

PSYCHOTHERAPY AS GRIEF WORK
Ghosts and the Gestures of Compassion

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ON STAGE

I first met Michael when he was a student in one of my undergraduate psychology classes. He was a drama major at the university where I was a guest lecturer, and at that time one of the bright lights of its theater. He was one of several theater people, who, during the past year, were attending my classes, and I generally found them to be the most interesting of my students. It was not only their eccentricity which made them stand out. More to the point, it was their sense of dramatic presence which I noticed. In retrospect, I now recognize that this dramatic presence was inseparable from the ways in which they inhabited the space of the classroom. At that time, I did not have the language, but, looking back, I intuitively knew that they thought with the liveliness of their gestures, and as a psychologist and psychotherapist trained in phenomenology I was sensitive to these nuances: the tilt of a head in making a point, or the movement of a hand in sweeping out an arc in the space of a question or a comment. This was nearly twenty years ago, and little did I realize then that this was the beginning of a small revolution in my ways of knowing and being.

Of all those many students whom I taught and recall, the one who haunts me now, as I write these pages, is Michael. He was a tall, swarthy, handsome young man whose intensity was immediately evident in the fierce glow of dark, gypsy eyes, and the chiseled hardness of a firm jaw. Often, after class, he would sit with me over a cappuccino and he would talk, not about his studies or his

acting but mainly about himself, and especially about his deep sense of loneliness. It was in these moments I saw how young he was and how at odds his intensity was with this vulnerability. It was also in these moments that I learned a remarkable fact. Michael suffered, often quite painfully, from intense bouts of nausea which frequently enough resulted in severe spells of vomiting, and he had already been diagnosed as having a gastric ulcer. One of his great fears, he said, was that such an attack would happen on stage, and indeed it was the case that some of his worst moments occurred when he was waiting in the wings for his cue to enter the performance. Remarkably, however, none of these fears were ever realized when he was on stage. Quite the contrary! Crossing that magic threshold which separated the wings from the stage, Michael was in a sense always re-created. He was, he said, no longer himself and he experienced this difference not as an idea but in a deeply felt embodied way.

Even now after twenty years, I remember my thought at that moment: the body on stage, unlike Michael's body, did not have an ulcer. The body of Michael the actor and the body of the characters Michael portrayed were different bodies. When I next saw him on stage, I could not help but notice how this difference revealed itself. On stage, Michael was bigger and his gestures more fluid and expansive than in lived life.

It was in watching Michael on stage that I first understood that the lived body of phenomenology is most radically a gestural body. It is not the lived body which makes gestures or out of which gestures flow, like water from a container. Rather, it is the gestures which create the lived body, the water in its flowing which creates the vessel.

GETTING INTO CHARACTER

Over the intervening years, I have learned much from my work with actors, actresses and directors. Like Michael, Alex also was one of my teachers. A graduate student in performing arts, Alex was the one who helped me understand how the actor gets into character. Over the course of many conversations, I learned that for many actors and actresses the defining moment comes when the gestures of the character to be portrayed are captured and impregnate the body of the actor. Alex told me that the lines to be memorized came alive only in the movements and gestures which accompanied them, and until that moment the dialogue remained in the mind. From Alex I learned to speak about the muscular incarnation of memory, and I learned to appreciate how central it is for the memories of mind to become gestures of flesh. Years later I came upon an interview with the great English actor Anthony Hopkins. In this interview he said that he finally understood the character of Picasso (whom he was portraying in that film) one morning when he was descending the stairs on his way to breakfast. It was in the movement of walking in a certain way, of going down a staircase, and in the gestures of the arms and trunk and legs which accompany such a movement that Picasso was born in him. I recall how incredulous the interviewer seemed, for it was no grand theory that Hopkins was presenting to indicate how an actor gets into character. It was, rather, something quite simple and ordinary, and yet most profound. By waiting for the gestures, by making oneself a vehicle to be impregnated by the other, the character was/is born. When you watch an actor like Hopkins, or Robert Duvall, or Dustin Hoffman, you can see that transformation when the person of the actor fades and the figure of the character appears. The gesture creates the body.

