

DISEASE: THE PLAYGROUND OF THE ARCHETYPES
DUE TO A LOSS OF BOUNDARIES
BETWEEN THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE

by
Timothy P. Dukes

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Two years ago Mary walked into to my office and disclosed that she was recovering from an operation for colon cancer. Her six month check-up motivated her to seek therapy; tests revealed that the malignancy had taken hold in her vital organ, the liver. "I want to save my liver", is what she said.

Today, as she enters in my office, her skin is dark as a dried fig and the whites of her eyes yellow from jaundice, I wonder how close she sits to the grave. I look over the past two years of our relationship and it takes me down into a dark and painful place. I hear the echoes of countless sessions that reverberate with the richness of our work and I descend into the shadows in an attempt to retrace and highlight our tumultuous journey.

Cancer and its manifestation in the body, for Mary, came as a result of failed rites of passage. Mary, the "Initiate", became lost in the ritual. Life circumstances caused her to break from the familiar and to enter the underworld, unguided and without consciousness. Within a matter of years ritual and daily life began to merge into a obscured playground where the Gods and Goddesses danced. The result was a loss of boundaries between the sacred and the profane. Our way of working together then became a process through which we attempted to re-establish, define and maintain, Sacred Ground. She worked to protect and delineate boundaries between the everyday and the archetypal realms. Mary's body had taken on the function of the

liminal phase of initiation. Those devouring aspects of psyche which run rampant in the unconscious had moved into the realm of the physical and attempted to unfold their karmic drama in matter, not in spirit. Healing began by demarcation of these aspects of Being where matters of spirit are carried out in spirit and matters of flesh are carried out in flesh. In a sense, the daily world of this initiate had to be protected from the experiences of the realm of the spirit.

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Is it possible that disease is a manifestation of failed passage and that the images and experience, because they are not integrated on one level, spirit, seek completion in the body? Does the healer then become the one who facilitates a process in order to re-establish the boundaries of the the sacred realm? Can the healer share the internal experience of the client in such a way as to free the "spirits" from their entrapment in the body? If we neglect the realms of the spirit are we not left in disharmony? And if we actively value the spirit and open to its message can we not then initiate a way of healing?

Soul
Question.

It seems, for Mary, that a collapse occurred in psyche where body, mind and spirit melted into the course of her daily life. The two years of her therapeutic work has been a process of sorting out the "mess" and relegating questions of spirit to the realm of the spirit, concerns of daily life to the realm of the mundane, issues of mind to mind and matters of body to the body.

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One day she came to my office to share a poem. She tells me that she has carried it with her, in her hand bag, for much of her life. It reads

Soul of sweet delight never can be defiled,
Young enough to seek
Old enough to find
Wise enough to put back

We worked with this poem for several sessions. It became clear to her that she had indeed felt defiled. Given the unending trauma in her life, her reliance on a willful and repressive mode for survival, she was able to continually "seek", and in fact did "find". However, she realized that she lacked the wisdom to "put back". Repression surfaced as her singular methodology for survival. Through her deep desire to "seek" she continually opened her psyche to the archetypal. She imagines the cancer to be the manifestation of all that should have been "put back". "All that pain and rage and no where to go with it. It has been devouring me", is what she said. Our work then became clear. Her way of healing was to instill a process, a way, of "putting back".

This paper is an exploration of one aspect of her approach to healing. I will present an image that will facilitate a discussion of the mechanics of our therapeutic relationship. In other words, I intend to address "how" we've worked together. This paper is not intended to capture the nature of psyche nor is it an attempt to

present solid psychodynamic theory. Rather it is an inquiry, a purely subjective look at the one particular way in which I have worked with this client. I might describe it as, the way in which we attempted to sort out the "mess". It will take a first person, narrative form for I feel that this will allow for a fluidity that is necessary to explore the "nooks" and "crannies" of this rather elusive process. What follows is also a distillation of years of meeting two and three time per week.

good

your way!

