

Deep Callings: The Will of the Heart

Adhip Rawal

Abstract

Is something calling us? Maybe the heart knows something we love, but the head is not aware of or does not believe in it. In cultures driven by patriarchal modes more remains unconscious than needs to because we lack the means to contact deeper dimensions which could be inherently alive. The narrowing of epistemology is a loss of self. Considering whether the heart has qualities of self, dream, and desire may provide a framework to recognise it in an embodied education and to liberate ways of knowing that can deepen subjectivities and enable potentials that were interrupted to begin ripening again. It may also encourage us to consider our relational agreements and to create educational spaces that refine attention to the hosting of futures. Setting up mirrors to make the heart more cognisable may revive individualities and what is meant to be in the world.

Keywords

heart; intuition; intimacy; dream; desire; destiny

On a journey of the heart there is so much to see – Bliss

Introduction

This paper's assertion is that the heart is neither unconscious nor neutral to who we are and why we are here, and that we must involve its intelligence in education. The question I am holding is: *'Why is a degree not also a deeper purpose degree?'* I don't know what this will mean, but I hope some of these words will be for somebody else to hear. I remember encountering the heart when I interviewed patients with severe anorexia nervosa. This is a complex affliction with considerable mortality where instinct is repressed by willpower, perfection takes over radiance, and ruminations replace embodied feelings. Yet there were moments in these conversations where it felt like the climate of death had constellated the heart's voice to break through. Fortunately, I was working within a paradigm that made room for this disassociation of the head-heart connection. But I want to begin earlier: In 1988, the Jungian scholar Marie Louise von Franz (1988, 1995) highlighted the *'liberation of the heart'* as the key challenge facing humankind over the next 50 years. James Hillman (1989) was also concerned about the persistent dominance of rationalism over feeling responses in living and relating. He described the heart as the place of deep desire and imagination beyond social conceptions of the self in the forbidden realm of soul. The transgression to birth images could yield a person's star – their unique identity – and the voice to articulate dreams would bring

gifts to person and community. Dreams can indigenise the mind, von Franz (1988) suggested when she implied that there is no such thing as a grounded American who does not dream about the Indians. Dreams have shown me that within them lie the earth's promises to us and the heart's desires are guides towards them. The heart minds or tends to deep knowledge and moments that touch the heart can release depths of unexpected feeling, energy and vibrancy that expand our vision of reality and open the door to remembrance. Its sensibility and impulses speak to the aspiration to live out a meaningful life and we need to become aware of the potential resonating within us as a communication towards values and futures we are committed to – its importance outweighs the temptations coming from the outside world. This makes the person a giver of gifts by being who they are – this is not for sale – and the culture is to care for and invest in the expression they are to live into.

At this point it would be helpful ... to ... perform a conceptual turn through 180 degrees, after which the question can no longer be: “What can I expect from life? but can now only be: “What does life expect of me?” What task in life is waiting for me? (Frankl 2021, 38).

Viktor Frankl stressed that the will to meaning was to be preserved, not the will to power or pleasure. If the opportunity for the fulfilment of an individual's unique duty in life was lost, it remained unrealised forever. Dreams can show us what opportunities were not realised in a life. In a dream some time ago, I entered the mailroom at my work. Next to the pigeonhole, which also exists in waking reality, was a large red letterbox. It was holding many letters that had been posted to me, but around it was a thick chained padlock. As I looked down towards my hand, I noticed that I was holding a keychain with dozens, maybe a hundred keys. The dream made me think of ancestors who were displaced and whose lives were put on hold. Perhaps there is a place where the forgotten gathers and nothing is truly lost, but time could be essential. Frankl's words themselves seem like an ancient letter. The Upanishads say: “You are what your deep, driving desire is. As your desire is, so is your will. As your will is, so is your deed. As your deed is, so is your destiny” (Easwaran 2007, 114).

Carl Jung framed the generativity of and responsibility to life in the wedding of conscious and unconscious:

There are psychic goals that lie beyond the conscious goals, in fact they may even be inimical to them, but we find that the unconscious has a ruthless bearing toward the conscious only when the latter adopts a false or pretentious attitude. (Jung 1997, 63)
The symbols of the self arise in the depths of the body, and they express its materiality every bit as much as the perceiving consciousness. The symbol is thus a living body... If man doesn't pay attention he pays in other ways. When whole countries avoid these warnings, we are in great danger. (Jung 1959, 173)

Jung affirms the reality that consciousness is embodied and the need to actualise the creative images that emerge in the earth's matter, which enable a person to live out of themselves. The conscious personality is to participate in a larger consciousness. Likewise, the unconscious yearns for and is minding the way of the conscious personality. The heart which perceives the deeper reality makes demands that come into our thoughts, and we need to stand tall and participate in the building of a world in its images, hopes and dreams. As is evident, Jung was greatly concerned that individuals would lose touch with these ethical, ontological impulses that can correct our ideas and that the self we experience would become a disembodied entity, determined by the ego's own conceptions, divorced, and dissociated from the ground. This could repress reality to such a degree that it would flatten the complexity a human brings into the world and mean the loss of affection – the beginning of knowing loneliness.