It was through this relationship with Alex that my work with dreams was changed. Dream interpretation always seemed to me to be more in the service of the therapist and his or her theories than in the service of the patient. It was not that dream interpretation did not have value, for I frequently witnessed its effectiveness both in regard to my own dreams and those of my patients. What always seemed lacking, however, was that muscular, incarnational sense of validity which would make the interpretation vital, which would move its understanding closer to the dream as it was dreamed in all its felt bodily sense. Taking the clue of how the actor gets into character, I began to do dream enactment, inviting the dreamer to take on the gestures and character of the dream figures. Candace DuPuy, one of my graduate students at Pacifica Graduate Institute, wrote her doctoral dissertation on this topic.¹ In her study, she has shown how the multiple techniques an actor/actress uses for getting into character are applicable to dream work. All these techniques emphasize a phenomenology of the senses, an acute attunement of the body to the nuances of the situation. In my own work, gesture is the term I use to contain all the multiple ways of *making sense* of the world in its varied textures, moods, contours, seasons, shapes, directions, colors, and lighting. In the gesture, the body holds and unfolds, like a flower in the sun, these multiple, evanescent, ephemeral impressions. Watching the gesture you enter a world of experience. The gesture is the portal through which each of us enters into the mystery of the other. It is a magic mirror, a dynamic mirror, through which you and I meet and are transformed.²

The use of dream enactment requires a careful regard, because it effects a powerful release of memories and emotions. Indeed, it is not unlike the way in which we are affected and moved by a superlative dramatic performance. Only it

is more so, because it is, so to speak, closer to the bone. The dream body enacted is and is not you, and indeed I suspect that this confusion of identify and difference is closer to the phenomenology of the actor on stage than is my earlier assertion in this essay regarding Michael. The body of the actor-actress is *and* is not the character's body, just as you and I are and are not ourselves in our moments of encounter. Your gestures decenter me, and mine you. A gesture is the power to dissolve and recreate in the moment who each of is. Each gesture is a potential *ec-stasy*.

Speaking in this way, I am moving toward the claim that the gesture is a field which precedes me and you. Depth psychology long ago recognized this fact in calling attention to the theme of transference, but it has sadly mis-placed it by linking it to the notion of projection, a term which still smacks of a Cartesian splitting between self and other, me and you, body and world. A phenomenology of the body revises transference as a gestural field, and emphasizes that it is the field that is primary, the gestural field out of which you and I blossom and fade. You and I no more precede this gestural field, than the lived body precedes the gestures which create it. Or said in another way, it is you who give me "my" gestural body just as I give you yours, with you and I understood here not as elements within a field but as the precipitates or crystalizations out of the field. To do dream enactment, then, is to be given an-other gestural body by the figures of the dream.³

Considerations of space prohibit me from saying much more about dream enactment. I would like, however, simply to indicate those steps which I follow in the process, because they give an indication of the bodily complexity and the leveled nuances involved in this focus on the gesture. The sequence is not a fixed schedule. It is heuristic, attuned to the situation and its shifting moments:

1. Breathe and pay attention only to your breathing. More and more allow yourself to become your breathing, to become the act of your breathing. As you let yourself surrender to the act of your breathing, you will feel more and more relaxed. Give yourself over to this deep feeling of peace and relaxation. Become your breathing, float on it as if you were a cloud, floating in the sky, drifting, carried by the wind. Surrender to that larger field of your breathing. Let yourself be held and contained by your breath.
2. When you are in this deep sense of relaxation, allow yourself to recall a dream. Wait on it, and wait for an image from it to appear. Allow a dream figure to approach you. Let it be there in front of you. Attend to it with a state of open curiosity.
3. Carefully allow that dream figure to in-spire you. Breathe the dream figure in, take it in with every breath so that you can actually begin to see and to experience how it dissolves and becomes part of you, part of the very act of your breathing, part of the marrow of your bone, and the blood coarsing through your veins.
4. Once you have allowed yourself to be in-spired by the figure of the dream, wait. Wait until it moves you. Lend your body to the dream figure and wait for what it wants from you. If it helps, you might imagine a question: what gesture, what movement, what posture, what action does this figure want?

