

The Psychic Defense

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I want to introduce my subject by telling you about the case of a client who came to me. Picture an independent young woman who suddenly begins to have fainting spells. As a result, she cannot work or drive. Although she is an excellent swimmer, she cannot swim; even in waist-deep water, she is likely to faint and end up floating facedown in the water. Medical tests detect no problem. Her EEG and EKG are normal; she is not epileptic.

I bring this young woman into deep relaxation and, using particular techniques, I help her approach a state where she can access information about her condition. Then I ask her to tell me what is happening. She describes that she sees a man, the father of a friend. This is a man who had recently died. She tells me that he had had sort of a crush on her. She sees that at times he suddenly pulls her out of her physical body, causing her to faint.

After giving the woman some instructions for creating a psychic defense against his unwanted presence, I speak to this man that she is experiencing. I say, "Do you know you are dead?"

The young woman reports that he says, "What do you mean? I am alive!"

I ask him to remember when he died. After a few moments, he is apparently able to recall his death. Then I ask, "Do you know you are harming this woman?"

"No I am not! I just love her."

"But you are harming her, threatening her life, by causing her to faint."

After some further conversation, the man agrees to leave the young woman and goes "across" with a being of light. Within a few days the fainting spells cease, and the young woman is able to resume her life.

Here we have a scientific problem: there is no proof of an afterlife, but a therapeutic strategy that involves the soul of a dead person is effective in relieving a condition that standard treatments cannot resolve. On the other hand, many religions and traditions describe the phenomenon of psychic attack. Perhaps we should take seriously the possibility that these occurrences are on some level real. In the end, it is not as important to argue about *what kind* of reality is represented by such processes as it is to find ways to assist those who suffer them. In any case, the possibil-

ity of psychic attack is something we cannot directly test for empirically due to ethical constraints (we would have to consider the fact that if the attacks were effective, they would be damaging to the subjects). However, parapsychology research suggests it is not only possible to influence thoughts at a distance (Radin, 1997; Dalton, 1997; Bem & Honorton, 1994), but also possible to influence biological systems at a distance (Nelson, Bradish, Jahn & Dunne 1994; Nelson, Jahn, Dunne, Dobyms & Bradish, 1997; Ostrander & Schroeder, 1997; Schlitz & Braud, 1997).

I myself had to learn a lot about psychic attacks. From my adolescence onward, I underwent many of them over a period of 20 years. Gradually I came to understand how these episodes were constructed and how to deal with them. In my experience there are three sources of such attacks: 1) the presences of those who have died, as illustrated by the previous story, 2) other entities, and 3) living persons.

Many teachers picture the wonders of conscious expansion, the glories of penetrating other realms. This is all true: it is nice to learn a spiritual path, to have meaning in your life, to expand. But if the folktales speak truly, then there are some dangers in these realms—even for those who are not on a path. These dangers include more than the souls of the deceased.

Some teachers naively tell you that you should meditate a lot. If you follow their advice, it may happen that you end up in some trouble. You have your moments of light, but then you hit anxiety. You go to the teacher for help, and he or she tells you it is only coming from inside you—so, meditate more. If you follow this advice, there is at least some chance that you may experience a serious breakdown.

What such teachers say is partially true: you are dealing with your inner demons. But all religious traditions talk about outer demons as well. In the end, I believe they are right—even if you do not speak about "demons," but only about aggressive "entities." For the psychologist who encounters these phenomena, it is necessary to understand such attacks. They are a real feature of the spiritual dimension of human life, and those who suffer from them need and deserve skilled assistance. Until we have more scientific-sounding words to talk about this dynamic, it will be necessary

to use traditional terms—at the risk of speaking in language associated with medieval superstition.

Unfortunately I have found very few authors dealing with the matter of psychic attacks in a somewhat realistic way (Bailey, 1930; Fortune, 2001). If we assume there is some kind of real phenomenon behind such reports, what kind of a model can we use to understand outer “demons?” “Inner demons,” of course, are our own unfinished business—unwholesome fears, greeds and ambitions. Left unchecked, these unwholesomenesses lead to evil actions. One way to understand outer demons is as subtle presences that connect with us through these inner flaws and who cultivate those flaws.

