The Mirror Effect, the Law of Attraction, and "Points of Attraction" That Can Nurture the Evolution of Human Consciousness

carroy u ferguson
Awakening the Inner Sense

Casting a Shadow

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Reviews

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GLORIA BURGESS, Ph.D, MBA, MA
DARE TO WEAR YOUR SOUL ON THE OUTSIDE
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The Mirror Effect, the Law of Attraction, and “Points of Attraction” That Can Nurture the Evolution of Human Consciousness

This message has several purposes. First, I want to express my immense joy that Chip Baggett and I are serving as Co-Presidents of AHP since August 16, 2009. In my view, Chip and I are long-time friends, who have a transcendent connection and synergistic energies. My desire and intent is for our co-presidency to mirror the effect(s) of synergistic collaboration as a “point of attraction” that can assist in the evolution of human consciousness across often “perceived personal and societal boundaries” (e.g., race, culture, ethnicity, class, individual and collective belief systems, and dogma). More generally, however, this message is intended to further discuss: what I have called in other writings the mirror effect; what others have called the law of attraction; what I will call “points of attraction” in our life spaces that can limit and those that can nurture the evolution of human consciousness; and my views of two recent societal and global mirror effect events that have provoked creative thought.

The mirror effect can be described as the effect(s) manifested in our life spaces, individually and collectively, which have emerged or flows from the Energy vibrationally attracted to our “core thoughts” (beliefs or ideas) about ourselves and our worlds. Core thoughts are so basic to the way we orient our lives that we rarely stop to think about them. Yet, they serve as “points of attraction” for similar thoughts. Often they are transparent, causing a feeling of “that’s just the way it is,” or “that’s just human nature.” Their origins may be based on uniquely internalized cultural, racial, ethnic, class, or other-linked scripts, acquired and often unexamined during various developmental stages. In other writings, I have described how the mirror effect works to provide feedback, individually and collectively, about our “core thoughts” and what’s working and what’s not working in the three life spaces where we simultaneously live—i.e., each person has experiences in a personal life space, societal life space, and global life space.

Personal life space experiences involve “direct, face-to-face encounters” with people, objects, events, and circumstances, while societal and global life space experiences involve “indirect, second-hand encounters” (not face-to-face) with people, objects, events, and circumstances via the media, books, Internet, etc., around which we create and have beliefs and feelings. For the most part, then, societal and global life space experiences take place in the Mind. In this regard, the mirror effect is a reflection of how we “hold or focus upon” people, objects, events, and circumstances in our individual and Collective Consciousness. The reflection represents how we are using and misusing the law of attraction to attract, allow, direct, or misdirect Energy in regard to people, objects, events, and circumstances. To justify playing a game like “blaming the victim” when people, objects, events, and circumstances may require our compassion, for example, is a misdirection of Energy reflected by the mirror effect. Playing a game like “let’s find common ground,” of course, would be a more nurturing way to direct Energy.

In simplistic terms, the law of attraction suggests that we get what we think about or focus upon. Have you ever bought a new car and suddenly you begin to see that make and model of car everywhere? In Consciousness-Energy terms, then, the law of attraction can be stated as follows: Energy of any form magnetically attracts similar Energy, the intensity of emotions causing a more intense attraction in both speed and quantity. Therefore, when we “practice” thinking certain ways, attracting similar thoughts, these become “core thoughts (beliefs),” which then serve to “structure” our individual and collective realities. Much has been written recently about the law of attraction and the nature of thoughts. Scientifically, we know that thoughts have electromagnetic properties. In this context, various authors have suggested that we create our lives through how we use or misuse the law of attraction and the nature of our individual and collective thoughts. This has been called The Secret to how we knowingly and unknowingly construct our realities. What I would like to add and call attention to here is the nature of some of our individual and collective “core thoughts” that we, knowingly and unknowingly, may be currently using as guides and “points of attraction,” that can hinder the evolution of human consciousness. I also want to suggest “alternative core thoughts” that can serve as possible guides and “points
of attraction” that can nurture the evolution of human consciousness. As “points of attraction,” such “alternative core thoughts” can ultimately emerge to “structure” our individual and collective realities and become mirrored effects.

To clarify, points of attraction refer to what we are “actually” focusing on or the “current content” of our individual and Collective Consciousness and how that content is mirrored back to us. The key to understanding our “actual points of attraction” is our emotional response to thoughts about people, objects, events, and circumstances and what we desire. That is, when we are fully focused upon what we desire and are aligned and acting toward people, objects, events, and circumstances in accord with what we desire, we feel great, alive, expansive, content. When we focus upon the “absence” of what we truly want (i.e., focus on what we do not want in our life spaces) and allow that kind of focus to direct our Consciousness and actions toward people, objects, events, and circumstances, we feel frustrated, awful, out of it, limited, less alive. Our emotional responses to thoughts about people, objects, events, and circumstances and what we desire, therefore, serve to clarify our “actual points of attraction” and their underlying “core thoughts.”

What then may be some of the respective hindering and nurturing “core thoughts” that serve as guides and “points of attraction” in our life spaces regarding the evolution of human consciousness? The chart below outlines some common guides and “points of attraction” that we currently tend to use in our personal life space, and often project into how we construct our societal and global life spaces; contrasting alternative possibilities are also presented in the chart. Inside, we tend to experience these guides and “points of attraction” as inner scripts whereby we tell ourselves, “It’s okay if I….” [see tables below].

So, how can we employ the mirror effect in our life spaces to “uncover” how we might be using limiting and

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**Core Thoughts We Can Use as Guides and “Points of Attraction” in Our Life Spaces That Can Hinder the Evolution of Human Consciousness (It’s okay if …)**

- I tell someone that they created their own reality when they’re in great pain and need my compassion.
- I want to be right more than I want to be whole.
- I want my beliefs to be right.
- I want my favorite teacher to be right.
- I expect the people I admire to live up to my expectations.
- I expect the people I love to share my beliefs.
- I expect the people I love to accept me for what I think I am, to accept me how I want to be accepted.
- I seek validation outside my Self.
- I want people to acknowledge me.
- I want to find something or someone to blame for who and what I am today—parents, schools, siblings, country, my own or another’s group (race, ethnicity, culture) and so on.

