

Chapter Sixteen

The Matter of the Heart and the Heart of Matter

“When there is a conflict of priorities, one must follow the heart.”

—From my *Swan Lake* dream

I dream

I am walking with a female psychoanalyst. I put my hand over a spot on her back at her heart area. I feel energy of a wound or illness. As I hold my hand there I begin to feel the energy moving, as if I am extracting or healing this energy. This experience intensifies. She begins to convulse. She falls to the ground as if having a seizure, eyes rolling back into her head, contorting. I become somewhat anxious, wondering if she is going to be okay. She goes back in time to where she falls off a tricycle, hits her head, and dies.

Suddenly she quiets, eyes return. She gets up and says, “I haven’t felt this good after ten heart surgeries,” indicating that she has heart disease or a heart condition, something I didn’t know. Her husband is waiting for her in the car. She says that she is going to send people to me. I say, “I never did this before,” intimating that I may not be able to do it again. I just noticed that when I put my hand on your back, I felt dark and heavy energy there and the healing just started happening.” (Journal, 11-01-08)

The feeling in this dream was intense and powerful. I had this dream after doing a soul retrieval journey. In that journey I entered into what is described as the four chambers of the soul, which compares to the four chambers of the heart. In the first chamber you explore an original wound. In the second chamber you discover and renegotiate your soul's contracts that have kept you bound to repeating the events of the wounding. In the third chamber you retrieve the soul part that was lost because of the wounding, and in the fourth chamber you receive gifts that will help the recovered soul express and live its purpose.¹

When I did this shamanic journey I did not have any particular images come to me in the various chambers. I just accepted that whatever was happening was occurring on the energetic level where everything is pure energy. Even though I wasn't aware of anything happening on the soul retrieval journey, the dream would indicate otherwise.

This was another dream about energy healing and healing the feminine. This time the healing was at the heart level. I was healing the heart of the feminine, or perhaps I was getting to the heart of the matter of the feminine. I am reminded of the *Swan Lake* dream where the lady in the dream says, "When there is a conflict of priorities, one must follow the heart."

But what does it mean to follow the heart? The lady in this dream was a psychoanalyst. She was the same psychoanalyst in the dream that ended chapter 14, where she asked her husband if he was finally going to admit that he did energy healing. In this dream she made reference to having a heart condition. What was this heart condition? Since I accepted that dream figures represented parts of me I had to ask "What is the issue at the heart of the psychoanalyst in me?"

¹ Villoldo, *Mending the Past and Healing the Future*, 48–106.

A psychoanalyst is someone who explores how unconscious factors contribute to problems in a person's life, believing that bringing unconscious factors into consciousness can result in the elimination of problems, contribute to healing, and move us toward greater wholeness. I have long accepted the idea that unconscious factors influence most of what a person does. My journey into Jungian psychology and my own Jungian analysis had proved that to me. Although we think that our problems are with the people or the circumstances of our lives, such problems are often reflections of the conflicts between parts of ourselves.

At the time of this dream, I was in a psychotherapy practice with a group of colleagues, two of whom were trained in Freudian-based psychoanalytic theory. One of them was the psychoanalyst in the dream; she was in training to become a psychoanalyst. My own personal journey into shamanism and energy medicine was taking me increasingly into the nonrational realms of non-ordinary reality and transpersonal subtle energy states. As a result I came up against the Freudian psychoanalytic view, represented by my colleagues, which tended to pathologize attempts to carry ascent development to its transpersonal conclusion beyond Piaget's formal operational stage of cognitive development and rational world view. These latter two constructs are widely recognized by conventional psychotherapies and mainstream science, which view such ideas as neurotic immaturities of a prerational, magical thinking stage of development. They are therefore deemed to be inferior and less developed when contrasted with elements of possible, higher stages of development such as vision-logic, psychic, subtle, causal or non-dual, suggested by some developmental researchers.²

As the psychoanalytic and shamanic stories, with their differing theories and assumptions, increased in their power and presence, the core conflict between these two world

² Walsh, *"The Spirit of Evolution."*

views collided and became activated. I felt as if my colleagues saw my journey into shamanism as invalid, regressive, and inferior and that they believed psychoanalysis to be superior.

