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FIELDS AND ENERGIES RELATED TO HEALING: A REVIEW OF SOVIET AND WESTERN STUDIES*

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Introduction

Abundant research has been done to confirm the *existence* of spiritual healing – in controlled studies with humans, animals, plants, bacteria, yeasts, cells in laboratory culture, enzymes, DNA and more (Benor 2001a, b). How spiritual healing occurs is as yet a controversial question.

This paper reviews evidence suggesting that biological fields and energies may be involved in spiritual healing, and based on this assumption will present some speculations relevant to healing.

For the purposes of this discussion, *spiritual healing* is defined as a systematic, purposeful intervention by one or more persons aiming to help another living being (person, animal, plant, or other living system) by means of focused intention, hand contact, or holding the healer's hands near the body to improve their condition. Spiritual healing is brought about without the use of conventional energetic, mechanical, or chemical interventions. Some healers attribute effects of spiritual healing to God, Christ, other "higher powers," spirits, universal or cosmic forces or energies, biological healing energies or forces residing in the healer, psychokinesis (mind over matter), or self-healing powers or energies latent in the healee. Psychological interventions are inevitably part of healing, but spiritual healing adds many dimensions to interpersonal factors.

Sensations during healing

There are subjective hints that some types of healing may involve energies and fields. Let us focus first on palpable sensations during healing. I have personally studied the laying-on of hands type of healing in Reiki method [17,18] and Therapeutic Touch [19]. I can personally confirm reports from many healees and most healers that there are sensations of heat, cold and tingling which both healers and healees experience during a healing treatment [20-23].

How can we explain these sensations? Suggestion is a possible but a poor explanation, as many naive subjects report such sensations spontaneously, having never been told to expect them. A more likely explanation is that these are crossed sensory perceptions (in scientific

terms, a *synaesthesis*). This is a phenomenon reported for several sensory modalities. For instance, some people can hear colors and others can sense colors with their fingertips (or other parts of their skin). While both of these synesthesias occur spontaneously, people can be taught to sense colors with their fingertips. (). [24, 25]

Further findings suggest that dermal optics is a legitimate phenomenon. Yvonne Duplessis, who has published the most extensive study in this area, found that subjects could identify colors from as far as several feet above the colored target. Different colors appeared to radiate to different heights, and the relative heights differed consistently according to whether the testing was done in daylight or artificial light. Even more interesting, *wood and metal sheets interposed above the targets did not block or alter the sensations or the heights at which they could be perceived.*

How can we explain synesthesias? It seems that stimulation of auditory or dermal nerve endings, normally serving hearing or touch/thermal modalities, can produce sensations of color that are not normally experienced via these nerve endings. Dermal vision synesthesia may also be related to biofield interactions, as the colors can be sensed with the hands held several inches away from the colored object.

The sensations perceived during spiritual healing may also be synesthesias. Healers suggest that there is a bioenergy exchange between healers and healees during healing. This bioenergy may be stimulating nerve endings in the hands of the healer and on the body of the healees. These healing stimuli to nerve endings may be misinterpreted by the people involved because they are not familiar with the sensation of healing energy (whatever it may be). These nerve endings may be stimulated and interpreted as the more familiar sensations of heat, cold, or tingling.

Supporting evidence for this hypothesis of synesthetic sensation can be drawn from several further findings. Gordon Turner [23,26], a prominent British healer, recorded that sensations of color were reported by healers and healees during healings, in addition to the more commonly reported sensations of heat, tingling, vibrations and cold. This report is clearly consonant with the “dermal optics” observations noted above. The dermal optics findings date from at least a decade after Turner’s reports, so it is highly unlikely this effect was known at the time of Turner’s investigation. Suggestion in this case is an even more highly unlikely explanation than in the case of warmth, cold, or tingling. A more likely explanation is that dermal nerve endings which can sense color are being stimulated by a healing energy. Much work will be required to verify this hypothesis, but several further findings (cited in the next section) support this speculation.

My personal experience both in offering and receiving laying-on of hands healings is that the heat I sense was initially indistinguishable from thermal heat. With time, as I also developed awareness (still relatively rudimentary) of my own chakras, the heat sensations with spiritual healing have come to include an awareness of simultaneous chakra stimulation – which distinguishes these sensations from thermal heat perceptions.

