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# The Transformative and Healing Powers of Compassion, Forgiveness, and Wonder

Anna C. Eriksson-Marty  
*Dominican University of California*

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THE TRANSFORMATIVE AND HEALING POWERS OF COMPASSION,  
FORGIVENESS, AND WONDER

A senior project submitted to the faculty of Dominican University of California  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Arts  
in Humanities and Cultural Studies

By  
Anna Eriksson-Marty  
San Rafael, CA  
December 8, 2015

Gay Lynch, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor, Religion and  
Philosophy

Chase Clow, Ph.D.  
Chair, Humanities Division

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### Abstract

Since time immemorial, humankind has struggled to coexist peacefully together. As human beings, we strive on our relationships with each other and, yet, with actions of hatred and prejudice, we seem to consistently destroy those very relationships we value so deeply. Our current society is plagued by fear, which seems to run more rampant now – more than ever – with assistance of our rapidly evolving communication technology. The question must be asked, “How can we end this madness and heal ourselves into a kinder and more fulfilling future?” By providing up-to-date scientific research on the human emotions of compassion, forgiveness, wonder and awe, I will show how the existence and awareness of these emotions can positively impact our current global society and substantially lessen the hold that fear so often has on humanity. I will also provide current examples of existing smaller societies that have adopted this behavioral model and have begun to flourish. Lastly, I will explore some of the teachings from various renowned spiritual leaders who espouse the crucial importance of these emotions in our world today.

### Dedication

I dedicate this paper to the countless people who have shown me true compassion and forgiveness throughout my lifetime. Without these people in my life, I would never have known what it means to truly heal from pain and to learn that love is eternally the strongest force in our world. The unfaltering presence of these people in my life has helped me maintain my faith in the power of love with its inherent sense of awesome wonder. I have been inspired to write this paper because of compassion and forgiveness that have been gifted to me, for these have become my pillars of strength throughout many tumultuous times in my life. I am forever thankful for the opportunity to see firsthand that living a life which does not place prime importance on the immeasurable qualities of compassion and forgiveness, while coevally never losing a sense of wonder, is truly not living life at all.

## Introduction

I don't think that many people would argue that the experience of feeling pure joy is one of the most inspiring emotions we, as humans, can feel. Many times throughout our lives we encounter experiences which feel the opposite of joyful. The human experience of life is filled with less than desirable, and often deeply painful thoughts, feelings and experiences. The key question here is what forces or phenomena exist in our world which help us cope with and overcome these experiences positively? When we are faced with hardship, what helps us to maintain our feelings of appreciation for our spectacular opportunity to live this life and fills us with the strength to overcome life's adversities and helps us to move back towards a state of joy? Even more specifically, "what exactly is it that heals us and transforms us?" Many would use the term "Love" to describe our prime healing motivation in life, but sometimes it is important to even more distinctly break down what it is about the experience of "Love" that can make us feel healed or transformed.

In order to explore this further, we must first talk about what the term "healing" truly means. The word "Heal" in the *Miriam Webster Dictionary* is defined as a transitive or intransitive verb. As a transitive verb, there are three definitions of the word "heal." The first

definition is: “to make sound or whole” or “to restore to health.” The second definition is: “to cause (an undesirable condition) to be overcome” or “to patch up (a breach or division)” and the third definition is: “to restore to original purity or integrity.” As an intransitive verb, the word “heal” is simply defined as: “to return to a sound state.”

All of these definitions are helpful because they show us that healing is a positive force which is “restorative,” that is, it brings us back to wholeness as our starting point which, in essence, has been determined to be our natural state of being. Here, we can see that keeping our state of “wholeness” is what we thrive for and which enables us to perform optimally. Hence, our methods of “keeping wholeness” are very crucial to our quality of life.

Let's take a look at another more detailed and descriptive definition of healing by Lawrence E. Sullivan: “Healing always points toward a renewal of creative powers, toward a condition that is vital, stirring, strong and whole, as befits a creative beginning” (Sullivan 13). Here, Sullivan's definition shows us, in essence, that healing is our beginning and also our end, therefore echoing the “wholeness” quality we see in the first, more literal, definition, but he also gives us a sense that healing is an optimal, creativity-inducing state we inherently strive for in order to feel renewed. In this case it is relatively logical to move towards the conclusion that feeling renewed makes us feel more whole, which (while keeping these two definitions in mind) appears to be our optimal state of being.

