

Peer-Reviewed Article

Reversing the “Eclipse of Relationality”:

An Ontology and Phenomenology of Healing Culture

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Abstract

The Jewish philosopher Martin Buber talked about, living under the shadow of Auschwitz, that humanity lived with the ‘eclipse of God’. I now wonder if we have moved beyond this ‘eclipse of God’ to a time of the ‘eclipse of relationality’.

This article argues that the eclipse of relationality is enabled through a predominant worldview in which the world is understood as mechanical and dead—observed and experienced in increasingly abstract form. In this way of being, the world and the ‘other’, cannot be loved.

In light of this eclipse, this article offers two pathways back to life, particularly for practitioners concerned with healing culture. The first is ontological—a new way of being that is experienced through a living polarity between the ideas enfolded within Jung’s theory of individuation and Buber’s dialogical theorizing. The second is phenomenological—a new kind of social and ecological practice linked to a perceptivity of living process, traced from Carl Jung and James Hillman, to Mary Watkins, Henri Bortoft and Allan Kaplan.

The key wisdom from this article, from travelling down these two pathways—the key theorizing of a way forward for cultural healers—is that people increasingly spend so much of their life separated, a-part, lacking intimacy with another, or with the world, or the manifestations of the world that are all around them, and within them. Something is then missing—call it connection, which ensouls the world—the aliveness that invites an anticipatory and participatory relationship with the world, and importantly, a world experienced as both profound Otherness, as well as deeply Oneness. The consequences for people and the world are profound—for the experience of alienation enables abstractions to flourish, exclusions to expand, and rushed interventions to proliferate—the ‘eclipse of relationality’ beckons.

Keywords

individuation; dialogue; self and other; phenomenological sensibility; ensouling the world

Introduction

The exquisite opening words of Wordsworth from *The Prelude*, Book III, ‘Residence at Cambridge’ (1896), state that,

To every natural form, rock, fruit, or flower,
Even the loose stones that cover the highway,
I gave a moral life: I saw them feel
Or linked them to some feeling: the great mass
Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
That I beheld respire with inward meaning.

Not so long ago, about to finish eleven years of full-time work at my then university workplace, I embarked on what was to be a last walk to the office. As part of that walk, while crossing a bridge, like in the poem, I experienced a heightened sense of alertness, aware that the daily rhythm of walking this well-loved pathway was about to come to an end. All the living beauty around me—the screeching cockatoos, the fast-moving murky *Maiwar* (First Nations name for the Brisbane River), the leaning paper-bark trees, the laugh of the kookaburra—struck me with renewed intensity. Yet I also noticed that the dozen or so people I walked past or alongside, were either on their phones talking to someone, or they had headphones on and were listening to something. The point was that they were giving no attention to what was unfolding around them. *They were elsewhere*. It was a far cry from a Wordsworth like-moment. I finished that final walk wondering, what does it mean for Nature to not be seen and what does it mean for each of us to not be seen by the other?

This story of crossing the river and the questions that arose within me, suggest that humanity has moved beyond what Martin Buber called the ‘eclipse

of God' (Friedman, 1991, p. 339), or what Nietzsche called 'the death of god', to a time that I have characterized as an 'eclipse of relationality' which is ultimately an undoing of intimacy and culture.

As such, the key wisdom from this article, the key theorizing of a way forward for practitioners concerned with healing culture—is that people increasingly spend so much of their life separated, apart, lacking intimacy with each other, or with the world, or the manifestations of the world that are all around them, and within them. Something is then missing—let us call it connection, which ensouls the world—the aliveness that invites an anticipatory, ethical and participatory relationship with the world, and more importantly, a world experienced as both profound Otherness (in its own aliveness and perceiving Us as Other), as well as deep Oneness. The consequences for people, culture, nature and the world are profound—for the experience of alienation enables abstractions to flourish, exclusions to expand, and rushed interventions to proliferate—the 'eclipse of relationality' beckons.

This will be explained further in the next section, but linking the idea of the eclipse of relationality with that final walk to work, if nature and other people are not seen, and people are not open to being seen by nature, then will they not suffer the consequences of our lack of intimacy?