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**Core Thoughts We Can Use as Guides and “Points of Attraction” in Our Life Spaces That Can Nurture the Evolution of Human Consciousness (It’s okay if …)**

- I can empathize and offer comfort to someone in great pain without taking over his or her problem or trying or needing to fix him or her.
- I can let go of my “need” to be right about anything.
- I can accept that all beliefs serve someone at some time, even if I don’t understand them, or if I think mine are better.
- I can accept that my favorite teacher(s) must present truths apparent to them that may not be apparent to me at this time, or may never be apparent to me.
- I can accept the people I admire as human beings with just as many issues as any other human being.
- I can accept that the people I love have a right to do what they want and to be who they are, regardless of my personal tastes.
- I can accept that the people I love are not obliged to grow or to see me in any way but how they see me.
- I seek validation only from within, knowing that whatever response I get from the outside world reflects only something from within anyway.
- I acknowledge my Self as the wonderful, unique Being I am.
- I know that everyone in my life added to my growth, and I can see that addition as positive or negative to my overall growth and development, and I can have compassion for their role.
nurturing “core thoughts” as guides and “points of attraction”? To illustrate, I will attempt to use examples of two recent societal and global events. I chose them because of the vast amount of media coverage they received (indirect, second-hand societal and global life space experiences). Interestingly, the two events, occurring exactly two months apart, were the deaths of pop singer/entertainer Michael Jackson on June 25, 2009, at the age of 50, and the death of Massachusetts Senator Edward M. Kennedy on August 25, 2009, at the age of 77. Both deaths appeared to capture the attention of many people nationally and internationally. One death was anticipated (Kennedy); the other was not (Jackson). To some, death may represent a “transition or transformation of Consciousness”; to others, death may represent “the end of Consciousness.” Whatever the representation, the death of an important, valued, or well-known person in our individual and collective life spaces provides an opportunity to reflect upon life and to gain important insight via mirrored effect(s) emerging in our Consciousness as foci or “points of attraction”.

In our individual and collective societal and global life spaces, both events involved public figures. Each person was referred to as an icon, for very different reasons—the King of Pop (Jackson) and the Lion of the Senate (Kennedy). Both events, therefore, presented opportunities to use the mirror effect to creatively examine societal and global life spaces “content” in our individual and Collective Consciousness. One way to do this at the individual level is by honestly answering questions such as the following. What was my emotional response(s) to each death?

In what way(s) did my emotional response(s) shift or stay the same as I exposed myself to various “media content”? What “media content” held my attention more about each death—that is, did I focus more on the “failures” or the “gifts” of each person as the media presented them? If I focused more on the “failures,” what were they, and what was my emotional response(s) to the themes or story lines (e.g., theme—he was irresponsible; story line—he was gullible) of these failures? Did I see a connection between the themes or story lines of these failures and the themes or story lines of my own failures, or simply viewed them as the failures of that person? Similarly, if I focused more on the “gifts,” what were they, and what was my emotional response(s) to the themes or story lines (e.g., theme—he valued family and people; story line—he was creative, a giver, philanthropic or generous) of these gifts? Did I see a connection between the themes or story lines of these gifts to the themes or story lines of my own gifts, or simply viewed them as the gifts of that person? In what way(s) do these themes or story lines relate to what I truly want or desire, or what I do not want, in my life spaces?

The answer to the last question provides clues to underling “core thoughts” that may be serving as guides and “points of attraction” in our individual and collective life spaces. Using the identified themes or story lines and the ten contrasting guides and “points of attraction” presented in the chart, the next step then is to use the chart to identify which “core thoughts” appear to resonate with one’s emotional response(s) to the identified themes or story lines that were projected onto the media’s presentations and used to construct societal and global life space experiences about the lives of Jackson and Kennedy? An honest self-assessment here may reveal “core thoughts” that we, individually and collectively, may be using, knowingly or unknowingly, as guides and “points of attraction” to direct or misdirect Energy related to limiting and nurturing the evolution of human consciousness. In other words, after honestly answering the self-probing questions, look at the chart, and, while also looking at the identified themes or story lines for the lives of each person, honestly determine whether or not “It’s okay if I...”. Uncovered will be “what is truly desired or not” as related to underling “core thought(s)” at play in one’s personal life space. These “core thoughts” served as guides and “points of attraction” that were projected onto these two events and used to structure societal and global life space experiences as mirrored effects.

To conclude, fully recognizing that no one is obliged to grow, as we do have free will, the primary intent of this discussion, therefore, was simply to present one of many perspectives that may be helpful to those who do choose to grow. Ideas related to the mirror effect, and the law of attraction, are more fully discussed in my forthcoming book, Evolving the Human Race Game: A Spiritual and Soul-Centered Perspective.

— Cuf Ferguson
This issue balances both the lineages of the past with the hopes and perils of the present. It opens with yet another insightful reflection on humanistic psychology’s travails by David Elkins. In this provocative article, Elkins makes the case that humanistic psychology’s decline of influence within American psychology is not essentially the fault of humanistic psychology, but the “conservative” culture within which it operates—and that culture includes mainstream psychology. This is an unusually bold and straightforward indictment which, in the light of recent developments in American society (e.g., the economic collapse and waning confidence in the “quick fix”), seems both prescient and instructive. Discover how humanistic psychology can respond to this several-pronged dilemma, and the steps it can take to reverse the trend.

One of the ways that humanistic psychology has not flagged in its influence on American psychology is its extraordinary pursuit of “hardiness” research. In this signal study of the latest measure of hardiness, the Personal Views Survey III–R (PVS III-R), Salvatore Maddi and his colleagues find that control, commitment, and challenge, the three pillars of psychological hardiness, continue to be robust predictors of both courage and growth, resilience, and life-satisfaction.

Speaking of which, our next set of articles homes in on three of humanistic psychology’s hardiest titans—James Bugental, Adrian van Kaam, and Alexander Lowen. All three have played pivotal roles in our movement, and, sadly, all three have died within the last year.

James F. T. Bugental was my primary mentor in the theory and practice of existential–humanistic psychology. Through his tutoring and supervision—and along with his extraordinary wife Elizabeth—Jim not only nurtured me, and many like me (such as my editorial predecessor Tom Greening), but helped to create one of the closest and most enduring networks of humanistically oriented practitioners in the last half century (e.g., the Existential–Humanistic...
Institute and the International Institute for Humanistic Studies are examples). My early exposure to Jim was when I began my studies at the Humanistic Psychology Institute (now Saybrook Graduate School) in a nine-month long “mentorship” course. From there he and Elizabeth invited me to join their low-fee, supervised counseling center called “Interlogue.” Through the almost 30 years I have known them, I have kept in close touch with the Bugentals—and they in turn, have treated me like family. In this light, and in the light of how they have treated many in our community over the years, I don’t think it is an exaggeration to say that they have, and will continue to have, a central place in the development of existential–humanistic practice for the foreseeable future. For an elaboration on Jim (and Elizabeth’s) influence, see the Fall 1996 special tribute to Jim in JHP, along with the recent retrospectives in the Association for Humanistic Psychology’s October/November 2008 AHP Perspective, and the American Psychological Association’s February-March 2009 American Psychologist. Finally, it is with a heavy heart that I announce the passing, just days ago, of Elizabeth, who, as you will see, contributed one of the most moving reflections on Jim’s life—and dying—that can be imagined, and by so doing, contributed immensely to our understanding of both Jim and eldercare. The gaping chasm that has been

left in the wake of Jim and Elizabeth’s deaths cannot be articulated; it can only be presided by and appreciated by those who will carry on their radiant innovations. I strongly urge you to read each of the tributes to their legacy, for each in their own way have begun the task of rebridging the chasm and rediscovering the innovators’ visions. In addition to the piece by Elizabeth Bugental, for example, Ken Bradford and Molly Sterling—both longtime associates of the Bugentals—provide a resplendent “roadmap” of Jim’s most intimate beliefs, and Orah Krug, a coauthor with me on an upcoming monograph for the American Psychological Association on existential–humanistic therapy, compares and contrasts Jim’s legacy with that of Irv Yalom. I believe this latter article is destined to become a classic.

