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## THE WOUNDED HEALER

by Paul Levy

One of the deeper, underlying archetypal patterns which is being constellated in the human psyche that is playing itself out collectively on the world stage is the archetype of the "wounded healer." To quote Kerenyi, a colleague of Jung who elucidated this archetype, the wounded healer refers psychologically to the capacity "to be at home in the darkness of suffering and there to find germs of light and recovery with which, as though by enchantment, to bring forth Asclepius, the sunlike healer." The archetype of the wounded healer reveals to us that it is only by being willing to face, consciously experience and go through our wound do we receive its blessing. To go through our wound is to embrace, assent, and say "yes" to the mysteriously painful new place in ourselves where the wound is leading us. Going through our wound, we can allow ourselves to be re-created by the wound. Our wound is not a static entity, but rather a continually unfolding dynamic process that manifests, reveals and incarnates itself through us, which is to say that our wound is teaching us something about ourselves. Going through our wound means realizing we will never again be the same when we get to the other side of this initiatory process. Going through our wound is a genuine death experience, as our old self "dies" in the process, while a new, more expansive and empowered part of ourselves is potentially born.

Going through and embracing our wound as a part of ourselves is radically different than circumnavigating and going around (avoiding), or getting stuck in and endlessly, obsessively recreating (being taken over by) our wound. The event of our wounding is simultaneously catalyzing a deeper (potential) healing process which requires our active engagement, thus "wedding" us to a deeper level of our being. Jung's closest colleague, Marie Louise Von Franz, said "the wounded healer IS the archetype of the Self [our wholeness, the God within]..and is at the bottom of all genuine healing procedures."

An encounter with something greater than our limited ego, what Jung calls the Self, is always a wounding experience for the ego. This is symbolically represented when the mythic Jacob, after making it to daybreak in his fight with the angel of God (who was clearly the more powerful of the two), becomes wounded on the hip by the angel's touch. The event of our wounding is initiatory, as our wounding originated in and potentially introduces us to "something greater than ourselves." At the same time that something greater than ourselves wounds us, something greater than ourselves enters us as a result of our wounding, setting in motion a deeper dynamic of psychic re-organization and potential transformation. In the myth, the angel then changes Jacob's name to "Israel," "he who has wrestled with God," which symbolizes that Jacob's identity has been changed in the process of his encounter with the numinosum. Our wounding is a "numinous" event, in that its source is transpersonal and archetypal, which is to say that our wound is the very way by which the divine is making contact with us. The origin of both our wounding AND the healing that precipitates out of our wound comes from beyond ourselves, as it is beyond our own personal contrivance. Our wounding activates a deeper, transpersonal process of potential healing and illumination that we could not have initiated by ourselves.

It should be noted that Jacob was wrestling with the angel in the first place because he would have been killed otherwise. The more powerful archetypal forces that wound us and become activated in us through our wounding literally challenge us to the core of our being to connect with, become intimately acquainted with, and step into more empowered aspects of ourselves, or else. Talking about his own personal experience of living out this deeper, archetypal pattern, Jung said "I would wrestle with the dark angel until he dislocated my hip. For he is also the light and the blue sky which he withholds from me." The dark angel who wounds us is at the same time the Luciferian agent who is the bringer of the light. There is a secret tie between the powers that wound us by seemingly obstructing our true nature and the very true nature that they appear to be obstructing.

Through our wound we become introduced to the realization that we are participating and playing a role in what Jung calls "a divine drama of incarnation," in which we step out of identifying ourselves in a personal way that is separate from others, and we step into, as if stepping into new clothes that are custom tailored just for us, a

“novel” role which requires a more all-embracing and expansive identity. We realize we are all sharing in and playing roles for each other in a deeper, mythic, archetypal process that is revealing itself to us as it acts itself out through us. We find ourselves instruments being moved by a greater, invisible hand, as if something vast, with more volume than our previously imagined selves is incarnating through us. To recognize this is to have a more open-ended and expansive sense of who we think we are, and who we imagine others are in relation to us. The wound is not only a personal experience, but rather, it is a doorway, a hyper-dimensional portal into the transpersonal/archetypal realm, which is a higher order (in terms of freedom) of our being.

The wounded healer only becomes able to heal and help others (which is to simultaneously be healing and helping him/herself again and again in the form of seeming “others”), when instead of being resentful, bitter and feeling victimized by their wound, he or she recognizes their wound as a numinous event, an archetypal moment that seeks to make them participants in a divine, eternal happening.

## OUR WOUND IS THE WOUND

Just like a dream, the situation in our outer world is reflecting back to us what is happening deep inside of us. There is a nonlocal correlation between the violence that we see playing out in the outside world and the wound that we feel inside of ourselves. This is a holographic universe in the sense that, just like a hologram, every minute part of the universe – such as ourselves – contains, reflects and expresses the whole. The microcosm and the macrocosm are mirrored reflections of each other, as if they are different dimensional, fractal-like iterations of the same underlying dynamic. What we are suffering from individually within ourselves is the doorway through which we can more deeply relate to and become engaged with the suffering in the outer world in a way that helps alleviate both the suffering in the outer world as well as within ourselves.

