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Book Review

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ROBERT D. ROMANYSHYN,

The Wounded Researcher: Research with Soul in Mind.

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Depth psychology tells us that the unconscious surrounds us. It infuses what we think we know with secrets and mysteries. Whether it is goal of our research, it is always the secret companion of it. This psyche or soul forbids us the ubiquitous fantasy of modernity, that the researcher is 'separate' or 'objective' with regard to his or her material. There is a soul in academic research and, as Robert Romanyshyn's wonderful book demonstrates, there is a soul of research.

Some books are masterpieces in that they are a culmination of years of painstaking work; work that is focused and rational as the academy prefers, yet crucially conjoined with work on the self through the imagination. *The Wounded Researcher* is such a book. Its expression, delicate, welcoming of the soul, allowing it to make alliances with philosophy and psychology, *is* the research it communicates. This is the book that Jungian researchers have been waiting for. It should be compulsory reading for all

students of depth psychology. My own research will never be the same after reading it. More importantly, I believe that this is the book that the academy needs. For modernity has perfected research without soul. And in its perfection, as Jung noted, produces perfect weapons, perfect plastic environments, perfect thinking that is withering for lack of soul. We need, as Romanyshyn tells us, research as re-search, a searching again for something that has already called to us, yet we did not hear, or we forgot. Just as the soul, however neglected, embraces all, so too does the whole of the twenty-first century academy need to learn the lessons of *The Wounded Researcher*, in order to *be* whole.

The book delves into the key issues of scholarly research that bring us to soul across the spectrum of the disciplines. These are principally: language and soul, poetics of research process, Orpheus and the myth of research, re-search as vocation, the transference field with research, hermeneutics and alchemical hermeneutics, how to invite soul into writing research, soul and ethical research. In the first place, the question of language is the point, a point that pierces and wounds the researcher as it seeks and fails to encompass soul. Since no rational language can express the fullness of psyche, give voice to all its inhabitants, the researcher must be content to signal the 'gap' between what can be written and what is. This failure to be the conquering hero of the quest for scholarly knowledge is the indicative wound of re-search with soul in mind. As Romanyshyn puts it:

Situated in the gap between consciousness and the unconscious, we live between the two worlds of collective conscious values, opinions, and prejudices and the values of the collective unconscious. To identify with either one of them is to forfeit the provisional character of our knowing.
(26/7)

Suffering the soul, in both senses, brings the researcher into the way of Orpheus. Re-search because already claimed by love of Euridice, Orpheus alerts us to the song

haunting the work. Losing what we love, Euridice/intimate connection to the work, we descend into a kind of underworld depression. This descent teaches us that we cannot possess what we love. We have to lose Euridice/the work again lest the re-search dwindle into an ego-trip. *The Wounded Researcher* is so successful and has such integrity because Romanyshyn is absolutely clear on the difference between research and therapy. While therapy seeks out the healing and playful qualities of the soul for the sake of the patient, re-search must be a process of self-immersion and detaching, with an emphasis on the detaching - for here it is the work that must live. Indeed the Orphic researcher finds dismemberment, in the cause of the song of the ensouled work going free.

Vocation is another way of summoning the depths into re-search. For our lives have collectivities of conscious and unconscious stories from ancestors and imaginal figures. For them we find ourselves 'called' into the work. They provide a space where the ontological character of psychic existence as images provides an epistemology of metaphor. This is now a transference field in which imagination is a valid form of knowledge. Moreover, the transference can be sculpted into a ritual space, just as empirical research uses experiment to do the same. Another way of working with these ritual planes of the soul is to enact dialogues with the imaginal figures. Here we learn to listen to the 'other's' point of view in the work and decenter the ego. By suspending our rational prejudices of modernity, we make a space for the imaginal others to do their work in the work. Romanyshyn details four levels of transference field: personal, cultural-historical, collective-archetypal and eco-cosmological.

Hermeneutics is an important part of this 'poetics of research' process. Romanyshyn uses the term 'poetics of research' extremely carefully. It illuminates all he

does. 'Poetics' means here the patient attention to the 'gap' between what consciousness can achieve and what the soul can inspire. It is clearly, from the context of *The Wounded Researcher*, a creative attention in embracing love, metaphor, imaginal dialogue.

However, I think there is a rightful insistence upon the difference between poetics of research and that of poetry in the need for creativity to serve the scholarship. This poetics is not designed to find its own way to embody itself as art. The difference is more a matter of distinction than separation between the two activities. Where does the weight and mystery of the other lie?

With hermeneutics, the book shows that Hermes is the mythological figure of the 'gap' in language; one who can translate the destiny of the work. Hermeneutics is about the interpretation of symbolic texts, not necessarily written. Given that hermeneutical interpretation involves the reader who bring his/her prior understanding to be transformed, it provides an endless circle of interpretation as the reader's continual involvement constitutes a co-creation of reality. Alchemical hermeneutics differs in invoking the unconscious of the reader and the work into the interpretative process. The hermeneutic circle becomes a spiral. In particular, the stress on alchemical hermeneutics emphasizes presence as that which precedes meaning. Summoned by the work, the researcher learns to speak out of being present to the work and all those on whose behalf it is being done.

So how is it possible to write re-search with soul in mind? Evidently, it is not possible to prescribe the form and key words! The poetics of research, of coping with the 'gap' is in the writing as well as the doing. Fortunately for us, *The Wounded Researcher* offers four modes or moods: creative repetition, elegiac writing, cultivating a metaphoric

sensibility, and Giving Voice and Body to the Work. These descriptions are both fascinating and very rich. They provide material for all kinds of research that is hospitable to the soul. Creative repetition and elegiac writing bring both the romance and falling in love with the work, and then its wounding, its losses, into the writing (I am reminded upon how I insisted on 'romance' being the theme of my first book, and the subject of the final sentence). Romanyshyn spends most time on metaphor in showing how metaphor makes something passionately creative of the poetics of gap. Finally, the body and voice bring the soul's embodiment into the writing of re-search.

The Wounded Researcher is a masterpiece resulting from years of research and practising research. I cannot possibly even sketch its full contents in this brief review. For example, I have not mentioned the invaluable examples from student work that will be enormously helpful to future students reading this book. Nor have I referred to the immensely scholarly philosophical underpinning to the argument here. Rather I have simply picked out what was most arresting for me. It is a rare book that changes a field. It is an almost inconceivably rare one that changes research practice. In our era of incoherent mass violence and destruction of the ecology that sustains all life, we need to do both. *The Wounded Researcher* is, in the last analysis, an important book because it is an attempt to save our soul by showing that knowledge needs also to be love of the ensouled world.