

TYPES OF SUPERNATURAL PHENOMENA

'Every moment is a miracle when you look at it with your real eye. There are no special miracles.'
Jean Klein

Levels of Wonders and Miracles

Almost all civilizations and cultures, both historical and contemporary, have recorded occurrences of apparent supernatural or extra-dimensional phenomena:

Since primeval times, people have spoken of strange and sometimes profoundly meaningful personal experiences. Such experiences have been reported by the majority of the world's population and across all cultures. In modern times, they are still reported by most people. These experiences, called "psychic" or "psi," suggest the presence of deep, invisible interconnections among people, and between objects and people. The most curious aspect of psi experiences is that they seem to transcend the usual boundaries of space and time. (1)

So-called miraculous or supernatural happenings are of many different types, qualities and levels. They range from outright deception to actual 'wonders' and 'miracles' which appear to violate our currently understood laws of nature. The most commonly reported psychic phenomena are telepathy, clairvoyance, psychokinesis and precognition. In certain systems of thought seemingly extraordinary events are classified into three broad categories:

- Sleight of hand and deliberate perceptual and cognitive deception
- Apparent wonders whose real mechanism of action and effect is not understood
- True miracles which occur due to the operation of higher-dimensional interventions in the natural order

Different types of so-called miraculous happenings are, in a certain sense, analogous to the awakening of various states of consciousness and perception. The Sufis distinguish a number of levels or degrees of significance for such events and then "work with them in accordance with certain scales of value."

First of these are those appearances which are due to works of deception, such as conjurors use; works of stealth, technically termed *Istidraj*, 'successive things.' Second come amazing things done by people without their knowing exactly how they do them, through the help of certain entities and influences. These works are called *Ma'awanat*, 'aids.' This is the lowest form of activities which appear to violate the natural order. Concentration on these things prevents higher human development. The energy going into them cannot be focused properly, and the

enterprise usually degenerates into charlatanry or remains a hit-or-miss occultism. Third we have wonder-working (*Karamat*), which literally means something generously bestowed. They are apparent variations in physical laws (actually using unfamiliar ones), carried out in the course of the Sufi's role as someone endowed with special functions. This ability evaporates if not employed operationally. Operationally means: 'only in accordance with the harmony of the whole Sufi phenomenon.' Fourth, and finally, are what are termed *real* miracles – the word for them is *Mu'ajizat*. These are true violations of natural events, carried out before witnesses by deliberate intent, by prophets, who are further defined as law-givers. The purpose is evidentiary, as in the case of the miracles in the Old and New Testaments. The kinds of operation correspond to the degree of significance and role of the human agent in question. Sleight of hand, of course, is for performers and charlatans. Assurances come to worthy people, but carry with them the probability that such undeveloped individuals will ascribe them to wild and unlikely sources. There are considerable risks of self-deception in pursuing this kind of thing. Sufi wonder-working comes about to help the Sufi in his work. It is his duty, in general, to conceal these happenings; and it is traditional also that his fellow-workers and disciples should also conceal them, if they know about their ever having happened. Miracles as such only take place when there is a need to demonstrate a person's importance before a mass of people, or a variety of people, of all kinds, so that they will listen to the message which he has for them relating to religious organization. They have never been, and are not now any part of Sufic activity. (2)

Transcending Space and Time

In certain higher states of consciousness, time, as normally understood, has no meaning. The annihilation or elimination of time is one of the salient characteristics of mystical experience. In the ecstatic state the mystic is "able to overcome all barriers of time and space." Esoteric evolutionary theory also holds that the development of new 'organs of perception' in human beings is connected with the transcending of space and time.

Many spiritual teachings claim that time is not absolute but relative, as alluded to in the classical story of Sufi master Shahab-el-Din and the Sultan of Egypt:

Sheikh Shahab el-Din was able to induce, it is said, the appearance of fruits, people and objects absolutely at will. It is related of him that he once asked the Sultan of Egypt to place his head in a vessel of water. Instantly the Sultan found himself transformed into a shipwrecked mariner, cast ashore in some totally unknown land. He was rescued by woodmen, entered the nearest town (vowing revenge against the Sheikh whose magic had placed him in this plight) and started work there as a slave. After a number of years he gained his free-

dom, started a business, married and settled down. Eventually, becoming impoverished again, he became a freelance porter, in an attempt to support his wife and seven children. One day, chancing to be by the seashore again, he dived into the water for a bathe. Immediately he found himself back in the palace at Cairo, again the King, surrounded by courtiers, with the grave-faced Sheikh before him. The whole experience, though it had seemed like years, had taken only a few seconds. (3)

