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# SPRING

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**ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS  
AND COLLECTIVE TRAUMA**



# Spring 88

## ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS AND COLLECTIVE TRAUMA

A JOURNAL OF ARCHETYPE  
AND CULTURE



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# THE GARDEN OF THE HEART AND SOUL PSYCHOLOGICAL RELIEF WORK IN EARTHQUAKE ZONES AND ORPHANAGES IN CHINA

HEYONG SHEN AND GAO LAN

**T**he Garden of the Heart and Soul project was first started at the orphanage in Guangzhou, China in 2007. Eva Pattis, a Jungian analyst from Milan, came to Guangzhou on May 1, 2008, and worked for ten days with the volunteers, making evaluations and supervising. Since then, we have set up forty-three workstations at orphanages in mainland China, including Lhasa (the capital of Tibet), Urumqi (the capital of Xinjiang Province), in Ningxia at an orphanage for Muslims, and in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou.

In the magnitude 8.0 earthquake in Sichuan, China, on May 12, 2008, about 69,000 people died, another 18,000 went missing, more than 374,000 people were injured, and 4.8 million survivors became homeless. The victims lost their family members and their livelihoods.

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A team from the Chinese Federation of Analytical Psychology and Sandplay Therapy went to Sichuan to provide psychological relief work the first week after the earthquake. We set up workstations in an area for the project that we called “the Garden of the Heart and Soul” and continued our work there for three years.



Figure 1. Heyong Shen with new students who came from Shui-mo, in Wenchuan, to the Garden of the Heart and Soul.

In December 2011, we returned to Sichuan for ten days with two friends, Lu Yuegang and Peng Xiaohua, who are well-known writers. Lu Yuegang, from his professional perspective as a writer, observed the deep emotional connection between the students and our volunteers at the Garden of the Heart and Soul. In three years, the children grow up fast and change a lot, but the intimacy, the feeling of family and of togetherness, which is so touching and moving, remains. This relationship is a basic element in the healing that occurs, especially in psychological relief work after earthquakes.

We had established a three-year plan at the very beginning of our work in May 2008, in the first week of the earthquake. Our primary effort was to build an effective relationship and a free and protected



space that could offer the necessary safety and containing. “Hand in hand and heart to heart” is a vivid description of our work at the Garden of the Heart and Soul.

On this trip we visited the Garden of the Heart and Soul at two schools: Beichuan and Shuimo in Wenchuan. Beichuan Qiang Autonomous County is the only self-governing county for the Qiang people, a very special minority in China whose history goes back to Dayu (2200 BC) and Shenong Yandi (4300 BC). During the Han Dynasty (206 BC to 220 AD), there were about twelve million Qiang people in China, one fifth of the Chinese population. Before the 2008 earthquake, there were only about 280,000 Qiang people, and one-third of the people in Beichuan died. The school in Beichuan, where we have been working, suffered terrible damage; over half of the 3,000 students died in the buildings that collapsed in the earthquake.

We set up a five-level therapeutic plan of action, according to the situation—a small group working with a large population of victims:

1. Individual and family focused interventions;
2. Group work with 20–30 people;



Figure 2. Early meeting in a tent, Beichuan, May 18, 2008.



3. Large group activities for 60–100 people;
4. Film viewing, engaging greater numbers of people; and
5. Community and environmental work using music, broadcasting, printed flyers, pictures, and replanting the landscape.

Based on analytical psychology and the Chinese culture's psychology of the heart, we embraced the way of *ci-bei* (loving grief, compassion) as a guide in our work. *Ci-bei* is a combination of two characters: *ci*, which means love and compassion, and *bei*, which means grief, suffering, and pain. In the character *bei*,

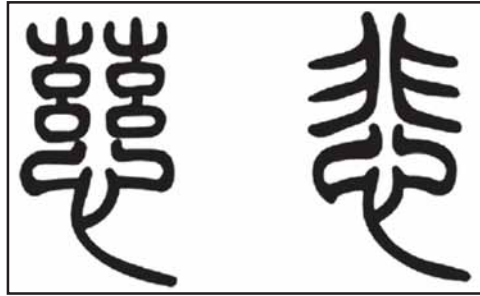


Figure 3. The Chinese characters for *ci* and *bei*.

the upper part of the symbol has the meaning of “split,” “flying away,” and “lost,” while the lower part is the symbol for the heart. Thus we have the symbolic meaning of *bei*: when your heart is splitting and lost, you will have grief, suffering and pain. This is very close to the modern psychological interpretation of trauma.

