered state of consciousness to make what is known as a "journey" into the hidden dimension of the universe, or nonordinary reality" (p. 136). He goes on to say that, "I have learned that shamanic healing depends on communicating in a humble and heartfelt way with the awesome power of the universe" (p. 135). Perhaps that power is present and palpable in the shaking discussed above.

We need to return to this awesome power of life that can remedy the ills we face. In "The Problem of Evil Today," Jung (1991) agrees:

The old question posed by the Gnostics, "Whence comes evil?" has been given no answer by the Christian world, and . . . a possible redemption of the devil was termed a heresy. Today we are compelled to meet that question; but we stand empty-handed, bewildered, and perplexed, and cannot even get it into our heads that no myth will come to our aid although we have such urgent need of one. As the result of the political situation and the frightful, not to say diabolic, triumphs of science, we are shaken by secret shudders and dark forebodings; but we know no way out, and very few persons indeed draw the conclusion that this time the issue is the long-since-forgotten *soul of man*. (p. 173)

We need a return to the soul, which is to say a return to that imaginal, magical, intermediary, transformative realm where we touch others, quite

aside from any limitations of time or space. Corbett (1996) brings the self of psychotherapy into view in that realm.

I would like to enlarge upon some . . . similarities between psychotherapy and shamanism by means of an exploration of the differences between a healthy self which experiences soul fully, and a self which has lost some of this connection. It is no coincidence that a self which is depleted, depressed, or fragmented suffers in ways which are descriptively the same as the phenomena of "soul loss" described by the shamans of pre-technological peoples, who attribute even organic disease to this problem (Eliade, 1964, p. 327). By contrast, the experience of the self as cohesive and vital is one of soulfulness. (p. 121)

And Abram (2006) reminds us that magic, healing, and the natural world are intimate ancient companions who join us in the quest for a return of soul, a restoration of the healthy self.

Magic in a fully indigenous, tribal context where the magic is not being used ever for entertainment. It is being used as a way of keeping the world alive and healthy, and of keeping humans in a healthy connection with the rest of the natural world. (online)

He also evokes a vivid awareness of the centrality of our sensing bodies.

Perhaps the fundamental way that we have of returning to soul is by way of our arrival in the mutuality of sensing.

Our sensing bodies are our direct contact with the rest of the natural world. It is not by being abstract intellects that we are going to fall in love again with the rest of nature. It's by beginning to honor and value our direct sensory experience: the tastes and smells in the air, the feel of the wind as it caresses the skin, the feel of the ground under our feet as we walk upon it. And how much easier it is to feel that ground if you allow yourself to sense that the ground itself is feeling your steps as you walk upon it. (online)

Paradoxically, the way to access the connections in the imaginal realm, to make full contact with the experiences that permeate us from other times

and places and people, is through our direct sensory experience, through the sense and feel of what is happening to us, here and now.

Being able to make that fully embodied empathic connection is both what is required here in this world, in order to heal our own traumas and be present in our own relationships; and what is called for in this other world of soul. I think that the beauty of what I have found lies primarily in its potent simplicity. Many people have difficulty staying present and in sensory empathic contact with either the natural world (including their own bodies) or with the emergent magical phenomena that arise non-locally. However, most of these same people would not find it hard to conjure a few moments of this contact and presence. In facing the many demons that haunt us, the many displaced traumatic experiences that are crying out for release, relief, and resolution through their visceral cry to be felt, heard, and seen; these few moments of contact and presence, of feeling, sensing, empathic resonance are truly all that we need to provide.

The refusal of modern enlightenment to treat obsession<sup>42</sup> as a hypothesis to be spoken of as even possible, in spite of the massive human tradition based on concrete experience in its favor, has always seemed to me a curious example of the power of fashion in things scientific. That the demon theory (not necessarily a devil theory) will have its innings again is to my mind absolutely certain. One has to be 'scientific' indeed to be blind and ignorant enough not to suspect any such possibility. (William James, cited by Melton 1996, p. 946)

I am calling for a return to this "demon theory," this age old recognition that we are indeed haunted. All the technical and technological advances

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<sup>42</sup> Obsession, in this context, is synonymous with possession.

of the modern world have not saved us from this reality. It is time that we begin to respond to those who haunt us, or we will continue to be forced to react, carrying out their ghostly turmoil throughout our lives.

Displaced experiences are unresolved states of bodymind that originated in intolerable circumstances, states of mind that are the experience of those intolerable circumstances. Since mind itself is the shared field within which all experiencing occurs, these states of mind are something like warps in the field that continue to go on existing until they are resolved. "The individual mind can reach out through time and space and affect distant bodies. There is much evidence to support this possibility" (Dossey, 1996, p. 60). "For the more mathematically inclined, Price offers a discussion of John Bell's famous inequality, in which two widely separated quantum systems seem to be connected by what Albert Einstein called a "spooky action at a distance" (Gribbin, 1996, online). We are inundated with spooky action at a distance, reverberating in the core of our own sense of self, and it is calling for us to answer back.

So many of the ways we speak in our culture continually deny the reciprocity between our senses and the rest of the sensuous world, between our bodies and the vast body of the earth. When we speak of the earth as an object, we are denying our relationship with the earth. When we speak of nature as a set of objects, rather than a community of subjects, we basically close our senses to all of the other voices that surround us. (Abram, 2006, online)

"We have our work cut out for us: a new equilibrium is needed and we must learn a new way of listening" (Hinshaw, 2002, p.12). Continuing,



If we are not to destroy ourselves through inept relations with the planet and those with whom we share this home, we must honor and practice a more 'feminine functioning of the ego', so as to let the Tao, or Self, take its course. The individuals who, Jung says, can bear the tension of the opposites within themselves are those whose egos function in a more feminine way, countering the over-developed masculine ego and allowing the influence of the Tao, of yin-yang, to exist. Their egos allow things to happen in the psyche in contrast to the predominantly masculine-dominated ego of today's western world that rather tends to interfere: helping, correcting, negating, not leaving the simple growth of the psychic processes in place. (p. 14)

The yin approach which is receptive, allowing, non-interfering, and joining with the other is the exact one that resolves displaced experiences. In this case, bearing the tension of opposites involves holding an awareness of what is me or mine along with what is neither me nor mine.

I turn now to one more description by Corbett (1996) that seems to me to be referring to these autonomous, pervasive, and troublesome until we welcome them, beings. He begins with Jung's description (*CW* 12, 88) of Mephistopheles:

The "diabolical aspect of every psychic function that has broken loose from the hierarchy of the total psyche and now enjoys independence and absolute power". Because of their autonomy and tendency to behave in ways alien to the totality of the personality and its ideals, such splinter aspects of the psyche have always been personified. For example, Rabbinical theology describes an 'evil inclination', an inner force that prompts us to sin, and is synonymous with Satan. In its Hebrew root, this word means to persecute, which fits well with its intrapsychic meaning—something within oneself that causes persecutory anxiety. In terms of self psychology, the devil, or the presence of potentially autonomous evil within the personality, represents the contents of a split-off sector of the self. This sector lives a separate life in the psyche, and its goals and values are at odds with those of the reality ego, or with the totality of the personality. Such split-off sectors of the self, synonymous with complexes, remain infantile and demanding

and are often the result of selfobject failure in childhood<sup>43</sup>. When they break loose from their mooring within the totality of the personality, they cause us to behave in ways that shock the reality ego, reminding us of the original meaning of the word 'devil'—a slanderer. (pp. 196-197)

There are also the minor demons. The glitches and recurrent snags that make our lives and our relationships, difficult. Anything that bugs us, gets under our skin, nags at us, or otherwise is a persistent irritant, is a sign of one of these splinter aspects, warps in the shared field of consciousness, a displaced experience waiting, hoping, crying out to be received. They are very easy to find, since they are desperate to be found. The necessary response is simple. We can be in these two worlds more easily than you might imagine, and it is ever more urgent that we begin to do so.

To integrate the work of resolving displaced experiences into our therapeutic practice, or into our own personal lives, requires two steps. The first step is to learn to meet these states of being, these troubled conditions of traumatic experiencing in the way I have been describing. The second step is to learn to recognize these displaced experiences in ourselves and each other. Practicing this approach is actually a great deal easier than one might suspect. This is partially because we are truly not alone in the project of doing this work. I am not, in this case, referring to some esoteric guidance, a diety, or even the assistance of our own deep unconscious, or soul. I am talking much more simply and practically. I am

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<sup>43</sup> I suggest that these "splinter aspects" are persons, not personified and that they themselves do not essentially result from anything in this person's life. However, the link to these displaced enacting experiences, these other persons, often does occur in the injurious moments of selfobject failure in childhood.

speaking of the other person involved, the one who is displacing, or disowning, or projecting away, or simply communicating in the only way they can, the experience that needs resolution. If we will only do the slightest bit on our side, the other person will do the rest. I believe that many of us have experienced something like this in our daily lives, such as when we simply stopped and listened to someone who needed to talk. In the cases of these displaced experiences, we will never have to deal with resistant or recalcitrant communicators. These painful experiences are already trying their very best to get through to us.

In terms of recognizing these, I have found that when I ask people (myself included) to think of something that is bothering them, invariably whatever comes to mind will include a displaced experience. To clarify here, when I say "include" it is because many disturbing situations have a current reality component. For example if I am feeling bothered and upset over a shortage of funds with bills due, I might proceed to do one of these resolution processes on the disturbance that I feel. When I am done, I will not find that my bank account balance has miraculously grown, or that the number of bills awaiting payment has shrunk. But I will find that it doesn't bother me in the same way. Probably I will feel more capable of dealing with the situation in some constructive and even perhaps creative manner. When I say "probably" I mean that while it will not bother me in the *same way*, it may still bother me in other ways. I have consistently seen that the process I've described will work to resolve the disturbance

that is welcomed. Still, it is often the case that troubling situations are burdened by more than one of these displaced experiences. If there are more, one process might not result in all of the constructive confidence and creative energy that I refer to, but any disturbance that remains will not have the same qualities as those that have been received and felt.

When Jung (1951/1978) describes the qualities of the process of projection, I think he is actually describing the situation of an activated displaced experience. I quote him here mainly because of his evocative description of the atmosphere that permeates these situations:

The projection-making factor then has a free hand and can realize its object—if it has one—or bring about some other situation characteristic of its power. As we know, it is not the conscious subject but the unconscious which does the projecting. Hence one meets with projections, one does not make them. The effect of projection is to isolate the subject from his environment, since instead of a real relation to it there is now only an illusory one. Projections change the world into the replica of one's own unknown face. In the last analysis, therefore, they lead to an autoerotic or autistic condition in which one dreams a world whose reality remains forever unattainable. The resultant *sentiment d'incompletude* and the still worse feeling of sterility are in their turn explained by projection as the malevolence of the environment, and by means of this vicious circle the isolation is intensified. (p. 9 [CW 9 Pt. 2, para. 17]).

By reading "the other's traumatic experience" (or the other's unknown face) in place of Jung's "one's own unknown face" and perhaps dropping the adjective "autoerotic" this becomes an exact description of what it is really like to be in the condition of possession by an activated displaced experience. The predictable enactment, the insoluble isolation, the sense of impotence and sterility, and the undeniable urgency that never arrives

at any satisfactory conclusion; this is the unmistakable atmosphere of a not-one-of-our-own, but rather displaced-from-elsewhere, experience.

It is also possible to recognize the presence and activity of a displaced experience by observing certain telltale signs. In some cases one person is distressed and then, in the process of an interaction, they become more at ease just as the other person begins to be distressed in just that same way. Bingo! You've got one.

Patients often interact on the basis of projective identification by projecting chaos into the analyst, who, in turn, attempts to organize what is internalized, and then the patient, by projecting what has been projected, gains much calm. The analyst, however, feels disrupted and, at times, is no longer able to function as a therapist. This can happen, regardless of the therapist's personal orientation, especially when treating primitively fixated patients. (Giovacchini, 1994, p. 210)

A displaced experience can also remain with both people<sup>44</sup>, as I have described before, escalating back and forth with escalating distress for everyone. Another clue indicating the activity of a displaced experience is the repetition of affect, impression, and intention. If you find yourself or someone you know upset in the same way again and again, with the same familiar sense of what is happening, and the same impulses and urges, I am sure that one of these displaced experiences is involved.

Another indicator is what I have come to think of as frozen affects. These are unhelpful or destructive emotional states of any kind. It is my firm contention that our own emotions are reliably and invariably helpful.

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<sup>44</sup> I am referring to two person interactions only for the sake of simplicity. The same signs occur in interactive groups of all sizes.

Anger over violation or injustice, grief over a loss, fear of some danger or threat, irritation or frustration at some obstacle, these and the full range of other affects are reliably helpful when we feel them. However, there are many instances in which a person's emotional state does not seem to be aiding them at all. Displaced experiences are pandemic and it is my impression that in every case in which the experience of an emotion is not helpful and productive, it is due to one of these. Even the most painful feelings<sup>45</sup>, such as devastation, helplessness, or agony, when they are our own and they are felt, do not ever make matters worse. We have these feelings of our own in response to current devastating, overpowering, or excruciating circumstances, or we are remembering feelings we have been prevented from fully experiencing or expressing in past devastating, overpowering, or excruciating circumstances. In either case, whether we are experiencing the current state of affairs fully, or are finally returning to an incomplete past situation, the fact that we are feeling our own feelings or experiencing our own emotions cannot, will not ever, make anything worse.

Elaborating further here, when feelings are being felt and it is not helping, such as when a feeling of sadness goes on without change as it is expressed and empathically received, or even becomes more painful to feel as it is expressed and received, then it is arising from a displaced

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<sup>45</sup> I am referring here to both innate affects (or emotions) and feelings, since the point I am making applies to both: to emotions such as joy, fear, disgust, sorrow, curiosity, and anger, as well as more comprehensive feelings such as exhaustion, devastation, irritated loneliness, longing, hopeless resentment, and so forth.

experience. The same is true for any other feeling or emotion. Expression of our own emotions and feelings, when situations allow, is invariably beneficial. On the contrary, enactments (including expression) of frozen emotions and feelings arising from an activated displaced experience are predictably and invariably unsatisfying and often destructive.

There are also certain emotional or feeling states that almost always seem to be destructive, so much so that we can hardly imagine them being helpful. These are those feelings that are only helpful in very extreme situations for only brief periods. One example of this, involving sadistic pleasure, is described on pp. 265-267. Another example is the kind of extreme terror that would impel someone to flee at breakneck speed to avoid some life threatening danger. This is obviously a very helpful feeling to have if you happen to be in such a situation. However if you are not in a situation like this, it will be disturbing at best. If it is a feeling that you have repeatedly and for any extended period of time, it will be terribly debilitating and miserable. This is just what can happen if the feeling of a real life-threatening emergency is displaced and activating over and over. This pattern extrapolates for rage, feelings of hopeless surrender, extreme desire or craving, and so on inclusive of all possible feeling states. There is, I believe, no feeling that we are capable of having that wouldn't be helpful in its originating situation. And I suppose that there is no feeling that can't be hurtful if it is repeatedly experienced out of the context of its originating situation and person.

Engaging in the process of resolving displaced experiences is a way back home, a way to return to our own feelings, to our own experiencing. This is the gold at the end of the alchemical rainbow that I am describing. Last autumn my daughter surprised me one day by calling to tell me that she had done one of these resolution processes and that it had worked. At that time I had not yet attempted to show anyone else how to do it,<sup>46</sup> but she had watched me do it on a number of occasions. She had experienced the relief of the resolutions and we had talked at length about my findings and conclusions; so she had a pretty good idea what it was all about. Still, I was happily surprised when she did this. Since then she has done these processes, this approach to resolving displaced experiences, a number of times, for herself primarily and for a few friends.