I think it is important to conclude here that healing and transformation are prime motivating forces in our lives. So, an important question remains: “What are the specific phenomena in our human lives which help us attain and maintain our essential, renewing, and optimal states of being healed and transformed? In this thesis I explore this question and discuss



how the phenomena of compassion, forgiveness and wonder help to heal and transform us when we encounter hardship in our lives.

## Compassion

One of the concepts that Gandhi promoted throughout his lifetime is the belief that the law of love rules humankind. He was steadfast in his expression that if violence and hate had always ruled our lives we should have become extinct long ago. Thus, humankind can only escape violence through non-violence. In other words, he firmly believed that hatred can only truly be overcome by love.

When one reflects on the teachings of some of the wisest spiritual leaders in our human history - leaders such as the Dalai Lama, Gandhi, and Mother Teresa, to name just a few - certain terms come to mind which describe their ideologies and beliefs. Some of these terms may be the words peace, hope, faith and love. I think there is one term which includes all the previous terms I listed and which particularly exemplifies what many of these leaders espouse to be the key to our success in living in our human society. That term is the word “compassion.”

### Definitions of Compassion

Before we talk about why the existence of compassion is such a large part of human spirituality, let us talk about some of the definitions of compassion. Steve Bein, in his book *Compassion and Moral Guidance*, introduces compassion in terms of how it is used in our

everyday conversations. He states: “Compassion is generally thought of as a recognition or awareness of the existence or suffering in some other being, coupled with the desire to avoid or alleviate that suffering” (1). But this description leaves us with many ethical and philosophical questions about what compassion truly is. One way to summarize all these questions is to state what we all know to be true: that human suffering is unavoidable and that, more often than not, it is only in going through this suffering that transformation and healing can occur.

So, if suffering is unavoidable and necessary, we need to find another definition to describe compassion. In my opinion this may be as simple as looking at the origin of the word itself. In the *Miriam Webster Dictionary* we read that the term "compassion" is derived from Middle English: via Old French from ecclesiastical Latin *compassio(n-)*, and from *compati* ‘suffer with.’ Here the key to understanding compassion more ethically and philosophically is the term “with.” Being “with” someone during their suffering does not involve avoiding, but for many reasons, being with someone in suffering helps them heal much of the time, for the isolation of suffering is a deep wound in itself.

Of course, being with someone is not just a physical act. To me, the act of truly being with someone in suffering requires a true awareness of the other person’s experience of feeling pain. When this awareness is in place, then, I believe, the term compassion can become a desire, an act, and an emotionally moving force that can heal.

Nancy Snow, author of the article “Compassion,” when describing the difference between compassion and pity, echoes this definition of compassion when she states that: “Compassion is a suffering with another that includes an altruistic concern for the other’s good” (qtd in Bein 40). Essentially, Snow’s definition combines the first, somewhat utilitarian and “conversational” definition of compassion by Bein and the meaning I just described that focuses

on being “with” someone in suffering. Snow further explains, “It is not only an awareness of another’s suffering, but also a desire for the alleviation of that suffering” (qtd in Bein 40). A quote from Archbishop Desmond Tutu also brings up this awareness:

When someone is in pain or suffering, we need to sit with that person and seek to enter into his or her pain and agony. Then we can speak with some credibility out of that shared solidarity. If we do not share and enter into pain together, it is like praising fasting when your own stomach is full. (qtd in Shapiro 101)

Now that we have discussed some of the definitions of compassion, let us look at an example of a community coming together and consciously deciding to incorporate the concept of compassion as the main force in their governing structure. This community is St. Louis, Missouri. St. Louis’ goal is to show how compassion's healing and transformative power can be integrated into the way a city governs itself.

### What Does a Compassionate Society Look Like?

Is compassion, with all its limits, our best hope as we try to educate citizens to think well about human relations both inside the nation and across national boundaries? So some thinkers have suggested. I count Euripides among them, and would also include in this category Aristotle, Rousseau, Hume, and Adam Smith. Or is compassion a threat to good political thinking and the foundations of a truly just world community? So the Greek and Roman Stoics thought, and before them Plato, and after them Spinoza and (again) Adam Smith. The enemies of compassion hold that we cannot build a stable and lasting concern for humanity on the basis of such a slippery and uneven motive; impartial motives based on ideas of dignity and respect should take its place. The friends of compassion reply that without building political morality on what we know and on what has deep roots in our childhood attachments, we will be left with a morality that is empty of urgency—a ‘watery’ concern, as Aristotle put it. (qtd in Bein 40)

After exploring the definition of compassion, I believe it is important to discuss, in terms of our search for the proof that compassion is healing, the feasibility and possible positive effects of

living in a compassionate society. Carl Jung believed that a compassionate society would become a reality in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The critical movement he believed would happen would be the result of a transformation of human consciousness from the egotistic “every man for himself attitude to a wholeness brought about by emphasizing on humankind’s ability to be compassionate and applying it towards community. Jung states: “A free society needs a bond of an affective nature, a principle of a kind like ‘*caritas*’, and the Christian love of your neighbor” (Jung 102).