We round out this special memorial section with superb reflections on Adrian van Kaam and Alexander Lowen. If the Bugentals inspired an earthy, spiritually oriented therapy, van Kaam and Lowen must be seen as kindred pioneers on parallel paths. For instance, as Susan Muto and Frederick Martin so ably demonstrate, van Kaam brought a profound contemplative dimension to existential humanism, or more properly “existential phenomenology,” while at the same time helping to launch one of the signal academic programs fostering that approach—the psychology department at Duquesne University. Further, not only was van Kaam a pioneering figure in academic psychology, he was also an ordained priest and originator of Formation Spirituality, which was pertinent to his existential–phenomenological vision and practice.

Alexander Lowen, on the other hand, was probably the most prominent student of the bioenergetic tradition of Wilhelm Reich. An earthy and holistic originator from the start, Lowen helped to found the contemporary field of (humanistic) somatic psychology, which also notably influenced the somatic component of “Bugentalian” existential-humanistic practice, as well as many other humanistic and transpersonal modalities.

Harris Friedman—a prominent bioenergetic–transpersonal scholar in his own right—co-wrote this captivating tribute with fellow bioenergetic scholar Robert Glazer. In light of Harris’s prodigious contributions to the humanistic literature, I am pleased to announce that as of this issue, he will officially join our Editorial Board. Although Harris and I have had our philosophical differences over the years, some of them quite vehement, I believe firmly that his presence on our Board will help to strengthen us, both as a diverse and dedicated group of humanistic scholars, and as bridgebuilders in the evolving psychological world.

— Kirk Schneider
This appointment will be effective to accommodate the successful candidate, between January and July 2010. Expressions of interest, applications, and nominations should be submitted, in strictest confidence, to Robert M. Fisher, Ph.D., Rusher Loscavio Executive Search, bfisher@rll.com.

The next President will find Saybrook University a remarkable opportunity for leadership, learning, and social benefit. Saybrook has a long and colorful history as a pioneer in higher education. Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center was founded in 1970 as the Humanistic Psychology Institute. Saybrook is known for its pioneering model, its faculty, and the quality of its 1,000 graduates throughout the world. A product of the nationwide wave of innovation in higher education, it was founded on the basic humanistic belief that human consciousness at the individual and societal level is a work in progress for which each person is responsible. This vision still provides the ethical, pedagogical and disciplinary content of the University’s programs. Saybrook believes that graduate education should prepare scholar/practitioners to take effective leadership roles in developing the higher levels of consciousness needed to realize the immense possibilities of these times, while at the same time minimizing the ever-present potential for social and individual suffering. To that end it provides a unique learner-centered environment for advanced studies and cross-disciplinary research based in an emancipatory humanistic tradition.

Programs are concentrated in the fields of Psychology, Human Science, and Organizational Systems. Culturally integrated boutique programs reflect a preservation of the unique qualities of each part of an institution that is greater than the sum of its parts. In Fall 2009, new master’s and doctoral students, predominantly from the healthcare professions, are pursuing studies in Saybrook’s new College for Mind–Body Medicine, in collaboration with the Center for Mind–Body Medicine in Washington, D.C. Other new affiliations with effective institutional partners (Leadership Institute of Seattle (LIOS), and the The Jung Center of Houston) are being implemented.

The new President will find Saybrook poised for continuing success as it has been ambitious in its recent undertakings. Recent significant increases in contributed income, mergers with related institutions, and the implementation of a visionary strategic plan poise Saybrook for quality growth under the next President. The highly successful stewardship of departing president Lorne Buchman, who is undertaking another presidency, is reflected in a projected budget of $10,000,000 in 2009–2010, following increases both in enrollments and in contributed income that reflect the impacts of strong leadership and new initiatives. Annual contributed income recently exceeded $1,000,000.

The President & Chief Executive Officer reports to the Board of Trustees. Direct reports include: Vice President of Academic Affairs, Vice President of Operations/CFO, Vice President of Marketing and Strategic Development, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, and VP/President of LIOS Graduate College.
INSIDE AHP

FACULTY POSITION
AT ST. MARY’S COLLEGE
MORAGA, CALIFORNIA

St. Mary’s is looking for an assistant professor, tenure track, and is conducting a national search. Please pass the word to anyone who may be interested in an assistantship professorship, tenure track, in the Graduate Counseling Program (GCP) at Saint Mary’s College of California in Moraga, just east of Oakland in the hills.

The GCP has more than 200 students. St. Mary’s would love to have a transpersonal/humanistic/integral/holistic oriented and culturally competent professor join the team! Saint Mary’s is a great college with a beautiful expansive campus in the San Francisco Bay Area, and good benefits.

Contact: http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/
Job Posting: http://novushronline.stmarys-ca.edu/
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Job site: http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/jobs/
To apply, applicants must register and log into the Job’s page: http://novushronline.stmarys-ca.edu/LoginPage.aspx

Conference Announcement
3rd ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE SOCIETY FOR HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY (APA Division 32)
HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY, PSYCHOTHERAPY, AND ACTION: TRANSFORMATION IN A TIME OF CHANGE

October 8–11, 2009, Colorado Springs, Colorado, University of the Rockies, Preconference workshops October 8

Keynotes: Leslie Greenberg, Pratyusha Tummala-Narra, Tom Pyszczynski
Contact: Louis Hoffman, louis.hoffman@rockies.edu; subject Humanistic Conference; Brent Dean Robbins, brobbins@pointpark.edu; http://www.d32conference.com; http://www.rockies.edu

Conference Announcement
40th INTERNATIONAL HUMAN LEARNING RESOURCES NETWORK

October 25–November 1, 2009, Cuernavaca, Mexico

IHLR was founded in 1970 by Virginia Satir (AHP’s President in 1982). Over the past four decades, IHLRN conferences have led to the formation of a worldwide network of persons who hold similar values and are interested in effective ways to learn, teach, and practice how to be more fully human.

The 40th annual conference is at Hacienda Vista Hermosa, which is more than 500 years old. The main lobby is the length of a football field and houses six or seven antique coaches and other treasures. Parts of more than 300 movies have been filmed here. There are 150 sleeping rooms; most have balconies and a few have their own private pool! All have ceiling fans.

Hacienda Vista Hermosa (HVH) is 90–120 minutes south of Mexico City (on the four lane super highway from Mexico City to Acapulco). Arranged buses will pick you up. The conference will begin with dinner on Sunday evening, October 25, and end after breakfast on Sunday, November 1. $913 for a single; $735 per person in a double; $670 per person in a triple. These rates include: conference, hotel room, three meals a day, taxes for seven days, and the annual $25 association fee. Fly in to the Mexico City International Airport.

