



Otto Richter, while adept in Western approaches of psychotherapy and the growth movement, has also learned from North and South American shamans. Here, he explains how healing has much to do with our perception: Only through access to the "nagual" the world beyond our terms and concepts, can we experience spiritual healing

By Otto Richter

Rather like ants do, when human beings form communities it is not unusual that we organize ourselves into a cooperating group of individuals, each having a specific role and contribution to the larger collective. We can assume that the roles that developed throughout our history reflect an attempt to fulfill the most prevalent needs and put to good use the technologies that existed within a community at any given time, e.g., hunter, gatherer, healer, carpenter, town crier, police officer, astronaut, etc.

The Roll of the Healer

The role of healer has, over time, undoubtedly taken countless shapes and forms. After all, wouldn't there be a multitude of factors that might determine who became a healer, what "sickness" or "wound" needed healing and exactly how the healing took place? Availability of certain plants and herbs, current religious and cultural beliefs, traditional tools and methodology as well as whether or not the healer has genetically inherited that position in society—all have played a part in what names we have used to identify them.

So the word, shaman, in the way we use it today in our culture appears to be a rather general term. While clearly referring to someone who has the ability to access the spirit world and return with healing powers, it does not specify how that actually is achieved or what effects are the result. Nor does it necessarily imply that the true shaman's intentions are more concerned with healing others, than with his or her own glory and power. Indeed, this is what differentiates a shaman from a sorcerer.

At the end of the day, I suspect that those healers who were (and are) the real shamans have gathered together whatever abilities and resources they had, applying a remedy to those in need, because they had an inner calling to do so. Whether a physical wound, a psychological issue, an emotional dilemma, a hormonal fluctuation, an ancestral influence or a spirit-possession it is the heart of the real shaman that steps forward with the intention to do good for all concerned, however that may be possible.

What is Black Magic?

I would like to share with you an excerpt from a letter written to me from one of my long-time students. She had been working with healing energy for many years, but when a loved one became seriously ill and needed a risky operation, she began to question the work of healing – for all the right reasons. The operation was a success and her

loved one survived and finally thrived. Nonetheless, her letter – written during the recuperation period - hits on very important points.

“Now that everything is over for the time being, and I work to take care of my darling, I sometimes wonder if my hope for a cure, or the specific human intention to “heal” is not, in itself, a kind of black magic? Is not all shamanic work with the specific intention of healing, black magic? Was it black magic, when I took an eagle feather and called forth the powers of healing? I ask, because I realize that I’m not sure that I actually know what is best.

Questioning Everything

So what is shamanic work? What is it for? I love working with visualization, Master Consciousness, to drum and to experience ecstasy and to channel that energy. But under what conditions should I use these tools? Or should I just sit waiting beside my sick loved one? Yes, I remember what you said: “Expect the best and also accept the worst.” However, there is still something that I cannot grasp.

At the moment, I put everything I have learned into question. What do I do with these treasures, if I'm not allowed to use them for my intentions? Something is pulling me back to the essence, and I feel a strong sense of humility. I'm beginning to understand that in fact, after all these years of learning, I know absolutely nothing.”

Humility

The following was my response to her, which also helps us clarify the possible pitfalls as well as potential powers of working with healing energy.

“Your strong sense of humility that you said you were experiencing, may be the beginning to the answer of your question. Yes, many people who are attempting to do healing work, actually are doing black magic because their egos are attached to their own success in performing white magic. To whatever degree the ego is invested in a particular outcome (for whatever the reason), this is the degree of black magic that is involved. Look at it this way; ego thinks it knows what is good, bad, right, wrong, what should be and what should not be. By attempting to manipulate the destiny or fate of another being, ego reveals its assumption to know what is best for that being; what it needs. Ego's own, selfish interests blind it from even considering the possibility that this being may need certain challenges for its greatest growth. One's heart may be loving and intentions good, but if one's attachment or aversion to a particular outcome is too strong, then ego is interfering in the business of others.