One day, without my knowledge and out of my presence, she did a process on one particular stuck, repetitive, unhelpful pattern she noticed in me. It was a minor, persistent feeling of negative expectation having to do with money and the future. The next day, she asked me how I was feeling about money and the future. I realized something was up; still I was no longer able to find that feeling. Though it had been longstanding and seemingly intractable, I have not had it since. She has had a great deal of experience in theater and she tells me that she thinks actors might have an even easier time doing these processes than most other

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<sup>46</sup> Since then I have shared this approach with a number of people who have been able to complete the process and arrive at the same results I have found.



people, because of their ability to feel characters. I asked her what it is like for her to do these processes and she wrote this short description:

It's like preparing to go onstage. You think of the emotion the character is feeling and imagine the scene in which that emotion takes place. Let yourself get worked up and fully immersed in that feeling and then suddenly, often with a deep breath, it will all be gone. And all you are left with is yourself. (K. Rose, personal communication, May 28, 2007)

I am reminded of Whitmont (1980) in *Psyche and Substance*, as follows:

Pathology, suffering, can be overcome only by adapting one's self to one's constitution, by finding a *modus vivendi* within one's own form pattern. This means accepting one's basic "thusness", accepting that state which cannot be changed. Only by seeking a therapeutic approach on the basis of acceptance of the given form pattern (rather than regardless or contrary to it), can we avoid having this pattern play its worst tricks upon us, and may actually succeed in turning its liabilities into potential assets.

On the psychological level this rapprochement through self-acceptance means to get to know first one's real inborn self. . . . Realization and acceptance of that part which we cannot change means to abandon many over-optimistic and idealized notions about one's self in favor of a, perhaps at first, humiliating but more realistic acceptance of one's shadow sides. (p. 46)

Given the possibility of resolving displaced experiences, the meaning of getting to know "one's real inborn self" may be different than supposed.

The practice of applying this method to intractable problems, frozen affects, relational impasses, escalating conflicts, inner discord, and the like, is one of continuous phenomenological research. Every instance of a displaced experience must be opened to with fresh eyes, a fresh mind and heart. The attitude or approach that works is the same one that is needed in any heuristic inquiry where the focus of inquiry is a subject of study

rather than an object. The heuristic subject of study is intimately related to and discovered through experience.

It seems to us that the difficulties in trying to avoid the phenomenal layer (even if possible) are more insurmountable than those involved with trying to confront it directly. That is why we feel that a real breakthrough in psychology will be achieved when we learn to study the phenomenal domain in its own terms and in a rigorous and systematic manner. . . . The phenomenal domain is of necessity constantly present. (Giorgi, 1970, p. 220)

In this practice each instance of meeting and opening to a displaced experience is its own mini-project in phenomenological research.

To be objective, or accurate in our terminology, the psychologist must be able to arrive at intersubjectively valid knowledge; he must be able to assume a specifiable attitude toward his phenomena; and he must be open to himself, others and the world in such a way that he allows what is present to him to be the way it presents itself. To be empirical, psychology must be based upon phenomena that are given in experience. To be human, it must have as its subject matter the human person and he must be approached within a frame of reference that is also human, i.e., one that does not do violence to the phenomenon of man as a person. (Giorgi, 1970, p. 224)

Research and practice come together in this work. I found this report of a similar phenomenological openness in *Religion and Magic in the Life of Traditional Peoples* by Child & Child (1993):

Among the Lovedu of Southern Africa, where illness may be explained as due to possession by an ancestral spirit, exorcism is not the cure. The spirits in this case are basically benevolent, and are causing trouble because their wants are not known and being met. A group ceremony, guided by a specialist, relies on protracted dancing to lead the spirit to make its wants known. Subsequently, the patient is able to be an untroubled home for the spirit (Krige & Krige, 1943, 242-249). (p. 136)

This kind of ceremony is, in itself, a human research project.

At this point I will summarize some of the specific applications of this approach that I have either used or envisioned. It is highly suited to aiding in crisis intervention, especially when the crisis is at least in part due to past trauma,<sup>47</sup> or when the crisis is the result of violence or abuse. I have worked with people in the midst of crisis who were experiencing heightened states of arousal and, with the use of these processes, they have settled far more rapidly than I would have thought likely. They also seemed to quickly gain a greater capacity to tolerate the crisis, allowing a restoration of presence and thought. This can be done with little or no help from the person in crisis if necessary, since the contagious aspect of displaced experiences is an effective key to diagnosis. In the presence of the person in crisis, notice the feelings that are arising in you in reaction to their state. These are reliably the ones to work with. Or a few simple questions about how the person is feeling, even when the response is very minimal, will connect you to the feelings that are gripping them.

In the course of regular ongoing psychotherapy these processes are a great boon. Identifying and resolving displaced experiences for our patients clears the way for easier access to the actual personal material that needs to be worked through. This can be done in two ways, with or without the patient's direct involvement. If it seems that it would cause any untoward effects to discuss this work with the person directly there is no need to do so. In these cases the processes can easily be done in a

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<sup>47</sup> It is unusual for there to be no past trauma involved in a crisis situation.

few minutes after the session is over, or any time later. It simply requires bringing the person to mind in regard to whatever difficulty is presenting in therapy and noticing how it makes you feel and letting that be the access to connect with the displaced experience, which will be heading your way as soon as you let it. When there is no problem in presenting this work to the patient, it can be done with their assistance. This can be a very productive addition to the usual psychotherapeutic process since their link to these displaced experiences is reliably associated with their own personal history. I have found that deep, comprehensive, accurately attuned interpretations are easier to arrive at with the additional insights that come from working with these processes. This is the case even when the processes are done alone, outside of the therapy hour. When the work is included in the therapeutic conversation it provides additional texture and thickness to the narrative development and supports new levels of understanding regarding early development and traumatic experiences.

In psychoanalytic psychotherapy or analysis there is the potential benefit of making easier progress without necessarily adding any overt interventions. Once a person becomes familiar with the method of doing these processes, they can be done quickly<sup>48</sup> and silently so that they can become a seamless part of the therapeutic process. Again, they can also be done at any time through recollecting and reflecting on the experience

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<sup>48</sup> A process takes less than a minute, often as little as a few seconds. It is simply a matter of noticing the feeling involved, orienting toward and opening fully to it.

of the patient, and noting any troublesome impressions. When doing one of these processes, it is not necessary to have any words attached to the feelings that are identified. Of course naming the feelings can be useful in thinking about them and making other connections, as well as helping to focus and identify what to work on. Naming the feelings can add richness to the therapeutic conversation, but it is not necessary. If there is a sense of difficulty and then a feeling associated with it; it is possible to simply turn toward that feeling, opening to it, without any need to name it. The process will be just as effective, with or without a label for the feelings.

The application to group work is potentially very exciting. I have had some experience with this and it has seemed to facilitate a flexible group connectedness, increase in group communication and openness, and offered an alternate route for handling difficult material that might otherwise have led to scapegoating. In the experience that I have had, it seems that people find it fairly easy to learn to identify these displaced experiences in themselves and in others. Having a simple, accessible resolution process available once these are identified opens the group to more spontaneous interaction, heightened trust, and a more vigorous curiosity about the explicit and implicit levels of group experience.

There is one unique and intriguing outcome<sup>49</sup> that ensues from these processes. Once the displaced experience has been resolved, and

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<sup>49</sup> See Ursula Le Guin (1971) "The Lathe of Heaven" for a superb fictional account of changes emerging from the dream world, which describes a similar outcome.

the interaction that was obstructed is now free to move forward, there is a compelling impression that things have always been as they are now. As an example, take a situation in which two people had been having a great deal of difficulty talking together, with both of them becoming defensive and reactive in various ways, and then a process successfully resolved the source of this difficulty such that they are now engaged in an effective, mutually satisfying, and self-disclosing conversation about the very topic they could barely touch only minutes before. Even though this sounds like a strikingly dramatic change, they will probably feel as if they have been talking easily and effectively like this all along.

I'm not sure how best to convey this, but it is a very prominent aspect of the work. When there are notes taken or witnesses queried, or even the direct participants stop to reflect and think back, it is possible to recognize the change that has occurred. But there is little impulse to do this, perhaps exactly because the feeling is that nothing has happened; that everything has been like this all along. I am not sure what causes this. I have speculated that it has something to do with the fact that the thing that changed wasn't really here, so in some strange way, nothing has changed or at least nothing here has changed. But then again, clearly something is different. An obstacle is gone but the people aren't changed.

I know that in my own case, when I reflect on the many changes in my life that have occurred in the last two years through the use of these processes, it is as if I have two entirely divergent, unrelated impressions.

I know that my life and my relationships are extraordinarily different and that many changes that I had little reason to hope I would ever see have been easily achieved<sup>50</sup>. But at the same time I do not feel any different myself, and it is almost as though life has always been as it is now. This is not an easy experience to convey, but striking when experienced. I do wonder if there is an explanation for this to be found in the insights of quantum physics, since linear time is apparently not set in stone.

Our own minds can influence things that have already happened.  
. . . The world can include both forward and backward causation at a fundamental level, but appear to have a unique direction of time from a human perspective. (Gribbin, 1996, online)

I hope this process that resolves displaced experiences will, at some point, be explored by physicists who will be able to shed more light on what is going on. As I said before<sup>51</sup> I think that this is an actual specific instance of Einstein's special theory of relativity ( $e=mc^2$ ) and I look forward to a more educated opinion than my own on this.

I will give one more rendition of my basic understanding of what is actually going on. My intention with this redundancy is to make passes through the material from different directions and with different areas of focus so as to give a richer description and a fuller investigation into what I have found. My understanding is that these displaced experiences are autonomous entities expressing themselves through activation within the

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<sup>50</sup> I had developed severe PTSD symptoms as a result of many years of intensely traumatic experiences. These symptoms were persistent, recurrent, and terribly disabling. These have all significantly improved or disappeared during this recent period through the use of these displaced experience resolution processes.

<sup>51</sup> See pp. 241-242.

field of experience of receiving persons. Perpetrators of abuse often do to others approximately what was done to them. This re-enactment of their earlier trauma is a necessary aspect of the use of projective identification to displace the intolerable experiences that have tormented them from that trauma. Within the unconscious theatrical scenario of perpetration as re-enactment, the new victim is made to feel feelings that are similar to the intolerable ones tormenting the perpetrator. This resonance between the earlier trauma and this new one allows for the transmission to the victim of the intolerable feelings, the intolerable experiences, of the perpetrator—both the activated displaced experiences that have been plaguing the perpetrator and compelling the abusive acting out, and the perpetrator's own current intolerable feelings, such as shame and guilt.

Resonance then continues to play a major role in the ongoing experience of the new victim, who will be overtaken by the activation of those displaced experiences whenever incidents in their subsequent life are similar enough to circumstances of the original or re-enacted trauma to allow resonance again. This will have a profound inhibiting effect on the progress of their trauma recovery, making it much more difficult, since their attempts to recover through recollecting and expressing their own traumatic experience will certainly resonate and evoke activation of the displaced experiences that were transmitted at the time.

This leads to my belief that trauma recovery requires a two-fold approach. One strand, which is already available in therapeutic situations,



involves the remembering, expressing, and working through of one's own traumatic experience. The other is the receptive resolution of displaced experiences that were transmitted at the time. This includes those that were motivating the perpetrator who was compulsively re-enacting, at least symbolically, their own experience of abuse along with the other layers of original trauma. I predict that whenever this is done the entire process of the person's trauma recovery will be more gentle and effective. I have seen this confirmed in my own trauma recovery, in my family, and in my work with the people who come to me for therapy.

There are countless potential therapeutic opportunities for the use of this simple method, and I am sure that thus far I have only explored a small sample of the possible applications. I have used it in conjunction with dreamwork, focusing on any conflicts that were evident in the dream. I have used it in public situations when I saw that someone, otherwise a stranger to me, was suffering. I've used it to facilitate my writing of this dissertation when I felt that my writing was obstructed. I have used it to turn the tide of an interpersonal impasse or argument. I have used it to help ease the way and restore wholeness when returning to memories of painful past events. Suffering from severe PTSD symptoms myself, I had occasions to ask my partner to do it for me when I felt too upset to do it. The first time I asked, he had never tried it before and the situation was strained and not conducive to trying something new; and yet it was wildly successful. I am fairly sure that I have only begun to scratch the surface

of the range of what is possible. Yet, even if it were only applied to the recovery from trauma in therapy I think the results would be impressive.

In the words of David Abram (2006) I find a core expression of a wisdom that echoes the real call of these displaced experiences that are crying out for a chance to be noticed as they are, and to be received:

Let things be alive. Or, if you don't want to let things be alive, just allow that things have their own active agency, their own influence upon us, whether it be a slab of granite, storm clouds, a stream, a raven, a spider. (online)

If we want to see and understand what is going on in the many disturbed and disturbing, conflicted, and destructive circumstances of our lives; we must allow that things have their own influence on us, even those things occurring at far distances in time and space. We must also recognize that these things do have their own agency. And, beyond this, if we want to respond effectively, then we must let things be alive. We must let these things be alive in their own way, within us.

When a great person hears of the Way  
 he follows it with devotion  
 when an average person hears of the Way  
 he doesn't know if it's real or not  
 when a small person hears of the Way  
 he laughs out loud  
 if he didn't laugh  
 it wouldn't be the Way

(Lao Tzu, circa 500 BC /1996, verse 41)

Learn this new way,  
 listening to wind and water  
 finding the soft power  
 that overcomes everything.

## Chapter 6 Listening to Wind and Water: Reflections and Suggestions

This enormous project that began over 16 years ago has been a deep collaboration with the unseen, the unknown, the unconscious, and the more than human world. It has called upon all of who I have been or was able to be, and has carried me into thoughts, feelings, insights, and experiences I could never have foretold. This journey has been a deep emersion in the realm of the real imagination, that place of dream and vision; a world that transcends time and space. My path has grown from the seeds of early British immigrant Quaker Wobbly roots on my father's side and a recent Italian immigrant heritage on my mother's side, with a passion for life; for beauty, music, art, science, creativity, and food! I am at heart an experientialist. Some people are inclined to reject or doubt the validity of sensory impressions due to their vagaries and limitations. I am not troubled by these aspects of the senses, any more than the variances and limitations of the audible notes from an oboe or an oud would incline me to doubt the reality of their music. I am not on a quest for an ultimate singular truth. Life is relationship, and the truth of real experience arises in the unique contact of each moment of relationship: the skin to the bark of a tree or a lover's touch, the breathing lungs and living airways to the emanations of a rose or a papaya. These are adequate realities to my way of thinking about life.

We need to reject the deadly reductionism that studies nature through measurable indices alone, turning life into an object; and return to the relatedness of Kenge's dance in the Ituri Forest<sup>52</sup>. We will learn most about the bear from the bear, the tree from the tree; and we will learn most about the nature of life and experience from a deep feeling immersion into our own sensory/affective/intuitive/imaginal experiencing. Measure as we will, our measurements will never constitute the creature, even when that creature is a rock, a pebble<sup>53</sup>. Each real thing is not just a thing. It is what it is in each of its living relationships, in the immediacy of its own deep experiencing and in being alive in the experiencing of the other. We need an experientialist science. This could be the resurrection of Inanna, the restoration of Pandora to her origin as Earth Goddess, the recovery of Eve from the scapegoating for all evil.

In this chapter I will reflect on the various aspects of this work and my experience throughout the process of this research.

It should be kept in mind that reflection is not speculation; the former is always directed towards the actual and is based upon it, while the latter takes its point of departure from the actual and attempts to speak about the plausibility of certain types of possibilities. (Giorgi, 1970, p. 214)

This chapter is divided into eight sections. In the first six I explore and reflect on each of the following areas, respectively: The Problem, Method, Findings, Theory, Practice, and Personal Experience. Then in the final two

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<sup>52</sup> See the quoted passage on p. 120.

<sup>53</sup> Even when that creature is a manufactured artifact of human endeavor such as a television set, a house, a subway track or train, a table; even in these cases we cannot conclusively or completely rule out an interiority, an experiencing self.

sections I do speculate in suggesting possible avenues for further study, and then, finally, offer some concluding thoughts.

An early return to the wilderness, to the natural world, was the foundation of my ability to undertake this research. A deepening of that connection was the way I was able to move forward through the darkness of profound unknowing. Finally, the outcome of my inquiry has offered a new avenue for restoring that intimate relationship with the natural world around and within me. I believe that the use of the displaced experience release process that I have found will open the way for a return to nature.

Listening to wind and water  
is another way of being;  
of letting things  
be

Listening to wind and water,  
all the ages I have been  
or will be, join me  
here

Listening to wind and water.  
Listening, now listening;  
even the dry brush  
of late summer -  
dead, forsaken,  
shows its living  
inner eyes  
to me.