In 1958, the trappist monk, Thomas Merton, had an epiphany while sitting on the corner of Fourth and Muhammad Ali Boulevard in Louisville, Kentucky. It was there that Merton saw the people of downtown Louisville “walking around shining like the sun.” Merton’s vision became a reality officially on 11-11-11. It was on this day that Louisville became the seventh city in the world to formally set its intention on becoming a compassionate city.

Louisville is now at the center of a global compassion reawakening. Among many other efforts, Greg Fischer, the mayor of Louisville, has been at the head of the project entitled “Give a Day” which is a massive volunteer week for the city’s citizens. In 2014, over 144,000 acts of compassion were produced as a result of this project. Mayor Fischer has introduced resolutions to study compassion and to concretely integrate these findings into the Louisville community. Louisville was named The Model Compassionate City by the Charter for Compassion in 2012 and in 2013 has assisted over 30 other cities in committing their efforts towards compassion. In describing a modern community coming together and incorporating the ethic of compassion into their functionality as a society, Louisville’s success is extraordinary.

In the beginning of this section I wrote about the world’s spiritual leaders and how much the quality of compassion has influenced their ideologies. One of those leaders, Gandhi, coined

the term *Sarvodaya* to describe a new social order he envisioned as a response to the mainly capitalist and communist governmental systems which were common in our world during his lifetime. *Sarvodaya* literally means the “welfare of all.”

When talking about the concept of compassionate communities I think it is important to acknowledge Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne, who was profoundly influenced by the teachings of Gandhi. Dr. Ariyaratne founded the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement. Located in Sri Lanka, the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement promotes the concept of self-governance through providing conflict resolution programs to villages. Dr. Ariyaratne first heard the word Sarvodaya while attending a New World Education Fellowship conference in India and, over the years, he has interpreted it as meaning the “awakening of all through sharing.” Dr. Ariyaratne has devoted his life to this cause and has stated: “Whatever the global problems we have, they can be tackled satisfactorily when loving and selfless qualities are nourished and strengthened” (qtd. in Shapiro 90).

So, we have thus seen that the concept of merging compassion into governmental structure has been introduced by varied learned minds throughout history. Whether on a larger, municipal scale, or on a smaller, more personal basis, the efforts of many throughout time have shown that the ethic of compassion is integral to the overall wellness of humanity. It is through these insights and actions that we have been able to witness how the exhibition of goodwill and benevolence, in general, often leads us to an overall happier, healthier and a more functional state of being. It is clear that humanity must be truly kind to itself in order to grow, heal, and thrive.

## The Story of Azim Khamisa

Let us begin with the compelling and inspiring story of Azim Khamisa:

Azim Khamisa was standing in the kitchen of his La Jolla, California, townhouse in his nightshirt when his phone rang. The international investment banker had returned from a business trip to Mexico the night before and was enjoying a relaxing Sunday morning. The words he heard on the call, from a man who said he was a police detective, didn't make any sense: "Your son... shot... dead..."

Azim was sure it was a mistake. His only son, Tariq, was just 20 years old, a good kid and a college student who delivered pizza to earn spending money. Azim hurried the detective off the phone and dialed his son's number, but got no answer. He next called Tariq's fiancée, Jennifer. Crying so hard that she could barely speak, she confirmed the news. The truth suddenly registered throughout Azim's body, and his knees buckled. He fell backward, hitting his head on the refrigerator. As the phone crashed to the floor, he was enveloped by a shattering, all-encompassing pain that he would forever describe as "a nuclear bomb detonating" in his heart.

Soon after, a close friend arrived to comfort him. They sat in a daze at Azim's dining room table. Nearby a picture of a skier on a snowy mountain evoked memories of teaching little Tariq to ski. A detective came and said witnesses reported four teens running from his son's car after what seemed like a botched robbery. Tariq, felled by a single bullet that tore through his heart and lungs, drowned in his own blood. The police were still searching for the suspects.

