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Healing of Psychoses in Transpersonal Understanding

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An acceptable understanding of the healing of psychoses is only possible through empathy in the psychotic experience. Starting with the concepts of Podvoll, Benedetti, and Peciccia, psychoses are described as deep disorders of the structure of consciousness. The healing process of psychoses needs the reconstruction of the sense of being, of awareness, and of the sense of self. To prevent therapists from becoming destabilized by archetypal energies and destructive forces, a grounding in transpersonal consciousness, in healthy structures of evolution, and in a team which is able to transform the psychotic dynamics is necessary.

The Evolution of Human Consciousness

WE CAN presume that human consciousness is a way in which existence appears. The structure of consciousness, its order, is therefore the order of existence, the order of being, which naturally reaches far beyond the recognizable structure of our consciousness.

Let us try to imagine in how many ways the absolute, God, nothingness, appears as the infinite number of forms and processes of existence. Our imagination is certainly too limited, but we can ask ourselves what characterizes the structure and the peculiarity of human consciousness as a way of being. Buddhism, for example, shows us that our experiencing in essence consists of an organization of the experiences. We could also say: as a human being, existence senses or feels, as a human being in existence is conscious. But another interesting trait is carried by human consciousness: the egoic "I" which we clearly perceive in the present. Moving on, we could say: as a human being, existence senses or feels itself. In every one of us it can become conscious of itself. In every human consciousness, being identifies itself

as self. Moving on further, we could metaphorically say: as a human being, God can realize Himself in His creation. But this self-knowledge, this sensation of being is not complete. Every one of us is only a minute appearance, a minute part of the whole, like a small bubble on the ocean that at best can recognize itself as part of a huge and gigantic ocean. The present possibilities and boundaries for encountering oneself as a human being have been described as the qualities of self-consciousness or of personal consciousness (Wilber, 1995).

Self-consciousness has a clear boundary between "I" and "No-I," between inside and out, and tends to identify with the pleasant. It transfers everything that cannot be integrated to the outside by projective processes. It throws away everything that cannot be used anymore. Anyone who threatens it, is destroyed by it. Anyone who gets in its way is pushed away by it, if possible. This is how we have treated other human beings, animals, plants, the whole planet. And now we realize the effects of our actions because they have an effect on us. We have poisoned the atmosphere and partly destroyed it and are now starting to suffer from it and become sick. We have exploited

other people and now have to realize that the earth lacks enough resources for everyone to live as we do. As parents we have ignored our children and as old people we sense how we are gotten rid of and nobody is interested in us any more. We make others responsible for our difficulties but do not find a way out of our problems. All these are ways in which we are confronted with our own actions. This seems to be an essential characteristic of the process of evolution of human consciousness: the confrontation with itself. In being confronted with the results of our actions as the "I," we can realize that the idea of our boundary is an illusion. The other humans on whom we project ourselves are not different from us. The other people belong to us. We are part of this planet; it is not to be differentiated from us. If we damage it, we damage ourselves. To realize this leads to an expansion of the feeling of self beyond the boundary of "I." If we identify within a relationship with this social holon (Wilber, 1995), which means as a couple, we very clearly feel what it means if one is disrespectful or abusive of the other. How can we learn to expand our consciousness beyond the boundaries of self-consciousness and feel how our family feels, how the organism in which we work, our working field, feels, how humanity feels? An essential consequence of this stepping over our boundary of self, this form of transcendence, this expansion of our consciousness, is the increasing acceptance of responsibility. If we stop projecting we can realize the effects of our actions because we do not need to ward them off. And if we identify more and more comprehensively and extensively, we, as a container of our collective consciousness, can sense and feel the effects of our own forces. Then we could recognize what we are doing when, for example, we abuse a child or wipe out a species of animals. Then we could really take responsibility.

Psychoses in the Process of Evolution of Consciousness

FROM THE point of view of evolution, sickness is apparently a common phenomenon. Evolution is a process of changing oneself, of newly structuring, of dissolving the old, of the experimental creation of new possibilities. Accordingly, in new structures not everything fits together, friction comes into being, pain comes into being, and on the level of organic life, sickness appears. At the same time, we

find all kinds of healing processes that calm pain, that continue the fitting together. Processes of sickness and healing are apparently typical marks of the process of evolution or change. If anything is disturbed or out of order, pain, symptoms, sickness, appear. We could say that these are zones which most of the time are especially full of energy and which lead to clear efforts for healing. In this sense sickness is important because it represents sensitive areas of development and change. At these points at least, a huge suffering appears as subjective feeling. This mobilizes other processes which help us to recognize the sickness and which help to heal it, or at least help to dignify appropriate ways of dealing with these zones of sickness as long as they cannot be healed.