We are sitting in the office and at first it is business as usual. Mary places her check in the little box to her right and we exchange our pleasantries. She is noticeable tense today and excited to tell me of her "progress". I half listen, waiting for this chatter to subside so that we can close the circle and begin to work on a deeper level. At first the atmosphere is what I would call "normal-everyday-consciousness". As she talks I begin to direct my awareness into my body and to allow for the thoughts and images in mind to "re-seed". I am now internally located, with awareness on my breath, the focal point of my experience. I will be referring to this focal point of awareness, the object to which awareness returns, as the "locator". As this occurs I am aware that my field, my sense of psychic awareness, is becoming denser. I experience this as a thickening quality. The air feels heavier, my body feels gelatinous, and my senses are now internally located. (I am not aware of significant stimulus coming into consciousness through my senses). Once this

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intrapsychic field is "set", I open my awareness to the experience of seeing and begin to visually "take in" Mary. This usually causes a disruption in her momentum, though she appears to not be conscious of this. At this point I may also verbally disrupt her. It is my perception that she too is in a field, her "everyday" field of consciousness. However, she is not located within this field but rather at the affect of it. She is adrift, even devoured by the power of her "familiar" way of being. It is my intention to bring her to a deeper level in her psyche. The disruption is intended to open her field and this is often accomplished by my responding to her in such a way as to create confusion and disorientation. In her efforts to regain her composure it is usually the case that subtle signs of emotion become evident. Her lips may swell, her breath changes slightly or her pupils may dilate. These are a few of the countless signs that tell me that she is opening.

At this point I have the experience of my field expanding to fill the room. In a sense, I embrace her psychically. While this occurs I identify my position within this inter-subjective field that we now share in common. Humor, a story, a smile almost anything that is genuine on my part allows her to be conscious of me and to remain open. I now am the locator for her psyche, that point which is calling her attention. It is my experience that the temenos has been established. We are now in a sacred circle together and we are open to those aspects of ourselves which are greater than our egos.

Excellent
Description

However, I am careful to maintain a kind of inner tension within my psyche which I believe acts to repress my personal unconscious content. I keep my "stuff" from presenting within this circle by disassociating from my inner world. Today, we are here for her.

The stage is set for our work. My primary function, at this point, is to maintain this inter-subjective environment. I experience the tone of this environment within my body so as it shifts, which it continually does, I respond in whatever way is necessary to maintain its boundaries. Words now function as tools for hold this field and their content are of secondary value. At this point I also function as her guide in the sense that I intend and agree to not abandoning her in whatever process occurs. My guidelines have to do with maintaining this sacred environment while remaining within this shared world in-common.

At this point, while she is unconsciously confident that she is safe and that I am with her, my next step is to surrender my position as her "locator" within this field. I do this simply by pulling back within myself while remaining present and available. Her tendency oftentimes is a wanting to return to everyday consciousness and this is initially met with resistance from me. For if she were to do so she would have to break the tension of this joint field that I am posturing to maintain. In a sense we have a battle of wills. Often the tension is broken and she returns to "her world" while I return to mine and we are simply two people sitting in a room together. As a matter of fact

this is standard procedure and we move in and out of this sacred space until she is ready to do the next piece of healing work. We dance in and out of this inter-subjective holding environment many times per session. I refer to this as the breath of the field. What I mean by this is that I experience a kind of inhalation and an exhalation of the entire field that is embracing us. As it opens it becomes less dense and as it contracts the thickness increases. It is when it is expanding and the density is also increasing that I believe there is unconscious content that is attempting to come into consciousness by entering the field. For Mary it is the somatic unconscious which is usually presenting. However, often she is not ready to open to it, to allow it to incorporate, so my response is to adjust the field. I will, in a sense, close it slightly as a way of filtering the impinging new material. I take my guidance from my reading of her ability to allow this material, attempting over and over to maintain the embrace of her psyche, waiting until she is ready. In a musical composition there is often a "rondo" which is a refrain that is repeated in its original key throughout the piece. This functions as repetitive theme, gives order, and offers a familiar locater, in contrast to a musical score which is daring and unfamiliar. This rondo is often presented so that it remains subliminal. I remain as a rondo, a familiar and repetitive locater throughout. When she is ready, when there is something calling to her from her unconscious that is demanding to be acknowledged in consciousness and she

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willing to open to it, we move into the next phase of this particular process.

As I mentioned, I turn over the position of the locator to her. As she sits, open and embraced within the temenos, I act to encourage an internal locator within her psyche. This could be and often is an image, however in her case she is already highly visual and is easily lost in the realm of the imaginal. This propensity is useful in later stages of this type of work. In her situation we want the locator to be in a less familiar region of her experience. For Mary this is the body. In addition, the language of the body, for most of us, is less complex than that of images and words. Mary is less facile in this territory and hanse is less likely to drift and become lost. I know this from my experience in working with her but it is also suggested by the disease that presents in her body. Her body is calling for her attention so we reference her or locate her within her body. This becomes what I would call a "point of departure". It is the point from which she will open her awareness to the impinging unconscious content and it is also the point to which her awareness will return. I imagine that it is through this point, in this moment when her awareness is fixed on the object, that her entire psyche breaths. My intention, is to be as unintrusive as is possible while continuing to maintain the embrace and to be in constant contact with her.