Contact: http://www.IHLRN.org; call MA Bjarkman at 317-850-5111
AWAKENING THE INNER SENSE
Some Methods and Meditation Objects

— Floco Tausin

What we know as our weekday is a tide of miscellaneous information that we receive with our five senses and put together into an integral picture in the brain. The sense organs are the gates of our body—they connect the outside world with the inner world and determine, dependent on our state of consciousness, how we experience this world.

But is there more to human sense activity than touching, seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting? There is, according to many cultures and religions where we find the notion of an inner sense. This sense is thought of as a mode of perception which directly and intuitively gives insight into the essence or true nature of the object perceived. Often this subtle or inner sense is linked to the eye as a widespread symbol of light, cognition, and truth. It is then addressed as the “inner eye”, “third eye”, or “eye of the heart”, common among mystics who experience the divine light. In Indian mythology, for example, this inner sense is expressed as god Shiva’s frontal eye that gives him unifying vision. Accordingly, tantric yogis try to open this third eye by activating the Ajna Chakra, located between the eyebrows. Likewise, the Buddha Siddhartha Gautama received enlightenment through a “celestial eye” (pnajnaatku) which permitted him to understand the forces of existence and their manifestation in the chain of causality. The Greek philosophers spoke of an “Eye of the Spirit” which has to be opened and purified to see the truth. While the Old Testament calls the prophets “seers” and refers to an all-seeing eye or “Eye of Providence” that turns to those who fear God and gives them superior insights or strength, the New Testament takes up the Greek philosopher’s notion of the “Eye of the Soul or Heart”: The eye becomes the object of purity (Matthew 6:22), and the Eye of the Heart has to be opened in order to see God (Acts 9:18). Over the centuries, Desert Fathers, Gnostics, and Mystics alike further reported experiences of the inner sense as inner eye or eye of the heart or soul. Since the early modern period, Western esoterics and scientists interested in

MEDITATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INNER SENSE
Developing our inner sense, therefore, is a way to improve our spiritual life. In fact, many of us are doing this already, more or less consciously. For example, while meditating, many have come to experience subjective visual appearances, ecstatic feelings, or intuitive insights—first aspects of an inner sense of waking up. But if we want to develop that inner sense to its full bloom, years and decades of constant exercise are necessary. In any case, awakening the inner sense means choosing a meditation method that works directly with the inner sense or with its objects and functions. Generally, meditation can be carried out on material objects that stimulate the inner sense; or on subtle objects that can be conceived of as objects of this inner sense.

MATERIAL MEDITATION OBJECTS
Material meditation objects are perceived through the eyes, not through the inner sense, but concentrating on them can stimulate the inner sense and lead to subtle appearances of the inner sense. Meditation on material

Eye of Providence at Aachen Cathedral, Aachen, Germany

Relation between perception, soul, and pineal gland, after René Descartes (1596–1650)
AWAKENING INNER SENSE

objects should support the inner sense or third eye in its function to mediate between the two brain or consciousness hemispheres. It should make aware to us our right intuitive emotional side as well as our left analytical rational side, bringing them into harmony with each other. This happens most readily with squinting techniques that have been developed in both Western and Eastern traditions. Two different types of squinting must be distinguished here, though:

1) the letting go of the eyes (parallel viewing) in which the concentration point shifts behind the object looked at to a focal point farther away, and

2) the concentrative directing inside the eyes (cross-viewing) in which the concentration point is drawn in front of the object looked at, in the direction of the observer, to a focal point closer. To distinguish these two types, we call the second type “doubling”. Doubling is the type of squinting ideal for meditation.

The simplest exercise of doubling is looking at the root of the nose, according to the way of Indian yogis. However, doubling can also be applied to distant material objects. Anthropologist and author Carlos Castaneda, for example, mentions a seeing technology called “gazing”, which means to first focus the view on an object, similar to the yogi’s cleaning exercise trataka. Sometimes, though, it is combined with squinting in which the practitioner separates the two pictures and thus superimposes two equally formed objects. The concentration on this superimposed object synchronizes the two consciousness hemispheres, and, regularly practiced, produces a depth perception that carries the practitioner into other spheres of consciousness.

Another example of this form of meditation is the meditation exercise using the Tables of Chartres. The tables are three legendary geometric figures of equal surface area, made from red and blue colored metal pieces shaped as rectangle, square, and circle. They are put down before oneself in two rows of alternating colors and shapes, and then the vision lets go and “doubles” them until a superimposed third table group appears in the middle. The knowledge around this old meditation type was maintained and passed on by gypsies, and published for the first time in 1978, by the French author Pierre Derlon.

SUBTLE OBJECTS: SUBJECTIVE VISUAL PHENOMENA

Subtle meditation objects can be feelings and thoughts. For developing the inner sense, however, those objects are particularly well-suited which appear through the fusion of the inner sense and the visual sense. I’m referring to those subjective visual phenomena that are known in ophthalmology as “entoptic phenomena”. Entoptics are phenomena believed by the observer to be seen outside of him- or herself, though physiologically explained they are generated by the observer’s visual system. The following entoptic phenomena are suitable as meditation objects for most people:

Afterimages: Contrasting colored afterimages may be explained as the continuation of the effect of a visual stimulus when this stimulus has gone. For example, blinking into the sun for a short time will produce the colored afterimage of the sun in our visual field.

Meditation on afterimages includes producing these images by briefly glancing into a light source, for example a light bulb or a candle flame. Against a dark background or with the eyes shut, we observe these colored luminous spots until they lose their intensity. Again, we generate another afterimage and observe it until it fades, and so on. Observing the afterimage, we actively move it with our view and watch it change its form and intensity; we study its proper motion and the influence of our eye movements on its luminosity.

Phosphenes: Phosphenes are colored spots and blurs in the dark, often seen with eyes closed. They are said to be discharges of visual neurons. Meditation on phosphenes works similarly to meditation on afterimages. However, it is more difficult because it has to be done without the stimulating effect of an external light source. We close the eyes and watch the colored spots taking shape in the dark. They tend to disappear from our awareness and therefore have to be made visible again and again by realigning our attention. An elaborated system of consciousness development focusing on afterimages and phosphenes was created by the French scientist and inventor Dr. Francis Lefebure; the exercises of his “Phosphenism” combine visual concentration on afterimages with (neuro)physiological rhythmics.

Eye Floaters (Mouches Volantes): Eye floaters are scattered semitransparent dots and strands appearing with bright light conditions in our visual fields and following the eyes’ motions. In ophthalmology, they are regarded as a normal opacity of the vitreous fluid due to progressing age. Eye floaters meditation means that we bring these the objects into our field of vision and consciously look at them. We explore them, get to know their forms, constellations, and movements. We notice that the floaters constantly drift away, mainly down, and we try to keep them in the field of vision. More advanced meditators of eye floaters will begin to see changes in movement, size, and luminosity.
**AWAKENING INNER SENSE**

The teaching of my mentor, the seer Nestor, provides elaborated seeing and ecstasy techniques to work with eye floaters, as well as a spiritual interpretation of these dots and strands.