Like sickness, healing is also a part of the evolutionary process that learns from disturbance, that tries to remove it and that looks for integration. We could say that for us healing is connected with the whole knowledge of being. In principle, healing can anchor itself in all forces of being, in all forces of evolution, and it can use everything needed from these forces. The healing process is therefore infinitely wise; it represents the wonderful task of contributing to the wholeness and integrity of being, to its harmony and higher development. Healing in this sense is connected with the best intention of evolution. Therefore it feels good if something heals or if we are working in a healing profession. With healing values like kindness, good order, good development, the feeling of wholeness, integrity, attunement, and fitting together are connected. In analogy to the process of healing bodily sickness, wherein the basic and healthy structures of body processes have an effect and can be reestablished, we can understand the healing processes of mental illness which exhibit far-reaching disturbances of consciousness.

Psychoses are probably such far-reaching disturbances of the inner structure of order of consciousness. If the task of human consciousness should be that of feeling itself, of sensing and realizing itself, then existence misunderstands itself in psychosis. In psychosis, consciousness manifests or organizes itself in a chaotic way, in a way that does not fit together. And that is how existence misunderstands itself:

The certainty about the everyday construction of reality which derives from our self-consciousness is partially lost. An

identification with archetypical forces and contents occurs which cannot however be borne or endured. That is how the patient on one side is at the mercy of the archetypical energies, and on the other side tries to organize and interpret them. We could say that the patient has lost ground and stability and is drifting like a ship in the ocean, being lost without steering in a gigantic thunderstorm. Sometimes the patient thinks he or she is the storm, the raining, the roaring ocean, the wrecked ship, the loose steering wheel or the lightning. (Galuska & Galuska, 1995)

The interaction of unsuitable aspects of self-consciousness with archetypical forces and contents then leads to all kinds of forms of unfamiliar inner realities. Up to now we still have great problems in recognizing the essential regularities of this process. But if we want to have a healing effect, we have to try to understand psychotic processes. This seems to be a basic requirement for the treatment of disturbances of consciousness, of mental disturbances, mental sickness: the empathetic attunement with the other human being and his or her subjective experience, combined with the ability to compare it with a healthy structure. From this, a deeper understanding can result; and with this perhaps the ability can develop to support a healing process in an essential phase or at an essential place. Unfortunately, out of its often-held biological attitude, modern psychiatry is frequently not interested in a deeper understanding of psychoses. And, what is more, it is hindered in research concerning psychopathological correlations because of the postulate of the absolute boundary of understanding. This postulate was put forward by Jaspers at the beginning of this century and means that, in a survey of the contents of experience, a basically uncrossable boundary exists for that which we can still understand (Glatzel, 1987). A biographic connection of an otherwise unreasonable fear would just be understandable, but for a delusive idea or the hearing of voices there would be no comprehensible possibility of understanding.

Considered more precisely, however, the absolute boundary of understanding proves to be born out of the investigator's fear that his or her own consciousness will be shattered. If we look more closely at the nature of empathy, we can see that it is characterized by the effort to establish a

highly precise equivalent of the experience of the other in oneself, which comes into being in a kind of process of resonance. In the case of psychosis this would mean that psychotic experience in the consciousness of the psychiatrist or the psychotherapist can be experienced without causing insanity in the experienter. Many people who work with psychotic patients know the feeling of fright, of fearful restlessness or bottomlessness, that from time to time spreads in them. And only a few seem to have succeeded in developing a deeper understanding of the processes of consciousness of psychotic people.

Edward Podvoll

FOR ME, one of these therapists with such a deeper understanding is Edward Podvoll. His illuminating book, *The Seduction of Madness* (Podvoll, 1990), guides the reader into the comprehension of psychotic processes and their healing by means of four autobiographies of psychotic individuals. Podvoll shows how these people, out of an urge for inner transformation and through different ways of trying to realize this transformation, in a borderline situation of their lives, get into an altered state of consciousness that entrances and fascinates them. This altered state of consciousness he calls, following Henri Michaux, the "second state." It is a kind of natural, archaic substrate of thinking and consists of consciousness that is at the mercy of a series of so-called "micro-operations" of thought which represent the seeds of insanity. Such micro-operations, for example, are an enormously accelerated thinking that repeats and multiplies itself and spreads without boundaries. Thoughts and pictures can unite as hallucinations as in a dream. Any kind of perceived phenomena can be personified and "tremendously stimulated."