Certain miracles which involve the transcending of time and space dimensions may be based on an intuitive perception of the immediate needs and requirements of a situation: "When a Friend perceives that a wrong is to be righted, he will seek guidance as to the method and permission as to the propriety in a state of contemplation; then the necessary effect will follow instantly and continuously or subsequently and appropriately." In *Among the Dervishes*, O.M. Burke discussed the nature of inexplicable events which seem to transcend the boundaries of conventional time and space with a contemporary Sufi teacher:

'Sheikh Abdul Kadir of Gilan,' I said, 'according to witnesses, once threw his slippers into the air during a Sufi meeting. Three days later a caravan arrived at his residence, and its members claimed that on that very day a pair of slippers, which they had with them, struck two bandits who were at that very moment robbing them, and this happening was so supernatural that it put the robbers to flight. Did this actually happen, or is the interpretation figurative, or is the whole story a fabrication?' Arifa threw back her head and laughed. 'The answer is really none of these things. But, to use your terms, the nearest we can get is to say that this thing could easily have happened. How it happened, and why, is something you understand through experience. And experience does not mean thinking out and explaining in words; but having these things happen to you. If you only knew it, such things are happening all the time to you. What you take as coincidence, or accident, very often is action: action taking place on a plane which is invisible to you. This does not mean that the illuminated Sufi sees and knows all: he or she only knows as much as is necessary for the time and the place.' (4)

Some spiritual traditions claim that an extra-sensory link exists between adepts past, present and future. This enables a spiritual teacher to communicate with fellow teachers and students at long distances and across time. Traditional belief also credits spiritual masters with powers such as instantaneous transportation from one location to another and the ability to see vast distances. Adepts are said to "be able to appear and disappear, cast their words and ideas for countless miles and survey the earth from great heights."

One of the wonders attributed to certain mystical masters is the ability to travel through space and fly enormous distances in view of witnesses on the ground. According to tradition, the Naqshbandi Sufi teacher Sayed Amam Ali Shah was reputed to appear at different places before different groups of people at the same time. Similar events are recounted in Taoist and Tibetan Buddhist teachings:

In addition to the non-existence of time, space plays little part in preventing the Sufi adept from travelling where he will. Transportation of many of the most famous Sufi teachers is said to have been a common event. Sufis have been seen at the same time in places many thousands of miles apart. Sheikh Abdul-Qadir – one of the most celebrated saints of Sufism – was believed to have travelled thousands of miles ‘in a flash,’ in order to be present at the funeral of some fellow adept. (5)

Alteration of Physical Reality

The reputed control of physical phenomena by spiritual adepts includes a wide range of abilities and manifestations:

- One of the consequences of inner development and spiritual illumination is said to be the ability “to move bodies outside their own mass and to penetrate physical objects under paradoxical circumstances.”
- Reports of telekinesis (defined as movement in a body seemingly independent of action from any physical cause) are frequent in the esoteric literature and oral traditions.
- Accounts of spiritual masters transforming one element or object into another and melting metals without heat also exist. Eastern esoteric tradition holds that the transmutation of metals was performed mentally by “the concentrative ability of a suitably ripe mystical intellect.”
- The ability to dematerialize objects or project them over immense distances is another supernatural phenomenon reported in the mystical literature of many traditions.
- Certain adepts were said to glow with a greenish light. The name of the Sufi master Hadrat Nuri means ‘light’ because it was reported that while teaching he shone in the dark.
- Some spiritual masters reputedly were able to walk upon the surface of water. The most famous of these, of course, was Jesus. There are also accounts of Qadiri dervishes having been observed walking on water and the disciples of the Sufi master Pir Turki were supposedly able to make heavy objects float on water.

An unusual wonder attributed to the female Sufi Rabia occurred when a string of onions suddenly fell from the sky after she mentioned that she had no vegetables in the house:

A large number of other miracles are reported of the best-known woman Sufi, Rabia al-Adawiya, in the eighth century. Using the formula *La-illaha-illa-allah*

(‘There is no God save Allah, the One’), she is reputed to have made fires without wood, obtained food without leaving her house, and been supernaturally supplied with sufficient gold for her needs. She was sold as a slave early in her life. One day her master said that he once noticed that a lamp seemed suspended above her, yet without support of any kind. This experience so troubled him that he immediately set her free, without saying anything to anyone. (6)

There are also accounts of spiritual teachers changing their physical appearance: “There are innumerable reports of teachers appearing taller, shorter, fatter, thinner, with or without beards – in fact, like completely different people – from one moment or one person to the next. Two or more people will be found, again and again, saying that a certain master looked like this, while others who saw him at the same time will give conflicting descriptions.” The Russian philosopher P.D. Ouspensky recounts an event of “transfiguration” in which his teacher Gurdjieff appeared to alter his physical appearance in front of a number of his students:

A very interesting event took place in connection with his departure. This happened at the railway station. We were all seeing him off at the station. G. was standing talking to us on the platform by the carriage. He was the usual G. we had always known. After the second bell he went into the carriage – his compartment was next to the door – and came to the window. He was different! In the window we saw another man, not the one who had gone into the train. He had changed during those few seconds. It is very difficult to describe what the difference was, but on the platform he had been an ordinary man like anyone else, and from the carriage a man of quite a different order was looking at us, with a quite exceptional importance and dignity in every look and movement, as though he had suddenly become a ruling prince or a statesman of some unknown kingdom to which he was travelling and to which we were seeing him off. Some of our party could not at the time clearly realize what was happening but they felt and experienced in an emotional way something that was outside the ordinary run of phenomena. All this lasted only a few seconds . . . G. had explained to us earlier that if one mastered the art of plastics one could completely alter one’s appearance. He had once said that one could become beautiful or hideous, one could compel people to notice one or one could become *actually invisible*. (7)

Telepathy

In ancient times, so-called simple or primitive people, such as the Australian aborigines, the Lapps of Finland and North and South American Indian tribes, would regularly communicate with each other telepathically at a great distance. Tradition also holds that many initiates of inner esoteric teachings can recognize each other by direct perception and communicate across time and space.

Refined abilities such as telepathy are said to work with the 'finer qualities' of existence by contacting the 'essence' of a person or situation. The need produces the result. Sporadic and occasional manifestations of telepathic ability are regarded as the initial stirrings of new, evolutionary 'organs of perception.'

It has been hypothesized that there is a relationship between telepathy, hypnotism and magnetism, although their action may exist on different levels or scales and modes of transmission. Gurdjieff explored this possibility in talks with his students:

Magnetism, hypnosis and telepathy are phenomena of the same order. The action of magnetism is direct; the action of hypnotism is at a short distance through the atmosphere; telepathy is action at a greater distance. Telepathy is analogous to the telephone or telegraph. In these, the connections are metal wires, but in telepathy they are the trail of particles left by man. A man who has the gift of telepathy can fill this trail with his own matter and thus establish a connection, forming as it were a cable through which he can act on a man's mind. If he possesses some object belonging to a man, then, having thus established a connection, he fashions round this object an image and, acting upon it, thus acts on the man himself. (8)

Many spiritual teachers develop unusual telepathic powers enabling them to read minds and gain knowledge at a distance. Some are believed "to maintain a telepathic contact with 'past, present and future' teachers, and giving them the means to project their message, through his teachings." Individuals with telepathic ability are sometimes called 'heart spies.' The Sufi Nuri was called 'Spy of the Heart' because of his capacity to read the minds and thoughts of others.

An interesting first-hand account of the occurrence of telepathic communication is reported by Ouspensky in an unusual event involving Gurdjieff:

And with this the miracle began. I can say with complete assurance that G. did not use any kind of external methods, that is, he gave me no narcotics nor did he hypnotize me by any of the known methods. It all started with my beginning to *hear his thoughts* . . . I noticed that among the words which he was saying to us there were "thoughts" which were intended for me. I caught one of these thoughts and replied to it, speaking aloud in the ordinary way. G. nodded to me and stopped speaking. There was a fairly long pause. He sat still saying nothing. After a while I heard his voice inside me as it were in the chest near the heart. He put a definite question to me. I looked at him; he was sitting and smiling. His question provoked in me a very strong emotion. But I answered him in the affirmative. "Why did he say that?" asked G., looking in turn at Z. and Dr. S. "Did I ask him anything?" And he at once put another still more difficult question to me in the same way as before. And I again answered it in a natural voice. Z. and S. were visibly astonished at what was taking place, especially Z. This conversation, if it can be called a conversation, proceeded in this fashion for not less than half an hour. (9)

In certain spiritual communities subtle transformative energies and refined teachings may be directly transmitted to a receptive group by means of telepathic communication:

Exercises and studies help to develop finer organs of perception. This is the first part of study. The second part is to be in circumstances in which that which is to be perceived is more richly present . . . The third part is equally important. It consists of the direct transmission and reception, from one body to another, of communications which are too fine to be perceived by the ordinary methods . . . Direct transmission can be called a telepathic communication from an individual or a group, acting as an amplifier for a certain original Truth, capable of transmitting to a less-developed individual or group. This is one of the functions of a teaching individual or teaching group. Such people or groups are ultimately dependent upon the existence of a correctly aligned and harmonized 'receiving group' for their operation to be successful. In addition to 'projecting' upon such groups, they can, however, affect people and groups which have a certain harmony but may be unaware of the source of their 'inspiration.' (10)

The process of mind-reading or telepathy cannot be forced or artificially induced. In fact, these psychological postures actually impede mind-to-mind transmission. One seeker describes his experience with this phenomenon in a contemporary spiritual community:

I am in no doubt that a large degree of extra-sensory perception is in operation. People anticipate one's questions and even one's actions. For instance, several times when I wanted a glass of water, someone brought me one; when I wanted to post a letter, stamps were brought; when I was thinking of a book, it was produced for me. But there is one striking factor which cannot be categorized in the present state of knowledge: *people who 'read one's mind' only did so when one was not expecting it.* Again and again, if I thought of something deliberately, to see whether it would communicate to someone else in the community, this simply did not work. But, as soon as I stopped trying, especially if I had 'real thoughts' (as distinct from thoughts only designed to test ESP) – the 'mind reading' would commence again. (11)

There are also suggestions that mental energy possessing 'finer' qualities may be projected by accomplished initiates to subtly influence the larger human community: "Human thought in certain ranges passes directly, without vocalization, from individuals and groups into the whole human race. The effect may be all the more effective for its being frequently unperceived by the ordinary perceptions." It has been suggested that telepathy is used not only as a communication method, but is also employed to influence people and events by stimulating or inhibiting certain human activity:

Sufi telepathic powers are used on a world-wide scale in such a way *as to discredit the idea that telepathy is possible.* We became convinced that controlled telepathy is possible and is used, in fact, as a practical communication system

between individual Sufis and their group leader and also between different Sufi groups. It is also used to obtain information from people and places which it is impracticable to contact in any other way. Telepathy is within the range of existing human mental powers, but for reasons concerned with the overall evolutionary situation of mankind, it is vital that this should not be realized at the present time – or indeed within the foreseeable future. Among Sufis, telepathy is invaluable as a means of communicating certain kinds of knowledge more efficiently than is possible by any other means . . . The Sufis hold that a form of telepathy can influence plants, minerals and inanimate objects in such a way as to help or hinder projects which would be advantageous or otherwise to mankind from the standpoint of the Sufi mandate. We were told categorically that telepathic powers are currently used, and have been used through the whole of historical time, to influence human cultures in such a way that a tension and rivalry is maintained. This offsets natural inertia and ensures that cultures attain their norm of productivity over an historical period. (12)

Clairvoyance and Prescience

Clairvoyance, sometimes called 'clear sight' or 'second sight,' is the ability to receive information from a distance, beyond the reach of the ordinary senses. Prescience or precognition is defined as foreknowledge perceived about future events, where the information could not be inferred by ordinary means. These abilities are widely credited to spiritual adepts from many traditions, although they are considered as secondary by-products of inner development. O.M. Burke, who travelled extensively in the East, recounts his experience with one teacher:

Going with him several times on long walks, which he embarked upon without any prior notice whatsoever, I realized that he spent a great deal of his time in silent communion and commemoration (called *Zikr*) and that this had become almost second nature to him. He often showed small signs of a sense of perception which is repeatedly mentioned in Sufi writings as a sign of 'sainthood,' but which could not have been noted except by an attentive disciple or someone else very close to him. One day, for instance, he picked up a cooking-pot and took it on a walk on which I accompanied him. Stopping at a poor small house he saluted the occupant and handed her the pot. The old woman was amazed. She said that she had just broken the earthen dish in which she cooked. Again, he handed me a box of matches when I had come out without any, in spite of the fact that I could not be sure that he realized that I had left them at home. It should be mentioned that he could not have observed that I brought some with me, for I had met him in his garden, on the way from my quarters to his. I mentioned these small indications to him. But he would not discuss them, merely saying, "Would you make me a saint, and rob me of the power of *becoming*?" (13)

One of the more unusual cases of clairvoyance reported in the literature of Zen initiates involves the ability to read and speak foreign languages which are entirely unknown to the person performing the feat:

A Japanese *sennin* ("yogi") called Tomekichi found himself in the company of a foreign missionary in Tokyo. Neither spoke the other's language and pantomime having failed to convey much abstract conversation, the *sennin* closed his eyes for a moment and then proceeded to expound his viewpoint in fluent English. The missionary was dumbfounded and, it appeared, so was the *sennin*, for he was totally ignorant of English and "on coming out of his temporary trance could not speak or understand a word. Nor had he any memory of the speech he had just made." [In another case] an educated modern Japanese called Kaneda who earns his living as a schoolteacher is in the habit of acting as interpreter at scientific conferences where papers have been submitted by foreign scientists in their own language. Though quite ignorant of the language involved, Kaneda gives an immediate translation of the content. (14)

The clairvoyant and prescient abilities ascribed to certain spiritual teachers often play an important role in their teaching function. The correct use of these faculties enables them to make skilful use of the possibilities which lie ahead: "This is why so many good people and saints in so many cultures are credited with this power of prescience. They can see what is going to happen. That is why they do not do destructive things. That is why they can do things which are likely to be good. Knowledge of the future makes man good. The most important step in this direction is to develop the capacity for prescience."