**Blue Field Entoptic Phenomenon:** This formal term refers to “flying corpuscles” or “luminous spots”, tiny luminous spheres moving fast along tracks. It is best seen in the blue sky (hence the name), but can become very strong in situations with extreme physical challenges like shocks or blackouts. From a medical point of view, it’s related to white blood cells and can become very intense in situations with extreme physical challenges like shocks or blackouts.

Unlike the other entoptics, the luminous spots can’t be fixed with the eyes directly but are seen in the peripheral field of vision. Observing luminous spots, therefore, improves our alertness in the whole visual field, rather than our ability to concentrate on particular objects.

But by consciously looking at entoptic phenomena like the above-mentioned, we withdraw our five senses from the material sense objects and channel the energy usually needed to maintain their functioning to the inner sense. This way, we awaken the inner sense, which in turn will help us to recognize and feel immediately and with great intensity the higher significance of these dots, spots, and strands as well as their relation to ourselves. We intuitively understand why such entoptics have been observed by many peoples, provided with religious meanings, and used as concentration objects.

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**INNER SENSE/INNER EYE**

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SHAMANISM: Countable or Uncountable?

In a strange region he scales steep slopes
Far from his friends he cuts a lonely figure . . .
So momentous are his travels among the mountains
To tell just a tenth would be a tall order

These lines from Sir Gawain and the Green Knight could also be used to describe the way of the shaman, because he/she lives a life apart from other, too, and has difficulty in conveying in words just what it is that he/she experiences when journeying into other realities. Perhaps this is why the accounts of such journeys were often turned into folktales, as it was the only way to make them both understandable and acceptable to people not familiar with the landscapes to be found and experiences to be had in such worlds.

So what is shamanism? We could simply say that what shamans practice, whether they call themselves indigenous, urban, or neoshamans, is what shamanism is, but this would be avoiding the question. Instead, the following definition is proposed:

A shaman is understood to be someone who performs an ecstatic (in a trance state), imitative, or demonstrative ritual of a séance (or a combination of all three), at will (in other words, whenever he or she chooses to do so), in which aid is sought from beings in (what are considered to be) other realities generally for healing purposes or for divination—both for individuals and/or the community.

As for the practice of shamanism, it is understood to encompass a personalistic view of the world, in which life is seen to be not only about beliefs and practices, but also about relationships—how we are related, and how we relate to each other. In shamanism the notion of interdependence “is the idea of the kinship of all life, the recognition that nothing can exist in and of itself without being in relationship to other things, and therefore that it is insane for us to consider ourselves as essentially unrelated parts of the whole Earth” (Halifax J 1987 Shamanism, Mind, and No Self, in S. Nicholson (comp) Shamanism: An Expanded View of Reality, Wheaton: The Theosophical Publishing House, 220). And through neurotheology, this assertion so often heard expressed in neo-shamanic circles that all life is connected, can now be substantiated. This is because it has been shown that during mystical ecstasy (or its equivalent, entheogenic shamanic states [states induced by ingesting hallucinogens]), the individual experiences a blurring of the boundaries on the ego and feels at “one with Nature”; the ego is no longer confined within the body, but extends outward to all of Nature; other living beings come to share in the ego, as an authentic communion with the total environment, which is sensed as in some way divine (Ruck CAP, Staples BD, Celdran JAG, Hoffman MA 2007 The Hidden World: Survival of Pagan Shamanic Themes in European Fairytales, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 76).

Traditionally it was the role of the shaman to maintain the equilibrium of the community he/she represented by focusing on the interrelationships within it and resolving any discord there may have been. The neoshaman, on the other hand, tends to work within a much wider community where not everyone shares the same practices and beliefs. Consequently, his or her work is generally more concerned with helping individuals rather than the community.

The following observation by the Hungarian academic Vilmos Voigt draws attention to the limitations of neo-shamanism: “None of the actual personal or social problems of the unemployed or the bored rich are solved by attending urban drum classes” (Voigt V 2009 Book Review of Andrei Znamenski’s The Beauty of the Primiti ve, Shaman 17(1,2), Molnar & Kelemen Oriental Publishers).

On the other hand, it is doubtful whether it could be said that attending services held in any churches, temples, mosques, or synagogues can satisfactorily solve the above-mentioned problems either. What such practices can be said to do, though, is to help us to make some sense out of our existence and also to make our lives more manageable.

In the 1960s neoshamanism became one of the Western spiritualities that capitalized on the Eliadean vision of “archaic techniques of ecstasy.” Mircea Eliade’s seminal work, Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy (1964 Princeton University Press [originally published in French in 1951]), can be seen as an attempt “to descend to the depth of the human spiritual tradition, to find the roots of the primal religion and to decipher its universal archaic patterns that could be retrieved for future spiritual regeneration” (Znamenski A 2009 Quest for Primal Knowledge: Mircea Eliade, Traditionalism, and “Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy”, Shaman 17(1,2), Budapest: Molnar & Kelemen Oriental Publishers).

Eliade believed that the sacred should be discussed on its own terms without being reduced to social life, history, economics, and brain function, and his method became known as the phenomenological approach. As he pointed out in his own diary in 1946, his intention was to present shamanism in the general perspective of the history of religions rather than as an aberrant phenomenon belonging more to psychiatry” (Eliade M 1990...
Casting a Shadow

The Shadow, this intangible yet integral, inseparable part of every inanimate object and animating being, has ever captured the curiosity, imagination, and sensitivity of the human mind in all spectra of its dimensional creative expression. From novelists, poets, lyricists, and scientists attempting to identify the physical properties of shadows on distant planets, musicians, shadow theatre puppeteers, dancers, painters, and others, to lovers becoming excited just seeing or yearning to glimpse even from a distance the shadow belonging to the person they love, have been fascinated, intrigued one way or another, and inspired by this phootastic phenomenon. But this entity, although complete and ours, has its appearance and presence depending entirely on the power of illumination. Moonlight and the flickering light of stars and candles create the most romantic and poetic shadows, hymned in every language and culture on earth.

Even the congenitally blind perceive the concept of shadow and can sketch rough outlines symptomatic of shadows drawn from their bountiful tactile experiences. John M. Kennedy, Ph.D., a researcher of perception, in his article “How the Blind Draw” based on his numerous studies on the subject published in *Scientific American*, January 1997, emphasizes that blind and sighted artists “use many of the same devices in sketching their surroundings, suggesting that vision and touch are closely linked.” He points out that blind artists depend on tactile data, stimulation, and touch to portray familiar objects. By sensing and feeling an object, they determine its shape. “Because the lines in most simple drawings reveal surface edges—features that are discerned by touching as readily as they are by sight—drawings by the blind are easily recognized by sighted people”. As sighted individuals do, blind artists also “use lines to represent surfaces and shapes to convey abstract messages.” Sighted individuals perceive two contour lines enclosing brightness, darkness, and color as indicators of surface edges, and the blind perceive the lines in pretty much the same manner: “as indicators for the location of a single edge of some surface.” It is precisely because “the blind appreciate line drawings and other graphic symbols to turn the names of other religions into countable nouns, then there is no reason to do so with shamanism either, at least for those of us who regard it as a religion. After all, there is not one religion that does not take a variety of different forms, so why single out shamanism for such grammatical treatment? Although keeping the noun shamanism uncountable might not be a particularly fashionable view to take, the alternative makes no sense to me.