However, I did not have any concrete evidence that either of my colleagues held such classical Freudian beliefs or world views and because both were very supportive of my journey into shamanism and energy healing, I had to assume that this conflict was entirely within me and had become projected onto my colleagues, given that they carried the hook for such a projection.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the assumption that humanity exists as a unique entity only because of our capacity for rational thought is still the metaphysical base that prevails in our culture and in much psychotherapy, perpetuating the soul-splitting effects of the Cartesian mind-body, spirit-matter dichotomy. This spirit-matter, mind-body split was the underlying archetypal cause of the conflict that emerged in me between my heterosexual and homosexual selves, between the masculine consciousness of the parsonage in which I was raised and the one emerging from the depths of my own soul.

This conflict now emerged between the psychoanalyst and the shaman in me. This most recent conflict seemed to get at the heart of the matter by throwing me headlong into a reality in which there was no such split. Spirit lived in matter, one with it. Perhaps this is what is at the heart of matter. And perhaps this is also what is at the heart of the feminine. Is this what the feminine knows? Is this what the heart knows? Is this what is vibrating in matter—there is no separation between mind and body, no separation between spirit and matter? My journey into shamanism and energy medicine had brought me face-to-face with this ancient wisdom. As I held these opposing world views, much like I held my homosexual and heterosexual selves as both being contained in some underlying whole, a journey into the Under World would provide an answer. From my journal:

I travel to the Underworld to visit with Huascar, the guide and guardian of the Underworld. We come to a pool of water surrounded by beautiful vegetation. I notice many hummingbirds. Huascar tells me "This is the Place of the Hummingbirds." I look into the pool, which is crystal clear. Mist rises from the pool, and Huascar tells me that the mist rising from the pool is the wisdom of the hummingbird. He instructs me to visit this place regularly and that I will learn to read the mist rising from the pool.

Suddenly I hear these words, "Look deep within the pool that is inside you and you will find the wisdom of the universe." I'm thinking, "I don't know whether these words come from Huascar, the pool, or the hummingbirds."

It is as if Huascar hears my thoughts and answers "It doesn't matter because they are all one. Energy of the one is continually exchanging itself with the energy of the other."

I think "But then how does one distinguish between them?"

Again as if hearing my thoughts, he answers "There is no distinction. It is the human mind, the ego that has the need to separate." As I continue to meditate on this image, I see mist rising. The mist takes various forms. (Journal, 5-6-12).

There is no separation between mind and body, no separation between spirit and matter. The energy of one is continually exchanging itself with the energy of the Other. This was the

message—a message that science itself is now asserting. Everything is made up of energy and everything exchanges that energy with everything else at all times.³

The above dream suggested that a memory of a previous lifetime continued to vibrate in the heart. The psychoanalyst in the dream said that the energetic healing of the wound that she carried in her heart left her feeling better than ten heart surgeries had. This dream showed the effects that energy healing can have on what we carry in our hearts.

But what is it that we carry in our hearts? What is it that the heart knows? We experience our emotions, our passions, our longings, as well as our hurts and wounds—the very essence of who we are—in the chest and heart area. One only has to recall the pain of a significant loss or the excitement of falling in love to know that these events register in the heart. The dream infers that an earlier traumatic event had created a disease or condition of the heart—a condition I knew nothing about. What *was* the heart condition?

This journey began with a call to listen to my dreams and became a way to understand the meaning of my same-sex attractions. Instead of divorcing my wife and leaving my family to pursue a homosexual lifestyle, my early dreams indicated that my homosexuality was about something else—“freeing the boy from the parsonage” as a way to heal the masculine and “finding the treasure hard to find.” According to most spiritual traditions the “treasure hard to find” is one’s true self and the divine within. What emerged on this path was the awareness that I was actually healing a split in me between various parts of me—the split between the masculine and feminine, the split between the homosexual and the heterosexual, the split between the mind and the body, and ultimately the split in me between spirit and matter.

³ Cameron, *A Happy Pocket Full of Money*, 26.

This mind-body, spirit-matter split can be stated in general terms as a split between the head and the heart. However, when we think of this mind-body split as a split between head and heart, there is a tendency to place thinking, rationality, and spirit with the head (mind), and to put emotion, feeling, and matter with the heart (body). To view the heart as the place solely of emotion or feeling fails to recognize the heart's connection to the energetic imprints and images vibrating in the soul.

Certainly, from a physiological point of view, the heart is simply an organ of the body—a pump so to speak—that carries blood, oxygen, and nutrition to all the cells as well as eliminating waste products. As such it is central to life. On the other hand, the heart is also a symbolic expression of that which is central to us not only as physical life but as psychological and spiritual life. In this sense the heart connects us to the life of the soul, that which brings us alive and enlivens us, even connects us to something beyond ourselves.

