

RADIATING LOVE: REFLECTIONS ON THE ROLE OF THE HEART IN INDIGENOUS AND GLOBAL HEALING

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ABSTRACT

Heart and breath based meditation, prayer, contemplation and related actions are time tested, evidence based healing methods. The goal of this conceptual article is to review some essential roles of the heart in indigenous and global healing, with special reference to Africa. As indigenous healing has been the traditional province of the major religious, wisdom and spiritual traditions, such as ancestral consciousness, Shamanism, Hinduism, Vedanta, Taoism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, discussion is focused on the heart as centre for such core healing variables as consciousness, spirituality, ubuntu, energy, coherence, care, compassion and/or love.

Keywords: Heart, indigenous healing, global healing, consciousness, spirituality, coherence.

INTRODUCTION

This conceptual review was originally motivated by reflections on the effectiveness of a local, indigenous African breath and heart focussed, meditation workshop, codenamed SHISO, in facilitating significant improvements in spirituality and health perceptions as well as various other transformation experiences in participants. The workshop was developed around the concept *Shiso*, an ancient isiZulu respectful (*hlonipha*) term for a human being (Doke and Vilakazi, 1972), which became an acronym for a particular healing method, standing for spirit (*uMoya*), heart (*inhlizyo*), image (*umcabango*), soul (*umphefumulo*) and oneness (*ubunje*) (Edwards, 2012). The effectiveness of this indigenous method appeared to be tapping into some universal healing processes such as removal of unwanted obstructions, release of life forces, and transformations from illness or disorder, to new contexts, conditions and states of integrated wholeness, health, well-being and flourishing life. The method, combined with many years of personal, cardio-respiratory based, spiritual practices as well as research collaboration with the Institute of HeartMath (2014) prompted reflections on the integral role of the heart in indigenous healing.

A further, global motivating theme was the need for consciousness transformations in the form of changes of heart and related actions for the many problems confronting planet earth. Planetary threats of nuclear war, international terrorism, global warming, overpopulation, unemployment, poverty, illness, injustice, corruption, crime and violence continue to be the order of the day. Most people are locked into an ongoing subsistence and survival struggle, which eats up much precious energy, distorts consciousness, causes illness and exacerbates disorder. The global village desperately needs healing. This healing needs

to represent all planetary inhabitants, as individuals and members of families, groups, communities and nations. This implies sufficient consciousness, care and collaboration by contemporary humanity in their considerable geographical, historical, religious, political, economic, cultural and other diversity. It implies comprehensive, equitable and effective approaches (Edwards, 2016; World Health Organization, 2013).

Indigenous and global healing has been the traditional province of the major religious, wisdom, indigenous knowledge and spiritual traditions, such as ancestral consciousness, Shamanism, Hinduism, Vedanta, Taoism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Although estimates will surely vary, according to one source on world religions, almost three quarters of the population of planet earth have either Christian (thirty-four percent), Muslim (twenty-four percent) or Hindu (fifteen percent) beliefs (McGloughlan, 2007). However, many will aver that such traditions have failed, not least because of the continuing conflicts among and between the traditions themselves. Certainly, contemporary violence involving fundamental Christian and Islamic extremist groups seems like some form of bizarre compulsion repetition of Holy Land Crusades and wars that occurred nearly two thousand years ago. On the other hand, many still hope that ongoing international meetings between genuine religious leaders and health organizations will bear healing fruits such as those of peace and love. The heart plays an integral role in life, let alone healing. Furthermore, holistic, integral, healing inevitably implies more than any sum of, or interaction among, healing variables in diverse contexts. Thus this presentation is necessarily limited to the heart as centre for such core variables as consciousness, spirituality, *ubuntu*, energy, coherence, care, compassion and/or love with their related outstanding potentials for global healing (Edwards, 2016; Rogers, 1980).