Agustin Rivas Vasques beim Vorbereiten eines Ayahuasca-Rituals (ca. 1985)

Calling on the Power of Healing

Pure surrender to the will of the Highest, and to allow the Spirit to “do Its work”, may be helpful in diminishing the involvement of the ego. In doing so, a new and more holographic understanding of the concept of “healing” will occur. Instead of being associated exclusively with what ego thinks is best, it expands to embrace whatever the “Great Web of Life” deems necessary, for the good of all concerned, and in service to the Light.

So, when you call on the Power of Healing, remember that it has nothing necessarily to do with results like good health vs. bad, pleasure over pain or living rather than dying. The Power of Healing is the ability to tap into and connect with the Light, the Universal Hologram, the Source, the Matrix, etc. Perhaps we could imagine a Cosmic Energy Grid, connecting, balancing and harmonizing all things, everywhere, throughout time and space. By calling on the Power of Healing, you set into motion an exchange in which energy is given to the object of the healing, as you give energy back into the Grid. Your contributions of love, gratitude and humility are precious energies with great power.

At the same time that it is your task to state clearly for what purpose you wish for this energy to be used, it is equally your task to release that wish into the hands of the Highest. To “expect the best”, does not mean to impatiently stand around and wait for it to happen. Once you release it back into the Grid, it is no longer your business. After you have prepared a place for it to manifest, then get out of the way so that it can.”

The Feathered Serpent

It is not only a good hearted intention that makes a real shaman, but also one’s inner balance and ability to direct one’s life energies. This must be done in such a way that one is lifted into an altered state which opens one’s perception to more refined dimensions of reality. There are many instances of shamanic lore, that verify and indicate this, but here is one I find most representative:

In Mesoamerica during the 16th and 17th centuries, a number of pre-Columbian societies flourished in which a supernatural entity called the Feathered Serpent was worshipped. Quetzalcoatl is the name that most people

associate with this archaic god, although only the Aztecs used that name. Other societies such as the Mayans and Olmec had different names.

A Quetzal is a bird known for its striking colors and bright plumage, which still flourishes today. The word “quetzal” is from the Aztec (Nahuatl) language and according to the American Heritage Dictionary literally means, “large brilliant tail feather”. The word “coatl” simply means snake. Together then, Quetzalcoatl means Feathered Serpent.

There exists a plethora of broadly conflicting meanings attributed to this deity such as fertility, vegetational renewal, the planet Venus, the wind, creator of mankind, intelligence, self-reflection, a patron of priests, internal political structures, war and military expansion. But the most obvious attributes, indicated by its name, demonstrate its main essential significance: one “being” that represents both the sky and the ground. Its dual nature most clearly symbolizes the union and balance of opposites. It represents our simultaneous divinity and humanity but, as well, the balance of the masculine and feminine principles within us all.

If we call upon the Feathered Serpent as a kind of power animal, we are inviting and celebrating the marriage of Mother Earth and Father Spirit within us. The image of feathers can easily be interpreted as flames or rays of light, indicating a revelation of enlightenment. As the fiery energy of Mother Earth rises up through the human energy centers, Father Spirit fills us with Light from above resulting in the transfiguration of man into god.

The Ineffable Nagual

Entry into the sixth Energy Center signifies contact with the ineffable, or as it is said in the world of Mesoamerican shamanism: the nagual. The word itself can refer to either a person (Nagual), or an aspect of a person (nagual).

Traditionally, a person identified as a Nagual has certain magical powers that supposedly enable him or her to transform shape. Originally such a person might have been the local indigenous religious practitioner and to this day the position of Nagual is integrated into the religious hierarchy. More widely, however, a Nagual is often seen as a magician or witch who is respected or feared and sometimes even persecuted.

More interesting to us though, is the nagual that refers to a certain aspect of a person. It is perhaps best discussed in contrast to another aspect called the “tonal”, which signifies the level within which everything can be understood on a rational level. Only those who enter the place, within which NOTHING can be understood or identified, will discover the realm of the nagual.