I have maintained throughout this book that my dreams are the expressions of my soul, their images revealing not only what is living there but what also longs for life. Many cultures and ancient traditions have long held that the heart is the seat of the soul. The dream with which I began this chapter suggested that vibrating in the heart are not only feelings and emotions but memories and images of our past and, from my own experience, images of our future. This awareness opens up another way of seeing, seeing with the heart, and seeing what is vibrating there.

James Hillman, in his discussion of the groundbreaking work of Henry Corbin —scholar, philosopher, theologian, and champion of the transformative power of the imagination and of transcendent reality in the individual—states quite clearly that the heart's characteristic action is

not feeling but sight.⁴ Hillman, discussing Corbin, says the thought of the heart is the thought of images.⁵ The heart is the seat of the imagination. Imagination is the authentic voice of the heart. So if we speak from the heart we must speak imaginatively.⁶ The heart is the place of true imagining. Hillman points out that when we personalize the heart as simply personal, confessional, subjective reflection, we drive the imagination into exile, into sexual fantasy or metaphysical conception or into objective data, none of which reside in the heart.⁷

Hillman goes on to say that the intention of the heart creates as real the figures of the imagination. The heart knows that the images we think we make up are actually presented to us as authentic creatures. Without the gift of the heart's imaginal sight we misunderstand the meaning of the images in our dreams or the persons of our imaginings and fantasies, or that which appears in a shamanic journey. We think they are subjectively real, that we made them up, figments of our imagination, apparitions—when we mean that they are *imaginatively* real. Or we think they are externally real as hallucinations when we mean they are *essentially* real. We confuse the imaginal with the subjective and internal. We mistake the essential for external and objective.⁸

Yes, the heart is an organ of feeling. But it is also the seat of the soul's imagination and our ability to see the imaginal realm. This makes the imaging heart central to a spiritual or symbolic life and raises our understanding of our compulsions and desires—sexual or otherwise—to their spiritual and symbolic meaning.

⁴ Hillman, *Thought of the Heart*, 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

Of all the images that could show up, we must ask why this image or that image. I believe that the images that show up are the ones that best describe the conditions of our soul. These images show what is vibrating there. They offer us an opportunity to interact with them and not only heal the wounds they might reveal, they also present the opportunity to bring into existence that which the soul longs to live, the wholeness that we are—the “treasure hard to find.” If we are to do the healing work that they offer us, we must view them as real, for essentially they are. They describe what is fundamental and basic to the soul. They show what is living there. This is the spirit that lives in matter. This is the matter of the heart. This is what the heart knows.

Research done by the HeartMath Institute and the U.S. Army seem to support such an idea. According to their research, the heart’s energy field can hold and even transfer information. In the early 1990s the U.S. Army conducted a series of experiments with human DNA. They wanted to know if and how DNA changes in response to human emotion. So they extracted DNA from donors and placed the cells in test tubes in another room of the research building. They then exposed the donors to video clips to elicit strong emotions. They showed the individuals graphic war movies, scenes of torture, erotic movies, and humorous movies. What they discovered was that at the same time the donor was experiencing the peaks and valleys of emotion while watching the video clips, the donor’s DNA was experiencing the same peaks and valleys in the test tubes in another room in the building and there was no lag time (time it takes for energy to get from one place to another). It was at the same instant.

Then they wondered how far they could remove the donors’ cells and still get a reaction. They moved the cells fifty miles and the results were the same. The army stopped the experiments at fifty miles but the researchers didn’t. They had the donors in Los Angeles and sent the DNA cells to Phoenix, Arizona, some three hundred miles away. The results were the

same. The DNA cells in the test tubes in Phoenix experienced the same peaks and valleys as the donors did in Los Angeles in response to the emotions. The conclusion is that human emotion has a measurable effect on DNA and time and distance didn't matter.⁹

Around the same time, the HeartMath Institute, one of the premier research centers of heart research, was doing research of their own on DNA. They wanted to know just how human emotions affected DNA. So they trained one group of subjects to experience strong emotions of love, compassion, care, and forgiveness and another group of subjects to experience strong emotions of anger, hate, resentment, and fear. They then measured the response of the DNA. At first when the subjects began to feel the emotions of love, compassion, forgiveness, and caring, the DNA began to relax. As they continued to experience these emotions, the DNA (which is a double intertwined helix) began to unwind. This had a positive and enhancing effect on the immune system, the endocrine system, and the hormonal systems. When the other group felt the emotions of anger, hate, resentment, and fear, the DNA twisted tighter and tighter and had a negative effect on the immune system.