MICHAEL BERMAN, BA, M.Phil., Ph.D., works as a teacher and a writer. Publications include *The Power of Metaphor for Crown House* and *The Nature of Shamanism and the Shamanic Story* for Cambridge Scholars Publishing (2007). *Shamanic Journeys through Dagestan and Shamanic Journeys through the Caucasus* are both being published in paperback by O-Books in 2009. A resource book for teachers on storytelling, *In a Faraway Land*, will be coming out in 2010. Michael has been involved in teaching and teacher training for more than thirty years, has given presentations at Conferences in more than twenty countries, and hopes to have the opportunity to visit many more yet. Although Michael originally trained as a Core Shamanic Counsellor with the Scandinavian Centre for Shamanic Studies under Jonathan Horwitz, these days his focus is more on the academic side of shamanism, with a particular interest in the folktales with shamanic themes told by and collected from the peoples of the Caucasus. For more information, please visit www.Thestoryteller.org.uk

— Spyros P. Damascos
that he strongly recommends that art
designed for the visually impaired in
the form of raised-line paintings and
brailed text be increased.

Lastly, but hardly least, of cases
in point, philosophers have also
used the concept of shadow in their
paradigms, for example Plato’s cave
allegory, and behavioral theorists have
named adjunct personality dynam-
ics as shadows. The two prominent
modes of psychotherapy using the
shadow idiom are Jungian Analytical
Psychology and Phenomenologi-

cal–Existential perception of shadow
had, whereas the Phenomenologi-
ics as shadows. The two prominent
modes of psychotherapy using the
shadow idiom are Jungian Analytical
Psychology and Phenomenological–
Existential Therapy. However, the
similarity ends at the use of the same
name of shadow. The Jungian shadow
suggestively comprises concealed,
envied personality traits we wish we
had, whereas the Phenomenologi-

cal–Existential perception of shadow
refers to our behavioral physiognomy,
silhouette, consisting of fine, distinct
characteristics of our personality that
we do possess, those specific charac-
teristics that are unmistakably ours.
Those attributes uniquely define us,
as do our facial features, and the abso-
lute silhouette of our physique case in
a background of light.

Illustratively, in the movie Mary
Poppins, the chimney sweep Bert
immediately recognizes Mary by the
cast of her shadow on the sidewalk
where he is scribbling sketches. His
face radiantly euphoric, he outlines
her silhouette on the sidewalk hap-
pily exclaiming her name. Without
her having uttered a word, or even
being seen, her shadow tells who she
is, identifies her and the qualities she
stands for: kindness, consideration,
responsibility, honor, altruism. Her
very shadow inspires confidence, care,
love, safety: “You need not fear when
Mary is near.” (Certainly, the reverse
is true: An unfamiliar shadow in an
alley revealing dubious personality
characteristics more than likely will
inspire anxiety or even fright.)

It is specifically the reputation
we build, based on everyday deeds,
mannerisms, gestures, and responses
to the daily tribulations of life, which
shapes the behavioral physiognomy
of our personality providing the first
impression, an instant recognition
so to speak of who and what we are.
Those are added together with our
identifying facial characteristics and
the inimitable cast of our physique’s
silhouette, to “cast our shadow.”

Delving introspectively a little deeper
into the physiognomy of our per-
sonality, maybe for the first time we
can come into contact with behaviors
that are not in our everyday repertoire
of functioning [and yet still define
us for others]. Behaviors exhibited
sporadically under certain circum-
stances, conditions, and settings, such
as airs or arrogance illuminated by
the ephemeral neon lights of instant
fame, callous self-indulgence, invei-
ging demagoguery, blinding rage, or
abusive pathological love. Quite often
the marquee lights of meteoric fame
are deceivingly bright, providing mo-
ment-to-moment pseudo-prominence
without a safety net to cushion the
fall when the glitter begins dimming
to darkness as swiftly as a light switch
turned on and then off.

Further probing beyond everyday
ephemeral behaviors might awake
dormant, unutilized strengths that
have always been available and within
our reach. Strengths that provide
the impetus to process setbacks and
adversities stemming from the trials of
life that we all face in a positive and
constructive manner. Strengths that
empower us to continue meeting our
family, personal, and societal respon-
sibilities and challenges head on, espe-
cially when under stress. Mental and
emotional traumas and mishaps test
our inner strength, stamina, self-de-
termination, and perseverance to rise
us above the despoliation and keep us
steadfast in pursuing our goals.

Even as we meticulously plan our
goals, curving our niche in the world,
it might be prudent to also be very
thoughtful and considerate of the
rights of others, and of the footprints
we leave behind, as they are indicative
of the road we chose toward attain-
ment of our aspirations.

Many a theologian, philosopher, and
humanist has said that to be born
human is to be bestowed a divine
honor and responsibility. I concur. As
humans, we are privileged in experi-
encing the world in its fullest dra-
matic immensity and grandeur, while
harmoniously marveling and musing
at the surrounding infinity with a
sense of humility and respect for what
might be hidden from the eye, from
what might lie beyond a telescope’s
most powerful lenses, and what might
be hidden from the eye, from
what might lie beyond a telescope’s
most powerful lenses, and what might
come into view only a step farther
than a shuttle’s charted voyage in the
universe.

Wyeth reflected on his Night
Shadow paintings (Helga Pictures):

“After I get in the mood of a thing I am
painting, I love to work on the background...
I love to dream, to think, about this
thing that’s going to live in that background.”

Having been born a human being
is also an enormous responsibility
because of our innate powers of
reason, our freedom of choice, and the
consequences ensuing from that
gift. It is explicitly the choices we
make that affect our conduct, the life
of others, even Mother Nature herself;
pursuing scientific research for the
benefit of humanity versus only for
science’s own sake, publicity, and ego
trips; trifling with what is unparal-
leled, wholesome, complete, beautiful,
and sacred, life. Frivolous endeavors
are hubris against mankind and the
unwritten moral code of nature.

“An unexamined life is not worth
living,” said Socrates. Periodic self-
fulfillment, into our behavioral physi-
ognomy, into the first impression
we make, and into the sincerity of
our intentions would perhaps enrich
self-knowledge and provide us with
the insight to implement necessary
changes in improving of our conduct.

Do we seriously take the time to
think, to honestly introspect and
wonder for a moment what kind of
shadow we are casting as we stroll the
avenues of our life? It might be quite a
rewarding, apocalyptic experience.

Spyros P. Damascos, MA, NCC,
LCPC, practices in Maryland, holds a Mas-
ter’s Degree in humanistic psychology from
State University of West Georgia, and leads
groups on spirituality and phenomenology.
HEALING INTO POSSIBILITY
THE TRANSFORMATIONAL LESSONS OF A STROKE
By Alison Bonds Shapiro

Reviewed by Daryl Paulson

This insightful book details Alison Bonds Shapiro’s experiences as a stroke victim. She was busy working at her occupation when suddenly she had not one but two strokes. These resulted in her being totally disabled. What she did to become better in many respects than she had been prior to the strokes is presented in detail in this book. This is a “where-the-rubber-meets-the-road” type of book describing a stroke with the voice of one who has gone through the experience.