The Eclipse of Relationality

Signposted as a world characterized by 'eclipse of relationality' above, many authors provide poignant analyses of the contemporary crises. For example, Otto Scharmer suggests that society faces a confluence of social-economic, ecological and cultural-spiritual crises (Scharmer, 2009, p. 95). Under such conditions political life has usurped the social-cultural and ecological life-worlds, rendering unbelievable violence towards people and ecosystems. There are huge shifts in the realm of culture (for example, increasing social isolation and a lack of intergenerational dialogue) and nature (for example, climate change) that are occurring simultaneously, causing many to lose any sense of orientation through the rapid changes and constant flux. The decay of democracy is underpinned by an unprecedented collusion between corporations and government, allowing and facilitating the manipulation of the masses through new form of 'surveillance capitalism' (Zuboff, 2019). The oceans are dying, and there is a proliferation of the death of many species. As the late Leonard Cohen would say, 'The catastrophe has taken place', 'the apocalypse has already occurred.'¹

Into such a catastrophe, there is a need not only for social, political and economic activism, but a new way of being in the world—an ontological shift—and a new way of perceiving and doing as social and ecological practice—a

¹ Cohen, L. see http://www.leonardcohen-prologues.com/closing_time.htm (Accessed 12.10.17).

phenomenological shift. These ontological and phenomenological shifts are offered as two pathways for practitioners concerned with what I call ‘healing culture’. My audience are people who I like to think of as ‘physicians of culture’, an idea Hillman, in his dialogue with Shamdasani, suggests was Jung’s. (Hillman & Shamdasani, 2013, p. 145). The first healing path is ontological—a new way of being that is experienced through a polarity between the ideas enfolded within Jung’s theory of individuation and Buber’s theory of dialogue, each of which are explored below. The second healing path is phenomenological—which I discuss as a new kind of reflective practice linked to a perception of living processes in the social and ecological fields. At the same time these two pathways are paved through two lines of thought.

The first line of thought highlights the crucial space between two poles—a polarity for living a conscious, creative, intimate and humanizing ontology. I suggest that this polarity can be discerned in the tension between the ideas of Jung’s individuation work and Buber’s dialogical work. I use the word polarity with a precision that means each of the poles needs to be deeply understood in and of its own right—individuation *and* dialogue (each with their corresponding difficulties), and yet with acknowledgment that each is enfolded in the other. Poles only make sense in their connected relationship: to be hungry only makes sense if someone can feel satiated; to go fast only has meaning when someone knows what it is to go slow. Importantly, polarity is used to eschew the cultural preference for balance—getting the balance right between one or the other, albeit recognizing indigenous worldviews that understand balance as being resonant and in relationship with the cosmic flux, thereby always in movement. However, polarity offers the idea of going deeply into both, knowing that within a journey of individuation is deep dialogue, and that within the journey of dialogue is deep individuation.

The second line of thought for cultural healers is traced from Carl Jung and James Hillman to Mary Watkins, Henri Bortoft and Allan Kaplan, and argues for a phenomenological way of perceiving the social and ecological world—or put in simpler language—a more intimate way of perceiving and doing in the world that would contribute to healing culture.

This was my concern on that final day of walking to my old workplace, aware that no one was seeing nature nor one another, nor aware that nature might be seeing us. Without that seeing, and awareness of being seen, there can be no intimacy and the eclipse of relationality draws near—a social and ecological atomization, fragmentation, or alienation. In contrast, this article offers a way to think about being receptive to an encounter with life. In the introductory story, to be in the encounter would be to allow the event of walking across *Maiwar* (the Brisbane River), *and* the relationship between myself and others who share the walk, and the river in itself, to manifest themselves as living processes. *Life then discloses itself*. Part of my argument is that the current way of being and doing in the world facilitates disconnection—and this disconnection is so profound and alienating that many people *do not see life, therefore life cannot disclose itself*. I

use the idea of ‘seeing’ broadly, in that many people do not sense, behold, experience, nor participate, in life. The current ontological gesture is largely dominated by mechanical, reductionist, distancing and deadening logics and practices—with the world observed and experienced in an increasingly abstract, separate, mediated and non-dynamic form. In this way of being and doing, the world and the ‘other’, cannot be loved, only acquired. It is this cultural gesture of acquisition, or what Buber called ‘rationality’ that is deadening (Buber, 1947) and is eclipsing relationality and ultimately life. An unloved world is easily ‘used’, viewed as a resource, and then exploited. Buber particularly argued that the world of abstraction and separation leads to an inevitable violence.