The conclusion is that strong human emotions alter the shape of the DNA in either positive or negative ways. This affects the immune system in positive or negative ways.¹⁰ The HeartMath Institute identified intention and heart coherence¹¹ as the critical variables in being

⁹ Ibid., 49–52.

¹⁰ Ibid., 53.

¹¹ Heart coherence means that the variation in the time interval between heartbeats is concentrated into one single frequency near 0.1 HZ. While this state of coherency can be created by paced breathing of six breaths per minute, this coherence naturally emerges when people are holding intention of sustained positive emotional states without any conscious change in breathing. Rollin McCraty, Ph.D., Mike Atkinson, Dana Tomasino, and Raymond Trevor Bradley, Ph.D. "The Coherent Heart; Heart-Brain Interactions, Psychophysiological Coherence, and the Emergence of System-Wide Order," 6.

able to wind or unwind the DNA. Other studies done by the HeartMath Institute indicate that emotional states tend to be reflected in heart rhythm patterns.¹²

The results of these studies done by the HeartMath Institute and the U.S. Army reveal that the heart's energy field not only responds to emotions, but the emotions can affect the very stuff that we are made of—our DNA. Could this dream and the findings on the heart suggest that we carry in our hearts not only the emotions of the wounds from the past but the very wounds themselves as energetic fields with their complete stories? Could it be that what we carry in our heart's energy field affects the very cells of our body in positive or negative ways?

Such findings support the Peruvian shamans' belief that our entire personal and ancestral memories vibrate in our luminous energy bodies. These imprints contain information that then predisposes us to organize our physical and emotional worlds in a particular way.¹³ The dream also suggests that these old wounds can be healed through energy healing. The implications for such an energy transfer system within the body are profound. Cell biologists confirm that the heart's field permeates every cell in the body in a manner compared to information carried by radio waves. Since heart energy can also communicate with the brain, it is likely that heart energy can also modulate and direct mind and body interactions.¹⁴

Several years prior to having the above dream about using my hands to move energy to heal the heart I was a participant in a dream group in which we used artistic creations such as painting, poetry, and the making of collages to work with our dreams and unconscious material, I had made a collage of a heart with hands and energy vibrating between them. (See figure 13.)

¹² McCraty, et al., *Coherent Heart: Heart–Brain Interactions . . .*, 6.

¹³ Villoldo, *Shaman, Healer, Sage*, 46.

¹⁴ McCraty, et al., *Coherent Heart: Heart–Brain Interactions . . .*, 6.



Figure 13. *The Path of the Heart*

It is as if the unconscious material tapped into in the making of this collage several years before had now shown up in this dream and was now manifesting as my experience in shamanism and energy healing, pulling me into what might be called “the path of the heart.” But I still didn’t know exactly what the message of the heart was or what it meant to “follow the heart.” That would all unfold over the course of the next several years.

Heart energy has traditionally been considered to be electromagnetic in nature. However, the unusual ability of heart energy to carry different frequency patterns associated with different intentions suggests a non-electromagnetic information carrier. Furthermore, the research done by the U.S. Army and the HeartMath Institute showed that human intentionality produced effects that defied conventional laws of electromagnetism with respect to their independence of space and time. The long-distance effects observed in this research indicate that coherent heart energy

may be a carrier for such nonlocal effects.¹⁵ Researchers have shown in previous studies that cells studied in vitro are responsive to the heart's field. Further studies indicate that the heart's electromagnetic field can be detected by other individuals and can produce physiologically relevant effects in a person five feet away.¹⁶ Perhaps this "non-electromagnetic information carrier" may someday be known as the subtle energy fields that as yet cannot be measured by current technologies but have been seen and felt by the indigenous shamans for centuries.

Jungian analyst Schwartz-Salant speaks of "imaginal sight," which are words to describe the transitional phenomena that refer to another dimension of existence, "a third area whose processes can only be perceived with the eye of the imagination."¹⁷ Schwartz-Salant has written that two people can become aware of a state in which their subtle bodies are interacting. This is often felt as a change in the quality of the space between them. According to Schwartz-Salant, it is experienced as energized and more material in nature. They are at the threshold of an awareness of archetypal or transpersonal processes.¹⁸ Perhaps this is a way to describe what the shamans speak of when they describe seeing into the spirit realm or into the realm of non-ordinary reality. It is their capacity to read what is vibrating in the energy field.