One of the traditional procedures used by Sufis of all branches, involves obtaining information of things past, present and future by a form of divination. This capacity continually influences the behaviour of a Sufi teacher and explains some of the apparent "rationality" with which Sufi leaders are taxed. When he acts in a way which appears to be unrelated to the problem at hand, it may be because he has, by instant perception, seen the matter in added dimensions. He sees the past of the incident and by looking into the future sees the effect which would be produced by various alternative actions on his part. The Sufi master is able to achieve the end result instantaneously and even while carrying on an ordinary conversation. (15)

Certain esoteric schools sometimes make use of simple methods or 'tests' which can ascertain an individual's potential for precognitive ability:

During the Delhi meetings, we were given what were described as 'a useful tool' for measuring potential in this respect. The technique involves asking someone apparently innocent questions, to which one knows the answers, to test whether he or she has perceptive capacity. It may even be developed through constant practice. As an example, you may ask someone, as if you did not know, "Which of these eggs do you imagine is fresher?" or "Has Smith ever played tennis?", and so

on. I was present when a test like this was made and I discovered an interesting fact. Some people did in fact score higher and higher in such 'guesses,' but if I found myself becoming excited, the performance of the person being tested would rapidly drop. (16)

The ability to know or predict the future is very much dependent upon a person's current psychological condition and state of inner development. Gurdjieff provides a useful perspective on this matter:

In order to know the future it is necessary first to know the present in all its details, as well as to know the past. Today is what it is because yesterday was what it is. And if today is like yesterday, tomorrow will be like today. If you want tomorrow to be different, you must make today different. If today is simply a consequence of yesterday, tomorrow will be a consequence of today in exactly the same way . . . In practice, in order to study the future one must learn to notice and to remember the moments when we really know the future and when we act in accordance with this knowledge. Then judging by results, it will be possible to demonstrate that we really do know the future. This happens in a simple way in business, for instance. Every good commercial businessman knows the future. If he does not know the future his business goes smash. In work on oneself one must be a good businessman, a good merchant. And knowing the future is worthwhile only when a man can be his own master. (17)

Unusual Mental Phenomena

Spiritual illumination often confers new mental powers enabling an individual to learn more quickly and act more effectively in the world than a normal person. One of the concomitants of the attainment of higher states of consciousness is the capacity to acquire, through insight and direct awareness, knowledge which otherwise could be attained only through intensive and prolonged work. This is sometimes called "instant learning through holistic methods."

Certain spiritual masters are said to be capable of influencing events and happenings, and even the minds of others, in a totally inexplicable manner. People reported that the Sufi teacher Sayed Imam Ali Shah appeared to them in dreams, giving them important knowledge concerning their physical and spiritual well-being. According to tradition, some spiritual masters are able to make people come to them merely through an effort of will.

Power over plants, trees, birds, animals and other natural phenomena have been attributed to certain realized beings, including St. Francis of Assisi. The great Sufi mystic Najmuddin Kubra was reputed to exercise an uncanny influence on animals by means of thought projection.

It is possible to induce an individual to externalize their inner thoughts and feelings by the application of certain concentration techniques, in order to reveal their character and the operation of the secondary, conditioned self:

If there is in fact a capacity to project images directly into another person's mind, this may account for the ability of Sufis, again witnessed countless times, to alter people's behaviour. This is sometimes called 'bringing out the real character' of the individual. It may show you what this person is really like. It may be better or worse than the image which you have of an individual. It is said to be used for teaching purposes, and is as if the Sufi can interrupt or disturb, and replace the working of the mind, as an electromagnetic wave might interfere with the sound from a radio or the picture from a television. (18)

There is an unusual mental capacity called 'direct reading,' which can be developed through training. "This is the process of adopting many of the muscular characteristics of someone else, and then checking what thoughts go through the mind when one has assumed the musculature of the other person."

A related phenomenon, referred to as 'direct perception,' involves obtaining knowledge of a higher order directly, without the necessity of a traditional approach or study:

What is called direct perception is one of the possible powers of developed man, but, unlike, for example, clairvoyance and telepathy, it is not known in the West in the form practised by Sufis and the literature of Western occultism does not offer a convenient label. It involves making mental contact with another "whole," material or otherwise, and "reading" it so as to obtain knowledge of its nature, past, present, or future. This knowledge is called "direction" by Sufis and is "read" in a form that accords with the cultural images and idioms of the percipient, not the subject. One major use of the procedure is to verify the truth and relevance of traditional Sufi teaching material so that the process of Sufic influences on man is kept continuously renewed, active and effective. Direct perception, it is claimed, cannot be significantly developed in a pupil below a certain level of capacity and cannot be developed in an individual who has aspects of his nature which makes him unworthy to serve humanity. (19)

A form of advanced mental activity exists in which a sensitive person can pick up the pattern of an individual's thinking by using a third party as a channel or intermediary. For example, "with *unconscious* mind reading, when you have a conversation with someone, it is possible – and it often happens – that the choice of events dealt with corresponds with a pattern in someone else's mind. This ability is sometimes of great value in diagnosing someone's mental condition and hence prescribing treatment for a condition which blocks the learning process."