Carl Jung and Martin Buber: A 1951 Conflict of Individuation Versus Dialogical Ontologies

Readers might be asking, why the link between Martin Buber and Carl Jung? Tangential perhaps. Yet, linking the discussion to the deep cultural stories of individuation and dialogue grounds my argument in pre-existing reference points. Intriguingly, Buber became embroiled in a conflict with Jung, one manifest public in 1951. Contemporaries of a far-gone world, Buber disagreed with Jung, around some substantive issues. The 1951 conflict shocked people, because many people considered themselves as disciples of both men, who ostensibly shared a common concern with ‘modern man in search of a soul’ (Freidman 1991, p. 356). At the heart of the conflict was Buber’s stance on a dialogical worldview, in contrast to Jung’s predominant psychologizing one, or more accurately, one concerned with the Psyche—and particularly how the differences were interpreted to produce two divergent worldviews.

I would like to contend that on one level the conflict was simply a manifestation of misunderstanding one another (as often occurs when there is a conflict). However, on another level, it would be more useful to re-imagine their conflict as a necessity, enabling practitioners concerned with cultural healing to see a polarity that enables profound intimacy with both an enlarging Self, and also the Other. As such, it is suggested that we re-imagine an understanding of individuation and dialogue, not as an either-or prospect, *but as a dynamic polarity*, whereby both individuation and dialogue can be understood as deeply intertwined within one another, which in turns produces a different ontology of intimacy, or ‘way of being’—which is my key point. Let us start with Martin Buber’s understanding of dialogue.

Martin Buber and Dialogue

Within his *I-Thou* book (Buber, 1958) Buber argued that an ‘I-It’ orientation in the world represented rationalization, objectification and abstraction—treating nature, people, and God as an object *to be used*, and resource *to be appropriated and managed*, evident in the dominant discourses of human resources, natural resources, and so forth. In contrast to I-It, he posited the ‘I-Thou’ orientation in

the world, which represented a vibrant living encounter of person to nature, or person to person, or person to the form that the spirit of life is manifested within. In this, Buber understood the I-Thou as dialogical, bringing oneself completely into a situation, wholeheartedly, decisively even, yet with a complete openness to encounter the Other. In fact, *the I is made* in an encounter with the Thou.

For Buber, dialogue, or a dialogical attitude, becomes a crucial way of entering the world of the Other, of encountering the Other, such that identity is disrupted, and worldview is challenged. Dialogue becomes a way of life that ensures *constantly being open* to the perspectives of others or the Other, thereby never settling on an easy identity. This is significant, and I will return to it later.

Buber Misunderstanding Jung, But...

With his commitment to dialogue, Buber entered the 1951 critique of Jung, arguing that Jung's theory of individuation was colonized by what Buber called an I-It mode (Freidman, 1991, 357). Within this colonization, the world (the Other) is *used by the imagined Self*, which, for Buber, undermined an orientation of *encounter* with the Other, with 'the world'. In contrast, Buber argued,

Only then when, having become aware of the un-includable otherness of a being, I renounce all claims to incorporate it in any way within me or making it a part of my soul, does it truly become a Thou for me (cited in Freidman, 1991, p. 357).

My suggestion is that Buber's 'reading' of Jung was profoundly influenced by a deeply traumatic experience of Buber's early life. In this experience, which became seminal in his turn towards dialogue as a life-quest, Buber had been enthralled in a morning mystical experience. Unexpectedly, he was interrupted by a visiting young man who clearly had serious questions about life. Buber, still preoccupied with his personal spiritual morning quest, was not completely present to the young man. The young man left and days later killed himself. Buber, from that moment on, gave up a self-oriented mystical life, and reoriented his religious life as a deep presence to the Other—the other of people, nature and God. In suggesting that Buber's reading of Jung was shaped by this experience, I am also aware that there is plenty of evidence that Jung was fully *in dialogue* with 'the world' (see Sabini, 2002). Yet, there is also a potential warning wisdom in Buber's critique, hence the 'but...' at the end of this sub-heading. In an era of hyper-individualism there is a profound risk that Jung's theory of individuation will be appropriated by a self-oriented attitude.