Unnatural, perverted impulses or contrasting thoughts appear. Thought processes can become things in the form of sounds or voices and are then personified as ghosts. Essentially, the psychotically changed consciousness loses the ability to doubt and, above all, in the struggle for certainty, it fights against self-critical impulses, so that it soon loses the ability to watch and reflect upon itself. In this way it increasingly loses its way in the "ocean of its own projections."

It feels at the mercy of forces which are beyond its control; it feels led by these forces, by ghosts, by machines, or by people. If the forces are of a very destructive character, it ends up in an inner realm of hell in which even self-destruction is possible. "Rare are the insane who are able to cope with their insanity" (Michaux, in Podvoll, 1990). But even in these states, moments of wakefulness, so-called "islands of clarity," sometimes appear. These are the moments in which consciousness is free of psychotic experience, in which spontaneous rays of hope with a new freshness appear, in which doubts concerning the reality of psychotic experience and small aha-experiences occur. Podvoll considers these islands of clarity to be decisive. In suitable, healthy surroundings they can increase, so that the dissipating identifications become less frequent. This zone of wakefulness is a kind of inner observer, an "I myself which is no longer retransferable to the abused, fragmented, always interrupted 'I.'" "Any healing depends on this "zone of wakefulness" (Podvoll, 1990).

The discovery of the zone contains an essential value of healing psychoses, because a human being who experiences this zone of wakefulness comes to know it as a moment of spiritual meaning that gives his or her life a different direction. For the psychotic patient to find a way again, tremendous effort, discipline, and much courage are needed, because again and again the patient can end up in the suction of psychotic ways of experience. At first, such patients will distance themselves slowly from their madness and live in a time of change between being awake and madness. But psychotic experiencing also has to constitute itself again and again. That is how weaker forms or maybe even positive, loving voices appear. Benedetti (1992) describes such psychopathological phenomena during a process of healing as "progressive" psychopathology that can even be of a supporting character for the healing. In this stage, the recovering patient is extremely sensitive and vulnerable, the danger of relapse is huge, and calm and stable surroundings are essential. Increasingly it is necessary that structures of consciousness be built up which have power over their own thinking. That is why the patient will have to stop from time to time at the abyss between dream and reality to learn to recognize self-deception. "In the end, the healing of a psychotic person depends on how much readiness and ability he has to submit to a detailed

rediscovery of his own state of mind" (Podvoll, 1990). The essential task of psychosis in therapy is supposed to consist of the "unification of heaven and earth," in the "synchronization of body and mind." By the principle of heaven is meant the support of consciousness, the care of consciousness, which psychotic persons have to look after, and their paying attention to the spiritual dimension of life. This means both a certain kind of thought training and the unfolding of inner peace and presence as an observing of thought processes. By the principle of earth is meant the preciousness of the human body and its care and earthly occupations like shopping, cooking, cleaning, gardening, and doing house repairs. "Heaven" and "earth" can now be united by rituals, love for detail, and compassion in "human principle." Whenever we act in such a way, a place of healing evolves (Podvoll, 1990). Although the preceding is a very brief presentation of Podvoll's work, I consider his understanding of psychotic processes to be most significant.

Gaetano Benedetti and Maurizio Peciccia

TWO OTHER research scientists and therapists who have contributed significantly to a deeper understanding of the nature of psychotic processes are Gaetano Benedetti and his colleague Maurizio Peciccia. Benedetti has dedicated a great part of his working life to research, therapy, and supervision of the treatment of people in psychoses (Benedetti, 1983, 1987, 1992; Benedetti et al., 1983). Starting from psychoanalytical thinking, he has developed a number of concepts of understanding. Together with Peciccia, he has created a psychotherapy for psychoses, in which they work with patients and therapists drawing pictures as a substitute for verbal communication until a certain degree of healing is established (Peciccia & Benedetti, 1989, 1996). In a complex process of theory-building, they finally conclude that a splitting, a fundamental dissociation, is the most essential characteristic of schizophrenic psychoses, as Bleuler and other psychiatrists suggested earlier. In particular, the experience of the observation of one's own participation in an interaction is supposed not to be integrated by schizophrenic individuals.