Then there is the matter of 'using other people's conversations' for sending and especially for receiving, messages and information. The method derives from the

contention that virtually everyone has telepathic and prescient faculties which enables them to discuss matters and to answer questions without being consciously aware that this is what they are doing. In this 'unconscious mediumism' people may have been ostensibly discussing, say, football, but the structure of the conversation (known technically as its 'equivalence') may be dealing with, say, international affairs. (20)

One form of thought transference is based on the ability to switch attention. "One can identify with and detach from another person so completely as to feel and see as if one does it by means of, or through the other individual."

Q: May I have an example of one such technique?

A: One of the most useful is the fact that you may 'pick up' from another person, without his being aware that you are doing so, or that he can do it, information which is being received by his mind. To clarify: there may be a subject of mutual interest in which someone is asking you questions, and you may get the answer because you can register his awareness of the answer, while he cannot himself do so.

Q: Is this something like 'mediumship'?

A: Only very slightly like it, because in the case of 'mediumship' generally investigated in the West, there is a great deal of belief that messages are coming from the dead, and also too much inefficiency; for example, the 'messages' are more often than not completely banal and serve only social purposes.

Q: Do you mean that there is a great deal of information 'in the air' and that this can be obtained through meetings of people, and that people are almost always unaware of this?

A: Yes.

Q: What prevents people making use of this technique?

A: The same thing that prevents people from understanding and using 'mediumistic' procedures. In the first place, they are emotionally attracted and are taking social satisfactions from the situation, which prevents it working accurately; in the second they cannot detach their 'greed' and self-centeredness from it, so they only want things which they desire. They do not want information or experience for its own sake. So people should approach this matter more sincerely and genuinely. (21)

Early or Primitive Magic

Anthropological and other research suggests that some form of magical thinking and practice has been present in most of the world's cultures since the dawn of recorded history and, most likely, far pre-dating that period. "The capacity to look beyond the tangible world, to seek out invisible connections and relationships between things and to spot the essential quality that unified them quickly bore fruit. Early man soon developed a system of 'magical' thinking and sought to apply it to improve his lot. Thus, at the very birth of human history, magic and technology went hand in hand."

Magic attempts to break through the normal physical limitations of the world in order to connect the power of the human mind with higher forces and energies. The emotional state and level of concentration of the practitioner's mind forms part of the magical operation. "Magic implicitly accepts that there is a special power of the mind, heightened under emotionally charged conditions, which may be harnessed."

The laws of magic are based on the principle that a 'bridge' or 'conduit' may be created between objects or actions which are similar to each other through the application of human will and intention (sympathetic magic). One of the fundamental rules of magic is that 'like may influence like':

A belief in magic may be said to be a belief that there is an invisible force, or forces, which govern nature and which obey a series of rules. Magic resembles science, in that the magician assumes he can make use of these forces in a set manner, irrespective of whether he intends to exert them for good or for evil. So, rather like the force of, say, electricity, magic will react constantly under given conditions . . . The fundamental assumptions of magic – that there may be more to the world than we can immediately perceive and that mankind may harness even what he cannot see – form part of the bedrock of our civilisation today. Indeed, modern science owes an enormous debt to the efforts of the magical pioneers, who sought to find out more about the world around them, through what amounted to a series of experiments. The principles upon which magic is said to operate have remained remarkably stable since prehistoric man first daubed the walls of his cave with depictions of the prey he wished to kill. The most basic form, often known as *sympathetic* magic, looks for associations between things. One factor that emerges again and again is the idea that objects we see around us are linked by a kind of invisible network of connections, which may in turn have links to other unseen dimensions. When such a connection is established or recognised, an immense power lies in the hands of the magical practitioner: he may exert an influence on one object or action by means of another. These may be two things that can be made or seen to resemble one another: like the outline of the prey on the wall of the cave which mimics the animals themselves. (22)

The assumption by most scientists that magic simply *can't* work is being re-evaluated by those who are more open-minded and willing to entertain the possibility that human beings and the world around us can be influenced by the power of our minds to a greater extent than commonly believed: "What would happen if we began with the idea that these beliefs and practices must have worked in some sense; if we indicated that we can no longer accept the notion that those who hold to them are irrational?"