In Chapter 1, Strokes Happen, Shapiro describes her experience of the two strokes in May 2002. She had no apparent risks for a stroke, such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol. She describes the actual sensations and aftermath of having a stroke, attempting to figure out what had happened. She was not expected to live, but thankfully she did.

Chapter 2, A Lifelong Dream, is the author’s way of stating what she had achieved, prior to her stroke, in terms of education and social status. She had received an MBA and was a successful business consultant. Then came the stroke, leaving her in the rehabilitation hospital, basically on a gurney, to face the remainder of her life. What would you do?

In Chapter 3, Taking Responsibility, she tells how her stroke brought her to a bedridden state, and how incredibly frightening that was “to have been fully alive and capable of doing so many things, and within hours, being brought to a near-vegetative existence.” How would you feel? Your brain has been erased of its memories; you wake up and find a new world—Alison’s world—the world in which only she is alive. She had no recall of anyone or even how to dress herself. She had no memory of walking or going to the bathroom. This is the horror she faced. How would you do?

Chapter 4, Affecting Your Own Life, is an existential discussion of the fairness of life and life events, particularly the fairness of having a stroke. Was it morally justifiable? Did the person deserve it? What was it for? These are important questions to consider. There is an immensity of the universe that is beyond our control, and what we control is a very simplified, contained area. Our defense mechanisms do not even let us imagine our out-of-controlness, until the system comes crashing in on us—loss of a job, a death, cancer, or a stroke. The question of utmost importance is “Why did this happen to me?” This is unanswerable, and one falls into circular mentation, tautology, and often to the depths of despair.

The author tells us of the way she began asking herself, “What am I going to do about it?” This was the beginning of her ascent out of her dilemma. It provided a solution to the problem and a gateway to a much better life.

Another key to her success was the discovery of “the brain’s neuroplasticity.” Her physicians told her she had six months to recover and that would be the end of it. This destructive, self-fulfilling, and inaccurate prediction was based on the belief that a brain is the same throughout life. Nothing was known about neuroplasticity. Current brain research demonstrates that brain function is not static, but instead is quite dynamic. It is ever-changing, ever remapping, and always ready to use itself as fully and effectively as possible.

For example, if you lose your hearing or your eyesight, the parts of the brain dedicated to these functions do not remain idle. They are instead diverted to other functions. This section of the book is very important, for it can provide much hope to other stroke victims.

In Chapter 5, Facing Forward, Alison Bonds Shapiro describes what she had to face—she had to relearn virtually everything she had once known. This was a huge obstacle, but one of immense importance. In her brain resided still the memory; her challenge was to get that memory back, but the process was ruptured. She had to rewire the linkage. In her words:

“We can’t go back to what we have been. We can only go forward to what we can be.

She made a commitment to herself to go forward, and she explains for others how to do so.

Chapter 6, Finding a Reason to Live, is an important chapter. One might ask, after two strokes that almost brought her to death, why would she want to live? She dealt with this existential question over and over, as she lay immobilized. Upon her mental revival, she thought about the people who had helped her during her experience and paid them homage by concentrating on her improvement through writing this book to help others who have undergone stroke.

Chapter 7, Cultivating Gratitude, is a chapter based on reframing. Instead of focusing on all of one’s troubles—what one has lost—it is far better to be thankful for what one has retained. This positive perspective is right on.

Chapter 8, Laughter and Loving Kindness, shows how a stroke victim needs for others to take the severity of the stroke with humor and loving
In Chapter 13, Habitating the Disability, she discussed the problem of making recovery habitual as “what is,” instead of “what should be.” If you become lame from a stroke, you will use your strong side more. This prevents the weaker side from developing. It is critical to break the cycle and concentrate on the weaker side. She describes this very succinctly.

Chapter 14, Believing in Change, discusses how change and transformation always happen throughout life. The problem is that we often resist. This is especially true in stroke victims. If individuals lose confidence and become stuck, they will remain so. It requires much effort to achieve, and achievement comes only when we believe we can overcome. The author gives five examples of what this can mean for stroke victims.

In Chapter 15, Shapiro discusses the importance of Skillfulness and Persistence. She talks about becoming discouraged, frustrated, and worn out, but it is the taste of freedom that they will remain so. It requires much confidence and become stuck, will remain so. It requires much effort to achieve, and achievement comes only when we believe we can overcome. The author gives five examples of what this can mean for stroke victims.

In Chapter 16, Being Creative, is a chapter on finding things to do that one likes doing. It will not do any good to do anything to recover but what one likes to do. For example, if what one enjoys is machine shop, then something else will not work. It depends upon the person’s inward goals. This is what stimulates the brain and is very important in self-rehabilitation.

In Chapter 17, Training Past the Disability, Shapiro describes undertaking the training of body parts that worked to support her recovery beyond their pre-stroke strength. She made sure, however, that the parts that were not working well did not get a free ride. She notes that it took several years to do this, rather than the six months allowed by her physicians. This seems to be far better to me, because this is the time it takes young people to develop. For example, young people begin speaking at about two years of age. They must practice and practice and practice to speak fluently. So must a stroke victim. Progress is not a steady pace forward; it will be uneven.

Chapter 18, You are the Tool, is a chapter devoted to healthcare. The primary point of this chapter is to explain and differentiate self-indulgence from self-care. In our society, we face self-indulgence on a massive scale. This is not self-care. Self-care starts with a different understanding, one that is unselfish. We are part of a larger whole—family, group, or society. Self-care is focused upon these greater self–other relationships. As I care for the whole, I care for myself. It consists of an open heart and a deep abiding respect for what is—and the enjoyment of being with others.

Chapter 19, Minimizing Stressors, provides approaches to finding out what is too hard, what is too easy, and setting limits between the two. One of the biggest stressors is emotional loss. You have lost a part of yourself, and this leads to depression. This chapter is very good in talking about and dealing with that.

Chapter 20, Being Kind to Yourself, is a great chapter. Criticizing oneself for not remembering, not being able to move one’s hand, or having trouble walking are all useless and destructive. A person is at square one. All learning must be repeated, like a young child dealing with that.

In Chapter 17, In Paying Attention, Chapter 9, Life is Happening Now, the author discusses how she came to realize that her life is occurring “now.” There could be no waiting for change. She could not take a sabbatical, but had to live and function now. She found meaning in asking herself: “How can I do what will bring me joy with what I have?”

In Chapter 10, Who Can You Be Now?, she discusses the problem of overdetermination—that is, being preoccupied with something else before one begins. Her stroke brought out the fact of this illusion. She could see that her fears were but temporary, as long as she did not hold on to clinging to it, or escaping it; it is happening without judging it, paying attention. This was the main reason Alison was able to encourage her brain to reconnect with her body.