THE HEALING HEART

Over the centuries, the heart has been recognized as a centre and source of life, health and healing in many cultures. Its autorhythmic beating in the unborn foetus before brain formation, its continued beating after brain death, and its transcultural associations with emotional, physical, energetic, intellectual and spiritual life, are well known. Just as the physical heart occupies a central location in the human anatomy, so the heart is metaphorically associated with such human qualities as sincerity, genuineness, morality and integrity, as conveyed by the phrase, "speaking from the heart" (Childre and Martin, 1999). In South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation commission hearings provided a transparent example of this integral role of the heart in healing. In the public eye, some justice was seen to be done. Although the various forms of injustice, oppression and violence that were perpetuated through the nefarious Apartheid system could never be undone, the court, public and many victims of various forms of violence were given the opportunity to intuit, assess, evaluate and ultimately judge genuineness in atonement offered by perpetrators, who in turn could receive forgiveness by victims (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2008).

Ancient heart focussed healing probably developed many thousands of years ago in Africa, predating, informing and influencing later systems developed in India such as the Vedanta and Chakra. In ancient Egypt, the heart was originally viewed as the organ for blood, emotions and consciousness (Bryan, Smith and Joachim, 1974; Nguyen, 2013). It was believed that feelings of anger and sadness were the result of the heart closing itself off from its vessels (Bryan *et al.*, 1974). The heart was mummified in the body after death, so that it could be weighed against the feather of Maat in judgement for possible sins against the gods (Nguyen, 2013). This also implies the view of the heart as an organ of consciousness and conscience. A famous vignette, in the Egyptian Book of the Dead, is the judgement of the deceased before being permitted to enter the afterlife. The papyrus of Ani features Ani and his wife bowing respectfully towards the gods, as Ani's heart is weighed in the balance scales by the jackal-headed Anubis against the feather of Maat, the Goddess of truth, balance, order, harmony, law, morality and justice. Ammit the Devourer, looks on as Ani speaks to his heart, telling it not to testify against him like a bad conscience (Hood, 2009).

Various physical, metaphorical, transcultural and transpersonal meanings, attributed to the human heart, appear to have layers of increasing depth (Childre and Martin, 1999). Traditional Zulu meanings of the heart are remarkably similar to Ancient Egyptian views. Doke and Vilakazi (1972: 330) note the following three layers: (a) as physical organ, (b) as seat of emotions, feelings, hope, courage, desire and appetite and (c) as conscience, will or patience respectively. For example, as physical organ, the heart beats (*ukushaya kwenhliziyo*); as seat of emotions, the heart may feel quite content (*inhliziyo ithi cosololo*) and, as conscience, the heart may prompt one (*walalela inhliziyo*).

Indigenous, local, cultural perspectives on health and healing include and transcend World Health Organization focus on biological, psychological and social health and well-being (World Health Organization, 1946) with more emphasis on dimensions of spirituality, community, ecology and morality (Benson, 1996; Edwards, 2011; Wilber, 2007). Health is viewed as a holistic, coherent, dynamic integrity of various interacting energies, components and contexts (Childre, Martin, Rozman and McCraty, 2016; Wilber, 2000). Holistic health thus essentially includes all these energetic processes, with their diverse arrays of vibratory activity corresponding to dynamic, organ systems and correlated environmental resonant frequencies, all of which are orchestrated through the heart (Bohm, 1993; Childre *et al.*, 2016). In practical terms, to heal means to make whole, to restore to health, integrity and/or oneness that which was ill, broken and/or fractured, and synchronize those diverse, vibratory, energies and rhythms, so immediately evident in heart beats and breath cycles. This implies an ongoing, energetic transformation process of healing moments, events, or movements towards perfect health in all vertical dimensions: physical, mental, spiritual, ecological and cosmological; and along all horizontal dimensions: individual, interpersonal, familial, communal and social. Holistic, integral, global and ecological perspectives include involving and evolving, ascending and descending,

converging and diverging transformations from unity to diversity and vice versa (Wilber, 2000). In everyday healing, various studies overwhelmingly endorse the value of heart focussed breathing, while cultivating positive emotion from the heart area (Childre *et al.*, 2016).