After the investigator left, Azim's friend shook his head. "I hope they find those bastards and fry them." Azim was silent for a while. Then he said, "I don't feel that way. There were victims at both ends of that gun." When he heard himself say this, the words rang true. He felt as if they came from God. (Bettencourt, "Triumph of the Heart")

Azim Khamisa sadly found himself in a thoroughly nightmarish situation which, unfortunately, made him face one of the ugliest realities in life: the undeniable fact that human beings kill each other. The victims usually leave behind loved ones who feel completely heartbroken from their loss. As humans, we have the power of free will and, therefore, the reality is that we make mistakes in our judgment and in our actions. The world we live in is far from perfect. How do we reconcile this imperfection? How do we heal from tragedy and despair and

transform ourselves back into a state of feeling full of life again? I believe that the experience of forgiveness is a key aspect of how we, as humans, can deal with the consequences, the "imperfectness" of our negative actions and continue to live our lives with, at the very least, a small amount of peace. In the case of Azim Khamisa, we see a man who has just suffered an unimaginable loss which was directly and violently caused by another man. Yet, we also see a man who feels that the perpetrator of this awful act is, in his eyes, a victim also. This is the essence of forgiveness: to somehow allow love and care inside a broken heart. It essentially replaces some of the negative emotions with the force of love so we can heal and continue living a quality and healthful life. To illustrate this notion, let us hear a little more about Azim's experience later in his lifetime after the shock of his son's murder had dissipated slightly:

Azim would eventually apply his business mind to the study of sociology, obsessively poring over the dire statistics of America's street wars. He concluded that Tariq and Tony (his son's murderer) were victims of a cycle of violence for which every American, himself included, was responsible. He resolved to change the status quo. He also sensed that if he didn't reach out to the killer's family and forgive them—maybe even invite them to join his crusade—he'd be a victim of his anguish forever. (Bettencourt, "Triumph of the Heart")

In response to his son's murder Azim decided to study sociology. This brought him even further down his path of forgiveness. Azim later formed a nonprofit group, called the Tariq Khamisa Foundation which is dedicated to ending youth violence. Khamisa asked the grandfather of his son's murderer to join him and today the foundation teaches the virtues of nonviolence to young people nationwide and raises \$1.5 million annually for educational, mentoring, and community-service programs.

Forgiveness is such a huge part of love because when an act of transgression is committed against us we will never be able to fully heal and be open to love unless we forgive. Azim recognized this important fact from the very beginning of this tragic story. It is in our own

best interest and our interest as part of the collective human experience to participate in acts of forgiveness so life can go on and pain does not end our lives.

#### Dr. Fred Luskin and the HOPE Projects

Further, any discussion of forgiveness must include the work of Dr. Fred Luskin. Dr. Fred Luskin is a foremost authority on the subject of forgiveness. He is the Director of the Stanford University Forgiveness Projects, a senior consultant in health promotion at Stanford University, and a professor at the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology. Dr. Luskin's work in forgiveness training with many different groups of people has illustrated that forgiveness as a conscious action changes the feelings of weakness we feel in the midst of tragedy and transforms them into feelings of strength. Through this research he has been able to scientifically document the beneficial aspects of forgiveness and how essential they are to the healing process. His studies reveal:

- People who are forgiving report fewer health problems.
- Forgiveness leads to less stress.
- Forgiveness leads to fewer physical symptoms of stress.
- Failure to forgive may be more important to than hostility as a risk factor for heart disease.
- People who blame each other for their troubles have higher incidences of illnesses such as cardiovascular disease and cancers.



- People who imagine not forgiving someone show negative changes in blood pressure, muscle tension and immune response.
- People who imagine forgiving their offender note immediate improvement in their cardiovascular, muscular and nervous systems.
- Even people with devastating losses can learn to forgive and feel better psychologically and emotionally. (Luskin Introduction)

The Northern Ireland HOPE Projects, conducted by Dr. Fred Luskin and his research partner Reverend Byron Bland, are two research projects that focus on the topic of forgiveness. In these studies, Dr. Luskin and Reverend Bland worked with the families of murder victims who had been killed in the midst of the thirty years of violence between the Catholic and Protestant people of Northern Ireland. In this study Dr. Luskin utilized a forgiveness training approach he had taught in the Stanford Forgiveness Project. This approach mainly revolves around the concept that forgiveness is a choice we can always make that is more healthful and beneficial than continuing on in anger and sadness. The exercises he teaches are aimed at proving this very concept. In terms of working with the family members of the murder victims in Northern Ireland, Dr. Luskin and Reverend Bland echoed these sentiments while focusing specifically on the scientifically measurable improvements in well-being of the participants who learned and practiced their forgiveness techniques. At the end of the training session a statistically significant increase was seen in the participants' experience of physical vitality and well-being, thus showing that healing through forgiveness is an essential truth.