Nerve and muscle stimulation and blocks to stimulation

Let us move from the palpable to the off-the-body types of healing phenomena. Many healers report that healing is equally or even more effective if they hold their hands near the body of the healee but not touching it [15,19,22,27].

A curious phenomenon has been reported by a number of investigators. Leonid Vasiliev, a Russian researcher, reported that pointing the experimenter’s finger at the nerve of a muscle of the arm of a deeply hypnotized subject could lead to the contraction of the muscles innervated by that nerve [28]. Suggestion was ruled out as an explanation because he

blindfolded the subjects and had assistants who were not knowledgeable in anatomy doing the pointing. This is a curious fact which again suggests a possible transfer of energy. Further evidence for this type of muscle twitching was presented to me in a video cassette by a healer who finds this phenomenon during his treatments [29].

Vasiliiev's experiments were not associated with healing. The reason I mention his work is that Vasiliiev did a further bit of investigation which deserves to be followed up in healing. He interposed various materials between the finger of the investigator and the body of the subject. Strangely, he found that glass and metal did not block the effect, but that cardboard did. I don't know if suggestion that might have been acting on the part of the experimenter rather than on the part of the subject, or on both, but if we could identify a material that blocks this sort of energy it would be a tremendous step toward defining what healing bioenergy might involve. Similarly, Vlail Kaznacheyev [30] reports heavy paper can block apparent field interactions between frog hearts. Without the interposed paper it was found that when chemicals were applied to one heart to alter its rate of beating, the second heart (isolated from contact with the first, but placed close to it) would alter its beating in the parallel with the first.

There are several, minor reports whose reliability I feel is even weaker than the last three but which point in a similar direction. One comes from Shafika Karagulla [31], who reports that she was able to block a dowser's ability to sense water in the ground with a material which she placed underneath his feet. She declined to reveal what that material was. If it is a valid report (and again not just suggestion) it hints at something that may help us to study these sorts of energies.

A similar report by Z. Harvalik [32] indicates that wire mesh shielding can block a dowser's sensitivity to electromagnetic fields.

The last report of this sort comes from Cassoli [33], who found that on one occasion a patient who was undergoing healing felt nothing where he usually felt the typical sensations that I described earlier. In this instance the patient was wearing a particular jacket and when he took off the jacket he did feel the healing sensations. Again, I suspect that this is more likely to be suggestion than an actual effect, but it is certainly worth following up.

The aura or energy field(s) surrounding the body

Numerous healers report palpable sensations when they move their hands close to but not touching the body [19,20,27]. Normally these sensations are symmetrical, smooth and even in distribution around the body. Different healers may experience different sensations when moving their hands around the body of the same individual. If illness or injury are present, a different sensation is noted near that part of the body. This may be experienced as heat, coolness, tingling, stickiness, or other feelings in the healer's hands. This suggests that there is a biological energy field around the body.

In addition to palpable evidence of a biofield, we have reports of gifted psychics who report they see auras [Brennan 1987; 1993; [34,35;] Karagulla/ Kunz]. These are described as shimmering halos of color which reportedly correlate with the subject's shifting physical, mental, emotional and spiritual States.

There are two reasons to question whether the colors perceived in the aura are the product of the mind of the person who sees it or whether they have an objective, "out-there" existence. The first is that numbers of healers have told me they can see auras in full color just as well with their eyes closed. The second is that when I invited several healers simultaneously to observe the same subjects, who had physical problems confirmed and diagnosed by a medical doctor, each healer reported a different range of colors in describing the patients' auras. Both

of these observations suggest to me that aura perceptions are synesthesias or something equivalent to them. It appears that healers' minds/ brains are putting up colors on the screen of their awareness to represent the qualities and meanings of the bioenergy fields that they are sensing. Barbara Brennan (1989; 1990) suggests that healers perceive different colors when examining the same person because each healer is tuning in to a different layer of the bioenergy field.

In any case, all of these observations appear to confirm the presence of a biological energy field surrounding the body.

Further evidence for the theory of synesthesias

Medical intuitives can provide assessments of a person's physical, emotional, mental and spiritual states. In addition to perceiving these as bioenergy fields through their hands or as a visual aura of colors around the body, they often report other modalities through which they make their assessments.