The locator, being in the body, is usually easy for her to contact. Often, if at this point, I say something like "What . . . where

is it" or "Where are you experiencing this", she will open to it. (I want to add that for Mary, and it is true for others when we work from this approach, some orientation is require to bring about the faculties of mind which allow for this degree of body awareness. One component of this is to work with the client to increase their power of concentration so that they have the ability, at least initially, to direct the mind. In addition I find that once they begin a process such as this, the concentration is greatly enhanced as a result. In addition, this approach requires what I refer to as long-enduring-mind. That is the ability to stay with a process when other components of psyche are demanding a return to "normal consciousness").

As I mentioned, this predominate sensation within the body becomes the point of departure for their opening for the next phase of this work. It is not a particular object or sensation within the body that I encourage them to open to but rather the predominate sensation at the time. For example, the point of departure could begin as a tightening in the chest but as awareness it brought to it the object could open up into a burning, throbbing sensation. This approach is often referred to as mindfulness.

Once the locator is in the body and awareness is brought to it, I take on another function. That is, I respond to her experience in such a way as to "pump" the experience. As she drifts or as her awareness goes to other objects outside of the field of the body, I gently continue to guide her back into the predominant sensation. As she

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} yes
This would seem to me to be one of your strengths

returns to the locator over and over, eventually the object of her awareness opens up. As the locator opens a new field predominates in conscious. In so many words she falls into or is drawn into the locator. She descends into the body and she drops out of awareness of the room.

As she enters, awareness of the body is no longer her referent. Rather, her psyche is now open to that impending energy which has been demanding her attention. She has entered another state of consciousness where images, sounds and other sensations prevail. As she moves into this field, I go with her. My function is then to encourage and respond to her in such a way as to maintain the tension, as well as the breathing pattern of this field. In addition, I guide her to the predominate locator within this new field. I refer to these as "process locaters". This could be a flow of images, a phrase she hears in her thoughts or other sensations in her body. That is, I encourage her to open her awareness to the predominate experience or to the most compelling or demanding object in her experience. (This differs from the point of departure in that it does not necessitate her returning to the body). Usually, at this point, she is carried by the experience. She is in a flow and her psyche is open. However, I do not encourage that she just totally surrender to it, to be devoured by it. I will, from time to time, bring her back to the locator in the body, the point of departure, so as to reenforce the bridge between this inner experience and the experience of her body in the moment. A bridge, if

you will, between the sacred and the profane. This is the sorting out process, the opening to and clearing out of the mess. The body is not ignored but; it is given voice. In a very real way the body is honored and the somatic unconscious has the opportunity to come into consciousness.

Strong discharge is not encouraged. It is my experience that although emoting is very healing, the energy that is lost is what is needed for further and deeper penetration. The release that tears, for example, offer is accomplished in a more productive way. The opening up of the field via deeper penetration creates a greater capacity for latent unconscious material to be release. Discharge also tends to collapse the field as it dissipates the energy. The theory is that as the field opens, deeper energies are released. As this energy comes into the field, or in Mary's case, is released from the body, it functions to further open the field. The opening of the field, while being embraced in a temenos or holding environment, is what allows for the energy to move out of the body and into other levels of consciousness. It is here that the spirits, which are caught in matter, have the opportunity to be released. As this occurs, the imagery is very real and as Mary remains located in the field through which they find their expression, the body gives signs of enormous relief. What unfolds is often a very rich and intense drama within the mind that hints of archetypal proportions. Mary reveals her inner experience as this process is occurring. She not only is telling her story, she is

giving voice to the myths of our times. As Mary embarks on these journeys, her body and her psyche, step out of the ordinary and into the mystery. As we chart her course she begins to clearly delineate the temple from the marketplace.

From the time we first met I told Mary that I would not encourage her to go anywhere from which she could not return. There is an incorporation phase of this work that I will not discuss in this paper. Rather, I will continue with flushing out the methodology of this approach to healing with a brief discussion of how we might work with one of her dreams. Several months ago she brought the following dream to one of our sessions.