It is important to approach so-called 'primitive magic' with fresh eyes in order to understand the phenomenon more clearly. "Science today may need to be more scientific; to examine what it has shied away from examining, to discover, as far as possible with scientific methods, what may or may not lie behind patterns of thought which on some level or other, are shared by almost everyone on the globe."

From the most convoluted magical ritual, to the stream of magical thinking which survives in our own lives, all follow the same underlying current. That current has flowed unbroken from the days our stone-age ancestors first daubed their cave walls with the images of the animals they wished to catch. Magic offers advantages and benefits on many levels. Without hazarding any opinion on the validity of its tenets, at its crudest magical thinking opens the mind to the possibility of factors beyond the everyday world. Importantly, it also introduces the idea that we may do something about that which we do not wholly understand, to break through barriers, to 'find out.' As such, it is a valuable precursor to science. However, with all patterns of human thought, there is a point at which what began as a survival advantage may outlive its usefulness. If one is in the grip of constant superstition, or fear of unseen 'magical' forces, or witchcraft or malignant spells, one will no longer be able to operate at an optimum level . . . Today, most of us use magical thinking at some time or other – even if we call it only the power of 'positive thinking,' 'willpower' and suchlike. Many superstitions, whatever their outward form, owe their durability and attractiveness to the fact that they tap into the current of magical thinking; touching wood, for example, implies that there are forces which may both influence and be influenced by actions on our part. The emotional content of such magical residue makes it addictive and difficult to unseat. Magical thinking may influence our everyday lives much more than we are willing to recognize and admit. If we – just as much as the overt practitioners of magic – could spot the mechanism at work, we could better judge how much of it is useful and productive and how much is not. (23)

Healing

The power of certain adepts to control physiological processes in a seemingly 'supernatural' manner has been recorded in many different cultures throughout history. There are accounts of shamans who could render themselves insensitive to pain and control the flow of blood. Tibetan Buddhist lamas have been observed generating an 'inner heat' that defies explanation:

“They can sit in the intense cold with only a sheet to cover them and even if the cloth is soaked in water they can make it evaporate.” Observers have noted that incisions made in the flesh by Rifai dervishes stopped bleeding with inexplicable rapidity and that wounds healed without any scars in a very short period of time.

In virtually every spiritual tradition there are reports of teachers relieving pain, healing wounds and curing disease. The ability of mystics to heal is held to be a secondary by-product of inner development and not the primary manifestation of their knowledge and being: “In traditional mysticism, saints did not become saints because they were healers; they became healers because they were saints.”

Healing may involve the laying-on of hands, visualizations, the use of sound and colour, the repetition of sacred words or phrases or the application of spiritual force (*Baraka*). A vivid account of healing through the transmission of subtle energy from one person to another is provided by Fritz Peters, a pupil of Gurdjieff:

I remember being slumped over the table when I began to feel a strange uprising of energy within myself – I stared at Gurdjieff, automatically straightened up, and it was as if a violent, electric blue light emanated from him and entered into me. As this happened, I could feel the tiredness drain out of me, but at the same time his body slumped and his face turned grey as if it was being drained of life. I looked at him, amazed, and when he saw me sitting erect, smiling and full of energy, he said quickly: “You all right now – I must go” . . . I was convinced then that he knew how to transmit energy from himself to others; I was also convinced that it could only be done at great cost to himself. It also became obvious within the next few minutes that he knew how to renew his energy quickly, for I was equally amazed. when he returned to the kitchen to see the change in him; he looked like a young man again, alert, smiling, full of good spirits. (24)

The ability of certain individuals to influence the minds and bodies of others through inexplicable means is a mystery to modern science. The power of the mind to heal is sometimes allegorized as the ‘Philosopher’s Stone’ in the ancient teachings of spiritual alchemy. “The function of the Philosopher’s Stone is to act as a universal medicine or elixir. When the mind of the healer is concentrated and transformed in a certain way (salt, mercury and sulphur combined), the result is the Stone (power or force). This Stone, which is the source and essence of life itself, is now projected upon the patient, who recovers.”

One of the common ingredients of many spiritual healing practices is the use of concentration techniques and inner preparation before the process of healing commences in order to develop and project the power of *baraka* (blessing, grace). These and other exercises such as the repetition of words (*mantras* or *dhikrs*) are applied to ‘clear’ the individuality and enhance the interaction of minds during the healing process:

Dhikrs are usually said during the hours of darkness. When a supernatural result is desired, the *dhikr* must dwell upon some facet of the Divine power allied to the effect to be accomplished. Thus, when a Sufi wishes to cure illness, he prepares himself by repeating a *dhikr* consisting of the Name of God which denotes healing. By this means the Sufi intends to collect in his mind a tremendous potential of mental force associated with healing. This he projects toward the object of his attention, at the same time concentrating upon the desired result. (25)

The use of sound and colour in spiritual healing has long been accepted in many cultures. Certain sounds and colours, when perceived or visualized, have an effect not only on the physical body but also on the emotional and spiritual planes. Each colour and sound has its own vibration and frequency and affects specific organs of the body. "Each organ in our body is a vibration. All the organs in our body are like a symphony of sounds. When the organ loses its precise vibration, then it is ill."