5. Without judgment or criticism, without interpretation, allow that gesture to take place. Follow its movement. Stay with the gesture. Stay with the movement for as many enactments as it needs or wants. It might be helpful at this moment to do the movement slowly, to enact the gesture in a slow, rhythmical manner. Allow this to take place until this movement, this gesture, seems finished.

6. Now it is important to let the dream figure go. Now it is important to pay attention to the out breathing. With each breath that you exhale, begin to see the figure forming again in front of you. Do so until the figure is as complete as it was in the moment just before you allowed it to in-spire you. Attend to that figure now as it stands there over in front of you.

7. When that moment seems completed, offer a gesture or a word of thanksgiving.

8. Attend now to what you need at the moment. Attend to your feelings. Attend to your felt bodily senses and do the gesture or the gestures that seem to express those feelings.

I have indicated in brief form the sequence which I use to do dream enactment. I have done so in order to emphasize not only the complexity involved in this focus on the gesture, but also to highlight the very important moment of thanksgiving. In doing this work, I have learned that this moment of

differentiating oneself from the dream figure which has inspired you is crucial. This moment of letting go is as important as the moment of inspiration, the breathing out of the dream figure as important as the moment of taking it in.

GRIEF

While my work with actors and actresses taught me to appreciate the gesture and the gestural field, it was a shattering personal loss and its attendant grief which brought me to a deeper understanding of the relational character of the gesture.

Grief is a cellular matter. When the one who has been your spouse, your lover, your companion, and your friend has died, it is the body in its deepest levels and rhythms which measures the time of grief and mourning. No act of will, no decisions of the mind matter, because grief is the winter of the soul, and like the seasons it can only be endured. And in this time of endurance, there is only a waiting. One lives a kind of cocoon existence: the world fades and the body shrinks into the space of its grieving.

In *The Orphan and Angel: Grief and the Reveries of Love*, I presented a poetics of the mourning process, and here is neither the time nor place to present it again.⁴ Let me say only that this poetics of mourning emphasizes how the grieving process is a dying of that gestural body formed in a relation with the one who has died. In this dying of the gestural body, conscious awareness of the loss is never enough. Slowly, ever so slowly, each gesture which tied you to the other is continually made and undone in the absence of that other. The right arm which unthinkingly one always draped over the shoulder of the other no longer

finds its reciprocal in the world. Or the hand which grasped the hand of the other reaches out and encounters only a void.

At first there is a kind a haunting and the other who has gone lingers as an absent-presence, soliciting the gesture without confirming it. The haunting, like the seasons of the world, has its own rhythms, while the grieving you continues to exist in a world where your haunted body has no place. An awkwardness ensues, registering the disjunction and disharmony between the world which continues on its way and your failed gestures. At the same time a shrinkage begins, as the repeated gestures, made with their own volition, become more and more like a phantom limb, until the once familiar body you were begins the slow process of dying. The gestural body made in relation to the other who now lingers as a ghost fades, slowly, into a kind of invisibility, and you actually do feel that you have become a shade, pale, lifeless, thin, without the spark of any animation, so far away now that the world's appeals no longer solicit you. You live in limbo. You live suspended in a world between the living and the dead.

I learned in a deeply painful way that there is no way out of this moment, which I called a cocoon, and that there is no guarantee that one can or will emerge from it. And so in *The Orphan and the Angel* I gave only a poetics of the experience, a description of it, and not a psychology addressed either as an explanation or as advice. That for me the mourning blossomed into love is a miracle. I can say only that this blossoming began as and continues also at the cellular level as the crafting of a new gestural body in a field of love. And those who know me well register this change, for they mirror back to me what I, myself, feel in the deep marrow of my bones: that in saying I have changed, I am saying

that I have been given a new body. Its gestures are looser, more fluid, and much amplified and it is no surprise to me, therefore, that my writing has also changed.

A PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE GESTURE

At the Doorway

He was about seventy, and maybe about seventy-five, an old man with thinning white hair, shoulders bent by age, a slight limp in his walk, accompanied by a woman, whom I assumed to be his wife, a woman about as old as he, also with white hair, but straighter in her posture and more subtle in her walk. They approached the door of the coffee shop as I was about to leave. Opening the door for them, I stepped aside, but the old man took the door in his right hand, and, with a sweeping gesture of his left arm accompanied by a very slight bow and a very broad smile, he ushered me across the threshold and into my day. We exchanged only one word, the thanks which I spoke as I passed them. Beyond that one word something like a small miracle happened, and although I never saw them again I have remembered that moment, that brief moment, these long years.

At the threshold the old man outlined with his gesture a whole universe of manners, a landscape of civility, an old world of grace and charm, whose space and time echoed an earlier, slower, more quiet rhythm. Present to that gesture, I was offered a kind of citizenship in the world that it carved out, gifted with a sense of belonging to a common space, a community, a tradition of which somehow I was already a part but had forgotten. Beyond that man, his wife, and myself, the gesture brought with it an assembly of all those others who belonged

to that old world of practiced etiquette, polite manners, genuine respect and measured patience. Later I found myself thinking of my father and remembering those long, monthly Saturdays, when we would sit in the kitchen of his aunt and uncle, old European immigrants, and I, as a young boy, would listen to their stories. The smell of strong coffee served in a glass, the taste of hot, freshly baked bread, the slow ticking of an ancient clock in the next room, the fading afternoon light filtered through yellow shades: all of that was enlivened again by this simple gesture, all of it made to live again as an assembly of ghosts brought to presence with a courteous bow and a sweep of an arm. That was the gift of this gesture, an appeal to enter into that world, an appeal addressed by the old man at the door to me, a stranger, and yet one who was made to feel that he now belonged.

The Gesture

The gesture, like the old man's sweep of his arm, is the outline of a world, the chiseling of what is otherwise a neutral space into a significant place. It is the seed from which a cosmos is born, a field of radiating lines and vectors which draws the participants into a mutual presence. It is the outline of a world. As such, every gesture is an appeal, an invitation not only to enter into a world, but also to partake of its experience. The appeal of the gesture of the old man at the door was for me to inhabit again those Saturday afternoons of my boyhood, when in the ambiance of their fading light I felt something of the presence of my ancestral heritage.

The ancestors are a haunting presence and indeed every gesture is a haunting by significant others. The gestures which each of us make carry the

signature of those significant others who have gone before us, those others who have *mattered* to us, who live again through us. Those ancestral ghosts who haunt our gestures are often those of whom we have heard only in story, but who, nevertheless, have captured our hearts and have lived in our dreams. Carl Jung attested to this when in Memories, Dreams, Reflections he confessed that in going about his work, he was only continuing the work of his ancestors, completing it for them, or at least bringing it to a new round. So too, with each of us, even in simple things. You make a gesture, always without thinking of it, and your companion says to you how much you look and seem like your grandfather. Haunted in our gestures by significant others, shadowed by the ancestors, we are in and through our gestures stitched into and held by a tradition. Our gestures are the habitat of a history, its embodiment, testimony that as beings in time we do belong to a community of others. The body that one is, the body that one is born with, has been crafted long before one's birth.

Haunted by significant others, the outline of a world and its landscapes of experience, the gesture as an appeal is an emotional field, a gravitational, magnetic force which attracts and holds not only you and me and the ancestral ghosts who attend us, but also mood and affect, memory and image. Indeed, the gesture is the pivot around which mood and image swing, a pivotal moment in which an image is made incarnate and a mood is a given expression. The gesture is the living image charged with feeling, an erotic field whose gravitational tug is the stuff of desire and longing for the other. With the sweep of his arm, the softness of his smile, and the subtle gentleness of his bow, the old man at the door opened waves of memory and longing, affect and image, desire and loss. In his simple gesture, the old man at the door evoked a field of dreams.