Psychic attacks can also come from humans. Some will try to perform interesting rituals, some will try to project their own negative energy onto you, and some will ask for help from demonic entities. Two of the main procedures of classic witchcraft are the *dajida* and the charge.

A *dajida* is a witchcraft doll prepared by the practitioner of dark arts and sympathetically connected to the victim by means of a sample, such as a bit of that person’s hair, nails, blood, sperm, saliva, photograph, or a piece of clothing that has been worn for some time. Once the connection is established, it is believed that what the practitioner does to the doll will happen to the victim at a distance. Fortunately, this is not so easy to accomplish. Part of the effect is through suggestion, reinforced by the folkloric beliefs of the victim. But in some ways the doll also helps the practitioner project his or her own energy and intention. Some classical experiments seem to produce interesting effects, though it is difficult to do such experiments ethically. However, a few related experiments have been done under laboratory conditions (for some hints at a modern version, see Ostrander & Schroeder, 1997).

A charge is an object filled with bad feelings and bad intentions, such as a dead cat. Typically, the sorcerer gets a cat or rat, connects it to the victim in the same manner as a *dajida*, then puts it some place to rot. The rotting process is intended to have repercussions on the victim. Another variation is a cursed stabbing knife that is placed where the victim will find it. The intended outcome is that the negative qualities in the knife will induce the victim to use the blade to kill himself.

Symptoms of psychic attack include the following:

1. A feeling that someone is blowing on the back of your neck, but no one is there;

2. A persistent stinging in parts of the body, producing a specific pain;
3. Strange pains that do not respond to painkillers;
4. Unexplained illness that cannot be diagnosed by medicine;
5. Pressure on the back of the neck, spine, or back of head, as if someone is pressing with a finger;
6. Panic attacks (while most such attacks result from stress and worry, some are different in origin and come on when everything in life is OK, occurring as a sudden feeling of intense anguish or fear, or the sensing of a threat that may occur with nausea);
7. Nightmares (most are from indigestion, stress, worry, and personal problems, but other incidents have a quality of vividness and may feel as if an octopus or some other threatening thing is grabbing the person, or as if some specters or demons are present—sometimes the dream experience is one of being encaged or otherwise imprisoned);
8. Direct visions (e.g., a girlfriend of mine was combing her hair in front of the mirror, and saw black serpents in her hair, while other clients have seen a vampire at the door, or a bedcover has seemed to become a python);
9. Hearing threatening voices, which of course, to a psychologist, is a probable sign of schizophrenia, but in my experience many people who hear voices clearly are not schizophrenic—that is, they are living normal productive lives and some small percentage of these may result from psychic attacks);
10. A sense of constriction and despair, a feeling of oppressive darkness that is darker than the absence of light;
11. Fatigue, weakness, feeling a burdensome weight;
12. Unexplained fainting;
13. Waking up and feeling as if movement is impossible, as if a force is preventing full return to the body that can be felt as total paralysis lasting for some minutes or even hours;
14. Sudden, intense, uncontrollable emotion;
15. Repulsive odors, such as rotteness, that are suspended in a precise location;
16. A sound of bells that comes from nowhere; and
17. Paranoia—the feeling that someone or something is after you.

Naturally, all of these symptoms may arise from causes other than psychic attack. However, when more conventional causes or cures do not work, it is possible that the symptom may result from such an attack, mostly if several symptoms like the ones above are showing up together, and “normal explanations” have

first been ruled out. There are specific protocols for treatment of such conditions, which are omitted from this review. Vulnerability to such attacks can also be decreased by the development of personal and spiritual power.

If a person such as my client wants to develop her power, she must deal with her inner demons. If done properly, she will have power—but she must use that power with love. If not, eventually it will amount to black magic: the manipulation of psychic energies for your own purposes. As power develops, we learn to let go of our own personalities so something different can happen spontaneously inside of us. According to the spiritual traditions of the world this different thing, which is really our soul, will start moving in harmony with God's plan for the purposes of love, justice, and beauty. This is a coincidence: moving in unity with everything, so God's plan is your plan.

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