THE CONSCIOUS HEART

Studies in psychoneuroimmunology are increasingly providing evidence for what sages, yogis and divine healers have intuited for millennia; the effectiveness of heart centred consciousness and intentionality. Consciousness appears to function as a vast information network linking physical, mental and spiritual realms, as it oscillates in feedback and feedforward spirals among levels traditionally referred to as matter, body, mind, soul and spirit (Chopra and Simon, 2004; Wilber, 2000). Emotions form one connecting pattern. For example, emotional currents are fuelled by atmospheric negative ions, cardiorespiratory activity and contemplative prayer. From a neuropsychological perspective, consciousness particularly includes respiration, blood pressure, heart beat, medullary reticular activating system, thalamus, hypothalamus, limbic system, cerebral cortex and prefrontal lobes for recycling and/or action via sensory-motor region, parietal lobe and basal ganglia (Childre *et al.*, 2016).

African consciousness has always recognized that we are one undivided reality (Bynum, 1999; Myers, 1993; Ngubane, 1977). In Zulu this Oneness (*ubunje*) includes void (*ubuze*), silence or emptiness (*ukuthula*), original One (*uMvelinqangi*), ancestors (*amadlozi*), plants, animals, people, huts, kraals and everything else. Our humanity (*ubuntu*) reflects that communal humanization and socialization process whereby we become people through our relationship with others (*umuntu umuntu ngabantu*). Our diversity reflects our interrelatedness (*ubunhlobonhlobo*). Nowhere is this more obvious than in ancestral consciousness, where knowledge of that integrated body of living-dead, spiritual community continues to nourish living descendants with communal spirituality. This ultimate non-duality has come to be described by Huxley, Wilber and others as a perennial philosophy or psychology, reflecting a spectrum of consciousness (Edwards, 2011; Huxley, 1958; Wilber, 2000).

Ancestral consciousness forms the essence of most spiritual and/or religious traditions. In Zulu culture, the intimate relationship between the living and the dead is revealed through the importance attached to the concepts of *umphefumulo* (soul), the shadow (*isithunzi*) and conscience (*isazela*). The term *uMoya* (Spirit) is typically used to characterize the universal yet unique, indigenous origins of spiritual healing practised in Africa. Indigenous views on survival, life and health are inextricably related in the emphasis on ensuring proper relationships with the community of ancestors, Creator and/or God. People work at this relationship through ceremonial and ritual gatherings to prevent illness and promote health. The term *umsebenzi* connotes many meanings including work, love, ritual, and ceremonial gathering. Such gatherings generally constitute communal, spiritual labours of love in order to appropriately remember revered

ones, as well as facilitate their provision of spiritual protection and social support for the collective (Edwards, 2011).

Other indigenous knowledge systems have similar beliefs and practices. The Vedanta system also advocates union with the divine. Yoga postulates that life-energy flows up and down the spine. The *chakras* are associated with particular anatomical locations of the spine and brain, plexuses of the nervous, endocrine and other human functional systems, as well as colours, sounds, patterns and symbols (Judith, 2004). As Wilber (2009) notes, the significant point is not the location of the chakras but various modes of consciousness that take subtle energetic regions as appropriate outlets, when greater consciousness becomes liberated from lower, limited and bounded modes of energetic awareness. As central point, the heart chakra (*anahata*) expresses unconditional love for spirit, consciousness and all creation (Judith, 2004). Similar recognition is given to the central, balancing and harmonising function of heart consciousness in other spiritual traditions. Taoist chi-gung emphasizes subtle consciousness/breath/energy exercises in relation to the central (heart) *tan tien*. The Buddhist heart sutra regards ultimate enlightenment as the union of emptiness and form, realized through loving kindness meditation and action (Reid, 1998). Judaic and Kabbalah energy spheres (*sefirot*) pivot on heart (*tiffer et*) beauty, balance and harmony (Childre and Martin, 2000). In Christian Hysteric traditions, as well as Islamic Sufi traditions, the Prayer of the Heart involves heart focussed, continuous repetition of a phrase, or name of a Deity (Louchakova, 2007a, 2007b; Louchakova-Schwartz, 2013). Centring prayer has recently been popularized by Keating (1997). Institute of HeartMath (2014) research has furthered understanding of the heart's intrinsic nervous system and extensive electromagnetic, bio-physical, hormonal, and neurochemical connections. It seems that the human heart, in all its interior, exterior, breadth, depth and height, is at last receiving due recognition as focal point of consciousness and spirituality.