As I have already mentioned, self-observation—the consciousness of the self of its own experiencing—does not exist during a psychosis. Ordinarily a differentiation is possible between the experience of taking part in an interaction, for example with the outside world, and the observation of the different contents of experience. If the participatory function of an interaction and the function which observes this experience are not integrated now, the patients are either completely at the mercy of the interaction or totally isolated from it. This means they either develop an excessively individual and not commonly shared view of reality and interpret it in a delirious way, or they do not even take part in interactions, isolating themselves in their observing function and becoming autistic. The participation in reality equals a merged symbiotic experiencing: “Sometimes we see the psychotic patient living symbiotically, we feel him to be very close to us; he tells us: ‘I am the moon, the sun, the universe. I am you’” (Peciccia & Benedetti, 1996). The observing function, on the other hand, equals the state of separation, of the “separate self”: “At other times the patient is in his separate self but, as he is split off from the symbiotic self, his separation is extreme, it is autistic solitude: ‘nothing exists apart from me: the sun, the moon, the universe, are meaningless shadows which I cannot distinguish’...‘you are light-years away from me’...‘you are not there’ ” (Peciccia & Benedetti, 1996).

These two states should, if they are integrated, generate a harmonious feeling of self. In contact with another person, we consciously live in a dimension in which we feel separate, comparable to the fact that we can see light as a particle separate from other particles. But unconsciously, we have the impression that we are in the other person or that we are the other person, much as we can interpret light as waves. Unfortunately, Peciccia and Benedetti understand this unconscious state of being one of an illusion. They think that it is necessary to see it as an illusion as it helps to accept the disillusionment of the principle of reality. If we take a Buddhist viewpoint, we would look at the feeling of a separate self as being an illusion. However, if we follow the wave and particle model of light, it mainly seems to be a question of perspective: If we form our experiencing out of the perspective of the social holon (Wilber,

1995), we feel separate. If we expand our experiencing to the perspective of surrounding social holons, then the experience of connectedness and oneness comes into being. In the structure of psychotic experience, however, a fundamental disintegration of symbiotic and of separate states of experience exists, of which the patient is painfully aware. In the symbiotic state, in merged experiencing, in the function of participation, the feeling of boundary and self-observation is missing. In the state of separation, of isolation, the function of observation, the experience of connectedness and integration is missing. The path from a feeling of separation to a feeling of connectedness and vice versa cannot be taken due to the fear of loss of self, out of the feeling of one’s own life being threatened.

Benedetti (1992), in the course of his life, has developed a series of therapeutic concepts to reach the goal of healing psychoses in this changing of dissolving closeness and impenetrable distance in the therapeutic relationship. For him the “dualization of psychopathology” is decisive. This means that the therapist, by, in a way, taking over psychotic forms of experience, detoxifies and transforms them in his or her own organism and then again puts them at the disposal of the patient. He calls it “therapeutic appersonation of suffering” and “therapeutic projection.” A good illustration of these principles is the psychotherapy of psychoses mentioned above, which was developed by his colleague Peciccia.

In this therapy, an integration of the participating and observing functions of experiencing can occur by means of an exchange of drawings. The patient draws a picture of his or her experiencing, then talks about it. Next the therapist answers with a drawing that takes up part of the patient’s drawing, giving a progressive movement to it by adding more elements or small changes. In this process of drawing between patient and therapist, the drawings increasingly contain parts of the experience of self of the patient and of the therapist. In connection with the continued dialogue about the drawings, connections between symbiotic and separate forms of experience can come into being (Peciccia & Benedetti, 1996).

I have outlined the concepts of Podvoll and of Benedetti and Peciccia in some detail here because they are an essential contribution to a transpersonal understanding of the healing of psychoses.

The Process of Healing of Psychoses

I HAVE DESCRIBED how the inner structure of order of consciousness is disturbed and fundamentally shattered in psychosis. On the path to an extensive feeling of self, existence misunderstands itself. It does not remain rooted in fundamental principles of the order of consciousness such as: becoming and fading; being and nonbeing; consciousness; sense of self; silence; energetic sensing; the ability to control the orientation of consciousness; and the differentiation of sensations of the body, emotions, perception of the senses, thoughts, and pictures of imagination. Podvoll (1990) vividly describes how, because of a multitude of disordered and untamed micro-operations, consciousness becomes addicted to madness. To me it seems essential to understand that psychotic patients identify with archetypal structures. This means they connect the feeling of self with very basic dynamic patterns, but they do not succeed completely, which leaves them feeling that they are the victims of these energetic phenomena. In catatonia, for example, the patient repeats simple movements, feels led or obsessed by them, or remains in complete stillness. In coenesthetic forms of schizophrenia the patient feels his or her body to be flooded with energies, being influenced, occupied, or infected. It is striking that consciousness turns to an energy quality and intensity that is not normally at its disposal and which it cannot control. It is probably this fact that makes up part of the fascination of psychoses, the "seduction of madness," as Podvoll (1990) calls it. It seems as if existence wants to feel an elemental force, as if consciousness wants to feel a larger and more fundamental force than itself, than the small picture of itself and feeling of self that self-consciousness normally has. But the psychotic consciousness is unable to cope with this dynamic, with this intensity. It loses its order; it disintegrates and misinterprets itself as being the Messiah, the devil, the extraterrestrial, or the messenger of a superior power.