There is this little girl.
 She is four years old. . . perhaps younger.
 She is covered with dirt and she is wearing rags.
 And has been living in a basement with years of grime.
 Piles of rags, maybe one window and maybe a low table.
 There is poverty everywhere. . . it is not very pretty.
 She is encrusted. . . a Mexican child.
 She has short curly hair yet it is matted and dark.
 She has two or three small children in tow.
 All are dressed in rags.
 One boy, one eighteen month old, and another little girl.
 She, the four year old, is asking me to clean up her poop.
 There is a big pile on the table in front of the couch. . . it
 is slimy, smelly and very unpleasant.
 I said "yes" that I would clean it up.
 She had been there all this time with them in this abject
 poverty.
 I am aware that I am clean.
 I clean up the mess with a pie plate and go to put it in a
 drawer.
 I realize that it should go into the garbage.

*2112
 This boy
 of recording*

I am thinking that I will do that.
 Then the little girl asks, " Will you please put me on your
 lap and rock me"?
 I realize now that she is me.
 I answer, "yes".
 We get into a big white rocking chair.
 We are rocking.
 I was still limiting myself to her request.
 I will take her home.
 I decided I would get a big white house for all of us.

Where to begin to work with such a rich a powerful dream? If
 we were to begin with images and their associations, we would invite
 the unfolding of a very large imaginal field. This makes me wonder ^{vs}
 just how to move outside of ego consciousness. There are images
 from this dream that, were she to direct her attention to them and
 allow for associations, she would surely open to her emotional body.
 She would discharge and perhaps gain insight. However, in order to
 hear this dream from a somatic perspective, and to address the
 cancer at the deepest possible level, we chose the above described
 approach.

The question came to my mind as to where to enter this dream.
 Once the temenos had been established we talked about the dream
 while "tracking"; returning the awareness to her body with a general
 and open consciousness while moving from one predominate sensation
 to the next, until a particular region in the body demanded her
 attention. This became a locator and the point of departure. We
 worked to hold her in this field until the energy built to such a degree
that she was able to enter the dream. She was no longer talking about

the dream at this point, but rather, she was literally speaking from within the dream.

She was now in the field of process locaters and we "tracked" within this field and remain open to the more predominate and compelling objects. This turned out to be the experience of handling the "poop". We then worked to locate her and hold her within this experience while gently guiding her back to her experience in the body. What emerged was an acute sensation in her lower left abdomen, precisely where she was operated on for the removal of the cancer in her colon. By moving back and forth between this intrapsychic experience and the sensations in the body, another field began to open. This was an association from early childhood of the basement in an apartment building, where she lived with her grandmother. We then began to "track" within this field and memories of her mother, who was absent from her life for much of her childhood, came to the fore. The locater then became the image of her mother. At this point, Mary was clearly fatigued and was having trouble holding the tension. Images were flooding her consciousness and there were several opportunities for her discomfort to open to tears. Her body was fidgety and I continued to remind her of my presence. However, something deeper was calling to her, demanding her away. We remained in dialogue and she kept returning to the locater, now the image of her mother's face.

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Then the temperature began to change in the room and a greater density was apparent. There was a quickening of the inter-subjective field and clearly there was something beating the ethers. A dark winged creature was seeking release. Fear set in, so we worked to back her off from this field by overlapping this experience back into her body. Grounded in the moment and conscious of her presence within the office, she was able to calm her mind though the sensations within her body had increased to the level of pain. When she was ready, she returned to this field and to the black pulsating wings of a clawing, crow-like figure. It was struggling for release, yet seemed to be transfixed on a carcass, like a vulture on a road kill, too greedy to leave its meal in spite of the lights of an oncoming car. By maintaining her location in relationship to this object she began a dialogue with this creature. As she did so, another field opened and she realized that she was witnessing the devastating impact that her Aunt had on her as a young child. Another whole internal drama began to unfold. She stayed with this for awhile and then she began to cry and to wind her way back into her body and back into the room. We sat together as she wept . . . soft and silent . . . child tears. Something dark flew from the room. We both heard it and smiled. Our work this day was complete. We would talk about it tomorrow . . . but for now it was time for her to rest. (and you?)

Jim,

This is - seems to me - so much

you to write this paper.

I appreciate so much your respect for
your own experience & your capacity
to respect & value the movements of
psyche WITHIN you, within the field
where BOTH you & I may dwell.

I can very much sense the effectiveness of
your work - your sensitivity, your patience,
your acute awareness of the process that you
BOTH enter.

I sense the depth in your approach.

I really want to receive this - recall
you by it - Excellent valuing of your
therapeutic process. you have followed it

Well - for BOTH of you - for me too. 95 A
Have a good summer. Chris.