Chapter 12, The Art of the Small Goal, is excellent. Alison Bonds Shapiro said a problem seems bigger if you consider going from being wheelchair-bound to taking long walks. Instead, the process is much slower—from the wheelchair to smaller walks, over and over again. So, recovery requires progressing slowly up the ladder and feeling good about each rung. She says that each person chooses his/her own system of good and bad, and this can be a setup for failure. She had preconceived what was good and what was bad before ever attempting a challenge, but eventually recognized this to be sabotage. She then learned to appreciate achieving small goals.

In Chapter 11, Living with a Weak Side, she discussed what it was like to be on the weak side. She described this very succinctly.

So must a stroke victim. Progress is not a steady pace forward; it will be uneven.

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Chapter 20, Being Kind to Yourself, is a great chapter. Criticizing oneself for not remembering, not being able to move one’s hand, or having trouble walking are all useless and destructive. A person is at square one. All learning must be repeated, like a young child who is learning a new skill. Progress is to be rewarded, not expected. It is a long way back to normalcy after a stroke, and it is important for a
person to realize that.

Chapter 21, Reestablishing the Social Body, is a very good chapter, for the author discusses the tendency of a stroke to separate an individual from society. This aspect, unlike the body, may go unnoticed by many. However, it is most obvious for the person who has suffered the stroke.

In Chapter 22, Beginning, Shapiro deals with “what to do now?” She tells how she was enabled to write this excellent book.

Chapter 23, Putting the Lesson to Practice, describes how we have a number of things we attend to until we are hit with cancer, heart attack, or stroke, etc. They interfere in our lives in every aspect and cause us to think: “Why did this happen? Why did this happen to me? What kind of universe do I live in? What is my purpose? Do I have a purpose?” One cannot simply endure one of these crises; one must actually find the answers to these questions. And it is important to ground the answers into practice.

Eight Principles of Transformation, Chapter 24, provides the cornerstone to success. These principles are:
1. It’s the how, not the why.
2. Show up.
3. Open your heart.
4. Start from where you are.
5. Be skillful.
7. Let go.
8. Go out of the way.

Ms Shapiro discusses these eight aspects thoroughly and the differences in her life before and after the stroke. I learned a tremendous amount from this book. I had a stroke in 2007, and it was the biggest disruption of my life. I had served in Vietnam, suffered from a traumatic stress disorder, and was very uptight. I launched my own business in 1991 and was burning the candle on all sides, including the ends . . . that is, until my stroke. It was not as serious as Alison’s, but it was catastrophic for me. I vacillated for one year, thinking as Alison’s, but it was catastrophic for sides, including the ends . . . that is, and was burning the candle on all.

I launched my own business in 1991 and was very uptight. Vietnam, suff ered from a traumatic disruption of my life. I had served in Vietnam, suffered from a traumatic stress disorder, and was very uptight. I launched my own business in 1991 and was burning the candle on all sides, including the ends . . . that is, until my stroke. It was not as serious as Alison’s, but it was catastrophic for me. I vacillated for one year, thinking my life was over. Fortunately, I went back to my studies and reevaluated my life. I lost all my fears from Vietnam, and now I do not hassle people as an uptight CEO. Shapiro’s book has been a Godsend to me.

DARYL S. PAULSON, Ph.D., is a scholar-at-large in transpersonal and integral studies. He is the President/CEO of Bioscience Laboratories, and the author of six books including Caring Business, Competitive Business: An Integral Approach for the 21st Century, and Walking the Point, Male Initiation, and the Vietnam Experience.

LOVING GRIEF
By P AUL BENNETT

Reviewed by Allan Schnarr

The path of a really good book is straight to the reader’s heart. So it was as I was steadily enchanted by the wisdom in Paul’s story of love. I willingly surrendered to his intimate tale. I felt myself resonating with a warm wisdom that only my heart could know. I discovered the felt sense, right here in the center of my chest, that love and loss are shadow and light. Even now there is a fullness there that rises to moisten my eyes. Not only is it better to have loved and lost, it is the nature of love to make loss inevitable. Paul made this discovery slowly as his grief claimed him. His deeply beloved wife, Bonnie, suffered through bouts of cancer that eventually led to her death. Paul was there, intimately connected with her every step of the way, and then continuing in intimate connection with himself after she was gone. Deep in his heart, with pain as his mentor, he learned to recognize: “My grief is how my love for her feels.” His love for her felt the pain of losing her, and then learned a profoundly comforting lesson: Their love for each other could never be lost.

Paul tells his story in simple, heartfelt, and lyrical prose, flowering into lean poetry at the end of each chapter. Throughout, he has parsed his concepts into direct, experiential description. As if he had trained in mindfulness before the experience (maybe he did!), he unfolds each moment with a meditative acceptance of what it is. His presence to each moment of his grief is emotionally immediate. He acknowledges the difference between speaking feelings and feeling them. It is exquisitely clear when he does speak them, that he has felt and is feeling them. His report of his feelings crescendoes as he describes the recurrent howl of grief that he eventually learned to allow. Indeed, one of the great gifts I found in reading this book was the affirmation of a belief I have long held. Feeling my feelings is the path through my grief—and indeed, through my life. I feel my way through.

While feeling his way along, Paul steadily discovered that he was being “irrevocably altered”. Love and loss were having their way with him, and he was learning to allow it. Toward the end of the book he talks about the path he had been following. At first, as his wife’s death approached, he found the path increasingly narrow. The range of choices was so limited. When the path came up against “the wall of death”, he was able to release his illusions of control over the future. “Your love can sit alone on the grass, lean against the wall, and rest.” Grief and death taught him to stop and let go.

On the other side of the wall, much to his amazement and initial
consternation, he discovered that the path was now wide open. Everything was now possible in a way that it had not been since long before the cancer. He was able to allow his career to move in a new direction, and to allow new love to come into his life. Through this time, he reconciled a profound paradox, that life has power to veto our plans, and that nonetheless we have unfathomable power to create. It is in this paradox that renewed resilience for living life is found. Woven like titanium threads between the lines of this discovery, as it is throughout the book, is how essentially love and loss cohere.

I loved reading this book. It was a heartfelt activity throughout. I experienced such deeply soothing resonance in walking Paul's path with him. I know that theoretically I couldn't actually feel his love, and yet it seemed recurrently that I was. So available is his emotional world that I was right there with him. The concreteness of his description of his wife, Bonnie, was so direct that I felt myself coming to love her. My resonance with him was so complete that in feeling with him his loss of her, I was feeling the accumulated sadness of the losses in all the love I have known. It was all gently comforting.

Writing is an act of communion, with one's own experience, and with the open-hearted reader. It is clear to me that the communion between Paul and me is the deepest treasure I received from him. I came to love Paul in the way that I have learned to love myself. We have both loved and lost so wholeheartedly. We have allowed our feelings to lead us through grief. We have learned that the path of love and loss is the cycle of life. We have learned that every loss that love occasions is not just a challenge to let go of the illusion of control. We have discovered that the darkness of letting go of what needs to die brings light to a new, uncharted path.

I'm with you, Paul. Love lives on, always. You are it.

— Diego Pignatelli
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