- They may hear words describing healees' conditions, sometimes even specific medical terminology that they have never heard before and do not understand, but can phonetically pronounce or write down.
- They may perceive distinctive smells that they learn to associate with specific diagnoses.
- They may perceive distinctive tastes that they learn to associate with specific diagnoses.
- They may perceive physical sensations, particularly pains, in their own bodies which reflect the pains reported by healees. (These intuitive, mirror sensations have been termed *telesomatic reactions*).

These reports suggest that any of our sensory modalities can reflect the information that our minds perceive – relating to the biofield or to the information intuitively perceived about a person.

Photographic evidence of fields

Looking further for evidence of a field or energy that might be involved in spiritual healing, we have a couple of studies with photographic evidence for a possible energy. Gordon Turner [23] reported that, when laying on hands, if he interposed light-shielded photographic film between the healer's hand and the part of the body that was in need of healing, the film was exposed. Trying various other methods to expose the film in a similar pattern, he found that a hot iron applied for a number of minutes to the film would produce approximately the same effect on the film when it was developed. If the film was interposed between the hand and a part of the body that did not need healing it was not exposed. So again we have a hint that there may be an energy transfer involved in spiritual healing.

Graham Watkins and colleagues [13] report on a study of resuscitating anesthetized mice with mental intent (psychokinesis/ PK). They had pairs of anesthetized mice and the experimental subject was told to awaken one of the pair by PK. Subjects were successful to a very significant degree. When the experimenters placed light-shielded photographic film underneath the mice, they found that the film was exposed following the resuscitation and that there was a decreasing exposure with distance from the mouse. This suggests again that some sort of energy interchange occurred in and/or around the mouse.

A similar effect was noted by Chinese researchers [36], although not in a healing experiment.

X-ray film and nuclear emulsion film placed next to a clairvoyant target were exposed when the subject scored a correct guess.

A last report comes from Ambrose Worrall (Worrall et al. 1970), on indirect healing effects on photographic film reported by Robert Miller:

I [Ambrose] asked him whether he had made any other tests on the water, and he said he had poured some of the water into a pie plate, that he had gotten some special photographic film from a photographer and put it over the pie plate and left it there all through the weekend. The photographer told him he couldn't possibly get any reaction on this film from distilled water in a pie plate. What he actually got was a photograph of the pie plate and water, which they have been unable to explain. This was special photographic film which was sensitive only in the high ultraviolet range . . .

These reports cannot be taken at face value because we know that the mind can influence photographic film. If one is studying a phenomenon of this type, the so-called thoughtography effect (wherein a picture or an exposure is deliberately produced on film by the mind) could be at play rather than healing energy [31-39]. Nevertheless, it is curious that a photographic effect was observed in these several independent studies on healing and this observation should be followed up.

We have the additional phenomenon of Kirlian photography which again, suggests, according to interpretations of some researchers, an aura body or an energy body around animate and inanimate objects [40-42]. There is a lot of debate as to exactly what the Kirlian aura represents. Many people have argued that it represents only a corona discharge of static electricity or other electrical effect produced by the Kirlian apparatus [43], but there are a large series of reports that physical and emotional states of health and disease correlate with changes in the Kirlian images [25,44, 45].

The reports of Kirlian effects reflecting responses to healing suggest that there may be an energy body surrounding the physical body that either is a product of, or controls the physical *body*. Healers assert the latter is the *case*. Such an energy body may provide access for the healer to the healee for diagnosis and treatment.

Several other effects observed in Kirlian photographs support such speculations. In a number of studies, researchers examined the Kirlian image of the finger pads of the healer and the healee before and after healing. They found that the Kirlian image of the healer was large and robust before the healing and rather diminished afterwards. The reverse was true of the healee [42]. This suggests an energy transfer. Again this is suggestive and not conclusive, but it is consistent with the rest of the evidence.

Another effect of the Kirlian type is notable. Some investigators have found that if two people place their fingers on a photographic plate simultaneously and think negative thoughts about each other, an area of retraction of the Kirlian aura occurs on the side of the fingertip that is adjacent to the other person's fingertip. It is as though the "auras" were pulling back from each other. If the subjects think positive thoughts or have rapport, the auras many times will join or coalesce [46].

Again, all of these are preliminary reports which need much further study for verification. They suggest a field interaction or an energy interaction of some sort in the space adjacent to the body.