*Our lives are Swiss,—
So still, so cool,
Till, some odd afternoon,
The Alps neglect their curtains,
And we look farther on.
Italy stands the other side,
While, like a guard between,
The solemn Alps,
The siren Alps,
Forever intervene!*

– Emily Dickinson

The Space Between Us

“When I look I am seen, so I exist. I can now afford to look and see”, wrote the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott (1971, 113) to highlight that the self is mentored into existence by being witnessed and, more so, that the quality of one generation's perception initiates the next into life and determines whether its developmental potential can be actualised. In the trust of deep seeing love enters and creates the feeling of intuitive relatedness that invites another being's expression into the world. This is reflected and affirmed so their nature can be birthed into consciousness and achieve the primal separation this requires, slowly bringing awareness of the star – the person outstanding and to arrive. This is consciousness creation in a so-called feminine mode and shows the primacy of subtleties in human relating. In Winnicott's terms, empathic seeing provides safety for feeling level contact and acts as the precondition for the authentic self to take residence within the body and animate the unfoldment of becoming. We could say destiny begins with the love of seeing when the interior, vertical space within is made visible by a fair and affectionate horizontal space between people. People of the Zulu tribe express feeling value when they say ‘*Sawubona*’: ‘*I see you and you matter to me*’. The greeted person responds ‘*Shiboka*’: ‘*I exist for you*’. The German ‘*Griß Gott*’ and the Sanskrit gesture ‘*Namaste*’ – ‘*I bow to you*’ – also express blessings in the space between people which affirm

that seeing is knowing and that life is essentially related to meetings in realities beyond outer appearances. In contrast, injustices to beings are created in the absence of intimate perceptions. The absence of empathic seeing creates a reality where elements are missing and not personified in perception. This space is an ontological risk that threatens the settlement into embodied subjectivity. We sacrifice who we are because we believe the other person saying: ‘*This is reality*’. This adaptation is an enforced carrying of what was seen as accepted or desired – a survival personality – which is based on the loss of inner dimensions and represents a shift from another’s psychology influencing us as a gift to it affecting us as a hurt:

When you don’t have community, you are not listened to; you don’t have a place you can go and feel that you really belong. You don’t have people to affirm who you are and to support you in bringing forward your gifts. This disempowers the psyche, making you vulnerable to consumerism and all the things that come along with it. Also, it leaves many people who have wonderful contributions to make holding back their gifts, not knowing where to put them. And without the unloading of our gifts we experience a blockage inside, which affects us spiritually, mentally, and physically in many different ways. We are left without a home to go to when we need to be seen.... The absence of a welcoming village around a newborn may inadvertently erase something in the psyche; that loss, later on in life, will be felt like a huge gap. (Somé 1997, 23, 59)

These writers showed deep concern for the existential quest of people born into the despair of not being welcomed and losing sight of the heart’s will to meaning. It must mean something for a person nearing the end of life to remember what they could not in living. Maybe it suggests that it is hard to dig down and know what we are missing before we leave the world. Serena Parekh (2017, 83) coined the phrase ‘*ontological deprivation*’ to refer to ways in which a person’s identity and mode of existence is maintained by tightly regulated interactions that situate them outside the ground of meaning and recognition. She developed these thoughts in relation to the refugee crisis, but they echo those of von Franz (1988) who reasoned that the communication of meaning to generate a real culture depended on the liberation of the heart so that people would become the real people they are and met each other in this realness to ensure that deeper conceptions would not be missed. This will however necessitate bringing people back from the complex history of their relatedness which has put them into the economic marketplace and virtual spaces. Modernity’s systems of education and self-understanding have a biography we have interacted with for hundreds of years and this can make us believe we are separate from its inheritance and repress the reality of our suffering – the loss of feeling, seeing, dreaming – and all this could bring in helping us remember that we came here for more. Yet beneath thoughts of power, performance and perfection are cracks – the voices of inchoate feelings and the rebellion of instincts speak of forgotten losses: Our possibilities exceed our inheritance. It may seem strange that there is something within that can overcome what is keeping a human being from who they are and what they are committed to, but this impulse could be coming from what is excluded. José Ortega y Gasset implied that suffering opens to

deeper ontological reflections when he said: “He who does not really feel himself lost, is lost without remission; that is to say, he never finds himself, never comes up against his own reality” (1964, 157). Hillman (1989) thought that the heart’s desire and image of our wandering could be known in longing. He pointed out that beauty was of Persephone – the queen of the underworld – who could not be known unless one allowed for the melancholy in one’s heart to take one down low enough to hear her calling. Discontent then can be a way of seeing and finding missing soul and earth substances. “Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. Maybe many of us won’t be here to greet her, but on a quiet day, if I listen very carefully, I can hear her breathing”, said Arundhati Roy (2002). Is Persephone calling again – and is she upset at our distance from her?