The above dream suggests that vibrating in the object—in matter, in this case the heart—is information of a spiritual or energetic nature, information of a transpersonal nature inasmuch as the information transcends ego-consciousness and rational processes. The object is not just a metaphor, nor just a symbol onto which we project meaning. Nor is it a belief or a hypothesis about a spiritual realm. Rather the spirit realm is an empirical fact supported by personal experience. Hillman has suggested that the idea of withdrawing projections—the major goal of

¹⁵ Rein and McCraty, "Local and Non-Local Effects of Coherent Heart Frequencies . . ." , 6.

¹⁶ McCarty, et al., "Modulation of DNA Conformation by Heart-Centered Intention."

¹⁷ Schwartz-Salant, N. *The Borderline Personality*, 101

¹⁸ Schwartz-Salant, "On the subtle-body concept in clinical practice."

analytical practice—could become irrelevant once we recognize that much of what we call projection is an attempt by the psyche to experience things beyond ourselves as imaginal processes.¹⁹

Several writers (Hillman, Cheetham, Corbin, Kryder) state that we have lost the imaginal and with it we have lost the aliveness of our own souls. Tom Cheetham in his book *Green Man, Earth Angel* suggests that “all dualism of the modern world stem from the loss of the *mundus imaginales*: matter is cut off from spirit, sensation from intellect, subject from object, inner from outer, myth from history, the individual from the divine.”²⁰ The imaginal world is not imaginary or unreal. While the imaginary is the product of personal fantasy and is therefore subjective, the imaginal, on the other hand, gives us, as stated previously, access to a transpersonal content.

This transpersonal content has objective reality even though it may not correspond to any historical fact or physical reality. The imaginal realm or the *mundus imaginalis* exists independent of those who become aware of it. The imaginal realm possesses a truth that has a universal validity that the products of our private fantasies do not achieve.²¹ Through dreams, meditations, active imagination, and shamanic journeying we have access to the imaginal realm, to the intermediate realm of the subtle bodies. We have access to the realm of real presences located between the material world of matter and the world of Spirit. Could it be that the heart connects us with the imaginal space that allows us once again to see the realities of the invisible, to see the subtle energies that carry the wisdom hidden in matter?

¹⁹ Hillman, *Hillman on Corbin*, 29–30.

²⁰ Cheetham, *Green Man, Green Angel*, 3.

²¹ Naydler, “*Ancient Egypt and Modern Esotericism*.”

I enter the ship that carries me to the underground through a river that I access in a cave. I land in the area that I had come to know in my shamanic training as the Lower World. I wash in the stream and let it carry me until I wash up onto the land where I meet Huascar, the guardian and guide to the Underworld. I explain to Huascar that I am feeling the need to journey to the Underworld to access the wisdom that he had told Julie (my shamanic instructor with whom I had recently done some work) that I needed.

He is happy and calls jaguar and owl, and the four of us start off through the opening into the cave area, passing by the chamber of the soul. We journey on. At one point we mount horses as Huascar says that we are going deeper this time, into the deep Underworld. We journey on. Owl is flying with me. Jaguar walks at my side.

After a while I see the smoke of a fire. We come upon a group of medicine men sitting around a fire. I feel the warmth of the fire. I feel the fire in my body, in my heart and solar plexus. We greet the gathering and Huascar informs them that I have come in search of the wisdom from the Lower World. The indigenous ones look at me, like they are “scanning me.” I now see what is like a computer screen showing the scan results. The scan shows two areas that need fixing.

One of the men gets up from the circle, and comes and places his hand over my heart. I think that he will put his hand in two areas—maybe the solar plexus, but he doesn't. He keeps his hand on the heart area, as if transmitting energy to my heart. I ask what the areas are that need fixing but no one provides that information. I get the awareness of “heart wisdom” since I came seeking

wisdom. After several minutes, the man finishes and without saying a word, returns to the fire, and joins the group. Following Huascar's lead I place my hands together at my heart, bow, and thank them. We mount our horses and return to ordinary reality. (Journal, 2-14-13)

Once again the focus of this journey—like the dream five years before and the collage years before that—was about heart energy, healing the heart, and heart wisdom. I slowly came to understand that the images that appeared in my dreams, in my meditations, and now in my shamanic journeys were not just my imagination or some fantasy but connected me to some other realm, some other reality. I came to understand that through the images in my dreams and fantasies, the images appearing in my meditations, and now in my shamanic journeys, I had been accessing this imaginal realm, the *mundus imaginalis*, the place of “heart sight.”