PSYCHOTHERAPY AND THE GESTURAL FIELD

It is, I believe, in this field of gestures, in this field of dreams, that so much of psychotherapy takes place. The talking cure which describes depth psychology in its origins is really about that place of conversation where the word is made flesh. Indeed, acknowledging how much the gesture is a haunted presence, it is better to say that psychotherapy is, in fact, the making of a place for the ghosts to assemble to tell their tales. The person who comes to therapy is the vehicle for those ghosts who come for therapy. The talking cure is for the sake of the ghosts who haunt the symptomatic body and its gestural field.

The symptomatic body is the locus of a loss and in this respect all psychotherapy is grief work. What the patient brings into the field of therapy is a body haunted by an absent other, a body whose gestures find no witness, no reciprocal, for their appeal. Addressed to the therapist, these gestures hold in presence an absence which yearns for some lost other, an absence which in fact invites the therapist to become that other, an absence which galvanizes a field between patient and therapist, establishing a magnetic tension between them, a field in which each infects the other with desire and longing, impregnates the other with hope and with fear. And all the while from within this magnetic, transferential field, a field brought into being not by disembodied minds who project on to each other, but by the fact that patient and therapist are embodied beings whose gestures implicate the other; all the while from within this field between them words erupt, language appears, stories are spoken.

For the ghosts, however, who haunt the symptomatic body, the words that are spoken, the stories that are made are not enough. And for the therapist who takes the side of the symptom, who attends to the ghosts who come for therapy in contrast to the person who comes to therapy, there is no choice but to be the disappointing witness, the one who in keeping the appointment with the ghosts disappoints the person. Such a therapist, is, in a paraphrase of Winnicott's fine phrase, like a transitional presence who bridges the chasm between the gestural body which no longer finds its reciprocal in the world and a new body of understanding which, if grace allows, is made between patient and therapist. In failing to be for the absent other the gesture which restores the loss, the therapist, working on the knife-edge of disappointment, allows the ghosts who haunt the symptoms their release. Like a phantom limb, which through repeated failure, shrinks into a new gestural body, the symptomatic body in the repeated failures of its haunted gestures dies, and, perhaps is reborn. In this respect, psychotherapy as grief work, as ghost work, is not about cure. On the contrary, it is about assisted dying, the craft and practice of letting go. The rituals of psychotherapy are rituals of mourning, and language, which holds such a key place in the talking cure, is central to these rituals, to this practice of letting go. In another place, I have considered in detail some of the characteristics of this language which arises in the gestural field between patient and therapist, tracing its roots to the tradition of Orpheus and his songs, and especially to the Orpheus of Rainer Maria Rilke.⁵ Within that space, we practice a way of speaking which holds onto the meanings and stories made by letting go of them. We practice a way of speaking which is responsive to the gestural field as a haunting presence.

That the ghosts want their release was brought home to me quite recently via a dream told to me by a young woman whose brother died in a tragic and unexpected accident. The dream goes as follows:

I am hiking alone behind the North Star Ski Resort when I come across some ancient ice caves. They are blue and cavernous and deep. I rappel down through chamber after chamber, following the blue light. When I reach the end, there is a room with nothing but a fireplace which is lit and a rocking chair. My brother is sitting in the rocking chair. He looks strange because he has a very long, gray beard and his hair looks scraggly. I also notice that his fingernails are grotesquely long. He looks very sad. Once again, I go through the feeling that he is not really dead, but has just been here the whole time. I am not angry though. I ask him what he is doing here. He tells me calmly that he is "stuck here" and that I need to tell mom to "let him go".

The dead who haunt our dreams in search of release are like the ghosts who haunt our symptoms in search of their stories.

The significance of gesture to the practice of psychotherapy was also brought home to me from the other side. At a gathering of colleagues, I listened as one of them, also a friend, was presenting a case. The presentation was not only marked by clarity, but also by a kind of theoretical brilliance which astonished me as well as the others who were gathered. From the point of view of dynamics and psychological theory, there was no gap in my friend's

comprehension of who the patient was, of what her suffering was about, or how that suffering was related to deficits in early childhood failures of empathic mirroring, failures as it were, of attunement. I understood all this from the presentation, and I also understood that my friend as a therapist was deeply attuned to his patient. But I wondered about all that theory, and I suspected that it was *not* the way in which he was present to her. Indeed, because I knew him not only as a colleague but also as a friend, I also knew that during the hour he would hold his theoretical knowledge of the patient in such a way that it would not in fact become an obstacle between them, a barrier to his empathic attunement to her. So, when he finished, I asked him a very simple question. I asked: "How are you with the patient during the hour; how do you, for example, sit in your chair?" His reply was immediate, unchecked. He leaned forward, and with his left hand he made a gesture from his heart toward the invisibly present patient who was there in the room with us. And he accompanied that gesture with these words: "I love her".