Through the story of Azim Khamisa and the research of Dr. Luskin we can begin to see that the ability to truly forgive and the action of transforming our despair into inspiration and

progress are extremely important processes in the journey towards healing. Azim's decision to study sociology as a response to his son's murder played a primary role in his path of forgiveness. With the HOPE projects, Dr. Fred Luskin coordinated with Reverend Bland to offer and provide much needed solace to grieving families and also supplied a framework for healing which can hopefully be integrated into other divided and bitter societies. Azim Khamisa's story and Dr. Luskin's studies are both shining examples of how the process of forgiving truly strengthens us in mind, body and soul, and just how powerfully transformative, miraculous, and truly healing this process can be.

### Wonder

"I should ask that the [good fairy's] gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life" Rachel Carson (qtd in Fuller 108).

When we feel the emotion of compassion, where does this emotion originate from? Is there a force that stirs us to feel compassion? In searching for the deep, true origin of our experience of compassion, I think it is vital to talk about the experience and emotion of wonder. As Robert Fuller states: "Wonder lures us beyond self-centered perspectives of the world and elicits our affective capacity for mutuality, empathy, and care. Perhaps more than any other emotional experience, wonder draws us into sustained rapport with - and action on behalf of - the wider environment" (101)

The subject of wonder has not been a widely studied topic in contemporary western society. Many scholars of our time have yet to decide if wonder should be described as an

emotion or as an experience. Throughout history, however, there have been many cultures, and a number of knowledgeable individuals that have considered wonder to be one of humanity's prime emotions. For example, Hindu philosophers included wonder as one of their nine basic emotions, the others being: sexual passion, amusement, sorrow, anger, fear, perseverance, disgust, and serenity. Moreover, seventeenth century philosopher Rene Descartes postulated that wonder is one of the six primary human emotions (along with love, hatred, desire, joy, and sadness). Further essayist and poet D. H. Lawrence tells us we have a sixth sense – the sense of wonder. In terms of wonder's relationship with the emotion and experience of compassion, it is essential to focus our attention on what exactly some definitions of wonder are.

#### What is this Emotion of Wonder? Definitions of Wonder

The phenomenon of wonder has been a subject of contemplation throughout human history. Many great minds from various cultures throughout the world have pondered what exactly a feeling of wonder is. Many believe that wonder is a prime motivational force in human life. Greek philosopher Aristotle echoed this sentiment when he expressed that it was through the emotion of wonder that humanity first began to seek and love wisdom. Echoing wonder as a beckoning experience, environmentalist Rachel Carson also maintained that wonder awakens a passion for: “Some universal truth that lies just beyond our grasp...[a meaning that] haunts and ever eludes us, and in its very pursuit we approach the ultimate mystery of Life itself” (Fuller 109). American astronaut Neil Armstrong's thoughts also paralleled these definitions when, in 1969 at a meeting of the two houses of Congress, he stated that he sees the emotion of wonder as the basis of our desire to understand.

However, other great thinkers throughout time have seen wonder as more of a “utilitarian or instrumentalist” emotion. For example, developmental psychologist Jean Piaget studied how wonder, surprise and curiosity played functional roles in the development of children’s cognitive learning. Robert Fuller compared this concept of curiosity propelling children to his own contemplations on the subject of wonder. He states:

“Just as curiosity propels children to sustain their inquiries into the workings of physical reality, wonder is a prime motivational force in the emergence of higher order conceptions of existence. Wonder disrupts equilibrium and prompts us to accommodate to the most general order of thinking possible – an order from which we might contemplate the intrinsic cause or intentionality of things.” (88)

Further, famed biologist Richard Dawkins was interested in the subject of wonder and how, to him, it served the functional purpose of serving as a response to the unexpected, and how it helps us cognitively process what happens in our world. Additionally, in terms of a somewhat utilitarian, mostly functional definition of wonder, Albert Einstein, in his book *Living Philosophies*, essentially tells us that he feels that our eyes are closed when we can no longer experience the emotion of wonder.