If the task of human consciousness to date is to transform its feeling of self from self-consciousness to wider forms of consciousness, to transpersonal and collective forms of consciousness, then it will be necessary to integrate those elemental dynamic patterns of life, the archetypal forces of the collective unconscious of humanity. This is

necessary because it is the living out of these mythological forces, including the myth of individuality, that brings so much suffering for humanity. It is important for us both to live in the energies, forces, and forms and at the same time to be able to control them, perceive them, to be completely free of them.

This, in my understanding, is the connection of participatory function and observing function, of "symbiotic," merged self and "separate" self, as Peciccia and Benedetti (1996) call it. Looking at it in this way, our task is increasingly to surrender to the process of evolution and to connect ourselves with its unknown possibilities and forces. And, at the same time, we must be completely free, unmoved, and still, anchored in the native soil of nonbeing, the absolute. Psychotic people seem to have failed to grasp the simultaneity of heaven and earth. That is how their failure is an expression of the struggle to fulfill the task to which human consciousness is now dedicated. Psychoses are therefore diseases of time in a deeper sense. They will only be able to be healed if our consciousness succeeds in the transforming process which evolution now requires.

In the process of healing a psychosis, the psychotically changed consciousness basically has to build a new order of its inner structure. Going more deeply into the psychotic experience, a living out of the psychosis, unfortunately much too often leads to a further shattering and far-reaching splitting if, in the therapeutic context, it cannot be understood as a "progressive psychopathology" (Benedetti, 1992). This structure-giving and arranging process can be followed by a transformation of personality because, consciously or unconsciously, this human being has failed due to that urge for transformation, and it can best be fulfilled in the process of healing. On this path, other human companions are of tremendous help. If we, from a transpersonal viewpoint, understand every human being as part of a complete existence, we could say that existence helps the part of itself that is lost, to organize itself and to recover by adding other parts and forces in the form of therapists. The consciousness that has lost its way first of all needs very basic guidance and information. However, it is sometimes really difficult to find an access to the psychotic person at all because the person, in confusion and fear, has retreated completely into a defensive position.

If we systematically build up the therapeutic activities, in the beginning we find making contact with the patient is simply being there. The therapist is anchored in being present to pure being. The therapist and the patient are simply together, doing simple things, allowing the patient to feel that the therapist is there if needed. This is comparable to a mother who, in a natural way, does her housework while the small child is playing. For both, the common presence is completely natural. This presence in pure being is the basis for the psychotic consciousness having at least somewhere to feel safe. It is actually this fundamental feeling of being that it has often lost. It is lost in the nowhere land of emptiness, of nonbeing, in which, however, it cannot anchor itself. If somebody is there, if somebody is really there, tangibly there, the psychotic consciousness can gain more trust in the reality of existence, in the reality of being.

In a second step, the emphasis is on developing consciousness, on recognizing and extending the "island of clarity" and wakefulness, as Podvoll (1990) calls it. For this purpose, it is helpful to do simple things in a conscious manner, preferably together; for example, the practical things of everyday life, concrete and earthly activities, maybe also some touch or eye contact that brings forth the awareness that we are there for each other. A further step is for the patient to be able to sort out, and to feel safe in, his or her feeling of self.

By the experience of simple actions, the sensations going along with them, and the realization that they are its own, consciousness in this moment has a chance to recognize the fundamental nature of the feeling of self, the egoic manner of our experiencing. It can become conscious of the fact that everything that it experiences right now in this very moment is experienced by itself, and of how it can look at other parts as belonging to itself and at other parts as belonging to the world. That is how consciousness can once more discover and learn to understand itself. Maybe this is the reason why people who come out of psychosis in a certain way appear like newborn babies, traumatised by a heavy birth, vulnerable and clumsy, but also curious about life.