Ochwiay Bianco, chief of the Taos Pueblo in northern New Mexico, says that the difference between the white man and the Indian is that the European thinks with his head and the Indian thinks with his heart.²² Cheetham says that one enters into the *mundus imaginalis* through the heart, that the heart is the perceptual organ for sensing the spiritual, invisible, and energetic worlds.²³ He also asserts that wisdom is not only in the heart but also in the object.²⁴ We can enter into the realm of the Spirit through the *mundus imaginalis*, located in the heart as the “heart’s sight.” The dream above suggested that we have the capacity to enter into a spiritual realm or energetic field and not only gather information—imaginal sight—but affect healing.

²² Jung, *Memories, Dreams Reflections*, 247-48.

²³ Cheetham, *Green Man, Earth Angel*, xiv, 70.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

One can certainly argue that such a conclusion should not be drawn on the basis of one dream, one collage, or one shamanic journey. However, my dreams as well as various synchronicities and experiences occurring during meditation and shamanic journeys over the past several years—many of which have been shared in this book—had already been moving me in that direction. Everything is energy. Everything is connected by an energetic web of subtle energies. I am a part of this web of energy, connected to everything. There is no time or distance in this energy realm. When I have a thought it immediately resonates, registers, vibrates throughout this energy web and elicits an energetic response that returns to me in the energetic realm. In fact, everything I do creates an energy imprint that causes a response in the energy web. Every thought I have, every word I say, every action I take, every emotion I express, creates an energy imprint that vibrates through this energy web. As my journey to the place of the hummingbird had instructed, “Energy of the one is continually exchanging itself with the energy of the other.” This energy manifests as images. These images connect me to the imaginal realm, which is the wisdom living in the heart. Is this the matter of the heart that is at the heart of matter?

When we split off matter from spirit or mind from body and elevate spirit and mind to a superior place over body and matter, something in us dies. We suffer a loss of connection, not only to nature but to our own souls. Slowly it became clear to me that my journey into dreams, shamanism, shamanic healing, and energy medicine was my soul’s longing to reconnect me to the spirit that lives in nature, to the truth in nature, to the “directing intelligence” of my own nature, my own soul. Such “directing intelligence” knows that everything is energy or spirit—stones, trees, the human body, a lover, and everything is matter—thoughts, behaviors, attitudes,

fantasies. We then, as Cheetham points out, understand soul as the embodying of spirit and as the spiritualizing process of matter.²⁵

Hillman points out that words, too, burn and become flesh as we speak, wielding an invisible power over us, acting on us as complexes and releasing complexes in us.²⁶ The shaman sees the “matter” of words as metal darts in the luminous energy field at the level of the heart and removes them, freeing a person from the wounds of years of verbal abuse and from pattern of abusing others.

In a dream, I felt energy at the level of the heart and a woman recalled a time when she fell off her tricycle, hit her head, and died. I extracted the energy of this memory and she told me that she hadn't felt that good after ten heart surgeries.

Years later in shamanic healing work, as a client told me of a recent state of panic that she was still caught in, I saw a cord—of a state of panic related to some tragedy—reaching back into her ancestral past. As I worked on clearing this energy from the client, using my hands like I had in the dream and as trained to do in my shamanic training, she related scenes of another time where fire was destroying everything around her. She reported that her face felt hot, her lungs were burning, and she was having difficulty breathing. As I cleared out the energetic imprint of this traumatic memory, she calmed. The heat and burning subsided. She reported that the panicked feeling was gone. Delusional? Magical thinking? Or transrational, transpersonal reality—spirit in matter—and the entrance into the *mundus imaginalis*, the realm of subtle energies and subtle bodies—heart sight?

²⁵ Cheetham, *Green Man, Earth Angel*, xvii.

²⁶ Hillman, *Re-visioning Psychology*, 9–10.

Between mind and matter exists a psychic realm of subtle bodies whose characteristics manifest in mental as well as material form.²⁷ When we recognize that the realm of the imagination—the heart—mediates between the physical and the spiritual then the split between them can begin to heal. Matter is no longer associated with evil. Everything becomes material. What had been seen as purely spiritual becomes the realm of subtle bodies.

Said another way, when the imaginal is given priority, the dichotomy between matter and spirit collapses. The separation between my fantasy and the image or carrier of my fantasy dissolves. The spiritual is substantial. It is not disembodied. It is not only in the Other. It is here and now.²⁸ I now embody this Other for which my soul had longed and which I could only see in the men in my sexual encounters. Had I projected *him* onto these men? Or perhaps *he* had presented himself to me through the images in my dreams and fantasies and them?