Jung, Individuation and the Other

As suggested, I am not so sure Jung's understanding of being oriented towards the other was so different to Buber's, as is evidenced in Sabini's collection of Jung's writing on nature, *The Earth Has a Soul* (2002). But first, what is at the heart of Jung's theory of individuation? According to Jung's theory of

individuation, there is an autonomous process of accomplishing individual wholeness experienced as a psychological completeness. In orthodox Jungian thinking, it tends to be understood as a series of stages (Jung, 1955; 1972) that require significant effort to illuminate complexes, neurosis and the unconscious-at-play in our lives; courage enabling a person to move to responsible adulthood; and the obligation to ‘find our own’ path (Hollis, 93; 95), which includes service to the world. In some ways, the theory can be summed up by the first sentence of Jung’s seminal *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, in which he states that, ‘My life is a story of the self-realization of the unconscious’ (1963, p. 3).

Importantly, Hillman, as will be discussed below, has rescued what he considers to be a narrowing of how the theory of individuation has been utilized within the analytical tradition. This is not to say that Jung had a narrow understanding, and again, drawing on his *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung clearly sees individuation as a process of a ‘feeling of kinship’, that is, of connecting with the world, not narrowing to a psychological internal process:

... what I now feel in advanced age... there is so much that fills me: plants, animals, clouds, day and night, and the eternal in man. The more uncertain I have felt about myself, the more there has grown a feeling of kinship with all things. In fact, it seems to me as if that alienation which so long separated me from the world has become transferred into my own inner world, and has revealed to me an unexpected unfamiliarity with myself (Jung 1963, p. 330).

Recent scholarship suggests that Jung, particularly in *The Red Book*, was going into the self to then offer something *to the world*—that ‘kinship with all things’ mentioned above; he constantly engaged the world in such a way that his self was disrupted and such that he could ‘offer to the world’ (Hillman & Shamdasani, 2013, p. 65). Importantly, here is the idea of the ‘self being disrupted’, echoing Buber’s argument that dialogue necessitates an encounter with the Other that disrupts. Jung was particularly interested in dialogues with images that arose in the Psyche. As Hillman and Shamdasani put it, ‘that allows the figures to work on us...He let them instruct him’, and importantly, ‘the relation shifts’ (Hillman & Shamdasani, 2013, p. 165). Jung was not just interested in individuation as some introspective journey to discover a personal idiosyncratic self, or ‘follow one’s own journey’ (Hillman & Shamdasani, 2013, p. 64). His quest for individuation was continually re-made or unmade by encounters with the world—that is, in dialogue with the world. Yet he failed, or so Hillman and Shamdasani suggest, to offer people a way of bringing what they discovered back into the world (Hillman & Shamdasani, 2013, p. 145). Because of that failure, most interpreters of Jung’s theory of individuation focus on the inner journey for the purpose of the imagined Self, those earlier mentioned inner stages of consciousness.

What I am suggesting then is that with the risk of Jung’s theory of individuation being appropriated within an ‘I-It’ attitude (individuation captured by individualism, introspection and rationality), instead we can imagine that

Buber and Jung each offer a deep understanding of either side of the polarity that I am proposing—individuation and dialogue—with each philosopher going more deeply into the one side, to discover the Other. Crucially, it is in the polarity into, and between both, that a new ontology of intimacy with both the Self and Other becomes possible, a new way of being in the world that is about ‘life and consciousness’, along with returning life and consciousness ‘to the world’ (Hillman & Shamdasani, 2013, p. 65). My sense is that this is crucial—a returning life and consciousness ‘to the world’, something akin to the introductory story (where people had no attentiveness to life and the world).