THE SPIRITUAL HEART

As a transpersonal image for meditation and moral actions, the "spiritual heart" should be interpreted as including and transcending all other heart functions; physical, emotional, energetic, mental, psychological etc. In addition to all its usual connotations, ranging from observable breath through ethereal soul to ineffable spirit, the term "spiritual" also honours the above mentioned, intricately interconnected, neuropsychology in all local and non-local effects. The intuitive gestalt, as well as preverbal, felt sense of the physical, energetic heart is apprehended in early phases of meditation, providing a source of, or springboard for, the basic goal of all such meditative traditions, general ethical behaviour and specific moral actions.

St Mark's Gospel (12: 28-31) is particularly action orientated with regard to the explicit communication to: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" and to: "Love your neighbour as yourself." In this context, it is important to distinguish between

physical heart, energetic heart and causal or spiritual heart centres for immanent and transcendent consciousness (Wilber, 2000). Judith (2004) has defined soul as the individual expression of spirit and spirit as the universal expression of soul. Reid (1998) opines that all spiritual healing traditions, African, Eastern and Western, converge on two basic beliefs. Firstly, the energy, will and/or intention, that created the universe and all life, is guided by a set of primordial principles, often called wisdom or truth, that transcend all cultural definitions. Secondly, the universal energy of creation is motivated and accompanied by that compassionate empathy for life called love. Reid (1998) opines further that the three inseparable virtues or forces of the universe, i.e. wisdom, love and power, require constant balance and harmony. Power without wisdom is destructive, power without love is cold, love without power is impotent, wisdom without power is useless. In isiZulu, we speak of *uNkulunkulu*, *uthando* and *amandla*.

Myers (1993) has articulated fundamental philosophical assumptions of ancient African healing. Everything is spirit manifested, where 'spirit' is known in extra-sensory fashion via energy/consciousness/God and an extended self-concept which, includes ancestors, the yet unborn, all of nature and community. Spiritual healing logic embraces polarities yielding "both/and" conclusions, with axiology and 'ntu'ology' respectively emphasizing the value and interrelationships of communal, human, spiritual networks. This is an essentially holistic worldview that has become increasingly valued and recognized in modern forms of healing, which take into account the influence of relativity and quantum theories, the uncertainty principle and a holographic universe with dissipative structures. This implies a positive view of illness as a necessary re-ordering of a system grown increasingly coherent and complex, with greater instability and potential for novel restructuring interactions, including perfect health through the harmonization of all forms of energy (Chopra and Simon, 2004).

Intuition forms a core component of spiritual healing. Ancestral consciousness is experienced by African Zulu *isangoma* (*ukubhubhula kwedlozi*) in intuition (*umbilini*) and divine healing (*vumissa/ukwelapa*). Patanjali's' forth limb of yoga, *pranayama*, is experienced as focussing postural *asanas* and subtle energy system to prepare the yogi for higher stages of meditation (*dharana*, *dhyana*) culminating in Unity Consciousness (Samadhi). In yoga and chi-gung, breath is recognized as the bridge between mind and body, conscious and unconscious, interior and exterior, which, used consciously, acts as a second heart, driving subtle energy via the diaphragm, with its action of resonating with heart rhythms in such practices as kundalini and the microcirculation of the light respectively (Reid, 1998). In Buddhism, the ultimate union between emptiness and form in the heart sutra may be accomplished through focussed heart breath meditation. Healing through prevention of suffering and promotion of compassion and love are specifically pursued in Buddhist tong glen and Bhakti Yoga. Christian Hesychists and Sufi dervishes adopt similar prayers of the heart and related practices (Louchakova, 2007a, 2007b, Louchakova-Schwartz, 2013). HeartMath theory postulates cardio-respiratory, resonant phase-locking, producing a dynamic,

rhythmic Morse or genetic code type information system radiating personal, social and global coherence.