### *Reflections on the Problem*

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, *still* is sitting  
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;  
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,

And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the  
 floor;  
 And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor  
 Shall be lifted—nevermore!

(Poe, 1849/1991, p. 29)

My awareness of this problem that I have grappled with began in a dark personal hell that Poe would have understood. The effects of this problem in the world run the gamut from minor disempowering limitations through potent, compelling, debilitating conditions to truly evil, ravaging, demonic states. I would agree with Lubbe (1998) that "since its introduction by M. Klein in 1946, the concept of projective identification has inspired, baffled, rankled, but always mesmerized its adherents and opponents alike" (online) since this and more is exactly what it did to me. I have been as gravely confused by this ubiquitous phenomenon as by anything I have ever experienced. I have been hurt by it, intrigued by it, oppressed by it, fascinated by it, and most of all captivated by a deep desire, and a vital need, to understand it and to remedy the harm it so often causes.

As I think about the epidemic conflicts and confusions that are caused by this problematic phenomenon I find myself musing over one example. It is the common mistake of interchanging the concepts of "evil" and "bad" which are surely not the same thing. If I want to hang my wet laundry out to dry and a rainstorm arrives, I can certainly call it a bad thing, at least for me. I would be delusional if I called it evil<sup>54</sup>. Jung

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<sup>54</sup> Unless, however, I believe that the rainstorm was conjured against me by someone with ill intent towards me; then I may have cause to call it evil.

(1951/1978) runs into this inaccurate mixing of concepts when he explores the phenomenon of evil. For instance, while grappling with the issue of whether evil is real or unreal he concludes, "I must only insist that in our field of experience white and black, light and dark, good and bad, are equivalent opposites which always predicate one another" (p. 54 [CW 9 Pt. 2, para. 98]). I would agree with him about good and bad; however his suggestion that this applies to evil, which is what "bad" is meant to represent in this discussion, is another matter entirely. It is hard for us to think clearly about evil. It is almost like trying to focus on a printed page in a dream; most likely with each look the words will have shifted. Certainly one part of this problem I have confronted has simply been how difficult it is to see it clearly and to think clearly about it.

Another part of the problem is how virulent its effects can be and how deeply it has contaminated our experiences and judgments about ourselves, each other, and life itself.

How can we save the world  
 when we hate hate?  
 Everyone is trying to be so good;  
 so blameless, or at least repentant.  
 Everyone, that is, except the few  
 Who don't give a damn  
 Ravening rampant over our children.

The entire field of destructive potencies has been confused with evil itself. "Aggression and hate boiling up within are felt in the first instance to be uncontrollable; they seem to explode within us, and drown and burn and suffocate our bodies in our first experience of them" (Riviere, 1936/1964,

p. 13). This is a vivid experiential portrayal of what we could imagine the death instinct, Thanatos, would be like for the newborn infant. Yet, I did not see this in my own son when I let him express his rages and angers. He was not harmed by this experience but rather emerged refreshed and alert, empowered and at ease. The unfortunate misunderstanding that has led us to distance ourselves from our own aggressive potential, from our power and passion, has disempowered us and, in a tragic irony, made us utterly more susceptible to the ravages of real evil when it is tearing through our lives and our world. Riviere, in another passage, underlines the true necessity of grappling somehow with this aspect of the problem:

It is of great importance that this side of our lives [hate] should be better understood. When we become able to accept both the inevitability and the potential value of these processes in ourselves, the archaic element in our fear of them and reactions to them diminishes and is controlled; and we devise means to allow these natural forces some outlet and to use them as fully as possible in constructive ways. This can come about only by understanding, which derives so much from tolerance, in other words, from imagination, sympathy and love. (p. 52-53)

How much more easily this can be accomplished by resolving the problem that convinces us that there is an archaic inner conflict, an innate fear of our own anger, when there is actually no such thing.

The reverberations of this problem, like environmental pollution, are now endemic to almost every culture on earth. The forms that these reverberations take are as multitudinous as the evil plagues that escaped from Pandora's box. Expressions of the pain and heartache brought on by the problem of projective identification, through the effects of unresolved



displaced traumatic experiences, can be found in endless stories, novels, poems, songs, speeches, tirades, paintings, carvings, and so on. Below are some excerpts from "The Sounds of Silence" by Simon and Garfunkel (1965/2007) which point to the problems caused by rampant projective identification, by unresolved displaced experiences and their results:

People talking without speaking,  
People hearing without listening,

. . .

No one dared  
Disturb the sound of silence.

. . .

The words of the prophets  
are written on the subway walls  
and tenement halls. (online)

### *Reflections on Method*

The more I reflect on the way I have gone about this work, the more it occurs to me that depth psychology has been the overarching framework for my understanding of projective identification and also the fundament of my method of proceeding. I have relied on the deep wisdom of unconscious processes and I have not been disappointed. There have been many striking beneficent synchronistic events that have helped me along the way in this endeavor. Living in Carpinteria, which facilitated my encountering the clinical psychology program (with its emphasis in depth psychology) at Pacifica Graduate Institute was one of the most important.

At Pacifica . . . depth psychology is concerned with psychological reality as a whole. This reality is typically not limited to observable facts alone but, rather, is often constituted by what is unseen. Both

Freud and Jung, as the chief progenitors of depth psychology, criticized the limitations of merely "descriptive psychiatry" and emphasized the importance of developing metaphoric sensibilities and of seeking evidence from a wide number of disciplines including mythology, literature, philosophy, anthropology, the arts, and religion. (Pacifica Graduate Institute Depth Psychology Research Faculty, 2006, p. 4)

I do not believe that there are, as yet, many other institutions where my way of working would have been so welcomed, respected, and supported.

My approach, as I described in Chapter 3 above, has been a heuristic embodied imaginal method of inquiry that is deeply rooted in a profound trust in the unseen potent forces that make up the fundament of our lives and our world. My engagement with the unseen and unknown is such an important part of how I have proceeded that I am inclined to say that darkness itself has been my avenue while a love of darkness (and a devoted curiosity into what lies within dark realms) has been my method.

An amateur philosopher  
but professional vagrant,  
a skilled, well-traveled  
wanderer seeking  
the ever darker path;  
questing after no treasure  
no golden hoard or gems,  
questing instead after  
darkness itself.

The other crucial element of my method of study has been an enduring engagement with nature. If I had not already deeply immersed myself in an intimate relationship with the natural world I do not think that I would have been able to survive the challenges that faced me and took me into these dark spaces and unknown places, these hidden regions of the mind.

When the pain and confusion overwhelmed me I religiously turned toward whatever portion of wild, untrammeled, uncultivated, living earth I could find. The sea, the bluffs, the small fallow patch in the patio, a bird, a leaf, a stone, a feather, my own body, the sky—I turned toward whatever was at hand untouched by manipulation, and it always saved me.

*The First Words* by Seamus Heaney (1996)

The first words got polluted  
 Like river water in the morning  
 Flowing with the dirt  
 Of blurbs and the front pages.  
 My only drink is meaning from the deep brain,  
 What the birds and the grass and the stones drink.  
 Let everything flow  
 Up to the four elements,  
 Up to water and earth and fire and air.  
 (p. 47)

It has long been this intimate connection with nature that has carried me into arenas of understanding non-ordinary experiences that are shamanic and transcendent of the usual boundaries of space and time.

In this way, through the undeniable potent immediacy of mystical experiences, I avoided the pitfall pointed out by Rogers (1980) below:

We have failed dismally to heed Robert Oppenheimer's (1956) warning, addressed to the APA, when he pointed out that the worst thing psychology might do would be "to model itself after a physics which is not there anymore, which has been outdated (p. 134). But we have determinedly tied ourselves to this old Newtonian conception of science, seemingly unaware of the changes in the views of science that have been taking place in theoretical physics and in various other "hard" as well as "soft" sciences. (p. 237)

Ten years earlier Giorgi (1970) pointed out "that there has always been some tension between the purported subject matter of psychology and

the attempt to deal with it in a natural scientific way" (p. 55). He went on to speak of a need to "broaden the understanding of science so that it can incorporate human phenomena in a psychologically relevant way" (p. 55). Just this sort of human science was, I believe, absolutely necessary for me to be able to investigate the reality of this phenomenon in a relevant manner. If I had attempted to understand projective identification from a distant perspective, to measure and catalogue it, striving for an objective point of view; I would have been utterly lost from the start. "There must be another meaning of science, a deeper one that would not exclude the presence of the human person in psychology" (p. 55). This experiential science; deeply relational, heuristic, and imaginal; a new *natural* natural science, fulfills this need. Fromm (1973) identifies and adds a necessary ingredient that I have been given in good measure. "Critical and radical thought will only bear fruit when it is blended with the most precious quality man is endowed with—the love of life" (p. 485).

I also want to consider the way I have written this work. In this case I am referring to all of the phases of writing, some of which began many years ago in random notes and poems. The way I have written is also imbued with these qualities of embodied imaginal engagement. I will quote Anderson (2002-2003) since her descriptions of embodied writing reflect my experience so vividly. "Embodied writing seeks to bring the finely textured experience of the human body back to research praxis and writing" (p. 40). Indeed, this also allows access to an embodied theory.

As a research procedure, embodied writing is easily integrated into conventional research methods. But, do not miss the shift in ideological paradigm. Unlike conventional methods, embodied writing operates from a post-modern perspective. Like art, embodied writing both honors the present moment and points to the future through engagement and movement, sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph. In embodied writing, research is *both* art and science. (p. 44)<sup>55</sup>

As I moved forward in the work I was just as apt to be carried to the next level of understanding by the emergence of a poem, in imaginal dialogue with a figure from a dream or an ancestor, through a dance movement, or in an encounter with a lizard, as by the application of critical thinking.

The topic I was exploring exists in the same field of connections that inspired and sustained my inquiry. My topic was my method. Again and again I was personally aided, nourished, and awakened by the very fabric of connectedness that is the realm of projective identification.

Inanna, the moon,  
 the unconscious,  
 the Queen of Heaven and Earth.  
 She holds  
 all experience  
 at once.  
 She dies and rises again.  
 She brings consequences  
 like the hounds of hell;  
 and then, compassionate,  
 soothes our wounds,  
 weeps over our pain,  
 and lets us  
 (no matter what we've done)  
 spend at least half the year  
 in her presence.

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<sup>55</sup> Anderson reports that "embodied writing" as a tool was developed in collaboration at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology beginning in 1996.

Just as bad and evil are not identical, so perhaps it is the case that while good is the opposite of bad, it is not the opposite of evil. Good things of all kinds helped me through the torment and struggle, but perhaps it was Pandora's Hope that kept me going all these years. This is not the mortal hope that longs for a certain outcome, such as "I hope it will rain" or "I do hope this pain will go away". It is Hope from the gods, pure hope with no object, other than life itself. Morrow (2003) describes this:

I think that the opposite of evil is not good, but rather, hope—a more kinetic and practical thing. Evil, God knows, is energetic, and needs to be opposed by something more vigorous than "good," which, as John Milton found when his Lucifer turned out to be far more interesting than God, is blandly undramatic, a sort of Unitarian vanilla. Hope, on the other hand, is goodness in a tight spot, and ambitious to improve things. Robust hope creates new realities, and is, as Aeschylus said, the thing that exiles feed on. Hope is the primary energy of the will to live, the will to survive.

Rely on hope.

Rely, simply, on love. (p. 266)

### *Reflections on Findings*

What catches  
in the throat, the gut, the gutter?  
What catches in the stream blocking  
free flowing on forever?

What catches in dark history,  
before thoughts of genetics?  
What lands and sticks fast and stays stuck  
through the generations?  
What catches?

I seem to have found what catches, what causes glitches, what obscures, what encumbers, what oppresses and annihilates. Basically, I have found

out what is the matter with us. I hope that through this writing I will offer at least a taste of the experience that I have had with these findings.

The researcher collects, analyzes, and reports findings, fully intending to invite readers to encounter the narrative accounts for themselves and from within their own bodies through a form of sympathetic resonance. Ultimately, as a communication tool for somatic research and writing in general, the value of embodied writing depends on its capacity to engender a quality of resonance between the written text and the senses of the reader that permits readers to resonate with the phenomena described. (Anderson, 2002, p. 40-41)

Displaced experiences are states of mind always originating in profoundly intolerable circumstances, states of mind that are the experience of those intolerable circumstances. Since mind (which is also body) is the shared field within which experiencing occurs, these states of mind are like warps in that field, warps that go on reverberating until they are resolved. The shared field of mind is a landscape of connectedness. Just as the planets are held in the orbit of the sun rather than flying off in random chaos, ourselves, our experiences, our states of mind, when unresolved, continue in some way to orbit those with whom we are connected. I wonder if gravity itself might actually be a form of love, of affinity; a case of affective links.

Another aspect of these findings is that they are a recovery and a reconnection with earlier wisdom. When we are in the grip of a displaced experience, we feel possessed. That is because we are. An awareness of the potential and actuality of possession has been sadly eradicated from modern day thought. "The negative evaluation of possession in the West has been reinforced by the development of secular worldviews that

champion the autonomous individual, the maker of choices" (Melton, 1996, p. 1026). Here, then, is Melton's current definition of possession: "An altered state of consciousness in which the conscious personality of the individual is replaced with that of another personality, commonly thought of as a possessing spirit entity" (p. 1026). He continues with a comment on intent. "The possessing personality aims to establish communication with this world through the organism of the entranced medium" (p. 1027). Similarly, Chopra (1989) refers to what he calls "the ghost of memory" and says that "until the ghost is gone, patients . . . do not feel that they have a disease—they *are* their disease" (p. 81). All of this sounds exactly like what I have been observing, describing, and then finally resolving. Even the harmful effects have been described before. Melton (1996) goes on to recount that "Pioneer Spiritualist seer Andrew Jackson Davis developed a theory of obsession<sup>56</sup> to account for forms of insanity and crime. . . . Davis saw some of these creatures as having such a malignant and bloodthirsty nature as to incite the beings they possessed to murder" (p. 943). This is exactly what I am talking about.

Now that I have come to have a relatively deep familiarity with the existence and results of these displaced experiences, I often come upon descriptions of events that leap out as examples of the phenomenon. In *The Birth of Pleasure*, Gilligan (2002) deeply explores how the authentic voice recedes and how it can be recovered. In one section she describes

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<sup>56</sup> Obsession is used in this case interchangeably with possession.



experiences she had with her mother when she was a young teenager. In these descriptions I can almost see flashing arrows pointing to activated displaced experiences that are involved in the situations. I will include the passage that describes her mother's childhood history as that history is certainly involved in the layers of trauma that Gilligan was heir to.

My mother was an identical twin; her twin had died of a wasting disease (myasthenia gravis) when they were thirteen. My grandmother tells me the story of the twins, the "heavenly twins," and of Mildred dying, the family gathered around her. I find the story horrifying; my heart goes out to my mother, but for the most part she does not want to talk about it. Late in life, she will say, "It is a terrible thing to lose a twin." I can readily explain the turbulence that entered my relationship with my mother as I was approaching thirteen. My mother was terrified, remembering the loss, trying to keep me safely out of her twin story and distancing me from her in the process. Or simply overwhelmed with grief. (p. 112)

In an earlier passage there is the first description of the other voice, "the voice of the woman who is my mother but who does not look or sound like my mother" (p. 110). This voice possessed her mother at times.