The Phenomenological Tradition

While the Jung and Buber conflict offers a way to re-imagine an ontology of intimacy, one grounded in a polarity between the ‘ideas’ of individuation and dialogue, the phenomenological tradition offers a second path, one which can tap into a different way of perceiving and relating to the world. I say this, noting that Buber and Jung were also steeped in phenomenology, which is what joins all the authors examined in this article.

A particular tracing of some of this tradition is now discussed, one which foregrounds the possibility of a new practice of intimacy in the social and ecological fields, and which can ultimately contribute to a healing of culture. Four key authors are traced, from James Hillman to Mary Watkins, then Henri Bortoft and Allan Kaplan.

Hillman and ‘Ensouling The World’

James Hillman, one of the key inheritors of Jung’s work, draws deeply on the phenomenological tradition, and gifts us with a deep exploration of ‘ensouling the world’. Hillman initiated a revival of what he understood to be a broader and deeper view of ‘soul in the world’, first in his seminal book *Re-Visioning Psychology* (Hillman, 1975), and then in his essay, ‘Anima Mundi: The Return of the Soul to the World’ (Hillman, 1992b). For Hillman, somewhat like Buber, Jung’s notion of the soul, linked to his theory of individuation, had been captured by an ever-increasingly narrow psychology, which over-emphasized a turn inwards. Hillman was rescuing or unearthing the deeper and broader perspective of Jung’s theory of individuation. In a nutshell, the argument is that not only are people alive, animated by the life-force or soul’s ‘acorn’ (Hillman, 1999), but so is the world, the cosmos. Hillman called this ‘ensouling’ the world (Hillman, 1992b). Ensouling relocates the soul outside of narrow perspectives of psychology that sees life as only an inner-oriented subjective and psychologizing process of the Self. He wanted his phenomenological depth psychology to engage more with the world—to equip people to see the ‘images in events that give rise to meaningfulness, value and a full range of experiences’ (Hillman, 1989, p. 15) and that are mostly entangled within culture. Ensouling the world leads *away from* any perspective that drifts towards a focus on individuation as predominantly an

internal process to make meaning for the Self. Instead, ensouling the world insists on recognizing that the world is both alive to its own healing, as well as humans bringing meaning and healing *to the world*, particularly to culture, again alluding to Hillman and Shamdasani's suggestion that Jung was a 'physician of culture' (Hillman & Shamdasani, 2013, p. 145).

Importantly, a perspective of ensouling the world starts to see soul outside of the solo self, and re-orient towards the profoundly different and alive Other—whether that is the Other of the unconscious, nature, the world of politics, economics, urban planning and so forth. Here, there is a way forward in thwarting, or reversing, the eclipse of relationality. A deadening world can be filled with fertile life again.

Watkins—Towards a Phenomenology of the Social

Drawing on Hillman's work, a significant contribution is also made by one of the authors of *Towards Psychologies of Liberation* (Watkins & Shulman, 2008), Mary Watkins, from Pacifica College, California. She also wrote the influential essay 'Breaking the Vessels: Archetypal Psychology and the Restoration of Culture, Community, and Ecology' (Watkins, 2008).

She explicitly introduces Hillman's 'soul of the world' into the social field, asking people working in the social sphere to *refrain from quick intervention*, and enter into a much longer process of observation, listening and imaginative participation in the social phenomenon that they want to intervene into. I should add that this invitation eschews the mad addiction to rapid solution seeking that is self-evident in the social field. Instead, a stance of learning is a necessity, to see more 'deeply' into the causes of our social catastrophes. She invites people to listen to more people connected to whatever social issue is being explored, whether it is a local social problem (homelessness, drugs) or a socio-creative challenge (such as urban design). In that listening, she insists on more dialogue and then the waiting, likened to discerning the 'soul of the world', for images to arise that offer deeper meaning, and deeper diagnostics about a way forward. Such listening for images also recognizes that it is the heart that can be an 'organ of perception' and sees the world in aesthetic ways (Hillman, 1992a). In a sense, Watkins and Hillman are suggesting that the listening, presencing and dialogue, enables someone to potentially *get inside* what a social phenomenon is suggesting, the gesture that is unfolding. In some ways I imagine her work, like Hillman's thinking, as psychologizing the social, 'discovering the soul within it [the social]' (Hillman, 1999).