There is a transformative and healing effect when we recognize how our individual suffering is a personalized reflection or instantiation of the collective suffering that pervades the entire field of consciousness. Our personal wound is, in condensed and crystallized form, the footprint and signature of the collective wound in which we all share and participate. It is liberating and healing to step out of pathologizing ourselves and re-contextualize our personal conflicts, problems and wounds as part of a wider transpersonal pattern enfolded throughout the global field of human experience. The outer, personalized guise of our wound is the particularized form in which the underlying, eternal mythological motif incarnates itself in linear time and makes itself felt in our personal life. We are like psychic organs who individually “process” the unresolved, unconscious shadow and wound in the collective field. We are each simultaneously reflecting, creating and affected by what is happening in the very universe in which we are embedded and of which we are an expression.

It is important to note that this is not a linear, one-way process, but is circular and reciprocally co-arising. The unconscious in the greater body politic of the seemingly outer world affects us, stimulating a resonant unconscious energy within ourselves, while at the same time, our unconscious is contributing to and being nonlocally expressed by events in the seemingly outer world in a mutually reinforcing feedback loop. The point is that we begin to see the true nature of the situation we are in when we recognize that, just like a dream, there is a synchronistic co-respondence and fundamental inseparability between what is going on within our psyche and what is happening in the seemingly outer world, as if they are mirrored reflex-ions of each other. This recognition of what has always been the case is itself the very expansion of consciousness which is required – make that demanded – for us to be effective transformative, bodhisattvic agents of positive change in our world.

To realize that each one of us is uncannily embodying and acting out in our personal process (with all of our problems, symptoms, relationship conflicts, traumas, etc) what is at the same time playing out in the outside world is to step out of identifying ourselves as isolated, discrete entities who are separate from the universe. Contrary to being “alien” to this universe, we find ourselves intimate expressions of it. It should be noted, however, that the way to this realization is not through by-passing the personal dimension of our experience and artificially identifying with the mythic/archetypal level in a contrived and fabricated way, but rather by entering the mythic/archetypal dimension by fully incarnating, in a full-bodied way, our personal process in our life. The deeper, mythic/archetypal dimension “clothes” itself in our personal process, which is to say that our personal process is the doorway which introduces us to the deeper archetypal dimension of our being.

In this expansion of consciousness, we step out of interpreting our experience personally and reductively, based solely on cause and effect and the past, and step into experiencing the myth-like, time-less dimension of our situation. Interpreting our experience through a personal and reductive lens is an expression of a naïve, un-initiated, and ego-centered consciousness that knows no psychic center other than its own. Being linear and time-bound, it is a limited viewpoint that can only lead to depression, despair, resignation, disillusionment and meaningless and hopeless suffering, as our soul feels seemingly destroyed in the process.

When we expand our consciousness and interpret our experience transpersonally however, we step out of linear time into synchronic time, a dimension of our being in which the past, our wound, the world and ourselves do not literally, concretely, and objectively exist in and over time in the way we had previously imagined. Realizing the impermanence and fluidity of our situation, we do not have to make our wound “real” and grant it an unwarranted solidity or invest it with an apparently substantial, independent existence. We can awaken to the fact that the situation we find ourselves in is malleable, is fundamentally characterized by open-ended potentiality, and is infinitely and effortlessly creative if we simply allow it to be.

Talking about this moment of recognizing that our wound is THE (archetypal) wound, to quote Jung, is to see that our “suffering is archetypal and collective, it can be taken as a sign that [we are] no longer suffering from [ourselves], but rather from the spirit of the age.” Jung continues that we are suffering from an “impersonal cause, from [our] collective unconscious which [we have] in common with all [humanity]” [words in brackets have been changed from singular, masculine to gender neutral]. If we are able to channel and creatively express the spirit of the age from which we are suffering with consciousness, however, we become the “medium” through which the spirit of the age reveals itself to us so as to potentially transform itself, the world around us, as well as ourselves.

As wounded healers, we become transformed when we recognize that our wound is completely personal and uniquely our own, while simultaneously being a universal, impersonal process in which everyone is participating. It is this shared felt sense that deeply connects us with each other. This is the paradox: An experience of our wholeness, what Jung calls the Self, is both personal and archetypal/transpersonal (beyond the personal) at the same time. To experience this contradiction consciously IS itself the expansion of consciousness which initiates a transformation in ourselves, and by extension, the world around us. This is to paradoxically step into being a genuinely autonomous, independent being while at the same time realizing our interconnectedness, interdependence, unity and ultimate inseparability from the world and each other. The energetic expression of this realization is compassion.

The fact that what is playing out in the world theater is not separate from, but is intimately correlated to, and an expression of what is happening inside of ourselves, is significant in that it is revealing to us that a way of gaining more traction in effectively dealing with the pervasive destructiveness that is happening in the outside world is by becoming intimately acquainted with what it constellates inside of us. The unconscious, mad, violent, destructive, evil, wounded and wounding energies in the outer world nonlocally reflect and activate, trigger and express themselves in similar, resonant processes within ourselves. The dynamic unfolding in the outer world “translates” itself through the organ of our psyche, thereby giving shape and form to our subjective experience of our wound, our world and ourselves.