For a long time, I forget my memories of pleasure with my mother, and also her encouragement of my pleasure, her delight in my sensuality, my voice, and my writing. I have come to see her as something of a duenna, shrouded in black, a guardian of patriarchy, and yet she dressed in bright colors and had a subversive edge. . . . It was she who encouraged me to trust myself: "Darling, you know," she would say. I carry this voice with me. But also a voice that is haughty and removed, the voice of the woman who is my mother but who does not look or sound like my mother, her fierce, grim expression terrifying as she suddenly withholds her approval: "What do you know?" she says, reminding me of my inexperience. . . . I learned to say I was sorry when I was not; I thought my mother was teaching me to lie. . . . A wedge in a relationship that became so confusing in its alternations of presence and absence, closeness and distance. (p. 109-110)

Gilligan's next description of the "splintering" of the two voices is an exquisitely accurate rendition of the parallel experiencing selves:

As I will hear her in the same breath encouraging my freedom and imposing restraint, her voice splintering until it divides into what I have come to hear as the counterpoint between Mabel Caminez, the woman with the soul of an artist, and Mrs. Friedman, the mother raising her daughter in patriarchy. (p. 120)

Then she tells us of her recognition of the absolute otherness involved:

When I was a child, when I was entering adolescence, I fought with my mother for relationship; but after a time I found myself turning away, because I felt that I was confronting not my mother or, as Anne Frank says, not my "real mother," but a woman who had aligned herself with "a mysterious something," a more powerful enemy. . . . I became an expert in double consciousness . . . an experience of living simultaneously with two seemingly contradictory people. And perhaps what Freud called "the family romance," the child's fantasy of having been born to better parents, reflects a reality many children experience, of being in relationship with one parent (one's "real" mother, or father) and then finding oneself suddenly in the presence of another, who seems unreal, a fabrication, someone playing a part in a play. (p. 123-124)

The next passage is, I am sure, a description of an example of the feedback loops I have mentioned earlier. This is the extreme escalation that occurs when two or more people become possessed by the same displaced experiences, which are reverberating between them like an amplifier too close to the instrument, generating ever increasing shrieks.

I remember my father standing in the kitchen . . . his face flaring in anger: "Don't ever speak about your mother that way. Don't ever call her 'she.'" It was the time when my mother and I were fighting with a passion that seemingly brooked no restraint, the year . . . I turned thirteen. It was the year I thought my mother was going mad. (p. 125)

In the midst of the fighting, did the actual problem surface? I can imagine Gilligan turning to her father and, in front of her mother, angrily referring to her as "she", as someone else, someone other than her mother. I have found many echoes of my findings in a variety of texts, but it is especially moving for me to come upon the passages above. Here I have a sense of someone venturing, exploring, and describing phenomena so near to my findings; only just missing what I have found by a hair's breadth<sup>57</sup>.

Another aspect of my findings that intrigues me is the assortment of responses that occur when I share this work with others. I will illustrate the first of these, which has occurred many times, with the following example. I once wanted to show this work to a long time friend and so, after describing it just a little, I offered to show her by doing a process for her<sup>58</sup>. I asked her to think of some situation that she found upsetting. She easily did. I asked her to think about it and then I asked "How do you feel when you think about it?" I used her description of her feelings to contact the feeling myself and then I told her to wait a minute while I did the process. After about half a minute I was done. I asked her to think about the situation again and see if the feeling was the same or different. I sat while she silently mused, with an increasingly puzzled look on her face.

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<sup>57</sup> Another example can be found in "A Chorus of Stones" by Susan Griffin (1992): She says, "My grandmother's unclaimed fury had made its way into my mother's psyche" (p. 149), and she goes on to say that when her mother railed "she was not in her right mind" (p. 150).

<sup>58</sup> I prefer to demonstrate the process first and then talk afterwards about the work. I find people are more apt to understand and follow the ideas after having some direct experience. Presented first, the ideas can seem too far-fetched.

After some moments, of what turned out to have been fruitless searching for the upset feeling which she could no longer locate, she looked over at me and exclaimed with wry humor "Get out of my mind!"<sup>59</sup> I answered spontaneously, "It wasn't *in* your mind." I have witnessed variations of her response many other times. Alternately, the effect after a process is that the person will still find some disturbed feelings, although reliably not the same one that was discussed, received, felt and hence resolved.

There are other puzzling and provoking reactions to these findings. One involves a sort of forgetting (see also pages 316-318) that seems to be intrinsic to the process itself. Another is an apparent disinterest in the work after a successful experience with it, which may be related to this same forgetting. I am not sure if these are direct responses to the work itself or whether they might be a result of something I am doing when presenting the work. The forgetting seems to occur so frequently and immediately that I suspect it arises from some aspect of the work itself.

I remember one example of this curious forgetting that occurred in a session I conducted with a woman and her daughter. The mother began the session upset, anxious, and worried. As the session progressed, she was having such a difficult time tolerating what she was experiencing in relation to her daughter that they were unable to engage in any effective conversation. After a period of this struggle, I suggested to the mother

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<sup>59</sup> This interaction was with Beverly Kitz, nurse and health educator in Los Angeles, CA (personal communication, June, 2006).

that the situation might become easier through the use of one of these processes, which she had previously experienced in her individual work with me. She agreed. After asking her a few questions, to help me locate the feelings within the experience, I turned toward the distress, opening to the feelings for some moments, allowing myself to enter an embodied voluntary possession. Then, as always, that distinct problem evaporated.

At the end of the process she appeared to be much more at ease. She began to speak with her daughter, who began to repeat some of the things that she had previously been trying to say. Now her mother was listening without difficulty and the conversation progressed. When there was a pause I asked the mother how she was feeling now in relation to the issues her daughter was talking about. She thought for a moment and said, "Well, for the last week or so I've been starting to be more relaxed about it all." She clearly thought that her relaxed state was one that had been available for at least a number of days rather than the actual 10 to 15 minutes that had just passed. When this or something like it occurs, as it fairly frequently does, I often just let it go; as it does not seem to have any negative effect on the improvement that has been achieved. In this case, as I occasionally do, I decided to point out the discrepancy. I asked her if she could recall how she had been feeling about 10 or 15 minutes earlier, before I had done the process. She paused in thought and then suddenly, as if surprised, she said, "Oh, that's right! I was feeling tense and anxious and really upset. I don't feel that way now. Yeah it's better."

My understanding, at this point, of this facet of the phenomenon is that the resolution of a displaced experience has no effect whatsoever on what is actually experienced as the self. My guess here is that since the person does not feel that they have changed in any way, there is a sense that nothing has. The new ease that exists because the obstacle is gone becomes incorporated into the present as a taken for granted reality with no inclination to reflect on how it came to be or even *that* it came to be. Another useful description might be that the ease was, in a sense, already there in the person. The ease was merely being held back, obstructed, by the activation of the displaced experience, and so it was not able to be carried out fully. So, the removal of the obstruction is not, in that sense, any real change; it is just allowing what was already the case to be more fully expressed and lived out. This could account for the sense that people seem to have that nothing has changed, even as they are reporting and demonstrating a very significant change. The new freedom feels natural and familiar, not new and different.

I have become used to a possibly related event, one which puzzled me deeply at first. During the process of working out the details of this resolution process I have offered to use it for friends and have often done so. A number of them have told me that the problem we worked on has gone away, without ever returning. And yet, very few of these friends have ever asked me to do another process for them. I do not think that this is an artifact of my particular relationships with them, or how I have

presented the work, although I am not absolutely sure of that. I suspect it is somehow related to the forgetting that I described above. Life goes on. It may be easier in that one way, but who notices?

### *Reflections on Theory*

Love and hate are one, in the same way that day and night are one; it's a matter of point of view. Clearly anyone outdoors at night will be certain that they are not experiencing day and visa versa, however once one understands the rotation of our planet relative to our star, the Sun, one realizes that night and day are two aspects of one phenomenon. Just so, true hate is the other appearance of the one thing that is also love. It is my thought that the only reason that this is not apparent is the confusing of real present time hate with experiences of the destructive form of hate that result from an activated displaced experience.

In its original present time form, hate is an aggressive emotion that insures that a person will protect *and* defend what is loved and cherished against any destructive attack. It is this and no more. Its presence or absence is a product of whether the beloved is in the glow of safety and goodwill or harmed. However, most of us have experienced what seems to be a hatred that does not in any way protect anything or anyone and rather runs roughshod over even those who are loved and cherished by the one in the thrall of that displaced hatred. This, I think, is always an incident of the destructive results of a projective identification process, of

a displaced experience that has overtaken and possessed a recipient, who is now acting out an activation of a situation from another time, place, and person, a situation in which hate *is* a protective response to attack.

Uncovering love is uncovering hate; removing the obstacles to rage removes the obstacles to delight. We need to regain our freedom to love and hate, to want and repel, to accept and resist, to welcome and reject, to feel desire and disgust, to celebrate and to rage. Under the burden of countless generations of unresolved displaced traumatic experiences that are passing through to our world in layers of traumatic transference, we have lost touch with our natural birthright; which is to feel exactly the way we do feel in any situation. In the light of addictions and obsessions, we have learned to deeply distrust our own desires. In the face of useless obliterating violence and sadly misplaced destructiveness, we have come to reject our own ability to hate and rage and thereby to know where we do and do not stand. We have even tried to distance ourselves from our own sense of ego<sup>60</sup>, or self, as if the worst problems in life were rooted in our very identity, in our own existence itself. On the other hand, in our attempts to honor the inherent wisdom in life and to hold on to our sense of goodness and meaningfulness, we have often turned a blind eye to evil and its presence in our lives. If we have attempted to hold the tension of

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<sup>60</sup> "Ego" is a Latin translation of Freud's German "Ich" which in English means simply "I" (Barnhart, 1988, p. 317). Bettelheim in *Freud and Man's Soul* (1983) discusses the choice of this Latin translation. He suggests that this significantly contributed to an unfortunate misreading of Freud's original intent. Certainly the now familiar penchant for attempting to be ego-less might raise more eyebrows and at least inspire more discussion and critique, if we spoke of becoming I-less.



these opposites, and to confront and accept the full range of our own real experience without resorting to foreclosing on either the real experience of evil or on the wholesome necessity for accepting life as it is, we have found ourselves in a trackless land without map, guide, or direction.

Perhaps, with an understanding and application of this new view of human destructiveness, we can settle into a more coherent acceptance of the full range of life's conditions. Perhaps we will be able to begin to allow ourselves, each other, and most vitally our children to freely experience and express our full range of feelings and affects without condemnation, rejection, and suppression. We come into our lives with a deep capacity to respond to the circumstances that meet us. That capacity is not divisible into units of good and bad feelings, some to be welcomed and others to be destroyed. When we limit our ability to hate, we lose the freedom to fully love. When we can no longer express our disgust and displeasure, we are hampered in our ability to feel and show our delight and pleasure. Like the night and the day, mountain and valley, or sun and shadow, these deeply related yet distinct expressions of experience are in reality one indivisible whole that cannot be torn apart no matter how long or how hard we have tried to do so. This essential Taoist awareness must be regained if we are to halt the spread of devastation, destruction, and misery that currently appears to be sweeping the world as if it has a life of its own. And, of course, I am suggesting that it does. Well, not *a* life of its own, but rather innumerable lives—each one needing our care.

A further implication of this new theory involves the familiar event called projection. Perhaps projection always arises from these displaced experiences resulting from projective identification. Without considering the possibility of an activated displaced experience, there seems to be neither survival value nor any other value in the confusing occurrence of projection. It interferes with current awareness and introduces confusing and often disruptive elements into the relationships that are involved. The person who is doing the projecting is usually thought to be under the unavoidable influence of some effect of trauma that results in their being unable to fully distinguish the current person from the person involved in their past trauma. However, when the projection occurs it neither aids in the recovery from the trauma nor allows for a fully wholesome current encounter. It is true that an awareness of this phenomenon can be used by a skilled clinician to gain insight into the traumatic history and how it seems to still live in the patient. However, outside of this value within the therapeutic relationship, it seems to be fairly reliably destructive and diminishing of whatever good is available in the person's current life. If this is the case, and there is no significant hidden gain, then I would imagine that we are only seeing the inevitable result of a person being possessed by another time, place, and person traumatic situation that they cannot help but experience within their current interactions.

Another implication that interests me is a loss or lack of empathy, the dehumanization of others. This is something that is rampant in certain

situations such as wartime combat, but it is also common in psychiatric wards. Giovacchini (1994) describes this thoroughly:

Many psychiatric wards openly acknowledge that they are not interested in the psychodynamic approach or in understanding the patient in terms of internal mental processes. The staff is interested in maintaining the peace. Disturbed patients are supposed to keep their disturbances to themselves and not inflict them on the staff. . . . Many wards are nothing more than disciplining institutions and prisons. There is no possibility for developmental growth, nor does anyone care. That is especially sad and poignant is that there is no hope for the staff either. The richness of an experience of mental growth that occurs with a successful and humanistic psychotherapeutic approach passes them by. In dehumanizing patients, they have dehumanized themselves. (p. 217)

The experience as if others have no inner world is a natural byproduct of extreme experiences. When fighting for one's life, for example, one must not stop to consider the inner life of the other. When these experiences are displaced and activated, the receiver or host will lose touch with their own depth of appreciation for the inner life and humanity of others.

### *Reflections on Practice*

The ability to be aware of another's inner life, to imagine what it might be like from another's point of view, to be able to think and feel as if one is experiencing the other's situation—we all have this innate ability, at and before birth, only losing touch with it due to obstacles presented by the activation of displaced extreme experiences that in their own time and place make this empathic awareness temporarily untenable. Our own ability to entertain the other point of view is holding the existence of the

other person within the mind, within one's experiencing self. This is the hallmark of health and well-being, it is the existence of real relationship, it allows real thinking, and it is the way of healing and of love. It is the Tao.

This is the capacity that is needed in order to effectively engage in the process that will resolve displaced experiences. As I have said before, however, it is not necessary to be consummate at this empathic offering. It is only necessary to be able to do it for a little while now and again. It may be that the only thing that would prevent a person<sup>61</sup> from being able to do these processes is being too much in the grip of too many layers of displaced experiences. If this is the case, then we can expect to find ever increasing numbers of people capable of doing this work, as the work is done for them by others. That which has caused such misery and pain may also return us to the panacea of Pandora as Earth Goddess.

In my experience so far, there are no disturbing conditions that do not lend themselves readily to this work. One of the important aspects of this approach is its simplicity and its profound superficiality. That seeming oxymoron refers to the usefulness of working on whatever is most present and accessible. Let's say, for instance, that a person is having a very hard time in a relationship and you are going to use this work to help them. Furthermore, let's say that when you ask them how they feel when they are involved in an upset in the relationship they tell you that they don't want to think about it. There. That's the place to work. Just see how you

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<sup>61</sup> This is assuming the person is basically conscious and competent.

feel when this is said, or if you like you can ask a bit more about it such as "Tell me a little more about not wanting to think about it." From the responses to this you will surely receive enough to connect with a feeling. That is the place to work. Approaching the treatment of trauma in this way is amazingly gentle. I have worked with people around issues of very extreme trauma while the two of us are having a very pleasant relaxed conversation. It seems that we are being utterly superficial. Nonetheless, the work is profoundly effective and the results, in terms of increased access to memory and affect, development of increasingly coherent self awareness, and in terms of improved current life functioning, are great.

With this understanding of autonomous displaced experiences, the core element involved in the phenomenon of projective identification, it may become easier for therapists and others to respond effectively and helpfully to the suffering that occurs when these displaced experiences are activated. The prior formulation which was lacking this understanding of displaced experiences leads to the following:

Symptom tolerance, containment, and working over as required by transference/countertransference analysis is inherently emotionally demanding. In addition, it is an approach based on a body of theory, clinical skills, and personal experiences that is not easily acquired. Because of these myriad difficulties, wards and hospitals where countertransference enactment pervades treatment may represent the rule rather than the exception. (Shur, 1994, p.8-9)

The experience that the steps needed for deep psychological healing are difficult for the practitioner, as well as for the patient, is widespread. This may, in part, be why so many turn to medication and techniques that do

not deal with the richness of transference issues. My sense is that once the ability to do these processes is incorporated into therapeutic practice, transference work becomes much easier to do. I do not mean to be glib here; the understanding of transference processes and of the way that early childhood material can be represented in enactments is still, like the playing of an instrument, something that one learns over time, gaining mastery gradually, and never reaching the end of possible improvement. It does involve a deep level of psychological understanding on the part of the practitioner. But even with that understanding, patients often cannot easily tolerate transference interpretations. The use of these processes to resolve the displaced experiences involved changes this, and it becomes a gentle collaboration unlike the demanding work that is more familiar now.