Healers' effects on water

We have studies on healers' effects on water that suggest that energy may be involved in spiritual healing. An effect is producible by healers on water, measurable by ultraviolet and

infra-red spectrophotometry. Sealed containers of water were held by the healer for a number of minutes and given a “healing treatment.” There were changes in the characteristic infra-red and ultraviolet spectra of the water, suggesting an alteration in the hydrogen bonding of the water [47,48].

Another report of a photographic (indirect) effect of healing comes from Ambrose Worrall (Worrall et al. 1970), on indirect healing effects on photographic film reported by Robert Miller:

I [Ambrose] asked him whether he had made any other tests on the water, and he said he had poured some of the water into a pie plate, that he had gotten some special photographic film from a photographer and put it over the pie plate and left it there all through the weekend. The photographer told him he couldn't possibly get any reaction on this film from distilled water in a pie plate. What he actually got was a photograph of the pie plate and water, which they have been unable to explain. This was special photographic film which was sensitive only in the high ultraviolet range . . .

It seems highly unlikely that such changes could occur without an energy transfer. This implies that the healer must have activated some field or force to bring about such affects.

Ultraviolet (UV) emissions from healers

There are reports of observations of UV light emanating from the hands of healer and others with psi (parapsychological) abilities. This has been sketchily reported from the Soviet Union [49,50] and China [51]. No clear quantification of this effect was reported.

There is a further report that Kulagina, a very gifted Soviet healer, was able to produce a burn on the body of a person in the process of PK/ spiritual healing experiments. When regular glass was interposed between her hand and the body of the person (she was not told what kind of glass that was), she could not produce the effect. When quartz glass was interposed, she was able to produce the effect, which suggests that she can emit UV radiation, which is transmitted by quartz-glass but not by regular glass [52]. This may this be one of the energies, or the energy, involved in some spiritual healing effects.

Electromagnetic (EM) effects

Looking at EM effects, we find that strong magnetic fields can produce changes in water (reported in the infra-red spectrum) [47] and in enzyme function [7] similar to those that healers' hands can produce. This suggests commonality between the effect of healers and magnetic fields, again hinting at an aspect of healing energy. Further evidence for this commonality can be adduced from the fact that if you take water that has been treated by magnets and use it to water plants, the plants' growth can be enhanced by the magnet-treated water [48]. This does not prove that spiritual healing occurs through an EM effect, only that EM effects can alter water in some manner so that the water enhances plant growth – which parallels what happens when healers give healing to water and it is used to water plants.

Direct current (DC) fields have been measured by Burr [53], Ravitz [54] and others in plants and animals. They have called these “L-fields.” The fields have voltages and polarities, which are specific for particular anatomical sites on any given normal member of the plant or animal species. If the DC field is abnormal, this is often an indication of physiological malfunctioning in the organism. In these fields we have further support for the theory that there way be an “energy body” which is a sort of template for what occurs in the body.

As reported by the above researchers, the evidence is equivocal. It could be that the L-fields are actually produced by the body and radiated out, rather than the field originating on the

outside and controlling the body. However, Marsh and Beams [55] conducted a fascinating experiment which suggests that these fields may actually be controlling fields. They studied a creature called the planarian flatworm. This cute little creature is a fraction of an inch long and has markings on its head resembling eyes, making it appear it is staring at us as we're staring down at it. The planarian's most endearing quality to the scientist resides in the fact that if you cut it in pieces it will regenerate a new worm from each piece. Subsequently, a piece of worm maintains the same electrical polarity as the whole worm. It is positive at the head end and negative at the tail end of each piece taken from the worm. Under normal circumstances the positive side of each piece will invariably develop a head and the negative side will develop a tail. Marsh and Beams applied external fields with reversed polarity (positive external field to negative pole of planarian pieces, etc.) and found that the head developed where the tail ought to be and conversely with the tail. This suggests that the field may have an organizing property for the body and may, therefore, provide access for the healer in bringing about his effects of healing.

In speculating on electromagnetic healing energies we have considerable difficulties. Spiritual healing effects as we know them from healers do not occur as they do from an EM source like a radio transmitter, which demonstrates decreased power proportional to distance from the transmitter. Healers report that distance does not affect their healing powers. They feel they are equally effective with healees who are right next to them and those who are many miles (even continents) away at the time of the healing treatment. Research has confirmed distant healing effects (Benor 2001a; b). [n this respect, spiritual healing effects appear significantly different from EM effects.