Mary Watkins has developed a useful framework for thinking about how people engage the social world in a soul-oriented aesthetic way, which includes practices such as:

- '*Notitia*'—a term of Hillman's that pushes people to notice, and keep looking, listening, and noticing, but then doing it more with all their senses, with the importance of prioritizing sensing

over ‘feeling’. I quote here, that the noticing needs ‘the gift of careful attention that is sustained, patient, subtly attuned to images and metaphors...’ (Watkins, 2008, p. 6);

- ‘Multiplicity and dialogue’—recognizing that the soul wants multiplicity and complexity, and so there is a need to ‘bracket’ the ‘domineering ego’ (albeit, almost impossible) and listen to the un-listened and silenced voices (in the social field this is the equivalent of finding invisible people who rarely have their voice heard on an issue). Listening to such voices also requires a capacity for dialogue;
- ‘Seeing through’ and ‘the imaginal’— which for Watkins represents Hillman’s warning, that ‘we are always in the embrace of an idea’ (Watkins, 2008, p. 6). The point is that ideas are often abstractions, or quick leaps to interpretation and judgement. Aligned to the manic addiction to rapid solution finding, fueled by a gesture of control—quick interpretations and judgements undermine a gesture of humility and learning (and unlearning) which requires a deeper quest for understanding. As a contrast, seeing ‘the imaginal’ requires social practitioners to attend to the images of the world as presented through stories and dialogue, therefore letting go of pre-determined fantasies. Of course, many presenting images or stories are not necessarily welcome as they might penetrate to the heart of our cultural darkness’s—addictions to efficiency, convenience, hyper-consumption so name just a few;
- ‘Reflection and action’—here are spaces of real research, being in the world in action, yet reflecting on that action rigorously. Both reflection and action, as embodied activities, can enable what Paulo Freire richly called ‘praxis’ (Freire, 1970). Watkins is pushing for a depth here, asking for a combination of this Freirean action and reflection, with a Hillman-like ‘love and observation’.

What does such a framework mean in practice? Take the following example: I used to sit almost daily in my old local shopping village. I’d often walk the 100 meters from my home and settle in for a coffee. It is a semi-circle of shops—bakers, bottle-shop, butcher, fruit and vegetable store, sushi, a gorgeous Thai restaurant and a few others. It’s a quick stroll to the train station. It could be perfect. But I’d sit there observing, sometimes in conversation with others, and reach for a seeing of this social phenomenon of the village, one representing the gesture of our social-body. And of course, it was hard not to see what was unfolding. At the center of these shops is a car park. It is a chaotic space of cars moving in and out, around, and through. Those of us sitting around this center get to breathe the fumes and struggle to converse over the noise of machines. It

is tough going to be in this village if you desire conviviality! The gesture is clear—a place of efficient commerce, designed for cars, quick shopping and meagre human exchange, perhaps indicative of a broken culture, colonized by capitalist logics. That is simply what it is, without fantasy. It is quite shocking to see—and hence often avoided at all costs—both an intimate encounter with the social phenomenon of the village, and also a true diagnosis of the social priorities.

In this perception of the heart, an aesthetic response, I also experience a yearning when I sit in the shopping village. I yearn for something like an Italian or Spanish piazza. I long for their equivalent beauty and imagine what such a center could induce from local residents, to have a real ‘center,’ a hearth honoring the mythological Hestia figure in our collective culture (Paris, 2017, p. 185–187). Such honoring would be healing, fostering a warmth in our culture that is fractured by too much Hermes energy, mythically caught in exchange, movement and efficiency.

In seeing this village in a new fresh way, drawing on Hillman and Watkins suggestions, phenomenologically, through noticing and through allowing images to arise, implies a seeing through senses, aesthetically, which moves towards a possible encounter of intimacy. Here is a glimpse back into what a Hestia-like return to life might look like, instead of the deadening logics of much urban design today.

But now let us continue on this pathway, from Hillman and Watkins through to Henri Bortoft and Allan Kaplan, which extend into the broader ecological and social field.