The cause of a person's deadness or loss of vitality is the loss of soul, both the soul of the person and the soul of the world.²⁹ The soul understands that psychic life is also the life of nature, the life in matter. Natural life becomes the vessel of the soul the moment we recognize that it too has an interior significance. As I discovered in my work on the *Swan Lake* dream, for modern man, myth—the life of the imaginal—is born the moment we recognize that outer images and events are carriers and therefore patterns of energy at work within the individual or collective soul. I came to recognize that this whole journey had been to embody that awareness, a reawakening, a bringing to life in me the reality of the image of the other man in me, to reclaim its meaning and its efficacy. The descent into nature, into the nature of my own soul, was for the purpose of healing this split. This was the working out of the early dreams, which said “the

²⁷ Cheetham, *Green Man, Earth Angel*, 36.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 109.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 17–18.

healing of my homosexual self was in freeing him from the parsonage” and that “homosexuality is the treasure hard to find.” That healing was not about something that needed fixing or changing. Rather, it was about acceptance—embracing him and finding his meaning. It was about finding the Divine Spirit in the matter of the Other.

The matter of the heart is about this descent into matter, a returning to the wisdom, the intelligence in the object, again whether that object be a stone, a tree, an animal, a woman, a man, an organ of the body, or my own soul. Without this awareness we are left with the tragic split between spirit and matter, between mind and body, and the soul is left longing. As Cheetham points out, “We are both incomplete and disoriented because the *ground* [italics mine] of their contact is gone.”³⁰ We must be willing to accept depth psychology’s psyche, Corbin’s *mundus imaginalis*, the anima mundi, and the shaman’s world of non-ordinary reality. They allow us entrance into the imaginal space where the images express their imaginal realities. As Hillman asserts, if we are to recover the imaginal, we must first recover its organ, the heart, and the heart’s way of seeing.³¹

Hillman continuing his discussion on Corbin says it is the heart that perceives the relationship between mind and body, between spirit and matter. This awareness takes place by means of the image. The image holds within itself both the qualities of the mind and spirit (consciousness) and the qualities of the body and matter (world). The image contains the interpenetration of these two worlds, and it is always and only the image that is primary to what it coordinates. This imaginal intelligence resides in the heart. Thus the heart becomes the place of the union of the two—the union of spirit and matter.³²

³⁰ Ibid., 3.

³¹ Hillman, *The Thought of the Heart and the Soul of the World*, 6.

³² Ibid., 7.

I must acknowledge the wisdom of heart that the shamanic tribe of spirit walkers instilled in me during that shamanic journey. I must acknowledge the *mundus imaginalis* in which the images themselves express *their* imaginal reality, the play of *their* “light” rather than the light of consciousness that I bring to it. Each image immediately reflects its own consciousness, putting wisdom, divine intelligence, and transpersonal, transrational reality back into nature and matter, back into the object—even the object of my desire.

The messages emerging in my dreams and in my shamanic journeys began to confirm the ancient wisdom that the matter of the heart is the reality that at the heart of matter is kind of spirit or subtle energy that vibrates with information. We can interact with this energy in ways that affect healing. This is the matter of the heart. This is the heart of matter.

As the U.S. Army and the HeartMath Institute’s research have suggested, an image or a thought that is held with intention within the realm of heart coherence can affect the world around us. Be it Winnicott’s transitional space, the luminosity that the anthropologists talk about, Schwartz-Salant’s imaginal sight, or the shaman’s non-ordinary reality, we can travel into this world and gather information to heal ourselves and the planet. Not only can I travel into this imaginal world and visit the spirits in matter, they visit me in spirit, coming to me in the images of my dreams, visions, and shamanic journeys. Magical? Maybe so. Transrational? Yes. And to that extent it appears magical. English author and Sufi mystic Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee concludes:

We need the magical powers within nature in order to heal and transform the world. But awakening these powers would mean that our patriarchal institutions will lose their control, as once again the mysterious inner world will come into play, releasing

forces once understood and used by the priestess and shaman . . . The science of the future will work with these forces, exploring how the different words interrelate, including how the energies of the inner can be used in the outer. The shaman and the scientist will work together, the wisdom of the priestess and wisdom of the physician renew their ancient connection.”³³

In a shamanic journey I tell my guide Huascar that I'd like to journey to the heart of the earth to discover what the heart of the earth knows. We journey deep into the earth. At one point I see a hole with a rope ladder. Huascar instructs that I am to climb down the ladder. I do, and I come to a whole world, a complete universe operating there, like an entire society of people going about life. I enter what is like a café and sit down at a table. An earth-type woman comes and sits down across from me.

