

Healing As Restoring Integrity

Paul Bahder, M.D.

Healing is the restoring of wholeness from the feeling of disease. Healing disease is different from fighting illness. We often hear about “fighting cancer” or “the war with drugs and addiction” or even “the war with poverty”. We have an adversarial position with our experience involving struggle and conflict. This resistance is the seed of our suffering.

Illness or more specifically *the feeling of disease* is not the same as a medical condition. Modern medical care system overlooks the most important and mysterious part of illness and disregards and even ridicules the emotional signature of illness. And it is this emotional imprint that contains the valuable keys to re-connect us with wholeness.

The emotions we feel as we are experiencing illness are the disease. The physical condition associated with being sick is what makes the emotional reality of disease appear objective, as if it was an entity. We have all heard of people who had a grave medical condition but did not feel it or people who did not have any severe physical condition but were very much in unease.

The physical conditions are really not the domain of healers but of physicians. We have forgotten the difference between healers and physicians and live in the times that our medical system is almost exclusively run by physicians but has no healers.

Healing is the process of moving from being fractured with its associated state of disease to the state of wholeness with its sense of integrity, freedom and ease. It is an awakening from the oppressiveness of limitation and lack of ease to the discovery of wholeness. This awakening often appears as a release with an associated sense of freedom, creativity and lightness of being.

It is a curious fact that conventional medical education completely overlooks the activity of restoring a patient to wholeness and instead focuses entirely on fighting physical conditions. Even the field of psychiatry has drifted to simply looking at “chemical imbalance” and has forgotten that as healers we are not really treating a physical entity but a suffering of a human soul. These two domains of activity are not the same and cannot be reduced to one. Much as analyzing a chemical composition of a book – checking what the paper and ink are made of - while valuable in itself could never lead us to understanding of its contents and appreciating its beauty. There are domains of human existence that can never be understood in terms of chemistry, physiology, or outer behavior. They simply belong to different, mutually irreducible dimensions.

The feeling of disease contains a treasure which when unwrapped and properly integrated becomes the royal road to wholeness. It needs to be explored. It needs to be consciously savored so as to yield its subtle message. Much like good wine is not to be simply swallowed and forgotten, so disease is not to be simply eliminated. Behind the surface it contains subtle clues. We need to learn its language, hear its teaching. It is a teaching that is specifically our own, you could say tailor made for our own needs.

In disease our attention spontaneously goes toward discomfort and invites us into the process of integration. By accepting this invitation and becoming more aware we are moved in the direction of our destiny. Life becomes more purposeful and we learn to stop running from the ghosts of fear and grief that have been haunting us most of our life and finally come to rest.

The process of being restored to wholeness does not usually take place through becoming more aware of what we experience as “good”. Integration demands acceptance of those parts of our psyche that have been disowned or more properly banished into the subconscious realms. Integration requires welcoming back “the prodigal son” part of our psyche that has been lost, destitute, poor and in a state of disease. It requires opening up to that which we have spent a lifetime of avoiding. *Disease* is the invitation into that realm. Especially chronic or more serious kinds of suffering offer us a key to the darker realms of our mind so that we can resolve the sense of inner conflict and discover the integrity of life.

A healer is one who much as a midwife witnesses the birth of new consciousness amidst the conditions of pain and seeming suffering. *Disease* is already the process of awakening set in motion and so the healer is not there to make things happen but only to recognize and welcome the birth that is already taking place. Like a friend and a companion to the one going through this “birthing” process a healer patiently, without fear, with complete inner assurance is present to the mysterious transformation of consciousness taking place.

The outer healer serves as a temporary template to point a person’s attention to find that same inner nonresistance to experience of life within them. It is a temporary structure helping one to discover that healing has already taken place and that the inner healer has never been absent. And so healing in the end is the process of awakening our sensibility to the wholeness of being that is an ever-present reality and that has always been.

And what happens to the physical condition when healing has taken place? Much of the time it stops being a factor. We often observe resolution of seemingly serious medical conditions. However, some of the time it can even lead to physical sense of death. Yes, sometimes healing leads to death. I have witnessed the death of people who are healed, who arrived at peace and are ready to complete their journey on earth. Their transition is an expression of their healing.

Healing belongs to another dimension, not to the body. If it belonged to the body then healing would be doomed to ultimate failure because in the end we all must surrender our bodies. But healing takes place in consciousness. It is dealing with the *feeling of disease* and in that way healing lifts us out of the physical sense of life into a dimension that recognizes the context of our life experience. In becoming aware of that context, life appears in its mystery and unfathomable beauty.

In other words, the feeling of disease is our guide into the darker, hidden realms of our consciousness so that they can be brought to the light of awareness and integrated. Disease in this sense is really a teacher showing us areas of consciousness where we have not been present. Disease invites us to be attentive to the emotional experience that our physical symptoms evoke so that it is not banished into the underworld of our subconscious.

Many times people ask, "What is it trying to teach me?" They usually assume that they are supposed to reach some kind of a conclusion that will be "the lesson" they are supposed to learn. This kind of reasoning leads one into the mental realm of thinking *about* yourself as an entity rather than *living* your life. But disease does not necessarily lead to conceptual understanding, although it might. It leads to a state of liberation from suffering but not necessarily in the sense of making symptoms disappear. Disease leads to awakening from the hypnotic preoccupation with disease and external source of discomfort to the experience of wholeness. It becomes the vehicle to integrate painful emotional imprints and to dissolve the distorted self-images referenced to those memories in our psyche and in our body.

Healing allows the discovery of a higher sense of being that is freed of the limited concepts of self. Emotional "complexes" that have been like mine fields which we have carefully tried at all costs to avoid during our life come back in the *experience* of disease so as to be neutralized by the light of awareness and finally put to creative rather than destructive use.

Strangely enough, our concept of self is usually built on the bases of these emotional complexes, which while for the most part remain hidden from our awareness, nevertheless determine the course of our human life. By welcoming back the emotional content of these complexes and by making them conscious we are actually dissolving, like icebergs in an ocean, the complexes that have the potential for ruining our life.

It is the role of a healer to remind us that the experience of disease is not to be shunned but welcomed. Meeting illness not as an adversary but as an agent of transformation allows us to detach from the fixation on being a victim and leads us to a release and to freedom. Initially a healer appears as an external person that we go to see but eventually it is more like an activity of consciousness independent of any outer circumstances. The Activity of Healing can use any

individual or circumstance to reveal wholeness. That includes medications, surgery or any other painful situation.

In this paradoxical juncture of the inner consciousness of vastness with the outer awareness of specific situations in our life - being in the world of our experience and yet “not of it” - we find the purpose and fulfillment of our destiny. Simultaneous awareness of the context of our experience with the forms of our experience makes us fully human and fully heavenly. Then wholeness of being spans the dimensions of life – at once finite and mysteriously unlimited.