The forms of therapy in which patients feel their boundaries of body, where they learn to give grounding to themselves and where they use their

senses, are a great help in enabling them to feel themselves. At this point it will also be important to support the awareness of beautiful things, of good food, and to make tender experiences of the senses possible. Again and again, the basic principles of human experience and its fundamental order have to be explained. For this we need patience and a sense of the practical ways of behavior. As, for example, the reality check of psychotic persons is disturbed, which means that they do not know how to bring their inner reality into line with that of another human being; the therapist needs to show and explain this to them. Patients also need to learn, when another human being looks at them sharply and they are afraid that the other person does not like them and is a threat to them, that they can approach that person and ask him or her about the look. On the one hand, this means basic work and thought-training, as Podvoll (1990) proposes. On the other hand, it demands great prudence and spiritual wisdom because, as I have tried to show, psychotic consciousness is busy with basic questions of being and reality. In that respect, a therapeutic companion for a psychotic person will in some way have to be a spiritual companion or even a spiritual teacher.

Another essential element in the treatment of a psychosis is setting boundaries to shattering dynamics, especially by appropriate guidance but also by more substantial limitation of destructive forces and processes. Closed mental hospitals, isolation, restraint, and medication make us painfully aware of this situation. Sometimes it is very difficult for an empathetic companion to set boundaries and limits to a consciousness that misunderstands itself and damages itself and others. The way of dealing with destruction is certainly the most painful part in healing a psychosis, and it is also one of the most difficult tasks for the therapist to understand in sufficient depth. Certainly there are states in which the psychotic consciousness consists exactly of an identification with self-destructive energy-patterns. Such suicidal identifications not only exist in psychosis, but also, for example, in situations of war. But in most cases of destructive or self-destructive impulses, the cause seems to be found in the fear of destruction of one's own existence and in the attempt to rescue oneself in death. Feelings of self and of being are confused. The flight into death out of fear of the end of the world

or because of the threat by a seeming persecutor can be understood as an attempt to rescue the feeling of self at the cost of life, which means being. The shattering of consciousness, especially the split of the egoic experiencing of separation from the possibilities of feeling connected with being (see also Peciccia & Benedetti, 1996) seems to be the cause for this basic misunderstanding. The feeling of self can only exist when it is based on being. In self-destruction, self-extinguishing or the fear of these, psychosis points to death as being a door to nonexistence.

Destruction, extermination, and killing are functions of evolution. They are necessary to create space for something new that can arise from nonbeing. In evolution, zones of nonbeing are perhaps created to make space for a higher being, for a further step in evolution to come into existence. As, in the death of the individual, existence is extinguished, in some way every living being existentially knows about nonbeing. If, however, the process of dying does not happen in depth by surrender to the arrival in native soil, by surrender to the reunion with God, but stays related to the feeling of self, death appears as "the evil one." Destruction is then not a neutral evolutionary principle, but a threatening "evil power." At least in psychosis, the feeling of self becomes accessible, but at the cost of a fundamental threat. Destruction should not need to threaten the feeling of self. It often even serves the development of a being that senses itself. But the psychotic human being first has to struggle for assurance of the sensation of being, conscious being, and the feeling of self. Most severe destructive forms of psychoses can therefore only be healed if anchoring occurs beyond the feeling of self or even in nonbeing and the psychotic person realizes his or her self-destructive tendencies. In this case, psychotic individuals would have to realize that the attempt to identify with very aggressive and destructive forces, which means that destruction belongs to them, has become a part of them. Only if they realize their own destructiveness, only if they are distressed about how destructively they behave, can they tame these forces and turn away from them. Otherwise, they are in great danger of misunderstanding their own experience, and they are in great danger of wanting to rescue themselves or others, or of being killed by their own suicidal impulses.

Therapeutic Accompaniment

IF WE become aware of these aspects of the healing of psychotic processes, we can develop a sense about what an enormous task it can be to accompany a psychotic process. Certainly only a therapist who is capable of recognizing psychotic experience, meaning the disorder of the structure of consciousness, can treat it effectively. For this, we human beings have the wonderful possibility of empathy, of sensitivity, of attunement. This principle really is a wonder. Expressed transpersonally, it means that a part of existence, the consciousness of the therapist, can open up to another part of existence, the disturbed and psychotically changed consciousness of the patient. As therapists, we tune in to the patient. We line up our field of consciousness to some degree with that of the psychotic patient. Usually this happens by our allowing the experience of the patient to reproduce itself in us, and at the same time observing and examining it. The tuning in and the evocation of psychotic experience in a lesser degree in one's own consciousness is nevertheless a very difficult and painful task. The therapeutic companion must have a powerful capacity for creating and bearing exemplary madness. Only if the therapist is able to comprehend psychotic experiencing, might she or he be capable of recognizing the confusion and delusion and the nature of the disturbance. We have to realize what it can mean for a therapist to feel internally what the patient experiences: namely, that the whole world is against me; everybody wants to destroy me, wants to threaten my existence; that the telephones and sockets are bugged, the neighbor wants to kill me, and so on.