THE COMMUNAL HEART

The communal heart is strikingly apparent in San or *!Kung* healing groups, who achieve healing through rhythmic drumming, dancing and transcendent consciousness. Healing intuition is experienced by healers in the form of a lower abdominal “gut feeling” called *gebese*, which is critical to the experience of *!kia* as healers unwind in the dance, open themselves (*hxabe*) and pull the sickness out (*twe*) of community members (Katz, 1982). This *gebese* experience is similar to that described as *umbilini* by Nguni people and *kundalini* amongst some yogic practitioners (Khalsa, Newberg, Radha, Wilber and Selby, 2009). San healers also describe an experience known as *kowhedili*, which refers to an aspect of *!kia* where there is much pain experienced as they expel sickness from themselves (Katz, 1982). These deep transpersonal connections are inextricably related to the drumming sound of energy (*n/um*) and altered consciousness (*!kia*) in a mutually facilitative pattern of healing, which thus becomes a shared resource for all members of the community.

Originally, an African Nguni term, *ubuntu* has become an international philosophical concept and fundamental method of promoting social coherence and health (Edwards, 2011). The demise of formal Apartheid heralded South Africa’s transformation from political polecat to political showcase. The slogan “we are one” (*simunye*) conveyed a timeless realization of the unity (*ubunye*) that can result from collaborative action. Despite ongoing political struggles, violence, illness, corruption and crime, transformation continues in the experience of new generations of people growing up together from childhood in freedom. Other African language equivalents are *Botho* in Sesotho and *Hunhu* in Shona. All connote interconnected, heart felt, sense of community and realization that meaning in life is only possible through human relations and quality dialogue. Through its emphasis on essential humanity and human essentials, *ubuntu* is thus concerned with fundamental structures of being human, without which humanity would not survive in its present form, that is the giving, receiving and sharing of human care, support, companionship and healing. This is a foundational theme for all the caring, helping professions such as nursing, medicine, psychology, social work and theology (Edwards, 2011).

In contemporary *Nguni* culture, the collective responsibility for harmonization through *ubuntu* includes receiving intuition via dreams and/or visions from the ancestors, who form a living dead, spiritual community (*abangasekho*). Ancestors are also referred to as shades (*izithutha*) or conduits that connect human beings in general to God and/or Godhead. *uNkulunkulu*, literally translated means greatest of the great (*Mkhulu Mkhulu*) whose Greatness is reflected in omni-presence, omnipotence and omniscience. Divine healers typically experience their ancestral call through dreams, which continue to inform healers throughout their spiritual conversion (*ukuthwasa*) process and subsequent

personal and communal healing (Edwards, 2011). The SHISO heart breath based healing method was mostly based on indigenous healing practices of divine healers (*izangoma*) and African Indigenous Church (AIC) faith healers (*abathandazi*).

Easter holds special significance for all Christians as marking the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For South Africans, Easter is a special time indeed as the vast majority of the population belong to some form of AIC (Edwards, 2011). AICs deserve special mention for their role as buffer in preventing violent civil war between warring political groups during and after the Apartheid struggles. AICs provided continued care for many Truth and Reconciliation sufferers and continue to promote communal spirituality and practical public health in the form of food, money, surrogate family and work to anyone who asks for help. AIC meetings can be found at any time throughout Africa. In their bright and symbolically coloured clothing, groups gather wherever convenient, at the river or the mountain, near the sea, at a vacant plot in town or at the bus stop. Spiritual energy (*uMoya*) is invoked through bible reading, prayer and singing in a healing circle, a religious ceremony which includes rituals, music, drama and dance and everyday practice of *ubuntu* (Edwards, 2011).