Our wound introduces and connects us with the transpersonal dimension of our being, whose realization, amazingly enough, initiates the transformation and potential healing of our wound. Simultaneously containing both the pathology and its own medicine, our wound is a higher-dimensional event which has manifested in the flat-land of our third dimensional life. Symbolically encoded in the wound, uniquely tailored to our exact sensibility and aesthetic, is both the seeming “problem” and its own re-solution co-joined in a state of open-ended and boundless, indwelling potentiality.

Our wound is a genuine quantum phenomenon: Will it destroy us or wake us up? Is it a wave or a particle? Answer: it depends upon how we dream it. Our wound is not separate from the psyche that is experiencing it. This means that the way we interpret our wound, the meaning we place on it, and the story we tell ourselves about it, and thereby ourselves, has an actual effect on how our wound, ourselves, and by extension the world manifests in this very moment.

### **OUR WOUND IS INITIATORY**

Through our wound we become introduced to the part of ourselves that is not wounded, just like we would never notice the mirror if it were not for its reflections. The reflections are indistinguishable from the mirror while simultaneously “not” being the mirror. Paradoxically, the reflections in the mirror reveal what is not a reflection. Similarly, our wound reveals to us the part of ourselves that is free of our wound. The reflections in the mirror help us recognize the underlying mirror which embraces, contains, and is fundamentally unaffected by whatever it reflects. Our wound doesn’t affect our mirror-like nature, just like a mirage of water in the desert doesn’t make the grains of sand wet. We won’t notice the underlying mirror, however, if we become entranced by, fixated on, absorbed into and identified with the reflections.

The reflections in the mirror are the inseparable, indivisible, unmediated expression of the mirror, as we never have reflections without a mirror, or a mirror without reflections. Similarly, the wound is, in disguised form, a manifestation of the part of us that is not wounded.

Until we became wounded, however, we were unaware of the part of ourselves that is invulnerable to being wounded, as we were unconsciously identical with this part of ourselves, which is to say we were not relating to it as an object of our knowledge, i.e., it wasn’t conscious. From the dreaming point of view – where the inner process of the dreamer plays itself out in the seemingly outer theater of the dream so as to become conscious of itself - the deeper part of ourselves dreamed up our wound so as to make us conscious of the part of ourselves that is transcendent to the wound – i.e., “healed.” The wound itself is the very instrument through which our intrinsic wholeness prior to our wounding becomes consciously realized in time - the present moment - the only “place” where our wholeness can be realized.

To realize this is to have an expansion of consciousness, in which the opposites such as being wounded and not being wounded lose their previous sense of distinctive meaning relative to each other. Of course, on the relative level of reality, being wounded is different than not being wounded. To expand our consciousness, however, is to be introduced to the absolute level of reality, a state which simultaneously includes the relative, and yet embraces and transcends it in a higher synthesis. It is only our conceptual mind which “thinks” of the opposites as being separate. To recognize the relativity, and hence, identity of the opposites is to realize what Jung calls the

“Self” (which he described as a union of opposites). One of the deeper meanings of the Buddhist word “nirvana” is to be free from the opposites. In alchemy, the philosophers stone is found and the “gold” (which is none other than an expansion of consciousness) is made when the “greater conjunctio” is accomplished, which is when the opposites are united.

To recognize the union of opposites is to connect with and remember our intrinsic wholeness, which is the ultimate healing, as we become “one piece” with ourselves (and can create “one peace” with one another). This is, “as though by enchantment, to bring forth Asclepius, the sunlike healer,” who symbolizes the healing power and hidden theophany latent in the wound that is invoked by the light of consciousness. When enough of us recognize the healing that our wound is revealing to us, the healing aspect of our wound becomes constellated collectively, writ large on the world stage.

As a wounded healer, we are continually deepening the healing of the disassociation in our world. Healing our internal disassociation from ourselves nonlocally impacts and is correspondingly reflected back by the seemingly outer world, as we re-associate with each other (the powers-that-be’s worst nightmare), remembering who we are with regards to both ourselves and one another. We can co-operatively help each other to step out of a hierarchical universe based on fear, power and separation, and step into our deeper, co-equal identities as wounded healers and spiritual friends who ultimately depend, can count upon, and care about one another. We are interdependent parts of a greater, all-embracing whole and holy being. Realizing our interconnectedness, we can collaboratively put our lucidity together, becoming empowered agents of healing in the world.

It could not be more crystal clear that it is only through an expansion of consciousness that we will be able to transform our world crisis. Maybe all that is needed in this moment is for any one of us to wake up, as all the great enlightened teachers throughout the ages have said that when any one person wakes up and realizes the union of the opposites within their own selves, the entire universe wakes up with them.

From this deeper, more expansive point of view, our wound, instead of obstructing our wholeness, is actually an expression of it, as without our wound we wouldn’t have been introduced to the part of us that is free, healed, whole, liberated and awake. Our true nature can never be obscured, just as the clouds in the sky seemingly obscure the sun, but from the sun’s point of view, it is always radiantly shining, even on the cloudiest of days.

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