Only if the therapist is capable of bearing such inner disruption, maybe even the inner hell of the patient, without also becoming insane, can the therapist possibly show the patient the way out. For this, the therapist needs a surrounding that is not insane, an anchoring in structures of consciousness that are deeper than the disturbance of the patient. How can the therapist be capable, at least part-time, of dissolving his or her own consciousness to serve as a container for the psychotic suffering of the patient? Because only in such a case can the disorganized parts of the patient, the patient's misunderstandings and misinterpretations, be understood and be sorted

anew. To be such a container that can carry the energetic dynamics of psychotic experiencing to full term requires an anchoring in a transpersonal consciousness (Galuska & Galuska, 1995) and a connectedness with a circle of therapeutic companions who are around the patient. In their connection, they form something like a healing circle in the concrete or figurative sense. The circle, the team, is a much more effective principle than the individual therapist (Galuska, 1996). The individual therapist is best protected from the danger of being destabilized while working with psychotic patients by an anchoring in the fundamental principles of consciousness, especially in spiritual qualities like inner silence, centering, emptiness, distance, consciousness. The anchoring fundamentally needs to be deeper and more comprehensive than the disturbance. Here psychotic forms and disruptions of consciousness may exist that can be sufficiently understood and brought into line internally only by a consciousness which is rooted in the absolute, in God, or by an "enlightened human being," who would also need to have clinical experience, which is a rare occurrence in the history of humanity. The anchoring in the basic structures of consciousness gives greater security for the therapist when he or she is part of a team and is supported by mutual reassurance. For example, by the therapist exchanging ideas or impressions about a patient with colleagues, and in so doing, again stabilizing his or her own structure. Every therapist will have to be well-connected in a team while accompanying a psychotic person, because the stability and order of the therapist's own consciousness can best be supported in this way. Especially helpful here is the supervision of the treatment. In supervision, on the one hand, the labilized integrity of a therapist can be reestablished, while, on the other hand, the process of carrying the psychosis to its full term is supported: This is a concept that makes very clear the significance of the team, of the "healing circle," in the therapy of psychoses.

Let us, for the sake of understanding the healing process of psychosis, change our perspective and not look just at the individual psychotic person, surrounded by his or her therapeutic companions. Let us see the superior whole, the healing circle, the collective field of consciousness, that has absorbed the psychotically changed consciousness. If we understand it as a larger organism, then its

task is obviously to enable one part of it to transform. All forces of this organism, such as compassion, love, control, leading, setting boundaries, becoming conscious, and so on, which we only partly know and understand, can have a combined effect here (Galuska & Galuska, 1995). Perhaps we could compare it to carrying a baby to full term, so that a new structure of consciousness can be born. In therapies of psychoses, we often find the themes of death and resurrection. People involved in the healing process of psychotic developments appear to be predestined to solve the question of uniting heaven and earth, described above as the evolutionary task of human consciousness.

But perhaps the picture of carrying a baby to full term is too extreme. Maybe the healing circle rather represents a container which detoxifies, digests, and assimilates unfitting and destructive patterns of human consciousness. Therapists can very often participate in fundamental processes of change, in gigantic energetic intensities, in the solution of existential questions. If we take on such a perspective, then in relation to the current handling of psychoses, the most critical point is not the use of violence and medication, but the question of healing on the one side, or the isolation of a "psychotic center" and the restriction of damage on the other side. If we cannot completely understand the disturbance of consciousness in psychosis, it will threaten our own consciousness and we will therefore isolate the psychotic person, so that he or she cannot do any damage. And in a situation where that is the only possibility left, we should do it with as much compassion and mercy as possible. But psychosis cannot heal like this, it remains a potentially dangerous center felt by many people who have been treated only medically, who have been left by themselves and who prefer to forget "the whole horror story." A successful healing of psychosis can only happen if more complete structures of consciousness are built around it, if people are around with whom the patient can connect, who can be trusted, and who build a collective field of healing around him or her. In the future, it will remain something special to find people who are capable of restructuring and healing psychotic structures.