Spiritual healing is based on the premise that the human body has a natural ability to heal itself. This organic process is aptly illustrated by an analogy: "When the lion is sick, he eats of a certain shrub and cures himself. He does this because the illness has an affinity for a certain plant, or for the essence of it. The cure is always known to the disease."

The healer understands that the body is intrinsically healthy and uses developed intuition to prescribe a 'treatment' to restore the body-mind to its original state of balance, harmony and health. Physician and spiritual teacher Jean Klein:

Let the body be the body. The body has an organic memory of health. You have the proof of this in the fact that when you cut your finger, it heals within a week. The body evidently knows precisely how to heal itself.

Q: Then the natural state of the body is pure health?

A: Yes. There may be some momentary disturbances, but the fundamental state of the body is health. The true physician embodies total health because he *is* health. He helps health heal the body by going with it. Many modern medical techniques or medicines oppose health in viewing the body as an enemy. There must not be any violence. It is important for you to regard your body as a friend who knows perfect health. (26)

The power of consciousness acts as a catalyst to assist healing, through pure awareness acting as a 'solvent' which purifies and transforms the body-mind:

Q: Can I cure myself of a serious illness by merely taking cognizance of it?

A: Take cognizance of the whole of it, not only of the outer symptoms. All illness begins in the mind. Take care of the mind first, by tracing and eliminating

all wrong ideas and emotions. Then live and work disregarding illness and think no more of it. With the removal of causes the effect is bound to depart. Man becomes what he believes himself to be. Abandon all ideas about yourself and you will find yourself to be the pure witness, beyond all that can happen to the body or the mind. (27)

True health can only exist when we realize our real nature and a feeling of unity with the whole: "Life and death, health and illness are one. The true face of the universe includes all things in it – good, bad, life, death, health, illness – all of it. Healers do not heal us. The healing is already there in the wholeness. And the real goal of healing is to help the person in need of healing to be aware of this."

The wish to purify the body really reflects a subconscious longing for Self-fulfillment. But many get bogged down in physical health and it becomes an end in itself; they never go beyond a concern with the body to achieve true spiritual emancipation. Awakening implies the *dropping* of body and mind . . . The spiritually healthy person is one who has seen into the true nature of things, and is able to creatively adapt to his environment – that is, to respond freely and fully to changing circumstances without anxiety. Ultimately, behind all chronic illness lies spiritual dis-ease. The gnawing sense of unfulfillment sickens the body, and a sick body makes a perturbed mind sicker. (28)

The relationship between the healer and patient is crucial in the process of healing. Jean Klein: "A real doctor can see more or less immediately where the illness arises, but he questions his patients as if he didn't know. He asks a lot of questions because he knows that the patient, in order to answer the questions, must look at his illness objectively, and in this there is some distance from the illness. It is this distancing which is the beginning of healing."

Physical illness is often created by psychological problems which produce physical reactions. The structure of the conditioned personality acts as a barrier to the natural flow of life within us. The result of this opposition and disharmony is illness and malfunction. "Every illness is a reaction, so it is important for the patient to first accept the illness, not as a concept but as a percept. In accepting it you don't feed the illness any more. Functionally accepting and living with it is the only way to healing."

The very word, the idea of illness already predisposes you to being ill, creates it even. As soon as we classify our sensations into categories so as to name them, our imagination, charged with emotion, already very vivid in this field, feeds what we could call a malfunction. You should never name this malfunction, for this only feeds the imagination and confirms your illness. This in itself prolongs the malfunction. In my view malfunction is a signpost. The best way to bring a malfunction to an end on either the physical or psychological plane is not to refuse the sensation, the perception. You must accept it but this does not mean accepting it orally or psychologically both of which are a kind of fatalism. Accept it to-

tally, actively. Acceptance is lucid, watchful awareness in which all the facts are seen. It is this acceptance of the facts of the situation that brings about the cure. When you live in acceptance, illness no longer has any substance, and you have then the greatest possible chance of getting better. Non-acceptance prevents all possibility of a cure being brought about. So the first thing a doctor must do is instill in the patient the correct attitude so that he can live with himself. Clear seeing of all the elements of the situation comes when there is no involvement in the perception, when it is seen objectively. This un-involvement is the first step toward freeing ourselves. It is only when all the facts have been seen that creative action occurs. In acceptance intelligence and right action appear. Acceptance liberates all potential. (29)

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