Henri Bortoft: Towards a Phenomenology of the Ecological World

Henri Bortoft, a teacher at Schumacher College until he passed away some years ago, was deeply influenced by many traces of thought, including Hillman’s phenomenological and poetic work, but also Goethe’s scientific endeavors. Bortoft particularly explored how the Goethean and phenomenological way of thinking profoundly disrupts the old Cartesian way of separating, reducing, and deadening (Bortoft, 2012). He was doing much the same *for science* as what Jung and then Hillman were doing *for psychology*. He focused on awakening faculties of seeing for scientists that would enable them *to see ecological processes as living processes* in contrast to seeing them as mechanical, dead, and linear ones. This required both seeing with a rigorous observation of the parts, and the whole, but also an imaginative, or poetic process, of *seeing life unfold* within the phenomenon being observed. Such scientific practice therefore takes rigorous observation of the phenomenon seriously but adds imagination to see connections, patterns, and movement. For both Goethe and Wittgenstein, the kind of seeing which sees connections is imagination (Kaplan, 2002, p. 28). It is about the use of imagination because life always includes movement (even if only at the molecular level) and people need imaginative faculties to see and sense movement. Goethe called the use of both rigorous observation *and* imagination as

'delicate empiricism' (Goethe, 1790/2009) or 'exact sensory imagination' (Goethe, 1790/2009, p. xxviii).

For example, when people observe a tree, they usually see a 'thing', appearing relatively stable and static (this is the normative Cartesian way). Traditional science would dissect a tree to see each part: roots, trunk, branches, and leaves. However, within Goethean and phenomenological approaches, with close observation of the parts and whole, over a period of time, it is posited that with imaginative work, it is possible *to see a tree as a living process*, both in itself, and also deeply connected to the web of life embracing it. As such we can perceive a tree as both a 'thing' (what Goethe called 'object thinking') and a 'process' or 'emergent phenomenon' (what Goethe called 'metamorphic thinking').

In the same way, when inviting my community development students to understand this kind of living or metamorphic thinking and they struggle to get this idea of a tree as a living process, I often ask them to think about whether a rainbow exists. Does a rainbow exist? In one sense it does, as an idea or an image. Yet it is not easy to perceive as a thing (object thinking)—it, as a thing, will never be found. Yet it does exist as an emergent phenomenon, which manifests under certain conditions (rain, particular light, language, memory and so forth) (Barfield, 1988, p. 15). As such, all of life can be understood in this way. In turn, I try to teach my students to let go of thinking about community as a thing (again, object thinking), but to instead understand it, and therefore also notice it, as an emergent phenomenon, a living process, made by the people creating it. This approach to perceiving re-orientes community from noun to verb (Burkett, 2001) in much the same way that Hillman tried to reorient an understanding of the self as a thing, instead suggesting self to be re-imagined as a process always in dialogue with context.

Kaplan: Towards a Phenomenological Social and Ecological Practice

Kaplan has taken the implications of Bortoft's work, both the phenomenological and Goethean strands of it, to articulate a living *social and ecological practice*. Best articulated in his ground-breaking book *Artists of the Invisible* (2002), and then *A Delicate Activism* (Kaplan & Davidoff, 2014), Kaplan invites people to apply the metamorphic way of thinking explained above within the social field, asking questions such as what it means to see groups, communities and organizations in this living way? His work suggests a way of being present to this kind of seeing via Goethe's 'delicate empiricism', that requires the deft work of both rigorous observation (of the phenomenon, material, social or ecological) and active imagination—to see both the movement within living social processes and also the formative forces creating each unique social group—usually manifest as culture. Exercises are used to awaken the practice 'muscle' of seeing, sensing and imagining. For example, here is a personal story that might help to understand what Kaplan is trying to support about a living phenomenological way. The story, while focusing on the ecological world, is also relevant for perceiving the social field in a similar way.

The story comes from a five-day conversation that I participated in at a property called Towerland, 400km east of Cape Town, in South Africa. The conversation was between twenty-six practitioners from around the world reflecting on the question, ‘Can a social practice that foregrounds observation contribute to healing in the world?’ Sitting behind the question was an awareness that the world is at work in polarities, as is people’s everyday practice. One key polarity is intervention-observation. And of course, in most people’s every-day practice there is an easy disposition towards the intervention end. People love to take action. We are not very good at observing.