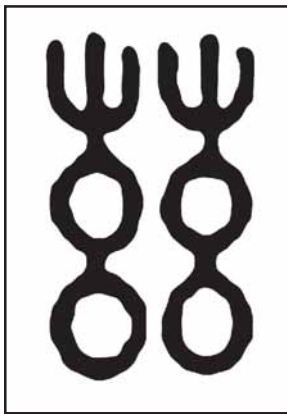


Figure 4. The Chinese character for *zi*.

How then to deal with such splitting, loss, and trauma? We can get the thread from the character *ci*. The character *ci* is also made up of two parts, the heart below and *zi* above. The symbol *zi* (figure 4) conveys the meaning of growing, associating, and connecting. So, from *ci*, we get the symbolic meaning of “associating with the heart” and “growing of the heart.” Association, relatedness, and relationship are also important for contemporary psychotherapy.

According to Chinese philosophy, in particular the Doctrine of the Mean, when we have two opposite factors together, like characters of *ci-bei* (love and grief), then we have a third level of meaning that goes

beyond the original two. For example, in the Chinese notion of *wei-ji* (crisis and opportunity) we find the idea of retaining the opposites and using the heart. This is also an important principle of Jungian analysis, which C. G. Jung called the transcendental function. The Chinese name for psychology, is “heart-ology” (figure 5). To rediscover the meaning of the heart and the soul is the main effort and the mission of a psychology of the heart.<sup>1</sup>



Figure 5. Chinese characters for psychology.

We based our work on analytical psychology and Chinese culture, especially the psychology of the heart. Sandplay therapy, combined with the Chinese five element principles, was the main method we used for the psychological relief initially. The practical and therapeutic process can be divided into three primary steps.



Figure 6. Setting up for sandplay, with a sign reading “The Garden of the Heart and Soul,” at the school in Beichuan, May 26, 2008.

First, we worked to build an effective relationship, from heart to heart, using the first principle of the psychology of the heart, *gan-ying* (the thirty-first hexagram of *I Ching*, which can be translated as “touching the heart and responding from the heart”), to set up a contained, free, and protected space to reestablish and increase victims’ sense of reality and safety. Qiang music and ritual were used, together with some breathing and body work to produce embodied resonance.

Second, based on the established relationship, we worked to enhance the therapeutic container by “attending and accompanying,” active listening with the heart. (The Chinese character for “listening” combines the characters for “ear,” “gestation,” “ten eyes,” or “straight,” and “one heart.” Such listening with the heart, as I call it, is referred to as “active listening” in the system of psychology of the heart.) We chose sandplay, music, painting, embodied dream work, and archetypal psychodrama for working with the clients individually and in groups.



Figure 7. Heyong Shen and one of his sandplay groups in the Garden of the Heart and Soul at the school in Beichuan, May 2008.

Finally, we offered sustained psychological support, using the psychology of the heart, employing the principles of “loving grief” (the Chinese character *ci-bei*, conveying the method and the way to work with trauma and healing) and *gan-ying* (wholehearted influence), and the healing and transformative function of the cultural archetypes (*dayu* for naming and initiating; *shennong* for taming and nurturing; and *fixi* for timing and transforming).<sup>2</sup>

For the first six months, we could see in the sand trays the process and images as the victims expressed their trauma, their feelings of chaos and suffering, helplessness and wounding. In the next period, after several months, through the sandplay we can see that they were touched by the heart; images of angels emerged along with figures of the heart, and the healing process took hold in the Garden of the Heart and Soul.



Figure 8. Children working in the sand tray in the Garden of the Heart and Soul at the school in Beichuan, August 2008.



Figure 9. The students brought this heart-shaped stone to the Garden of the Heart and Soul. It was used very often in the students' sandplay process.

The image and symbol of the heart is very important in the Chinese culture. When we constructed the system of the psychology of the heart, we wrote about three levels of meaning: physiological, psychological, and metaphysical. The meaning of the heart from a physiological sense is this: the heart is the root and nature of life; the heart is the changing of mind and spirit. From a psychological



Figure 10. Chinese characters for thought and thinking.

sense, the heart is the totality of all psychological phenomena and processes. But besides the mind and body, the heart conveys a metaphysical sense: in Chinese the heart is used to express the heavenly mind or heavenly heart, and the heart of Dao. The Chinese characters for thought and thinking (figure 10),

emotion and feeling (figure 11), and will and ambition (figure 12)—the three most important factors in psychology—are all combinations that include the image of heart at their core.