It was, as a recall it now, a touching moment. Simple, and quietly eloquent, it left us all in silence for a time. Through that gesture and its attendant words, we all felt the invisible presence of the patient in a way that the theoretical description could never match, and, installed for a moment in that field evoked by his gesture, we were humbled. I knew then that it is moments like these between patient and therapist which are healing. I knew then that in psychotherapy the ghosts ask of us these gestures of com-passion. In these gestures of com-passion we confess the limits of our comprehension, and, in doing so, we reveal our failure to be for them who they need. But in that failure we succeed. In these gestures of com-passion we release the ghosts from what we know,

allowing ourselves to be with them as we are, fellow sufferers with a limited capacity to understand, and even less to heal. In letting go of what we know, we suffer a loss which resonates with who they are, absent-presences in search of what has gone away. In these gestures of compassion we create a field of mutual mourning and each of us is released.

BEYOND PSYCHOTHERAPY

In concluding this essay I want to make this bold claim: the gestural field is a cosmic one, and the vibrations which a gesture establishes extend across the order of creation and even reach to the stars. To illustrate this claim, I offer the following story:

. . . It was a dark winter day when I made a visit to the local zoo. I have always been drawn to zoos in moments of melancholy, pulled by a loneliness and a hunger which beckons me toward the animal. Winter days, particularly in mid-week, have always been for me the best time for such visits, as they allow solitude and a private time with the animals.

On this occasion I was going to see the gorillas. Standing in front of the cage of a large, silver-back male, I keenly felt the presence of the bars between us. The gorilla was sitting in the front corner of his cage, and I could see him only in profile. On occasion, however, (as gorillas will do with visitors) he would turn his head for a quick glance in my direction. His deeply set, dark, black eyes seemed like pools of time, and in those few brief moments of exchange I felt dizzy, as if I could swim through his eyes into

another world. But the gorilla would just as quickly look away, and the spell would be broken.

The cage was so small, especially for so large an animal, and I wondered how he could bear it. His lethargy was inescapable and I thought of the many hours of boredom he must daily endure, wondering, too, if I was reading my own sense of melancholy through him. But I had also been with animals in the wild, and the difference in behavior, in gesture, and in that imaginal space between us was pronounced. Caught up in these reveries, I had absent-mindedly withdrawn an orange from my pocket and was tossing it in the air. The gorilla turned and began to watch me. Without thinking, I tossed the orange through the bars, momentarily oblivious to the prohibition against feeding the animals. The toss of the orange through the bars covered a distance of only a few feet in real space and took perhaps only a second in real time. But the gesture and what unexpectedly followed bridged an ocean of time and space.

One would have expected the gorilla to take the orange and retreat to the far corner of the cage to eat it. But this gorilla did not. Instead, he tossed it through the bars back to me, I caught it, and in my astonishment, I tossed it to him again. We continued like this for perhaps three exchanges, until this ribbon between us, this gesture of play, was broken by the sound of a voice from the far end of the corridor. "Don't feed the animals!". When I turned toward the voice, the gorilla turned away. He retreated to the far end of the cage. He kept the orange.

I left the zoo and walked out into the city. The cold, dark, winter afternoon did little to cheer the sadness I felt at having left the gorilla inside. I was different, changed by that encounter, and even more lonely in the midst of the crowded city. The gorilla had suspended his appetite for a moment. For the sake of an encounter, he had bridged with his gesture an immense gap between our worlds. In that gesture of tossing the orange back to me, he had reached out his hand across an emptiness so vast as to be beyond measure. Together we had built a tremulous bridge of gestures. And for a brief time we stood on opposite sides of that bridge, connected in a way that seemed to acknowledge in each other our lost kinship. Even to this day, nearly twenty years later, I know that I will never forget the eyes of my winter companion on that cold day. He remembered me, and as strange as it might sound, I felt so grateful for his recognition. But I also felt how far I had come, and I knew with a great feeling of sadness that we would remain forever more on opposite sides of that bridge, and that at the best moments of my life I would be able only to stop and linger and turn around to see, once again, what was left behind. I knew all that, and I knew too that what I saw in his eyes before the spell was broken was his sadness for me.