There are some reports in distant healing that weather, particularly electrical storms, may have interfered with healing. Preliminary reports from Gordon Turner [26] and Montague Ullman [56] seem to be worth replications and extensions. If verified, they would lend support to the hypothesis that healing energies are similar to or in some way affected by atmospheric electromagnetism.

Geophysical aspects of spiritual healing

There are several reports on psi that may have a bearing on our question. These investigations demonstrated a variability in some of their data on extrasensory perception (ESP) which correlated with phases of the lunar month [57]. In particular weeks during the lunar month there was a lessened effect and other weeks of the month an increased effect on the success rate with distant telepathy. Experiments on telepathy seem relevant to our discussion, in that spiritual healing appears to have much in common with ESP. More directly related is a report on water left for a period of time in churches, which then enhanced plant growth. The enhancement correlated with the phase of the moon during the time the water was in the church [58].

These reports suggest another aspect of spiritual healing which would be worth studying and may relate to a field which is affected somehow by geophysical or gravitational fields or some other related energy source from outside the person.

Orientation to earth's magnetic poles

Several studies state that the orientation of plants relative to Earth's magnetic poles appears to influence plant growth. This may be another hidden variable in spiritual healing research, as well as another clue to the energies and fields involved in healing.

Diurnal cycles affecting spiritual healing

The last item that I would mention, which may or may not be related to an energy field effect, is a report from Russia [59] that some healers there routinely study the time of day at which they are most effective. They take 12 to 24 pots of seeds and each 1-2 hours they work on one pot to see which grows the best. They find that most healers have a particular peak or several peaks in the day when they are more effective. I don't know if this relates to a field effect or to a geophysical effect (such as a solar influence) but this may account for some of the variability in spiritual healing research. In doing the research we ought to take this into account.

Discussion

These diverse reports all seem to point to some sort of energy or field (let us label it *psi energy*) which may be involved in healing and other aspects of psi. Psi energy (or energies) has properties similar to electromagnetic energy under some circumstances, yet is distinctly different from EM energies as they are generally understood to function. Attempts to explain psi functions using known physical forces have thus far fallen short of success. It would seem worth while to assume that psi energy is a form of energy as yet not well defined and to proceed from that assumption in developing hypotheses and experiments.

For instance, further explorations of materials which block inter-organism effects and/ or healing would might clarify the nature of this energy. What thickness, type, etc. of paper or cardboard blocks healing effects (if it blocks them)? Further exploration of the photographic and water changes should also be helpful. Can these also be blocked?

Available information, though not sufficiently detailed for clear conclusions, hints that the photographic effects will not be blocked by paper. This is the material most commonly used, to shield photographic film from light, and as such was probably used by Turner and Watkins, et al. to shield their film from outside light when the healers exposed it. This would seem to hint at more than one type or form of psi energy; A weak form, which is blocked by paper, and another form which is not.

Other alternatives must be taken into consideration. Healing may be effected by the organism in need (the healee), with the healer merely triggering or releasing telepathically this psi energy within the healee.

The energy processes reviewed above may be coincidental but unessential concomitants of psi energy interactions with the physical world. For instance, the healer or psi agent may enter some dimension beyond our sensory-reality dimensions (SRD), traversing distances and producing effects there which in SRD are reflected as psi phenomena. The observed SRD conventional energy phenomena (electromagnetic, etc.) may in this case relate to reality-level shifts of the agent, rather than to the psi energy itself.

Of course, it may yet be proved that psi energy is some manifestation of currently recognized physical forces. For instance, in touch or near-the-body healing, the healer may emit pulses of ultraviolet light which influence the biological field of the healee to bring about a healing.

In any case, further research is sorely needed.

One other problem must be mentioned briefly. It seems likely that the consciousness of the healer and (perhaps to a lesser extent) of the healee enter into the processes involved in healing. At a minimum, the healer must project or channel energy. Usually this involves a volitional act on the healer's part, even if that act is to become inwardly silent. or to "allow" (rather than to will) the healing to occur.

Many healers identify several different types of healing; distinguished by their subjective states

of consciousness during the treatment. The clearest exposition on this subject is by LeShan [60].

Though the exploration of psychological factors is an extremely complex matter, and speculations on the interconnections between mind and body even more complex, such issues will probably have to be included in any theorization about the nature of healing.

A greatly expanded exploration of bioenergies involved in healing, will be published very soon in *Healing Research*, Volume 2.

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