Within the exploration of the question about foregrounding observation, and in our attempts to pause and learn how to see, one of the exercises the facilitators Allan Kaplan and Sue Davidoff invited us all to do was, to spend an hour each day in groups of three, observing a particular natural phenomenon. My group chose to observe the succulents that covered much of a garden bed that I had walked past dozens of times over the past few years.

As I observed, and as the group of three entered into dialogue about what we were observing, what struck me were a number of things. First, the awareness of my blindness in seeing—I saw so little—or more accurately I thought I had seen, and then as dialogue opened up, I realized how many different ways there were to see. That awareness of blindness humbled me at a profound level. How much do I not see of the world, or myself, or of ecological or social situations I am immersed within? Second, the daily exercise of sensing and conversation with the other two in my group gradually awakened within me an intimacy with this garden that I had walked past so many times. Previously I had hardly noticed this garden—it was dead in my world, it did not feature in my imaginative world, other than in the abstract (as a ‘garden’ I simply passed by). I posit that maybe, just maybe, if someone had destroyed the garden I might not have even noticed, or if I had noticed maybe I would not have protested—after-all, it was ‘just’ a succulent garden not a rainforest! But now, having observed at a detailed level, having sensed the parts and the whole, I had cultivated an intimate relationship with that garden—I care about it; I can see it now if I do some memory work. I could almost, but not quite, draw it. This seeing/sensing and this intimacy then opens up a new participatory relationship between me and the garden, myself and the world; a succulent garden as Other, as disrupting me, inviting me to see it, disclosing itself as I give it intention and attention.

It is a relationship that is founded or grounded in a sense of the whole (not seen only by stepping back and getting an overview—although this need to ‘step back’ is partly true, but by first ‘stepping in’ and getting close to the parts, and in being intimate with sensing the parts, and the relationships and patterns connecting the parts, allowing the whole *to be revealed*, the gestalt)—and this whole is then experienced sensuously and intuitively.

And so here we return to the key wisdom that I am hinting at as the crux of this article—my theorizing of a way forward for cultural healing. My glimpse, or this awareness of my previous alienation from the garden—much like the people

walking across the bridge in the Introductory story—draws me into an awareness that I spend so much of my life separated, literally apart, lacking intimacy with another, or with the world, or the manifestations of the world that are all around me, and within me. As suggested in the Introduction, something is then missing—call it connection, which ensouls the world—the aliveness that invites an anticipatory and participatory relationship. The consequences for me and the world are profound—for the experience of alienation enables abstractions to flourish, exclusions to expand, extraction to abound, and rushed interventions to proliferate—the ‘eclipse of relationality’ beckons.

In Conclusion: Returning to Jung and Buber

To reverse the eclipse of relationality is to then engage in both an ontological turn and a phenomenological practice within which ‘life discloses itself’. It is a stance of open humble learning; not solution seeking, instrumental, willful. This is a key shift in everyday practice—a cultural shift, one that I propose can bring cultural healing.

Linking to the first part of this article, such a phenomenological practice can also be integrated with a new ontology, one which connects the ideas of Jung’s individuation with Buber’s dialogue in a relationship of polarity. Such polarity enables intimacy with Self and the Other, which are deeply enfolded within one another.

Within Buber’s idea of I-Thou, there was always the need of a full expansive, conscious ‘I’, capable of stepping into the presence of an Other. To not attend to Self, and in particular, the depths of self/s, is to be thwarted in any attempt to meet the Other. And one of Jung’s great contributions to life has been opening up this encounter with the many layers of the Self that is an on-going dialogue of ‘self-ing’ (self as verb), but with a much broader view, likened to Hillman’s rescuing of ‘soul of the world’. This dance between the Self-ing journey and the Other, is a living daily practice that requires people to sense and live the polarity of the Self-Other relation. They are different and yet enfolded within one another.

Could it be that Jung and Buber’s 1951 conflict was simply the soul of the world trying to reveal the dual journeys of dialogue within self, and then into the world, so we could see both journeys clearly

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