In terms of the experience of doing this work, whether within the context of a therapeutic relationship or within one's personal life, it may be useful at the beginning to remember that the real core of the displaced experience release process is simply a meeting in experiencing, feel the feeling that is coming through to you. This is the  $mc^2$  of  $e=mc^2$ . Allow your consciousness (c) to become one with the other (c), in the feeling of what is the matter (m); the feeling of whatever is prominent, dominant, demanding, or somehow making itself known. It may be good to start out working with discrete feelings—like exercises on the piano. However, soon enough it becomes possible to allow the prominent feeling to be the key to opening and then to allow a flood of similar layers to arise, taking a few

moments to move through a cluster of resonant feeling states. It seems to me that one of the benefits of this work is that the effort, if there is any, is done from the other side. The energy making contact is already coming from there. It is really only necessary to align oneself with the call to feel a certain thing, orient towards it, and then allow it to happen.

Furthermore, it is quite possible to do an effective process without any content information. I have tested this on numerous occasions since it first occurred to me to try it. The value here is that if a person does not feel comfortable sharing the details or even any information at all about some disturbing situation, this is no obstacle to the work. Just ask the person to think about the situation and then describe something of how they feel. Again, if you are planning to do the process for them, you only need to listen to the wind and the water; to the flow of feeling. Since the feelings, as I keep saying, are wanting to be felt, it does not take much talk about the feeling before you will be able to get a sense of it. If during the initiation of a process there is a difficulty in getting to the feeling, it usually works to ask the person how they feel in their body. Of course, if any interaction has gone on between you and the person while they are thinking of the situation, you can also just check how you are feeling, how you feel in *your* body, and it is apt to be exactly what you are looking for.

Returning to the situation where a person is, for whatever reason, reluctant to tell you what they are thinking of, there usually is no obstacle to their telling you at least minimally what they are feeling when they

privately think of the situation. Minimal information about the feeling is always enough in my experience with this work. It only takes a little bit, next to nothing, just enough to get a dose of the contagion. Of course there are other therapeutic benefits to the sharing of experience and to the sharing of details regarding traumatic events. I do not mean to minimize those gains, when they come. But meanwhile there is no need to pry. Just work with what is available. In terms of displaced experience release work, the smallest amount, the minimum dose, will be plenty. All that matters is the feeling of what is happening in the situation, of what happens when it is thought of, or when it is shared.

I have been thinking about atmosphere, emotional atmosphere, including the sterile feelings of hopelessness, frozen panic, impotent rage and so on. So many situations in our personal, professional, and political lives are embroiled in thick atmospheres that prevent creative thought and activity. By taking these on, one feeling at a time<sup>62</sup>, we can clear the atmosphere. We can clear the atmosphere of our family, our workplace, our social groups; we can begin to clear away the thick layers of psychic pollution that, I believe, are causing all the other pollutions we suffer. I'm not sure if this will affect the problem of global warming in any direct way (although it might), but it will certainly begin to make it more possible for

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<sup>62</sup> This is how they present themselves: one at a time. When, during a process, you resonate with one feeling that resolves, if there are others close by you may find, as I have, that one other feeling state will be coming forward next, and then when it resolves the next one arises. These very states that, when unmet, cause so much severe destruction and chaos, become extremely docile and cooperative once they are listened to directly, welcomed in, met, and felt with.



us to work collectively, cooperatively, sanely, and creatively toward a healthier economic, social, political, and ecological way of being.

The only thing that will change the pattern and habit of violence in people is the only thing that has ever morally transformed people—conversion; a turning around of the way one sees things. In order to do that, we must help people Stop, because Stopping is a necessary condition for a change of heart. You can't change if you are not still enough, long enough, to see that there is a different way or better way. (Kundtz, 1998, p. 253)

Judging from my own experience, however, I would say that the moments in living that seem to almost preclude stopping are those that are driven by these activated displaced experiences. Extreme feelings of urgency, even emergency, accompany these possessions and are compelling in their ability to make us rush ahead verbally, mentally, and physically.

As we begin to relieve ourselves and each other of the pressures from unresolved displaced experiences, I expect that we will find it easier and easier to stop, easier to stay still long enough, easier to stop and see that we are already embarking on a different and better way.

Each one of us must retire not only the karma we have created, but also the karma we have inherited before we can fully live our own lives and actualize our own essence (svadharma). On our path to the soul, the legacy of our ancestors lights our way. Yet, ancestral curses often entrap us in futile struggles with which we must contend. In healing the wounds of our ancestors we not only retire their karmic debt, but, in the process, also claim our own dharmic goals. Thus we leave the world more complete and healed than we found it. (Bedi, 2000, p. 165)

So, we will find ourselves more complete and whole than we have usually been, interacting realistically, like a newborn child, to the actual present circumstances of our lives; being ourselves and being with each other.

*Reflections on My Experience*

Although there were innumerable times through the years of this work when I would have loved to abandon ship and get away from the suffering, at this point I am grateful for the entire experience. My deep gratitude is grounded in a heartfelt appreciation for my parents and my earlier ancestors, an appreciation for the ways in which they gave me life and offered me the opportunity to become strong enough and healthy enough to tackle this problem. In light of this, I will share three poems. The first, written a few years ago, is about my father and something of what he gave me. The next is of my mother and her many gifts to me; and the third is of her mother, my grandmother, who endured a serious tragedy, thankfully with enough support to carry life forward anyway.

*Dad*

In Florida  
a continent away from home,  
you read Poe's "Gold Bug" aloud.  
Working out the code ourselves,  
I was learning what it was like  
to travel the world with a dad like you:  
curious and always worth exploring.  
You said  
we can crack this code  
if we just approach it right,  
think it through,  
don't give up,  
we'll get there.

Years later,  
With a code to crack;  
a code that tells the location  
of a treasure more rare  
and more necessary  
than gold.

Now I say to myself  
 and to those I love  
 we can crack this code  
 if we just approach it right  
 think it through  
 don't give up  
 we'll get there.

Years later, my young son, in the midst of our troubles, turned to me one day and said "Don't ever give up, mom," and I promised him I wouldn't.

*Mom*

Always painting, and seeing  
 blue in the shadows of my brown hair.  
 Always talking,  
 painting conversations,  
 hearing colors in the sounds of a voice.

You were color, painting my world;  
 with stories of Greek gods and goddesses,  
 coloring homemade marzipan.  
 Like sand castles, most of your art  
 was not meant for keeping;  
 but for living, loving, and being.  
 I still have your colors on canvas, paper, or board;  
 except the ones that slipped away,  
 like the triptych, too big to move to Oregon,  
 or the pastel landscape you sold for five dollars.  
 I'd buy them back if I could.

Reading palms at parties  
 with no system of interpretation.  
 Treating your mentally ill students  
 according to your ideas of who they are,  
 why you love that particular one,  
 like each line in the palm of each hand  
 each troubled child talks to you  
 and you listen in color  
 never black and white.  
 Even your charcoal drawings  
 in shades of grey,  
 shapes that bulge off the page  
 too alive to be flattened  
 too real to stay silent.

I brought a dream into analysis one day in which I went up through a tall building, emerging at the top and finding myself sitting on a large grassy mound with an expanse of beautiful blue sky and a soft breeze. There was the soft movement of the grass and a few small animals nearby, gently nibbling. I sat at ease on the earth; happy, content, and utterly peaceful. My analyst<sup>63</sup> said, "This was what it was like to be held in the mind of your mother." Yes. Exactly.

*Grandma*

My grandmother Rose  
married the neighbor boy.  
His family name was Rose.  
So she became Rose of the Rose,  
a redemption she sorely needed  
having watched helplessly as three  
young sisters burned to death;  
a horrible accident no one could stop.

She named my mother Albina,  
after one of the dead sisters;  
the one that lived three days in pain.  
Albina, the little dawn,  
her first child with Frank,  
the neighbor boy who held her hand  
as she stood helpless;  
parents aunts uncles all  
trying to stop the sudden flames  
burning away at the sisters  
she had been caring for.

Albina named me Valerie,  
perhaps for the strength we all have  
to endure the unendurable;  
to go on living like they did,  
finding a way forward.

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<sup>63</sup> Dr. Donald M. Marcus of Los Angeles, CA (personal communication, 2005).

We are all finding a way forward, and we are finding it together, falling and rising again, struggling when we must, helping when we can. During the course of this work I have often felt the presence of my mother, my father, sometimes my grandmother, and others. These are companions who have died. Their warm presence, which I cannot prove nor deny, is a hint of that other timeless time and spaceless space, that nameless Tao that is the way that joins us all. I do not know how they have helped with this work, nor do I know what the trees I live among have contributed, or what insights may have come from the gaze of my large-hearted pitbull with the deep and often sorrowful eyes. This work is a collaboration in more ways than I will ever know. Yet in another, less articulate way, I do know. I know because I feel. Feeling this complex collaboration does not make it measurable or give me words to account for it, but feeling it is enough to inform me that it is real. This is the knowing of intimacy<sup>64</sup>, which is perhaps the most important way we can know anything.

The poem "Feeling" (page 194) describes the way that the entire release process is really simply a process of deep feeling. I walked a long and complicated journey to that end, and in some ways this is a long and complicated text to essentially express that one simple idea. Here is one poem by Billy Collins (2005)<sup>65</sup> that reminds me of the circuitous path that I have been on and the humor that has so often sustained me.

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<sup>64</sup> Intimacy, from "*intimare* make known" (Barnhart, 1988, p. 539).

<sup>65</sup> Sarah Rosinsky, a Feldenkrais practitioner in Ventura, CA, brought this poem to my attention.

I don't think this next poem  
needs any introduction—  
it's best to let the work speak for itself.

Maybe I should just mention  
that whenever I use the word *five*,  
I'm referring to that group of Russian composers  
who came to be known as "The Five,"  
Balakirev, Moussorgsky, Borodin—that crowd.

Oh—and Hypsicles was a Greek astronomer.  
He did something with the circle.

That's about it, but for the record,  
"Grimke" is Angelina Emily Grimke, the abolitionist.  
"Imroz" is that little island near the Dardanelles.  
"Monad"—well, you all know what a monad is.

There could be a little problem  
with *mastaba*, which is one of those Egyptian  
above-ground sepulchers, sort of brick and limestone.

And you're all familiar with helminthology?  
It's the science of worms.

Oh, and you will recall that Phoebe Mozee  
is the real name of Annie Oakley.

Other than that, everything should be obvious.  
Wagga Wagga is in New South Wales.  
Rhyolite is that soft volcanic rock.  
What else?  
Yes, *meranti* is a type of timber, in tropical Asia I think,  
and Rahway is just Rahway, New Jersey.

The rest of the poem should be clear.  
I'll just read it and let it speak for itself.

It's about the time I went picking wild strawberries.

It's called "Picking Wild Strawberries."  
(pp. 61-62)

Perhaps I will write another version of this text. I will call it *Resolving Displaced Experiences*. It will have a nice cover with one page inside that says, "Find it, and feel it." And I suppose, knowing how I work, there will be footnotes!

The short version notwithstanding, I have deeply appreciated the opportunity to compile these thoughts, sort through my impressions and conclusions, recall the steps I've taken, research the work of others, and through it all come to a new and deeper understanding of my findings. My hope is that the experience I have had in producing this text will resonate with you, my reader, to provide an opportunity for you to share directly in some of what I have experienced and come to know.

As a research technique, embodied writing allows researchers to collect and analyze data close to the raw, lived experience itself, and encourages readers to relive the writer's experience as though it were their own by way of sympathetic resonance with the writings. (Anderson, 2002-2003, p. 40)

It has been, and is being, a deep pleasure to work with this topic, which is so consistently relevant to almost every, if not every, portion of my own life, from my intimate relationships to the writing of this work itself. At some points I do feel almost as if I were engaged in that impossible task of tracing the shadow of a pencil onto a piece of paper, using that same pencil to do the tracing; but somehow it is working out.

Often the movements of earth, fire, air, and water within our bodies pass unnoticed by awareness. Yet, writers using embodied writing typically report feeling more alert to the world, both within their bodies and in the world. The simple act of relaying experience from the inside out affirms life as embedded in the sensual world in

which we live. Nature feels dear and close. The blood pulsing through our veins insinuates the rush of a stream, or the wash of waves upon a strand. Breathing feels more akin to the wind, neurons to the lightning, and our human corpus to solid earth. (Anderson, 2002, p. 40)

Perhaps even more than "akin", perhaps actually part of the earth, part of the energy of lightening and wind. Pan, the god of nature, has sometimes spoken with me in my imaginal dialogues and whenever he does, I do not doubt that life holds me in its earthly embrace. Here are some notes from one of these embodied imaginal dialogues, beginning with my voice:

It is so lovely in the morning, sitting at this table in this small room surrounded on three sides by windows and beyond that surrounded by the cloistering boundary and canopy of the many trees. You, trees, are among the helpers who have and still do accompany me on this often difficult but always worthwhile journey. I now open myself to listen as best I can, to hear from each and all of you who wish to speak.

Pan – Your own wildness is the greatest gift you bring to this work. You are right to focus on the body as you write – it is here in the reality of this bodymindselfsoul who lives, who is, who experiences that the truth can be known and told.

Inanna – Let your body sink into a state of being that is my state of erotic aliveness let your body love the moment of being here alive in flesh as flesh let this be your way, let joy and pleasure, erotic aliveness, be your way; in this way be in my presence as you write.

This excerpt from one of my imaginal dialogues reminds me of a way of applying this work that I have not yet mentioned. It is a way of doing the displaced experience resolution processes for oneself, quite easily and quickly. While there is no particular problem with doing them for oneself, I sometimes find it challenging to stay focused for very long if I am alone, without the aid and awareness of another. If I only want to do one or a



few processes, this is not a problem. However, if I want to work through something more complex, staying with it for ten or more minutes, I find it much easier to do if I set up an imaginal dialogue with a helpful other and then do the processes within the dialogue, as I would do if I were talking things over with a friend, companion, or therapist. I simply use the dialogue as an opportunity to focus on and discuss what feeling states seem to be active in the situation I am working with and as each one becomes clear enough I pause and do the process to resolve it.

This aspect of the work, the self-care, has been an important thread throughout these last years. People closest to me, those who know me best, can attest to the major changes that have taken place in my way of being over these last couple of years. Once I had identified the process and gotten it into a form that was easy to apply, I began to save myself from a massive burden of disability that was almost untenable. As I write this I can feel, right now, the "forgetting" that I spoke of on pages 339 to 341. When I refer to that prior burden of disability it seems very far away and unreal, almost as if it had never been. This is quite strange because I can assure you that when I was in the grips of it there were times when little else existed for me besides the terror, torment, panic, agony, and so forth that would regularly overtake me. It had taken many years of abuse to drive me into this condition and anyone who saw the states I would fall into would certainly have imagined that it would take many years to climb back out, if it could be done at all. My current

partner suggested medication at the worst times. I almost feel that I am speaking about someone else. It is not, as far as I can tell, a dissociation; at least not of the repressive kind. Perhaps it is the emergence of a natural dissociation that was always there but couldn't be accessed, the distance between me and the original source of the displaced experiences that gripped me. In contrast, when I think about the abusive experiences that I endured on the road to that desperate and debilitated condition, my memory is vivid and I know without doubt that they did occur, and that they happened to me. I am quite aware that my life now does not include these instances of abuse and I am easily in touch with the difference between then and now, between those experiences and these. There is no "forgetting" going on about the abuse I suffered. The unreality is only about the extreme states of mind that would grip me and drive me mad, truly mad, leaving me suffering and inflicting unintended pain on my loved ones who could do very little to aid me at those times. Those states are the ones that I can recall as if through a fog. They are not vivid to me now. They are like a story of something that happened to me in another life or to someone else. I feel as if I have been at peace with myself, as I mostly am now, throughout these many years. Whereas, I know that "at peace with myself" was exactly what it seemed I could not be.

I am reminded of an interesting contrast. On two occasions I have seen video recordings of EMDR treatment for trauma. In both of those cases following the use of EMDR the person treated became very vague

about the prior trauma. There was little interest in it and no desire to speak about it. I found this very disturbing. In one case there had been an automobile accident and I don't recall the details of the other trauma. My guess at the time was that EMDR is a technique that accomplishes an artificially induced repression. I could see that this might have value in emergency situations but otherwise I would be very concerned about the potentially damaging side effects from forcing or inducing trauma out of awareness in this way. My experience with this displaced experience work is that as the activated and rigid states are resolved and disappear, the person is more able to think about and talk about the related traumas and more apt to be able to integrate these prior experiences into a coherent historical self-understanding. I think this is a very good and important sign, one that indicates a more wholesome, natural, and safe outcome.