I do not know what happens, but suddenly she gets up and walks away. As she walks away I see tears running down her cheeks. I call to her to come back and inquire as to why she is crying. Somehow I had dismissed her, had become distracted and although I had said that I had come to seek council with the heartbeat of the earth, I had ignored her.

I apologize and as I start to engage her I hear, as if vibrating all through me, the following: “Vibrating in the heart is the life of the soul. Just as clearly as you see here what is happening in the heart of the earth, your soul’s life is happening in the heart—the soul’s story. It is playing out there as clearly as the images you see here. You can access this life with imaginal sight. With imaginal sight we can not only access the story, we can heal the wounds that live

³³ Vaughan-Lee, “Anima Mundi: Awakening the Soul of the World.”

there as well as access the life that wants to live, the life that is ours to live. This is what the heart knows.”

As the reality of the imaginal world and seeing with the heart came more fully into my awareness and into my experience, a desire emerged in me to paint the original collage that I had made simply as an exercise in a dream group over ten years earlier. This was long before I knew about “imaginal sight” or *mundus imaginales*, or the shaman’s way of “seeing with the heart.” Of all the hundreds of images I could have chosen that day to make this collage, what had caused me to choose a heart and hands with energy vibrating between them? I suggest it was the spirit of this other man living in the depths of my soul, my soul’s next manifestation.

Here is my painting of the original collage.



Figure 14. *Imaginal Sight: Seeing with the Heart*

Once we understand the spiritual and symbolic meanings of the images in our soul, we have greater choices on how we will then live.

Notes and Exercises

When we split off matter from spirit or mind from body and elevate spirit and mind to a superior place over body and matter, something in us dies. We suffer a loss of connection, not only to nature, but to our own souls.

Ancient traditions have long held that the heart is the seat of the soul. Vibrating in the heart are not only feelings and emotions, but memories and images of our past, our ancestral stories, early traumatic events, our wounds and painful places as well as images of our future.

Imagination is the authentic voice of the heart. This makes the heart central to a spiritual or symbolic life and raises our understanding of compulsions and desires—sexual or otherwise—to their spiritual or symbolic meaning.

Many have lost their imaginal sight and with it the aliveness of their own soul. Through dreams, meditations, active imagination and shamanic journeying we have access to the imaginal realm of the heart that allows us to see what is hidden there.

For modern man, the life of the imaginal is born the moment we recognize that outer images and events are carriers and therefore patterns of energy at work with us. Each image reflects its own consciousness, putting wisdom, divine intelligence, transpersonal reality back into nature and matter, back into the object, even the object of our desires.

Journey to the Heart

Find a place where you will not be disturbed. You might want to listen to some shamanic drumming or journey music. Refer to the Resources in the back of the book for links to journey music.

Take some deep breaths and allow yourself to drift into a light trance or relaxed state. Start your music. Ask for a power animal or spirit guide to accompany you and notice what shows up. Ask the animal or spirit guide if they wish to accompany you on your journey to the heart. If you get a “yes”, thank the guide and begin your journey. If you get a “no”, ask to be taken to your guide. Place your intention to journey to your heart to discover what your heart knows, what is hidden there that might be useful for your healing or for your life at this time.

Imagine that you and your guide are journeying to you heart and notice what images begin to appear. Ask your guide to show you what you are holding in your heart, what is hidden there. Is it some hurt? Some pain? Some regret? Or is it some future that longs to live? If it is some hurt or wound, ask your heart what you need to do to heal. Notice what comes to you. If you remember some memory, ask how that memory can be helpful in addressing a situation in your current life. Notice what comes to you. If you notice some future that longs to live, ask how you might connect to that future and how you might manifest it in your life. Notice what questions come to you, what images show up and ask to understand their meaning. What message does your heart have for you?

As you prepare to return thank your guide for accompanying you. Thank your heart for accepting you and speaking with you. Now journey back into your room and back into your body. Wiggle your fingers and toes, take a deep breath. Pat your heart with your hands and open your eyes. When you open your eyes, you are back in ordinary reality, wide awake and alert.

In a journal make notes on your journey and your experience or write your journey out in detail. Reflect on your journey. Let it continue to speak to you.