Lastly, many view the experience of wonder in relation to the experience of being religious. Jewish theologian Abraham Heschel, whose fascination with the radical "amazement" that humans experience in the presence of the Divine, believed that wonder (as opposed to the somewhat negative emotion of doubt) is the basis knowledge itself. Furthermore, anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who asserted that the creation and existence of culture defines a given human society, believed that religion is a cultural system which affects the moods and motivations in humankind and therefore the emotion of wonder is intimately connected with religion (Fuller 65). The philosopher and psychologist William James was very interested in the relationship between religion and wonder. He, in fact, claimed that the existence of spirituality is the

connection between feeling wonder and being religious (Fuller 14). Further, he noted that the experience of wonder is different for everyone. Thus, James' explorations of the subject of spirituality show that wonder in and of itself does not have to be a purely religious experience.

Now that we have seen how various visionaries have defined wonder, let us examine how the experience of wonder can be healing. I think the best way to show this is to give an example of this process. Medical Doctor Rachel Naomi Remen has worked for over twenty years with people who are in various stages of illness. She is also a specialist in the field of mind-body health, and an esteemed author who has a profound understanding of the healing process. Much like the concept of wonder, Remen refers to what I believe is a parallel term to wonder – namely the term “mystery” – as a motivating and transformative force that can lead to healing. In Remen's words: “Healing is not a matter of mechanism; it is a work of spirit. At the very heart of spirit is mystery. Mystery is larger than the mind, it challenges the mind's dominion. Mystery is witnessed but never understood” (qtd. in Shapiro 152). I believe that Remen's statement endorses the concept that living in a state of wonder, that is, being aware of the mystery of life, is inherently healing in and of itself. She further states:

A human being is not a mechanism, but an opportunity for the Infinite to manifest. The mind's need for mastery can stifle our sense of mystery, can blind us to the mystery around us, and in doing so, alienate us from the true direction of our healing. (qtd. in Shapiro 159)

Even though Remen does not use the exact term “wonder,” I believe it is safe to conclude that we are speaking of the same subject here. When we are truly existing in a state of wonder we are essentially opening up our mind's closed doors and letting our state of health become limitless. This is inarguably a positive and healthy way of living our lives. Additionally, in terms

of finding healing, Remen's words exemplify how cultivating the essence of mystery and wonder in life can be deeply therapeutic and beneficial to us all.

In closing, Rachel Carson, who fearlessly championed for our environment and the sense of awe and inspiration that we can feel in our natural surroundings, suffered tremendously through years of illness and disease; yet, she never faltered in her estimation of wonder as a healing power. In her article entitled "Help Your Child Wonder" Carson concluded: "Those who contemplate the beauty of the Earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts" (Carson, "How to Help Your Child Wonder").

### Conclusion

In today's world, the existence of terrorism (which is a manipulation method to control others through inducing fear of violence) has become a sadly predominant mode of reaction to human conflict. Modern society is in dire need of healing from this sickness. I view terrorism as a behavior based on manipulating humanity's insecurities about our true nature as humans. Terrorism plants the notion that our inherent mode of interaction when facing fear is to hurt each other. Many of the interactions we have with each other on a global scale are based in this fear. Modern society is in dire need of healing from the beyond tragic effects of this phenomenon. Our collective human heart has become susceptible to this "illness" which has become metaphorically contagious.

Underneath all of this conflict, I believe there is a healing energy that, despite all the outside negative interference, drives us toward caring about and for humanity. This can happen

on an intimate, personal level or on a larger, collectively based level. It is the same energy no matter what scale we use, because, for some reason, it is undeniable in every circumstance that this feeling feels right to us; it centers us and makes us feel whole. This force indeed heals us.

Acts of compassion, forgiveness and living in a state of wonder miraculously take the fear out of our lives and help us to feel healed and reassured that humankind's truest intention is not to hurt itself, but to heal itself. In this thesis I have depicted how caring about and consistently forgiving each other, while simultaneously keeping our minds open in wonderment, can lead us to feeling we are integrated, and healed.

We are constantly facing situations which challenge our faith in love, and in love's inherent wisdom and guidance. But losing this faith is what destroys our humanity. Keeping this faith is what strengthens it. Acts of compassion and forgiveness strengthen this faith even more. And living our lives in awe of this faith is what will forever maintain the integrity of humanity. I do not think it is purely coincidence that the words "live" and "love" are so similar, for it has become clear that both must depend on each other in order for our humanity to survive.





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