My recovery encourages me about the possibilities of renewal and recovery for others, including the bees<sup>66</sup>. Here I will excerpt some lines from "Falling Asleep in the Garden" by David Wagoner (1999/2007B):

All day the bees have come to the garden.  
 They hover, swivel in arcs and, whirling, light  
 On stamens heavy with pollen, probe and revel  
 Inside the yellow and red starbursts of dahlias  
 Or cling to lobelia's blue-white mouths  
 Or climb the speckled trumpets of foxgloves.  
 . . . some are dancing  
 Deep in their hives, telling the hungry  
 The sun will be that way, the garden this far:  
 This is the way to the garden. They hum at my ear. (online)

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<sup>66</sup> For background on this reference to the bees see the section that deals with Colony Collapse Disorder on pp. 105-107 and 114-115.

Erotic aliveness, magical awareness, empathic attunement, creative intelligence, deep understanding, trust in the unconscious wisdom of the soul, intimate connectedness, participatory immersion in the natural world, profound communication with all the various beings of the living world; these are innate human capacities that I truly believe will flourish in all of us once the encumbering conditions caused by other time, place, and person traumas are lifted from our hearts and minds, and into our care. We are far more capable and creative, as a whole, than it appears.

Magic is the way of the world. It's that sense of being in contact with so many other shapes of awareness, most of which are so different from our own, that is the basic experience of magic from which all other forms of magic derive. (Abram, 2006, online)

That sense of contact, through our flesh and through the shared field of awareness in which we live, is as natural to us as swimming through the sea is to the dolphins, carp, or whales. We do not need to learn to do it. We need to undo what prevents us.

my life, you say,  
my life is this and that.  
I say my life,  
My life is going well  
or badly,  
I say my life;  
and never wonder  
when the deed was signed,  
who gave me title  
to this thing that is  
not a thing.

Our language is full of capitalist and colonialist language. We dig down deep inside ourselves for riches, we pay attention, we waste time, and we

apparently own life. As we endeavor to become ego-less, we practice affirmations to improve the life that we think we own. It is tempting to think that everything has gone backwards. Perhaps when we return to our bodies, come back to our senses, and begin to have room to breathe; to breathe in the dank forest air, the dry desert winds, the rich seaside salty dampness, the fragrant biting scents of the chaparral, perhaps then we will speak of life more than of my life, of being more than owning. Then we will be able to feel all the vibrant array of sensory feelings that make up the experiencing self that is me, that is I or ego; that is each of us.

When we do finally emerge, no longer trapped in an epidemic of self-condemnation and conflict, no longer consumed by displaced guilt, shame, agony, anxiety, cruelty, obsessions, depressions, addictions, and compulsions, there is no telling what we may be able to do. There is a great deal of talk about the wasted energy that is lost every day due to the inefficiency of our automobiles, buildings, and economic arrangements (such as the trucking of food over great distances) but very little talk of the enormous energy lost every day in our disturbed interactions, through the repeating cycles of useless and destructive activity that we repeat compulsively. This waste of our own lives is the fundamental underlying energy crisis, which is the real cause of the more publicly acknowledged one. Now we have the possibility at hand (or in mind, heart, and body) to relieve ourselves and each other of the burden of unresolved displaced experiences, and so begin to be able to devote ourselves to living here

and now. I suspect that as we move into this more profoundly relational, immediate, and intimate way of living, it will be natural and familiar. It will be, in fact, as if this is exactly how we have always been.

I recently realized that something profound had happened to my worldview when I wasn't looking. I don't know exactly when this change took hold. I only know that it occurred at some point in the last year and there is, I suspect, no going back. The process of change may have been gradual as I have been doing these processes for myself. My worldview, my deep sense of what is possible, has changed. Looking back I can see that one familiar atmosphere permeating my life, until now, has been a certain underlying sense of recurrent resignation. This had developed in me long before the extreme trauma that almost broke my spirit. This was already present during the years when I was a relatively healthy young person growing into adulthood. While I also had hope and never ceased trying to improve the circumstances of my life, to heal the various wounds I carried, and while I was often looking for better ways of relating; along with adulthood had come a sense that certain things were just beyond the reach of change. I'm not talking about a simple acceptance of reality as it is; but rather a feeling that I was going to have to accept that there is nothing to be done about many of the painful, repetitive, and destructive patterns that interfere with joy, love, and health. I was never sure which things were or were not out of reach of change, and so I would repeatedly make the attempt, but I grew to expect that over and over I would come

to impasses where all I would be able to do is find a better way of coping. It would become necessary to just find ways around these obstacles, and to find better ways of dealing with the results of their persistence.

I'm not sure if I am adequately conveying the sense of fatalism that I had. It lived in my body as heaviness, a subtle tragic quality that not only referred back to losses, pain, and grief from the past but inclined forward as well toward an expectation of inevitable failures and losses to come. I have to differentiate this from a quite different poignant sadness over the reality of transience, of vulnerability and mortality. While realistic contact with losses and pain inherent in living and loving comes intimately associated with a sense of aliveness and humanity, this feeling of futility has had a discouraging quality that seems to have added nothing to my appreciation of life. I am aware of this resignation in retrospect, from the change that has occurred. Now, when I see some destructive enactment, some repeating pattern that blocks aliveness and love, I see it in the light of future change. I may or may not engage in the practice of opening my awareness in order to resolve the displaced experiences that are at work, but whether I do or don't, I know this can be done and that it is only a matter of time and of the layers of displaced trauma that need to be met and felt with, that will bring real change, real resolution. I don't know if anything I have ever experienced has so radically altered my world view. Well, yes, maybe a small handful of other experiences have so deeply affected my sense of what is possible. Those experiences were profoundly

non-ordinary, mystical, and transcendent. One of the impressive things about the shift I am experiencing now, as I come to be aware of it, is that rather than an experience of mystical transcendence, it is an experience rooted in a resolution found in the heart of the troubles. It is not a sense of transcending anything. There is a solid, ordinary, everyday quality to my sense of this change. It is not something that I find in deep solitude or meditation or need to journey to other realms to experience. While it is a transcendent awareness of the deep underlying reality that permeates our experience, it lives in me in a practical and down to earth way, changing my experience of everyday reality, without my really noticing. It is as if I have finally really arrived in an intimate connection with the sacred Hope that has always been here, just a little out of reach.

In early January of 1991, as I lay fevered and sick, I had a dream. I saw myself lying as if dead on a stone sarcophagus that rested upon a stone platform. Awake it reminded me of the sarcophagi of royalty with carved stone effigies lying on top, but this was my real body, my real self. I knew that I was not dead. I was in a deathlike coma in which I would remain for a long, long time. At either end of the platform facing to one side, toward my viewpoint of the dream scene, stood an upright, human sized, standing cockroach with gorgeous iridescent wings and carapace. The two of them stood sentinel and I knew that they would guard me until I could come back to life. Awake I remembered the one thing every child growing up in Los Angeles in the 50's and 60's knew about cockroaches.



They were, as we had all heard it, the only creatures that would survive a nuclear holocaust. At the time of this dream I had, unknowingly, entered into the horrors that would soon overwhelm me; my own personal nuclear winter was about to descend on me. I have, in many ways, been in that coma ever since. But in my dreaming life in that deep state of near death, I have been very productive. And now, I am coming back to life.

There are disguises  
for brilliance  
(the awesome intelligence that survives  
the devastation of horror upon horror)  
splintering and hiding and seeming  
to be broken – playing possum  
for a day when the sun shines  
and people have found out  
how to say  
oh. Here you are.  
What a horror you have been through.  
Come to breakfast.

Thank you, I think I will. I may need to stretch a bit first; it's been a very long time.

I have been learning the art of dividing into chapters as I write this text. I have been trying to locate the natural divisions that the work suggests. In my life I seem to be coming to the end of *Chapter One*. This project, this research, these findings, this theory I propose is the direct result of the last 16 years of endeavor. But when I look further back to the 42 years prior to this dark and deeply engaged period, it seems to me to have been preparation for this work. In my earliest

memory<sup>67</sup> I lie in my crib wrapped in the deep magical shamanic voice of Paul Robeson, gazing into the dark night sky through a small high window, wondering where is the moon. This was the beginning, in this life, of my inquiry into the hidden recesses of the unconscious. I have given this quest everything I had to give. This chapter of my journey is ending. Just as I approached this text, without planning the number of chapters but rather letting them form themselves as I worked, I do not know how many chapters my life will hold. Like Alice, I will soon step across a brook, leaving one square on the chessboard and entering another. Also like Alice, I do not know what I will find there. I confess that if I happen to come upon the Red King sleeping and snoring I will be sorely tempted to wake him, just to see what happens next.

When work is the same as play and love,  
the dragonflies survive and the grasses flourish.  
We crave this place though it's long forgotten.  
We distract ourselves from its constant call,  
from the anguish of our unfulfilled longing.

We tell ourselves stories meant to construct  
a world we can control and contain;  
a world where we can forget death and passion.  
A world built on the graveyard of our childhood dreams.

Eventually the emptiness gains on us  
We feel its lack of breath on our neck,  
its numbness in our limbs.  
We begin to struggle in a new way  
looking at last to come home;  
searching for something real.

Then we begin to make our glorious mistakes

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<sup>67</sup> I describe this in Chapter One on pp. 23- 24.

stumbling in the dark, groping for comfort,  
 we take hold of all the wrong things.  
 But our grasp, our sudden unflinching grasp, is right.

Gripped by a crazy passion  
 that ruins our plans and retells our history,  
 we are no longer containing, but contained;  
 no longer controlling, but controlled.

Caught in our own sudden unflinching grasp  
 desire and need streak through our bone marrow  
 charging our corpuscles with an uncanny glow.

We begin to see in the dark.  
 We dream of dancing, and once again we fly.  
 Every move charged with meaning  
 Suddenly we have passed through the looking glass.

We find ourselves in an everyday magic.  
 The world returns our gaze  
 responding to every move we make.  
 Our desires converge with our real requirements.  
 Our challenges become our whims.  
 We want what we must do;  
 work is the same as love and play;  
 and we are the same as the dancing leaves  
 and the swirling rivers.

### *Suggestions for Further Study*

From the very start of the collaborative process that created embodied writing, we had hoped that embodied writing would invite readers to relive the experiences described in their own bodies and psyches through a form of sympathetic resonance. (Anderson, 2002-2003, p. 43)

It is my deep desire that some of you, readers, who acquaint yourself with this work through this text will be drawn to explore, inquire, and investigate this phenomenon for yourselves. While I will speculate here and make a few suggestions of areas for possible future study that have

occurred to me, my sense is that the most interesting research to be done with this phenomenon lies, as always, in the dark unconscious, outside of awareness. There may well be new ways of approaching this material; methods and avenues as yet unexplored and unarticulated.

It should be appreciated that the full articulation of the approach of any science, however critical it is, is not something that comes *first* in the process of practicing science. Rather, initially one is guided by a vision, in the sense of Strasser (1963), that is at first indeterminate and consists equally of gaps and ideas. The approach itself, however, is clarified in the very process of investigating specific phenomena by specific methods. Thus, at the same time that a vision is adopted, just as with a paradigm, it is *presumed* to hold until the evidence proves otherwise. (Giorgi, 1970, p. 177)

This describes how the present study grew into its current form, and I can imagine that there are approaches that will emerge from the unique gifts and preferences of other people and circumstances. Reading this text and hopefully feeling some of what is behind the words, as well as testing the process I have described and considering the observations I have offered, may, if I am fortunate, inspire some of you to questions and wonderings of your own about these ideas, these claims, this theory. I look forward with pleasure and hope to the possibility of being offered new insights and perspectives on this phenomenon through the work of others.

I also look forward to results from quantifiable research into the phenomena that I describe. I do not, however, look to these to take the place of, or expect them to be more valid or more reliable than the direct apprehension of the phenomenon which is, I believe, available to anyone who cares to approach it with a reasonable degree of openness and rigor.

I will discuss, below, some questions that have occurred to me as I have speculated on the possibilities for further study.

On a number of occasions I have made use of this resolution process when a person I was working with was in crisis, usually on the phone. It seems to me that a study could be designed within a crisis response agency, such as a 24-hour hotline, in which half the staff would be trained in utilizing this method and asked to do so during crisis calls, with the control group getting some other supportive training to match the attention given. This seems like it could provide valid, quantifiable data that could be analyzed. It would not be an easy design but perhaps not too hard to accomplish. My own experience indicates that there is a significant difference in time needed to gain stability; and that it should be much easier to achieve. Similar studies could be done with therapeutic recovery from trauma, or at a battered women's shelter, and so on.

I am interested in anyone engaging in research on the use of this approach for the treatment of personality disorders. I have witnessed suggestive, exciting results with histrionic personality disorder, with narcissism, and with dependant personality disorder. I also suspect that this approach might allow successful treatment of sociopathy, perhaps through working with the victims of the sociopathic person. This could turn into an interesting study, even if only one sociopathic person was studied through working with a number of victims. I recently watched an interview of Charles Manson made only a few years ago. He still looked,

acted, spoke, and probably felt (or more accurately did not feel) exactly as I remember from almost 40 years ago. Sociopathic people are famous for remaining unaided, unchanged, and unresponsive to treatment. If this approach is effective with sociopathy, evidence should be easy to find.

It would be interesting to explore how easily people can learn to discern the difference between interactions that are contaminated or controlled by the workings of this phenomenon and those that are not, although it would be necessary to develop some independent means of determining the presence of displaced experiences to assess this.

I would like to see comparative studies on outcomes from the application of this approach and EMDR, in terms of the ability to provide a coherent historical self narrative. This is a relevant question to pursue due to indications that adults who have a more coherent narrative of their own lives are more able to support and sustain healthy attachments with their own children. There may be a causative link implied here as well, since those more burdened by displaced experiences may also be less able to maintain the presence that allows for good intimate contact and bonding.

It would be interesting to explore the effects of the use of this approach on creativity. I imagine that people who have an opportunity to either do these processes for themselves, or have them done for them, would then experience an increase in clarity of thought, openness to inspiration and intuition, passionate engagement, creative thinking, and so on; which I imagine could be measured in various ways.

I am interested to see what the philosophical impact is when people are effectively introduced to this understanding. A study could explore the ways that this may change their self-evaluations, their views on evil, their attitude toward criminals or the criminal justice system, their hopefulness, their degree of aversion to negative emotional events, and so on.

In group interactions, scapegoating is a common problem. It seems to me that it would be possible to discover whether the inclusion of these processes in the context of various types of group activities does reduce the incidence, intensity, or duration of scapegoating, as I think it does.

Perpetrators of abuse are sometimes open and disclosing about their urges to re-abuse. It would be interesting to see if those urges could be dispersed in this way, as I think they could. If the study relied on self-reporting, it would have to be set up to avoid any benefit of success that might prompt deceit. It might require other avenues of assessment.

Since the experience of certain affective states<sup>68</sup> seems to be unique to displaced situations it would be useful to investigate more thoroughly than I have done what the relationship is between innate responses to extreme trauma and the correlated resultant, displaced experiences. Examples might be events of brief extreme terror becoming debilitating anxiety disorders, or severe unmet needs becoming addictions and so on. It seems to me that with a more thorough investigation there might be a great deal to discover in this regard.

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<sup>68</sup> See the description of frozen affects on pages 308-310.

It might be interesting to explore whether any non-human animals might experience these sorts of activated displaced experiences and if so is it more common among domesticated animals, only from people, from their own species, or from where? If not, why not, and so on.

Delving into the similarities and differences between the resolution of these displaced traumas and the process of recovery from our own traumas, pain, fear, blocked affects, repressed experiences, and so on might yield useful and important understandings.

It has occurred to me that the existence of extreme displaced states might be the reason that some apparently recovered traumatic memories are not able to be substantiated. I would guess that any severe state of possession by displaced trauma indicates that a real present time trauma accompanied the transference of the displaced experience to the current sufferer. Yet, reconnecting with a memory of that trauma could be complicated by the victimized person experiencing a blending of personal memories with impressions, perhaps quite vivid, that are from the other person, place, and time. If this is the case it might clarify some of the controversy around recovered traumatic memory. This could be explored.