A Path of Moonlight

What would it mean for educators to vow to existential depths and create spaces where we can live within the hospitality that is able to develop our psychologies towards the reach of our knowing? It may necessitate accepting that expanding our hospitality is primarily a question of contact at a level of reality where who we are is more important than what we say:

The critical factor was the existence of others, the being of others, specifically their being role models. This bore more fruit than any talk or writing. Because existence is always more decisive than the word. And it was necessary, and will always remain so, to ask oneself whether this fact is not far more important than writing books or giving lectures: that each of us actualises the content in our own act of being. (Frankl 2021, 31)

This is a philosophy where the meaning of what we do lies in our willingness to be the persons we are for another’s future. It will require giving up ways of knowing which have built our world on lesser levels of self-knowledge. The theoretical paradigm I alluded to at the outset posits the existence of two centres of knowing in human consciousness: (1) ‘*Knowing with the heart*’ which reflects the activities of the intuitive mind and implicational (or holistic) meanings, and (2) ‘*Knowing with the head*’ which reflects the activities of the conceptual mind and propositional (or partial) meanings (Teasdale and Barnard 1993, 216). The intuitive mind connects with somatic, emotional, and conceptual systems; it sources widely. This ancient mind which we share with non-human animals integrates implicit intricacies below the threshold of immediate awareness and reads these for meaning. The heart’s possibility of deep knowing is informed by its sensitivity to existential and relational intelligences at levels of communication including the vibrational or vital resonance between beings. Conscious attunement with this centre enables this information to refine itself by synthesising intuitive and imagistic experiences that can overcome us with meaning:

What one has truly felt, if only it can be made sensible to others, is always of importance to one’s fellow men. If pictures which have taken shape in memory can be brought out in words, they are worth a place in literature (Tagore 2017, 15).

We cannot be in the world of the head and heart simultaneously. The mode that is prioritised determines our experience and this age agreed to move away from the heart. But its ancient leadership is still within range and this reacquaintance would expand our ability to reach levels of consciousness in the service of knowing the human being and making potentials cognisable. The perception that births the world anew requires the receptivity to lunar ways of knowing, which are marginalised in patriarchal societies that have wounded the feminine voice and deny admission of these data points. They are likely to repress realities that need not remain unconscious. Yet intuitive intelligence evolved first and is prioritised in indigenous cosmologies that, believing more is perceptible, create initiatory moments when solar consciousness is dimmed and the inner eyes open to the wind to give something to the heart over the head.

It is evident when a student's self-expression shows the heart's striving and its place in literature. Feeling safe, the heart releases material that was interrupted and provides access to memories and the irrational that affect the quest and atmosphere in a room. These echoes continue to resonate, but they may not flower because we have experienced disappointments in love and are not used to trusting the ways of Eros (Theog. 120–121) where directions are to be sensed. We require educators who can suspend a life bound by logic and provide us with a point of consciousness to attune with in order to liberate ways of knowing that reach inherently conscious places of identity which are hidden from the eyes of modernity and where we can develop implicit capabilities of faith and courage, without thinking we are crazy. This is a reminder that some places should not be visited until invited and approaching the heart of a human being is not entertainment. Sometimes the best one can do is feel these places exist and protect them because they could be the future. Education that goes to the heart level of cognition can call forth the acuity of deep meanings and demand sacrifices. The reality of being can be revealed – learning what this means involves the integration of previously unconscious impulses and contents – and disturb or disappoint the conscious personality: There is a seriousness to deep callings beginning to resonate. Yet as Hillman said, “Until the soul has got what it wants, it must fall ill again” (1989, 78), so what alternative is there?

Conclusion

Perhaps there is something within us that we once knew but were callous with. Something that needs help with balance sheets, rules and regulations, and which makes us feel vulnerable but knows the way. Maybe one task for educators is to spend time in this classroom of soul before launching into the world, learning what she wants us to know and waiting for her hand.

*Nothing is gained by flying
to escape this globe
that trapped you at birth.
And we need to confess our hope*

*that understanding and love
come from below, climb
and grow inside us
like onions, like oak trees,
like tortoises or flowers,
like countries, like races,
like roads and destinations.*
– Pablo Neruda

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Dr Adhip Rawal

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6573-2371>

University of Sussex
School of Psychology
Sussex House, Falmer
Brighton, BN1 9RH
United Kingdom
Adhip.Rawal@sussex.ac.uk