The well-known author Carlos Castaneda (1925-1998), who wrote a series of stories describing his training with teacher don Juan Matus, has compared the tonal to an island upon which everything in the world exists, like a table-top that supports all items that are describable.” Don Juan had explained to him that the nagual is the part of us for which there is no description; no words, no names, no feelings, no knowledge. While probing don Juan for a more precise definition of the nagual—asking if it was the soul, pure intellect, vital force or even God—don Juan insisted that all those categories were just another item on the table (of the tonal). When Castaneda finally asked where the nagual is located, the shaman waved his hand to indicate the area surrounding the table-top. The place “where power hovers”.

While the nagual cannot be described, it CAN be located beyond the known. So, at least we know in what direction we are moving. As we enter the Spirit, it is essential to prepare to open our inner vision not only to new territories beyond our normal self-centeredness, but to realms that threaten our understanding and transform our very comprehension of truth.



Shamans Agustin (left) from the Amazon and Eduardo Calderon Palomino who worked with San Pedro cactus (ca 1985). Eduardo was Otto's teacher.

Seeing is an Active Process

Dr. Daniel Glaser, a visual neuroscientist and researcher with University College, London, did a groundbreaking study on mirror neurons that helps us understand why we see the world the way we do. What seems to excite him most about the results of that study is revealed in the following excerpt from a TV-interview in 2005 presented on PBS:

“What we're discovering more and more, and in truth the Greeks and the Renaissance scholars also had an understanding of this, is that vision is an active process. Seeing is a process of projecting what you expect out into the world and constantly matching your experience, your prejudice, your expectation with what's out there. For me the mirror neurons are a particular system which embodies this principle, and for me it's a very fruitful area.”

The Reality Beyond Our Concepts

In shamanic terminology it might be said that we can help the Third Eye to open, by daring to look beyond our unconscious projections, onto what IS. In other words, to be able to “see” what actually exists, we'll need to disengage from our habitual dependency upon the mirror neuron system, relax our conceptualization of reality (as we have known it) and enter the nagual.

This can represent quite a challenge, because everything we have learned in the past has become a pool of mental knowledge and beliefs, which determine how we perceive and experience the present. From the infinite spectrum of frequencies of vibration that cause reality to manifest, our dependency upon the limited structures within our culture and language has caused us to gather and package a few of them into easily identifiable and communicable segments. In our minds, those segments are grouped into concepts. The problem is; when observing reality as we normally do, we project - and therefore perceive - only those concepts, and no longer the entire spectrum. The concepts become our point of reference for what defines “reality”.

Opening the Third Eye

Let's take the spectrum of color as an example. Among all the languages of the world, there are probably no two of them that assemble segments of that spectrum together in exactly the same way. However, that doesn't mean that some cultures are more capable of distinguishing all possible shades of color than others. It simply means that they have grouped them together differently. In the Hungarian language, they have divided the segment of the spectrum that an English speaker calls red, into two different colors. Russians have at least two colors for the English speaker's color blue. So, how we learn to group ranges of the color spectrum, determines what we will notice and how we will identify them when we look at them.

This occurs not only on a visual level, but on all the other levels of sense perception as well. Think about all the times you thought you were hearing one thing, but it actually turned out to be something else entirely. Or maybe after a few years of learning about the art of fine wine tasting, you find it difficult to imagine how you ever swallowed that dreadful stuff you used to drink. What we have learned determines what we perceive.

So, as we enter the ineffable nagual and open the Third Eye, our task is to lessen the quantity of data we process in the tonal. Rather like turning off a noisy radio that is on full-blast most of the time, we suddenly hear the delicate mixture of unfamiliar sounds that seduce us into their mysteries. Concepts are annihilated and sensitivity is born. By quieting the rational mind and subduing the input of sensory information to the brain for a sufficient amount of time, we are able to tune into the more subtle realms of the Spirit.

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Otto Richter, author and counselor, is internationally known for his Human Holographics® personal development programs. This article is partially made up of excerpts from book six (Spirit) of his seven volume book set, *The Human Hologram*, published in 2013 in English (CreateSpace) and German (Param Verlag). For more info: www.HumanHologram.net

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