We only can gain the whole deeper understanding of psychotic processes if we connect with the persons who have lost their way, if we

open ourselves, if we allow ourselves to be touched by them internally. We can have a healing effect only if we create a healing field in which the psychotic person can settle down, into which the patient can be streamed, and to which the patient can be entrusted. This is only possible if our hearts open up for each other, if we allow compassion, mercy, and love also to have an effect on the disturbed and suffering. If the task of humanity, as mentioned above, is to fulfill the simultaneity of heaven and earth, to unite nonbeing and the conscious experiencing of evolutionary processes, then the synthetic principle is a characteristic of the heart. To give a picture: We are children of heaven and earth and our task seems to be to unite and give form to the qualities of our parents, the absolute and the individual form of our reality in a human manner. It is human if it is happening with love, dignity, and grace. Out of our heart, the holistic force of unification and merging can have an effect. It bears its fruits in integral creative action.

We need the clarity and intelligence of our consciousness to be able to offer effective help to sick people. At the same time, we need our heart for this task, otherwise, the solutions can be cool and clean but without love. It is love that reconciles. Love has a fundamental effect, even before any understanding. It is love that says yes to any form of being, to any form of consciousness, just as it is. And it is love that gives what the psychotic person needs most: an absolute yes to being, because he or she has lost trust in life. The heart allows us to be helpful even if we do not understand the sickness, even if we cannot treat or heal it. It gives comfort and human sympathy, it allows us to stay connected with suffering in a respectful and humble way, even if we cannot contribute to its healing or the alleviation of its suffering.

Health and the Goals of Healing

IF WE take a last look at the field of healing, we can now more easily understand that healing forces in essence have an effect by having a connection with the structures of health. This is why every hospital, or other health institution, really has to emphasize health as a starting point. To be healthy means to be structured, organized, in balance, in harmony; it means to have the potential to activate one's own abilities, to fall back upon resources, to function, to feel alive, relaxed,

and free. Health seems not to be a goal of evolution; rather it seems to be a prerequisite for the ability to live one's life, to develop, and unfold it. The more rooted we are in our health, the less is the danger of becoming sick and the more ideal are the conditions for us to use our potentials and abilities. From this viewpoint, prevention, in contrast to the healing of sickness or even the treatment of symptoms, is of wider importance. Prevention in the sense of support of a healthy life, the feeling of being healthy, is of fundamental meaning also for the treatment of all sickness. It is therefore easily comprehensible that, especially in psychoses, a basis from which healing can start is only reached by building up and strengthening healthy structures so that the psychotic person can, at least for a few moments, feel clear, safe, supported, free from fear, and alive. For a healthy healing field to be established, people who work therapeutically especially need to take care of their own health. They have to constantly watch that they become and remain healthy. Therefore it is naturally imperative for therapists to be in therapy themselves. Body hygiene, psychic hygiene, hygiene of the mind, hygiene of relations, are important requirements in the life of a therapist. The larger a therapist's task, the more awareness of his or her own health is necessary if the therapist is not to become "infected" by the problems of the patients, on a physical, emotional, or mental level. Therefore, spiritual health is one of the essential prerequisites for the accompaniment of psychotic people. A psychotherapist who is in danger of becoming psychotic will most probably not be able to conduct psychosis therapy except as part of a team and under supervision. Then the therapist might even be able to heal himself of herself in the process. In general, a fairly healthy consciousness is required to be able to heal a sick individual. Sick people can give much comfort and compassion to each other because they recognize their own situation in one other. But healing needs to relate with healthy structures and processes, if it is to be effective in the organism of a sick person or in a therapeutic relationship in the surrounding field of treatment.

What then is the goal of the healing of psychoses?

Is it the restoration of balance in the neurotransmitter system of our brain?

Is it the elimination or alleviation of disturbing symptoms?

Is it the establishment or reestablishment of the ability to live and work in society, in the human community?

Is it the development of normal self-consciousness, of a normal ego-structure?

Is it the mastery of psychic abilities—the ability, instead of being possessed by “ghosts” or archetypal forces, to use, in a kind of trance, these inner voices...heard as a channeling source?

Or is the goal of healing a psychosis to reveal a mystic who has found Divinity within, who has realized Divinity and lives in its creation?

Maybe the last goal is the most noble. However, a holistic perspective would not exclude any of these goals, but would see them as representing aspects of a comprehensive truth. To accompany a psychotic patient requires a readiness to accept that life far exceeds our ability to understand it, that we will never have complete understanding but can only try to give our best—with ease, magnanimity, dignity, and humility. If we remain receptive to an ever-new and more complete understanding, then we can live in acknowledgement of the open and unpredicted process of evolution, whose directions and revelations are still unknown to us.

Notes

This paper is a translated revision of Galuska (1997).

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