As psychotherapists, we are all very familiar with therapy, but not so familiar with healing. We prefer to use the Chinese character for “healing” for our Jungian practice and psychological relief work because it has embodied the image of the heart, and the heart-related healing process (figure 13). It is a combination of the images for boat and the making of a boat (the upper part of the character) and the heart (below) and it conveys a beautiful image of “boat of the heart.”

For making a boat, especially in ancient times, the earliest image of a canoe, for instance, you need to make an empty space in the wood or tree trunk. This is the Chinese character *yu*, to make a boat or canoe by hollowing the log; it forms the upper part of “healing” (figure 14). But the accompanying image of “empty” has profound philosophical and psychological meaning; it conveys the meaning of empty and containing, and nothing and everything (figure 15). Empty, in the Chinese cultural context,



Figure 11. Chinese characters for emotion and feeling.



Figure 12. Chinese characters for will and ambition.



Figure 13. The Chinese character for healing.

is not only a term, but a very important philosophy. It is empty but also “containing”; we call existence in the empty *miao-you*: a wonderful having or containment. There is a Chinese proverb: “Having containment is great.” That is the way and power of healing.



Figure 14. The Chinese character *yu*.

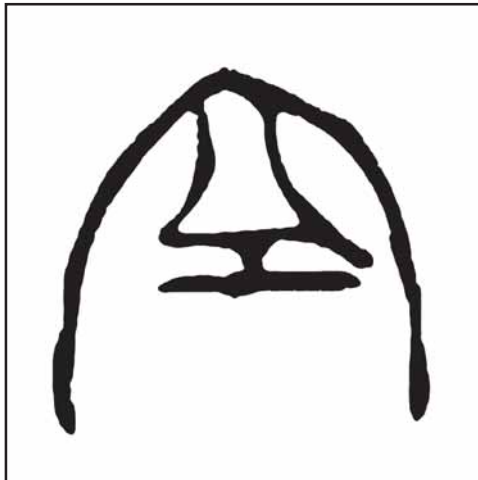


Figure 15. The Chinese character for “empty.”





Figure 16. Early on in our work at the Garden of the Heart and Soul, for group sandplay, we used the ground with natural green grass as a sand tray.

On April 14, 2010, there was a big earthquake in Yushu, China. More than 90 percent of the local buildings collapsed; and several thousand people died, and more than 12,000 were injured. Yushu had been an old land for the Qiang people, and is now in Tibet, located on the Qing-Zhang plateau, with an average altitude of 4,500 meters. It is here that the headwaters for the three main rivers in China—the Yellow River, the Yang-zhi River, and Lanchang River—are found. Our team from the Chinese Federation of Analytical Psychology and Sandplay Therapy went to Yushu and set up three workstations there. We have continued our work for the last two years.

The model of the Garden of the Heart and Soul and the system of the psychology of the heart have been wholeheartedly accepted and are used widely in China today. Originally, our work was primarily for the psychological development of orphans and for natural disaster relief work, but it has now extended to centers for waifs and strays (runaways), stay-at-home children, children whose parents are incarcerated, and



Figure 17. The meaning of the Garden of the Heart and Soul and our work, embodied in the expressive sandplay process.

the inmates of juvenile detention centers. We plan to set up one hundred Gardens of the Heart and Soul in mainland China in the next two years. Working with the heart is our version of Jungian analysis and sandplay therapy practice in China, especially for the Garden of the Heart and Soul.

#### NOTES

1. Heyong Shen, *Psychology of the Heart*, Eranos Years Book, 1998/2008.

2. Heyong Shen, *San Chuan Xing Si: Record of Events of the Garden of the Heart and Soul in the 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake* (Guangdong Science and Technology Press, 2009–2010), pp. 151–152.



Figure 18. Eva Pattis (pictured here with Heyong Shen) and Luigi Zoja came to the earthquake zone in August 2008 and participated our psychological relief work in the Garden of the Heart and Soul. We used expressive sandplay therapy mainly and helped a lot of students.