THE ENERGETIC HEART

Ancient Egyptian views on healing were based on the vision of a harmoniously interrelated universe suffused with the energies of heaven and earth. The sun god *Ra* radiated cosmic forces of light on microcosmic humanity, whose ultimate purpose in life was to become enlightened, through opening to the light, then channelling, distributing and merging this light with earth energy, which was symbolised in the form of a rearing serpent. Successful energy channelling was depicted in Egyptian paintings and sculpture as a snake rising from the forehead of enlightened persons. Consequently, the medical profession adopted the Caduceus, which includes two entwined serpents, as healing symbol. The vital energies of heaven and earth were believed to merge in a vital human, spiritual, energy body called *ka*. The aim of the Egyptian Mystery System, some five thousand years ago, was to educate and to enlighten humanity with regard to such beliefs and practices. Healers recognised cycles of the sun, seasons, especially those related to the flooding of the Nile, and other rhythms of life, music and movement (Myers, 1993).

For millennia, indigenous healers in Africa, India, China and other areas of planet earth have practised various forms of heart breath energetic healing. Still sitting and moving forms of co-ordinated behaviour provide the foundation for all forms of healing and transcendence as exemplified in alpha conditioning, bio-feedback, transcendental meditation, *!Kung* healing dance and *Tai chi* (Edwards, 2011; Reid, 1998). Heart felt experiences, that have been bodily re-experienced as anchors, provide a phenomenological foundation for various forms of imagery, light, sound, colour, touch and movement used in counselling, psychotherapy, illness prevention, health promotion and various other forms of healing (Ivey,

D'Andrea, Ivey and Simek-Morgan, 2002). A central thread running through all traditions, ancient and contemporary, is healing through the coherent energy of love.

Along with its practical value in preventing illness and promoting various forms of health care, popular in the global village inhabiting contemporary planet earth, the conscious use of energy in healing also has the theoretical potential to integrate common components of health care (Katz, 1982; Reid, 1998). This includes a variety of ancient and modern healing practices, using freely accessible transpersonal energy, which is given various names in traditional contexts, e.g. *n/um* (San), *prana* (Hindu) and *tao* (China). Contemporary integral scientific views resonate with the phenomenological insights of the ancient sages. For example, Wilber's (2000), integral theory includes a dynamic systemic approach, which embraces concepts of holism, which refer to relatively autonomous whole/parts or wholes that are part of other wholes, all defined by a "logic of coherence" or the coherent pattern they display. The dynamic systemic research of McCraty, Atkinson, Tomasino, and Bradley (2009) indicates that, of all the bodily organs, the heart, with its independent, intricate nervous system, generates the most powerful, comprehensive, rhythmic electromagnetic field, whose information patterns establish vast interconnections within and between people and various other environmental energy fields. The analogy is invoked of the orchestra conductor who synchronizes energetic information from nerve impulses, neurotransmitters, hormones, pressure waves and electromagnetic field interactions.

THE COHERENT HEART

The HeartMath Institute, a local indigenous healing initiative founded in California in 1991, has become global in application. The institute has pioneered integral, heart focussed research in neuroscience, cardiology, physiology, biochemistry, bioelectricity, physics and psychology. Research is typically integrative, dynamic and systemic in approach. A central vision and mission is of scientific research to facilitate personal, social and global coherence (Childre *et al.*, 2016).