Like the gesture of my colleague toward his patient, this too was a gesture of compassion offered to me across a great divide. How many ghosts haunt the gestural field between us and the other beings with whom we share the Earth, I cannot really fathom. But I do know that what links us to the rest of creation is the common field of the body, which, in all of its

variations and permutations, is the locus or the site where we appeal to and address each other.

ENDNOTES

1. Candace DuPuy, Exploring Dream Image Through Acting Technique, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Pacifica Graduate Institute, 1994. I should also acknowledge here how convergent my views regarding dream enactment are with the work of Eugene Gendlin. See, for example, his splendid books, Focusing, (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), and Let Your Body Interpret Your Dreams (Willmette, Illinois: Chiron Publications, 1986). Indeed, although I developed this approach before having read Gendlin's works, I am indebted to them and to him for having so carefully and systematically presented his material. Moreover, I am not surprised at the convergence, because he himself has noted two phenomenologists do not disagree. They do not because phenomenology is the practice of fidelity to experience.

2. For a detailed account of the mirror see my first book, Psychological Life: From Science to Metaphor (Boston: University of Texas Press, 1982). See also the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, especially The Visible and the Invisible (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968) and "Eye and Mind" in The Primacy of Perception (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1964).

3. This last point is, I think, important in regard to physical ailments. My oldest son, who is now thirty, has been living with Parkinson's disease

for approximately 6 years. He has told me that on multiple occasions his dream body never suffers the illness, and I also and quite recently have on occasion dreamed of him as hale, hearty, and whole. I wonder, then, about the potential therapeutic impact of enacting the dream in this situation. What are the limits of this paradoxical relation of identity and difference between the dream body and the body of the dreamer? How far can this gift of being given one's body by the other with whom I am in a field extend? The actor, after all, leaves the stage; Michael steps out of character and his nausea returns. Moreover, we are, after all, also a "mechanism", that syncretic structure of behavior about which Merleau-Ponty writes in The Structure of Behavior, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), and western medicine and physiology are not incorrect but only one-sided in their recognition of this level. If, as Merleau-Ponty notes, the human body, the gestural body, is a symbolic level which preserves *and* transforms the "lower" levels, then there are real limits in our possibilities but also real possibilities within these limits.

4. This manuscript is completed but as yet unpublished. It runs counter to our culture's obsession with meaning and addiction to information by refusing to prescribe either the steps or the formulae by which one overcomes one's grief. It is not a how-to book. On the contrary, as a poetics of the grieving process it offers reveries of mourning which invite the reader into the experience. We are so far from experience because we are dis-embodied that such invitations are understandably, but sadly, too often ignored or refused. Indeed, our addiction to overcoming experience is so engrained that we often seek the proverbial twelve steps before we even have had the experience to which the information is to be

applied. So much of psychotherapy, I believe, still falls into this place with its emphasis on knowledge systems and theories and practices that have a positivistic and literal cast. All too often do are theories and techniques not only get in the way of experience, they also prevent those disclosures of grace, of love, and of the sacred between patient and therapist, between me and you, which is the only source of healing. It is not because the therapist knows the patient that healing takes place. Rather, healing occurs because the therapist can witness a shared experience and thereby give it a vital place in the other's life. Such witnessing requires of the therapist more than a knowledge of techniques. It requires character. Being a therapist is much more about who you are, than it is about what you know. Being a therapist is about having and being a character.

5. See "For the Moment, That's Enough: Meditations on Therapy and the Poetry of Language", in Phenomenology and Narrative Psychology, (Pittsburgh: The Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center, Duquesne University, 1997)