I am curious about the possible connection between the chronic experience of activated displaced trauma and various medical conditions. It seems likely to me that resolving the burden of displaced experiences for patients suffering various illnesses might open pathways for more rapid and consistent recovery. This could be a valuable arena for study.



For myself, one of the most significant outcomes of this work has been the changed worldview that I describe on pages 365-367, which is the way I have grown to welcome conflicts and problems, knowing that each event of confusion, or irrational conflict, pervasive obstacle, or other previously aversive interaction is an opening to a new level of freedom, ease, and health. A heuristic study of this transition, this transformation in a person's worldview might be valuable and historic.

### *Concluding Thoughts*

I will begin this final passage with a poem written by my son in the midst of the turbulent times that challenged and inspired me to this work.

A time comes when you must return  
to reality.  
The covers shutting like the folding  
of a butterfly's wings  
as it lights on a branch.  
Most things end;  
a poem ends with the last breath  
of letters  
on the silky white paper.  
But love, imagination, creativity;  
these are things that never end,  
as long as there are people to  
support them.  
Most things end, but all things start.  
The last drop of ink  
falling  
on the paper,  
flowing through the expanding  
Ripples of time.

(Shaw, T., 1996, p. 43)

As he says, "Most things end, but all things start" and as I arrive at the conclusion of this text, I am aware of the ending of a deep and satisfying process; at the same time that I sense unknown beginnings. I have often said, in the course of this work, that I see possibilities for profound and beneficial change based on the results I have witnessed thus far, from the application of the insights and method that I have described.

In my view, the actual fundament of the phenomenon of projective identification is possession by activated displaced experiences. I see this as the cause and origin of conflict, both inwardly (in terms of experiences of psychological conflict) and outwardly (in terms of all destructive acts perpetrated on oneself or on others). While the ideas that I present here may seem odd or far fetched, they are in good company alongside recent breakthroughs in physics.

A subatomic entity may appear as a particle, or if looked at another way, it was a wave. . . . Subatomic particles can jump from one orbit of an atom to another without touching the intervening space . . . when two particles in a certain state of relationship drift apart from one another in space—no matter how distantly apart . . . they are found to display a non-local connection; i.e., they have a relationship which cannot be explained or accounted for in terms of any force of interaction between them. (Lemkow, 1990, pp. 68-69)

Indeed, the understandings and discoveries of quantum physics offer a solid foundation for understanding the world and our experience in terms of fields and relationships. We find that each of us, in our position as an observing participant, an experiencing point of view, stands in a position of intimate engagement with the elements of our experience. "Quantum

theory thus reveals . . . a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole. These relations always include the observer in an essential way" (Capra, 1975, p.68).

With this understanding we can approach our most difficult problems in a new way, perhaps even when we are most burdened and obstructed, feeling the least able to have any effect on our situation.

In the presence of a weak ego structure, the influence of the archetypal field becomes stronger and begins functioning virtually autonomously. Under these conditions the strength of the archetypal field and its overwhelming control over the individual's life is similar to the autonomous functioning of the instinct. (Conforti, 1999, p. 82)

If, indeed, this sense of overwhelming control exerted by the archetypal field is a result of discrete overwhelming experiences occurring in other time, place, and person situations with whom we are intimately connected through affective links that transcend the geography of space and time, then we are uniquely situated, exactly when we feel most possessed, to have access to the very material that can free us from these constraints. "Single cells, molecules, atoms, or electrons are bundles of sentient energy. In panpsychism, matter (or energy) itself intrinsically *feels*" (de Quincey, 2000, p. 11). Linking through feeling with the interiority of the experiences that are obstructing our lives in such painful ways can bring transformation, liberation, and a new freedom to simply be.

I will end with "The New Rule" by Rumi (circa 1250/2007) followed by two final poems of my own. This poem by Rumi has been a favorite of

mine for many years. It has always inspired me with a visceral sense of immanent transcendent possibility. Until now, I had never noticed the link between this poem and my formative experience, my earliest memory<sup>69</sup>, of wondering and searching for the moon.

It's the old rule that drunks have to argue  
and get into fights.  
The lover is just as bad. He falls into a hole.  
But down in that hole he finds something shining,  
worth more than any amount of money or power.  
Last night the moon came dropping its clothes in the street.  
I took it as a sign to start singing,  
falling up into the bowl of sky.  
The bowl breaks. Everywhere is falling everywhere.  
Nothing else to do.  
Here's the new rule: break the wineglass,  
and fall toward the glassblower's breath. (online)

In that timeless openness of breath, we can feel and experience in a new way, bringing something new and different to bear on our troubles.

Find something so stuck  
you would have changed it long ago  
if you could.

Hold it gently, turning it this way and that.  
Don't try to make it go away.  
Don't try to figure it out.  
Just notice how it feels.

In it, someone in a very bad spot,  
is telling you how they feel.  
But they are so far away  
long ago or out of touch;  
the only way to tell you  
is to make you feel  
what they feel,  
to show you;  
and so they do.

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<sup>69</sup> See the description on pages 23-24.

Now say Yes,  
Open your mind body soul self  
feeling this feeling;  
just for a moment.

Don't try to feel it  
you don't have to;  
It wants to be felt.  
(you have often tried to not feel it.)

Say Yes  
Let it in  
Give yourself  
to this feeling  
for one moment;  
And what was stuck  
Will be stuck  
No longer.

Since this only takes a moment and  
Since we are all burdened with stuckness and  
Since one hundred layers of stuckness only  
take one hundred moments to dissolve,

We can begin  
A new experiment  
Finding out  
What life is like  
When we are  
no longer  
stuck.

\* \* \* \* \*

What moment  
will be the one;  
The one after which  
we wake up happy  
saying Oh  
and I love you  
and look  
Look at the light—  
how beautiful!

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## Appendix A

### Early Description of the Displaced Experience Resolution Process

Below is an unedited transcription of my first written description of the process for resolving displaced experiences. The significant difference between my work at that time, over two years ago, and the process now is the deletion of step three, in which I attempted to locate the qualities of the original experience. It was effective but cumbersome and I found that this step was unnecessary for the effective resolution of the problem. In current practice I use steps one, two, and four. I move through steps one and two just as they are described below. In contrast, without the excess work involved in step three, step four has become considerably easier to accomplish. It is now simple and direct. I orient toward whatever feeling arises in the difficulty. Then I simply feel it, allowing myself to be taken over by it, absorbed in it, inundated with it, to be briefly possessed by it. Rather than working to find the feeling, I let the feeling find me<sup>70</sup>.

#### *Details of the Process*

There are four steps to the method I have discovered for the resolution of displaced experiences. These steps, like those involved in

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<sup>70</sup> Refinement of the process occurred through experimentation over time. I am also grateful to Lionel Corbett (personal communication, November, 2006) for offering his view that the existence of experience without a body seemed highly unlikely. This challenged me to deeper reflection that led me to realize that these were not abstract disembodied "experiences" that had to be located. They are actual person, time, and place events to be contacted and received.



riding a bicycle, may begin to flow together seamlessly. The actual resolution takes place during the moments of the fourth and final step, which is essential and irreducible.

Step one: Identify an area of difficulty, a glitch, a rut, a stuck place.

Step two: Identify the feelings that arise in that experience.

Step three: Locate the original experience. I do this by sorting the various feeling states into a relational triangulation: that is, three pairs of conditions that describe the relationship active in the original event. (This is the way that I have found for locating the original experience; there may be other approaches that would work equally well here.)

Step four: Experience the original experience. Using these pairs as an experiential map, feel into each of them until they are all sensed at once and then allow yourself to enter into the center of the experience and simply be there for a few moments fully feeling what it is like.

### *Elaboration of the Steps*

In step one it is often adequate to ask yourself or whomever you are assisting to think of some repetitive difficulty that occurs in specific situations or in a particular relationship. People usually have a pretty good sense of what their glitches or persistent difficulties are. They will often say something like "I don't know why this bothers me so much, but it always does" or "I keep trying to deal with this situation differently but I always end up in the same mess." It is important to stay focused on one

discrete difficulty at a time. We have usually developed elaborate stories to explain to ourselves why each of these is such a problem, and these stories are often interwoven with other difficulties and with our life experiences. These stories will not be useful in this endeavor. What will be useful is the whole specific discrete mess, including the involvement of others and how one feels toward those others. Often the repetitive, rut-like quality is apparent in more than one person involved in these reenactments. In terms of resolution, it does not matter which involved person is worked with—it is only necessary to somehow get the feel for the underlying displaced experience that is driving the discord. Since it is actually the unresolved original experience that is being worked with and resolved, not the people involved in the reenactments, the resolution will be effective for anyone who has been associated with that particular displaced experience.

Step two is generally easy to accomplish by asking for a description of what it “feels like” when the difficulty is happening. It is helpful to use or suggest the words “It is as if I . . .” since this will open up an authentic description of what sorts of experiential components are actually active. We often hesitate to say things that are obviously too extreme for the actual situation at hand. For instance, if I always get seriously driven up a wall when anyone asks me to repeat what I’ve said, I may hesitate to admit that I feel like running out of the room, or screaming frantically. This becomes easier to express when I say, “It is as if I feel like running

out of the room," and so on. This also helps avoid the pitfall of getting side-tracked into long detours that are attempts to explain how these extreme reactions make some sort of sense in the current situation. This will be a wasted exercise. They simply do not make sense in the current situation. This is one of the reliable hallmarks of an activated displaced experience. This is not to say that some close relative of the extreme reaction demanded by the displaced experience isn't also occurring. For instance, if someone repeatedly doesn't hear me and I am asked to repeat myself quite a few times, I probably do feel a bit peeved myself. But I am unlikely to feel like screaming at the top of my lungs on my own account. (These sorts of things have usually been thought to be residues of our own traumatic past. I suggest that when glitches persistently repeat in an identical fashion they have at their core a displaced experience that may or may not have come to us during a traumatic experience of our own. Recovery from our own traumatic past will proceed much more smoothly and directly once these other person's experiences are resolved.)

Step three is an inquiry in which we puzzle out how these various feelings could have made sense in the original experience. The method I have used most efficiently involves thinking in terms of a perpetrator and victim dynamic, where the perpetrator may have been a person, a group, or a grave situation. I look at the feelings that seem to be those of the victimized person and then see if there are any feelings expressed that

could have been those of the perpetrator. For instance, if I feel as if I want to scream and run from the room, it would seem that there would have been some threatening, perhaps terrorizing other (person, people, or event). I might consider how I react to others when I am experiencing this. Do I feel myself go into a rage? If so, I will check whether it seems to be the sort of protective rage that a victimized person might feel (in which case it would be a second victim-feeling), or whether it seems more destructively aggressive and dominant (and hence makes sense as the perpetrator feeling that matches the terror of wanting to run screaming). It is not necessary to have every element of the perpetrator side of the equation as a given in step two. It is possible to use the victimized feelings to suggest what the paired perpetrator state must have been. For example, if a feeling that arises in one of these intractable situations is a sense of insatiable hunger, it would be reasonable to consider that some famine or forced starvation was probably involved. Our human family histories are unfortunately filled with an array of horrible events that have not yet been felt into and with by anyone. It is sometimes possible to identify the details of the origin, when the relevant traumatic family histories are known. This can be very interesting and enriching, but it is entirely incidental to the efficacy of the work.

I realize that this third step may sound a bit cumbersome and inexact. I am confident that the actual displaced experience will communicate itself to the sincere inquiring person. The experience exists.

It is not some figment or fabrication. It is not a construct, like a map, used to describe something else. It exists. As gravity drives water downhill or genetic striving drives a plant to flower and bear fruit, it has been driving the glitch, or rut, to be enacted again and again; and it is present and available to be found. It could be said that it wants very much to be found. It has been crying out by creating havoc through its reenactments. It is like a sore thumb or a loose tooth or an upset child. Just feel for it and you will find it.

In step four the real work takes place. Those familiar with the practice of homeopathic medicine may recognize some similarities in this work, including the factor of "like cures like." This step corresponds to administering the remedy and just as in other forms of homeopathy the principle of the minimum dose applies. This step takes the least amount of time. It is the simple application of awareness meeting the awareness of the original event, experience meeting experience. All the steps prior to this are only necessary as pathways to that center. Here I find it useful to pause for a moment. Then I use the experiential map created by the triangle of relationship elements (the three experiential pairings). I move from one element to another evoking those feelings, thoughts and urges in myself. This is reminiscent of a pianist using the sustain pedal while playing one note after another until an entire chord is resonating. This can be seen as a voluntary possession by the qualities of the experience. It is in that sense a purposeful journey into the very possession that has been

crying out for attention by driving the recurrent difficulty in those who have been living with the displaced experience all along. There is an art to locating and receiving the experience (just as there is to therapy and parenting) and I suppose actors and other artists will have the advantage here, but it is something we are all capable of. The idea is to allow oneself to be taken into the heart of the original experience—what it was like for someone to be there in that situation, in that moment, having all of those thoughts, feelings and impulses in the original context in which all of it made absolute sense. I find it takes some time, though less than a minute usually, to evoke the whole array of feelings. Then there is a point at which the experience is alive and “as if” real in the moment. It only takes a breath or two of that fullness to finish the resolution completely.

My experience has shown that when these steps are followed, and specifically when the last step is complete, real relief invariably ensues. That particular rut is gone. That particular glitch is unraveled. That particular relationship snag will no longer recur. It will do absolutely nothing else. No other problem will improve from this piece of work. No untoward side effects will result. In fact, even though others may be acutely aware of the change in the person—in how they are acting, feeling and responding, the person may hardly notice the difference. They are not different. They were not the one actually having the problem. They were merely possessed by it. If I keep tripping over some nagging

obstacle and then one day the obstacle is gone, I will be glad of it but I will not feel that I have changed.

Partially because of this aspect of the phenomenon, I have developed the habit of often doing a brief "pre-" and "post-" check, as it can elicit an awareness of the change that otherwise might not occur. I do it in this fashion: After step three is complete and I am ready to do the actual work of resolution, I stop and ask the person to think about the problem situation and to simply note how they feel when they think about it. It will not, of course, feel as disturbing as actually being in the given situation, but thinking about it will bring up some of the unpleasantness and the familiar quality of that particular problem. Then a minute or so later when I have completed the work, I ask them once again to think of the problem situation and note how they feel when they think about it. The person often has a puzzled look as they realize that they can't seem to think about it in the same way. More than once I have heard something like "I can't seem to find it." Alternately, the person may begin to describe a very different set of feelings associated with that situation. In this case there is another displaced experience that awaits attention.

### *Ethological Application*

A different and perhaps even more useful application of this technique is in vivo; during the usual course of interactions. The application is the same whether the interaction is between lovers, friends,

relatives, workmates, or therapist and client. Whenever you experience a particularly painful or difficult moment in the context of an interaction it can be useful to consider the possibility that a displaced experience is active. Obviously there are simple moments of pain and difficulty that arise as the direct outcome of current life circumstances such as the loss of a pet, the frustration of some undesired outcome, a simple miscommunication resulting in some misfortune and so on. The particular moments that are relevant to this application are those in which the level of pain or difficulty seem to exceed current circumstances, as well as any situation in which pain or harm is provoked by the apparent willful action of someone in the situation (and clearly not as a necessary and immediate self protection.)

The same four steps that are described above are used in this situation with the only difference being that the selection of a particular glitch to focus on has already been accomplished by the event that caused the pain or difficulty. So, one begins with step two by simply asking oneself "How do I feel?" By identifying the specific elements of the distress that one is experiencing it is possible to very quickly and accurately arrive at a map of the activated displaced experience that has caused the interpersonal disruption.



## Appendix B

### Charting My Journey in Poetry

Some of my poetry is embedded in the main text of this work. For inclusion within the text I selected those poems that I felt added depth or clarity to my explanatory descriptions, or that offered important insight into my process and viewpoint. Here I have collected a number of other poems that were vital in supporting, sustaining, and inspiring my work throughout this investigation.

Well over forty years ago, on a solitary afternoon walk in my early teens; I first began composing poems, with this haiku:

waves mnollulbrackring  
on the chrickly ragrick rock  
gurshling, shurshling; die.