Coherence is a key concept in HeartMath research. In addition to its usual linguistic usage as in a consistent, intelligible argument, or entity whose parts are related in a logical, orderly way, the term "coherence" has specific meanings in physical science. These include: global coherence where the emergent whole is more than and qualitatively different from the sum of its parts: auto-coherence as a uniform pattern of cyclical behaviour, as in the sine wave; and cross-coherence as, for example, when oscillatory systems in the body, such as respiration and heart rhythms become entrained and oscillate or resonate at the same frequency. From a physiological perspective, the brain, heart and intestines contain biological oscillators known as pacemaker cells, whose rhythms can be altered through conscious intentionality (McCraty *et al.*, 2009). The umbrella concept of coherence refers to a psychophysiological mode that encompasses entrainment,

resonance, and synchronization — distinct but related phenomena, all of which emerge from the harmonious activity and interactions of the body's subsystems. The coherent mode is reflected by a smooth, sine wave-like pattern in the heart rhythms and a narrow-band, high-amplitude peak in the low frequency range of the heart rate variability power spectrum, at a frequency of about 0.1 hertz, which is also the resonant frequency of the planet. In practical healing terms, positive emotions and heart focussed breathing at about 5-7 breath cycles per minute facilitate vast interconnectivity (Childre *et al.*, 2016).

In 2008, the Global Coherence Initiative was launched to promote global health and well-being through heart-focused care. In pursuit of this mission a global network of ultrasensitive magnetic field detectors are being installed strategically around the planet to provide data on relationships involving physical, animal, human, planetary and cosmic ecologies. At present five sites are operational, one of which has been installed at a private game reserve in Zululand (Edwards, 2016). Conceptual and practical implications of this initiative with special reference to global healing can be found on the websites: <http://www.heartmathsouthafrica.co.za> www.Heartmath.org and www.glcoherence.org. Although heart based practices to advance global healing have existed for millennia, it is argued that never before have these been as scientifically grounded as is the case in the Global Coherence Initiative.

CONCLUSION

The heart plays an integral role in life, let alone healing. Thus holistic, integral, healing inevitably implies more than any sum of, or interaction among, healing variables in diverse contexts. This presentation was necessarily limited to indigenous knowledge on the healing heart as centre for consciousness, spirituality, *ubuntu*, energy, coherence, care, compassion and/or love with their related outstanding potentials for global healing. Reflections illuminate an ancient tree of heart based healing, rooted in an undivided world of plants, animals and indigenous healers whose holistic, therapeutic knowledge and intuitions was recognized and sanctioned by their local communities. Branches such as yoga, chigung, kabbalah, meditation, prayer and HeartMath, which use holistic heart focussed techniques, reflect original meanings of healing involving transformations from illness to states of integrated wholeness, health and integrity. Flowers receive continual nourishment from various wisdom, knowledge and/or spiritual traditions. Heart-centred practices for global healing occur in ancestral reverence, Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity and Islam. For example, as mentioned above, Christian traditions have long practised the prayer of the heart as in the Hesychast method of the Jesus prayer, where recitation of the prayer is associated with the physical rhythm of breathing and the heart beat.

This article began with reflection on the effectiveness of the SHISO African breath and heart focussed meditation. In conclusion, reflective practice typically reveals that in heart felt, unity consciousness, everything profoundly intercon-

nects. Love unfolds, forms empty, hearts breathe, individuals and collectives harmonize, fractures heal and apprehended intuitions guide healers as to holistic ways of preventing illness, subverting violence and promoting health. Many spiritual traditions recognize a non-duality or oneness, interlinking the manifest diversity of forms. Global travel, telecommunications and the internet have facilitated the scientific study as well as theoretical and practical integration of such knowledge, wisdom and spiritual traditions. HeartMath scientific studies have provided empirical support for the vital role of the heart in healing and interconnectedness. From an ultimate, spiritual perspective there always already seems to be perfect health from which we humans inevitably stray by virtue of our imperfect humanity. This paradoxically, continuously re-engenders the opposite cycle to regain that state from whence we began, to return home, to rediscover the heart of health and healing. Heart and breath based meditation, prayer and contemplation, and related actions, are time tested, evidence based, healing methods, practice of which typically leads to greater consciousness and love of all sentient beings on planet Earth and the cosmos for the foreseeable future. Consciousness reveals each beat and breath is a link to One who has been called many names: *uNkulunkulu*, God, Brahmin, Tao, Allah, whose divine, healing, rhythmic, heart breath gently whispers: "Please let me lead you to the land of light, love and life."

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