I was forming new language to express an intimate experience of the natural world. These tendencies, and abilities, to be intimately embedded in nature and to formulate new ideas and language have sustained me through the many meandering paths of my life. They have led to and enabled my deep engagement in this long inquiry into the hidden regions of the psyche and the possible origin of what most profoundly threatens both that intimate connectedness and this natural world itself.

I have sorted the following poems into four categories: Poems related to the problem, to the approach I have taken, to the practice informed by these findings, and to the possible future I envision.

*Poems of the Problem*

Someone, somewhere, sometime  
in a much too horrible experience  
had no one to turn to.

Now they turn  
and they cry out.

We are here.  
Ourselves,  
our place,  
our time.

Someone  
is reaching out to us  
through long lines of affinity  
that transcend time and place.

We feel their call.  
We feel their cry  
in our hearts minds and body.  
We live their pain in our flesh,  
an immediate bodily experience  
that tells us just exactly  
how they feel.

\* \* \* \* \*

We think we struggle  
under the burden  
of our genetics  
and our history  
but  
we don't;  
not entirely,  
often not at all.

If it were our own,  
we would not be  
struggling  
and suffering,  
and failing again.

We suffer  
some assault on another.  
We struggle in their history.  
This is the only thing  
that causes useless pain.

We never  
torment ourselves,  
regardless of history and genetics.

\* \* \* \* \*

Weary of so many minutes turned to dust  
So many moments crowded into boxes  
Afternoons that become only hours  
Love lost, when love can never *be* lost.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two worlds:  
Ours and Not Ours.

Trouble  
is two things:  
ours  
and not ours.  
And so there are  
two journeys to take.

One richly entwined  
with all of our living;  
tracing our relations,  
our feelings,  
through the tapestry  
of our own life.

The other, distinct,  
stands apart;  
a sentinel silent  
until brought to life  
within us.

We rouse these ones  
when We feel something  
close to what They feel.

Like tuning forks  
we vibrate in response  
to the events of their lives.

Catch them!

Let them vibrate in your flesh,  
Do not set them loose on each other.

\* \* \* \* \*

There is a way you have  
(or it has you)  
of becoming evil itself;  
And as ravaging  
as it is for me  
(the one the storm  
is raging at)  
How much more  
ravaging for you  
(the one it  
rages through).

\* \* \* \* \*

Music beat rhythm drums heart  
goes on beating, goes on living  
music singing breathing loving  
lungs going in and out and in and out  
We sing to each other  
we speak laugh cry moan in pain  
Music, we sing to each other  
we love, finding the rhythm  
of heartbeat and breath  
we sing, we love  
we keep living  
instead of drowning  
in the vacant deathlike emptiness  
that does move with music heartbeat breath drum

\* \* \* \* \*

There is no place to hide  
 from the horrors we are living.  
 Build a mansion tall enough  
 to leave the ground behind?  
 Plan a future far enough  
 to avoid the flow of time?

When you wrench the life from another,  
 what happens to your arm?  
 to your mind? to your own children?

We Are All In This Together, from  
 before knowing and beyond forgetting.

No where to hide:  
 Go as fast and far away as you can;  
 See who you find beside you.

Everyone you have ever met, and more.

\* \* \* \* \*

We hold each other.  
 We even hold the disgust,  
 passed abusively person to person,  
 that leads us to hate the fact  
 that we hold each other.

*Poems of the Approach*

Power unleashed  
 by the simple act of noticing  
 what really, truly, actually is.

Diving into a molten sea of dense matter  
 I cannot find wings, I cannot swim.  
 Sinking unknowing, deep beneath layers of pain;  
 layers unfelt, unseen, unknown.  
 I need eyes that can see through this morass  
 I must find them, these dark dark eyes

\* \* \* \* \*

Can we let ourselves know  
 what we are doing,  
 eating and breathing  
 and inevitably killing?

How different it will be  
 when we can say Please,  
 I'm sorry, and Thank you.  
 Thank you to the broccoli  
 flowering peacefully in sun and air  
 were it not for our hunger and our  
 need for eating, need for breathing.

Can we let ourselves know  
 what we are doing,  
 teeth crushing,  
 body being those who have died before  
 as ancestors or food.

Can we come back to the table  
 the rock, the open hearth.  
 Can we see what we are doing  
 and feel.

This meal is not a massacre,  
 this breath, no matter how many  
 unseen beings are in it, is not  
 genocide. This is living.

\* \* \* \* \*

Holding the tragedies in loving arms  
 saying Yes (and No)  
 Yes it happened; not no it didn't.  
 Yes you feel this and I feel this.  
 No it wasn't right;  
 not you deserved it.  
 No it isn't fair and Yes  
 we can hate it together  
 as we say Yes  
 this happened  
 and Yes, here we are.

\* \* \* \* \*

Experimenting  
in my garden;  
this garden that  
mostly grew itself  
over years of neglect.

I plant a little of this and that  
I talk to the insects, the birds  
the moles underground  
the older plants, the fungus;  
mold, worms, and ancestors.  
I have been trying this  
experiment of gardening  
with respect.

And then the snails and slugs came.  
I asked them to stop eating  
the young spinach, the verbena.  
I explained, I described  
I was negotiable,  
They were not.  
Ignoring me,  
they went on making clean holes  
and glittering trails.

I got mad, beginning to imagine  
pie pans of beer  
buried deep enough  
to trap and drown them  
as I knew I could  
and this  
experiment  
faltered in my mind.

Why wouldn't they listen?

Put yourself in my place,  
to see what I mean.  
Time after time, success,  
asking the birds,  
please leave these seedlings be;  
the gopher, to eat other roots.

But now my garden is invaded.  
 Dull dimwitted snails  
 and unresponsive slugs:  
 It was inevitable.  
 I'd always known they were  
 mindless creatures.

Suddenly  
 I am no longer experimenting  
 I am inside the experiment  
 and it is not an experiment.  
 It is life, real and demanding,  
 looking deep in my eyes.  
 Saying simply "bigot"

And life is right.

I had not been in conversation  
 with the snails and slugs  
 as I had been with the others.  
 I had been telling them  
 as if they were fools  
 what they had better do.  
 I hadn't listened  
 because  
 they were beneath me.

I've lost my experiment  
 I'm wondering  
 how best to plant myself  
 in this garden.

\* \* \* \* \*

Do Not tell me  
 it is  
 for  
 My Own Good.

Do not lecture me on spiritual principles  
 and the value of lessons learned in pain.

Do not.



I have been places only agony knows  
and I have come back empty handed.

But I will tell you one thing.  
These empty hands  
are more powerful than gold.

The journey through that fire  
removed the flesh and charred  
the bones to ash.

These hands are so empty  
there is nothing  
they cannot hold.

When the angels fly out from the seven directions and spread  
themselves so thin you only see the glimmer of their shadow  
sparkling, I crawl serpent-like across the sands of their dry saliva  
and leave traces even the mind won't touch.

These hands are so empty

I arrive unaware and leave everything changed in the wake of my  
nothingness – I do not sleep. I only cross from one side of the river  
to the other – floating noiselessly on fire  
and consuming myself endlessly.

I meet you in that field with no lilies, no wheat,  
no ripening grain, nor gentle breezes.  
It is the hot sun of winter or the cracking moment  
of a window pane too old to cling to the splintered frame.

We fall together  
and my empty arms  
hold us both in an expanse of nothing  
falling into nowhere.

I will not tell you  
It is for your  
own good  
nor payment for some  
crime or sin  
nor is it evidence  
of some secret desire  
to suffer.

It is only the falling  
of hard things through space.

There is a whirlwind pushing us along,  
There is an avalanche approaching the threshold of our winter.

It will bury us in drifts of frozen moments,  
and we will grab at each other like drowning serpents.

Together, we will see the  
bottom of the sky.

It will all look like hate and useless destruction  
but we will still be there  
still together.  
still falling  
and still held  
in these empty empty arms.

\* \* \* \* \*

The ocean today is the color of a rough-cut slab  
of murky serpentine; brown encroaching on the green.  
Green so dark in spots it hints at a purple black

The weather has turned ferocious  
pulling every blade of grass, every tree,  
into one organism, writhing.

Now the storm lulls and I walk along the bluffs,  
the air is dank like blood; and the surf crashing.

Vireos startle into the high eucalyptus;  
a hawk glides motionless against the wind.  
The clatter, horn, and roar of a train  
is small, disappearing into the world of weather.

Unlike vacant machinery,  
Each cell resonant,  
I am huge with the sea,  
huge with the wind,  
huge with the sun  
that streams now through the clouds.

\* \* \* \* \*

Taoism, that quick road to enlightenment,  
 everywhere at once; going nowhere.  
 You arrive without ever having left.  
 You find yourself already at your destination.

*Poems of the Practice*

I am the rainmaker  
 dancing the pain of the parched years.

You come to me for healing  
 bringing your torn flesh  
 which becomes mine.

I bleed and you reject me  
 just as you do your own hurt self.

I keep dancing though it feels like dying.  
 When I bleed, your blood and mine are one.  
 I rebel against the pain just as you do.  
 I condemn myself just as you do.  
 I turn away just as you do.  
 I become ill like you,  
 hurt like you,  
 parched, like all the long years without rain.

It is all part of this dance I am dancing,  
 even those moments when I forget  
 totally forget  
 that I am the rainmaker  
 healing the parched emptiness  
 with the fertile vulnerable emptiness  
 of my being  
 being willing, being able  
 to become the wounding you carry  
 in your flesh that becomes my flesh  
 that dances the whole disaster  
 through to its ending  
 in rain.

(Rose, 2005, p. 6)

\* \* \* \* \*

Doing in two sessions  
 what would take many,  
 so many sessions,  
 over months  
 to do  
 if it weren't for  
 these displaced  
 experience  
 processes.

\* \* \* \* \*

Beginnings and a plural view of origin:  
 Where did life start? How did the world begin?  
 Maybe we need to ask: Which world? Which one?

When I stop and let  
 a displaced experience possess me,  
 entering the world of that experience;  
 I find myself in that original scene.

I feel the texture of land after the devastation of war  
 rough and rejecting, or the hollow cold emptiness  
 of an abandoned infant left to die, or the bleak grief  
 of a stricken survivor in a ravaged genocidal landscape.

Scenes, original scenes;  
 sometimes I see  
 particulars:  
 The impression of someone threatening,  
 attacking or leaving or dying or dead.

Each time I find myself  
 in an Original scene.  
 I know it, I touch it,  
 I feel it, I sense it.  
 My body in two worlds,  
 Here, where you see me  
 There, in the world of another,  
 where that world began.

\* \* \* \* \*

Birds that wake before dawn,  
a planet overtaken by the sun,  
our children  
growing older,  
then we die, one by one  
passing across that threshold.  
doorways that seemed locked  
are suddenly open to the sea.  
that point  
upon which we reside.  
present moment, now we say,  
now, and now,  
and now again.  
How many angels  
actually carry on  
doing the miracles  
angels do  
not on the head  
or through the eye  
but on the point  
of this needle of now.  
this vast point  
that weaves love through  
every intersection  
arriving at the crossroads  
staying paused  
for an eternity  
flying off into far reaches  
and still  
never straying from  
this vast point.  
Experiences find me here  
like ships seeking harbor  
drifting almost wrecked  
almost sinking  
drifting alone they wander  
with no one awake at the helm  
seeking in some unseen way  
a safe port, open arms,  
a mind that can think now  
what was once unthinkable  
and feel now what was once  
completely impossible.

\* \* \* \* \*

If I take you by the hand  
will you follow me underground?  
We will move through rock  
    through stone  
we will breathe air  
    that has lain deep  
    in the earth for eons  
come with me into that dark place

safe from monsters,  
for we will be deep in the source  
    of their being,  
even the youngest  
are further up  
over our heads

down, swimming  
through underground  
streams and lakes,  
finding their bottoms  
and then plunging on  
ever always down

come with me  
to the molten core;  
you have heard of that  
    molten core,  
but no one has ever heard  
    of the place we are going

deeper still

we will go to that place  
    that is no place

where the power of gravity  
    overcomes existence  
In that dense center  
where there is nothing but space

\* \* \* \* \*

She asks me,  
"What's the point of going back  
to childhood experiences?"

I describe the way  
unhealed traumas,  
(our own and the others)  
echo in us  
without our knowing it  
so that we are affected by them  
without our knowing it  
so that in our relationships  
we influence situations  
without our knowing it  
to become in some ways  
like those traumas  
without our knowing it.

Until we turn back  
healing those traumas,  
ours and the others,  
telling our stories,  
into the open arms  
and heart and mind  
of someone who hears  
ours and the others,

then we realize what we are doing  
just as we find  
that we don't keep doing it.

\* \* \* \* \*

The world too full—hearts bursting.  
We wake on cornfield days or underwater.  
We stumble ahead hopeful of a destination.  
We clutch at each other; loving or hating.

Something comes with the wind,  
arriving through a rent in the sky.  
Searing our lungs with a sudden air  
and stopping our struggling steps.

We turn, listening at last  
to something invisible.  
She takes shape and surrounds us.  
She takes the name of a lover or friend  
and sits down to dinner at our table.

Now, the food is changed.  
We cannot eat blindly.  
The miracle of teeth and killing rouses us.  
We cry out our torment.

Then the food arrives within us  
feeding a deeper fire, burning through bone,  
sobbing, we fall at her feet and keep falling  
down, below down, we go under  
forgetting all of our resistance  
in the pleasure of falling.

She joins us  
and we fall together through this deeper sky  
where a new way of talking comes to meet us.

It is language without violence  
that knows how to rage in a beautiful terror.  
It begins to instruct us  
in how to tell our own story  
by hearing it first,  
listening to wind and water.

*Poems of the Possible Future*

Where is the bed?  
I must rest.

I have traveled too far to tell.

There was treasure there  
but it was held in the hands  
of death; and she wouldn't  
release it lightly.



She had to know  
that I would hold it as she does  
without restraint  
fearless even when afraid.

She had to know  
that I had seen what she has seen,  
the depths of depravity  
the edges of sanity  
the mountains of pain  
that threaten to bury us all.

She had to know  
most of all  
that I could feel what she feels  
which is everything.

\* \* \* \* \*

We come through  
essentially unscathed,  
wearing our wounds  
like the weather—  
everpresent, transient.

There is a place  
weapons never touch,  
a place beyond  
deprivation and despair.  
We meet there in our loving  
eyes shining pure as ever.

Behind our pain,  
beneath our misery  
there is  
an ancient child  
reborn every moment.

We pass exhaustion  
lose all direction, and still  
our soul waits patiently  
for our return.

\* \* \* \* \*

How can anyone  
face the truth  
when it is buried beneath  
the agonies  
of displaced guilt?

The real truth  
is over here,  
blameless  
and beautiful

even when  
it reveals  
the horrors  
that have been.

\* \* \* \* \*

Enjoy yourself.

Enjoy what you see,  
taste smell touch feel  
think know

Enjoy experiencing

Enjoy your self.

\* \* \* \* \*

A blank sheet.  
People weeping.  
Organizations held together  
by frozen pain,  
perpetrating agonies  
on succeeding generations

Succeeding at last to generate  
a solution as simple  
as a blank sheet

Saying 'write on me'  
a blank cloth saying  
'spread your meal on me'  
a blank canvas saying  
'paint an image of yourself on me'

Even more blank and open  
even more welcoming,  
the willing self saying  
Here, speak through me,  
form an image of yourself in me.

Come, I invite you,  
show me your pain.

Show me the inside  
of your suffering.

Take my place,  
You are welcome here.

You are not alone.  
I will hold you here  
in this emptiness of my being  
with the rest let gently aside  
to give room, to give space  
for the enormity of your pain  
for the impossible condition  
that has driven you mad  
driven you so mad  
you harm others.

Here, I welcome you.  
I will hold and be you,  
for a few moments  
nothing will happen.  
You can be as you are,  
held in this place.

For once, not alone  
in this impossible place,  
then  
in just a moment,  
everything changes.

\* \* \* \* \*

I am having  
dreams of another future

not that one,  
dying hopelessly  
in the destruction  
of so many things,

and not  
some other one,  
living  
free from dying,

but this  
other future:  
living, dying,  
breathing both  
in and out,  
welcoming  
the pain of past torment,  
creating  
the pleasure of now

doing the laundry,  
feeding  
the baby,  
making love,  
having tea,  
talking  
together  
at last