

THURSDAY **06 JUNE** 2024
QEII CENTRE **LONDON** UK

Prof Paul Dieppe

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PRESENTING:

Spirituality and Healing –
and the role it plays alongside
scientific medicine

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whole-person
health
CONFERENCE **24**

“Spirituality and Healing:
and the role they play
alongside scientific medicine”

Paul Dieppe

The title begs two questions:

1. What is Spirituality?

2. What is Healing?

SPIRITUALITY

Many definitions, including:

- Subjective experience of a sacred dimension
- Seeking Meaning and Understanding
- Asking 'who and what am I?' (Cheryl Hunt)
- Noetic (religious) experiences (William James)

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Awakening experiences (Steve Taylor)

I had some spiritual experiences early in my life, but dismissed them as hallucinations or some such, in the light of my 'education'

I then became totally 'enculturated' into the ethos of scientific medicine ('scientism') and started denouncing things like spirituality as 'absolute nonsense'

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Oh dear!

HEALING

Many definitions, including:

- Making whole again (Cassel)
- A transformational change (Csordas)
- Transcending suffering (Egnew)
- Regaining a sense of balance and peace (Hsu)

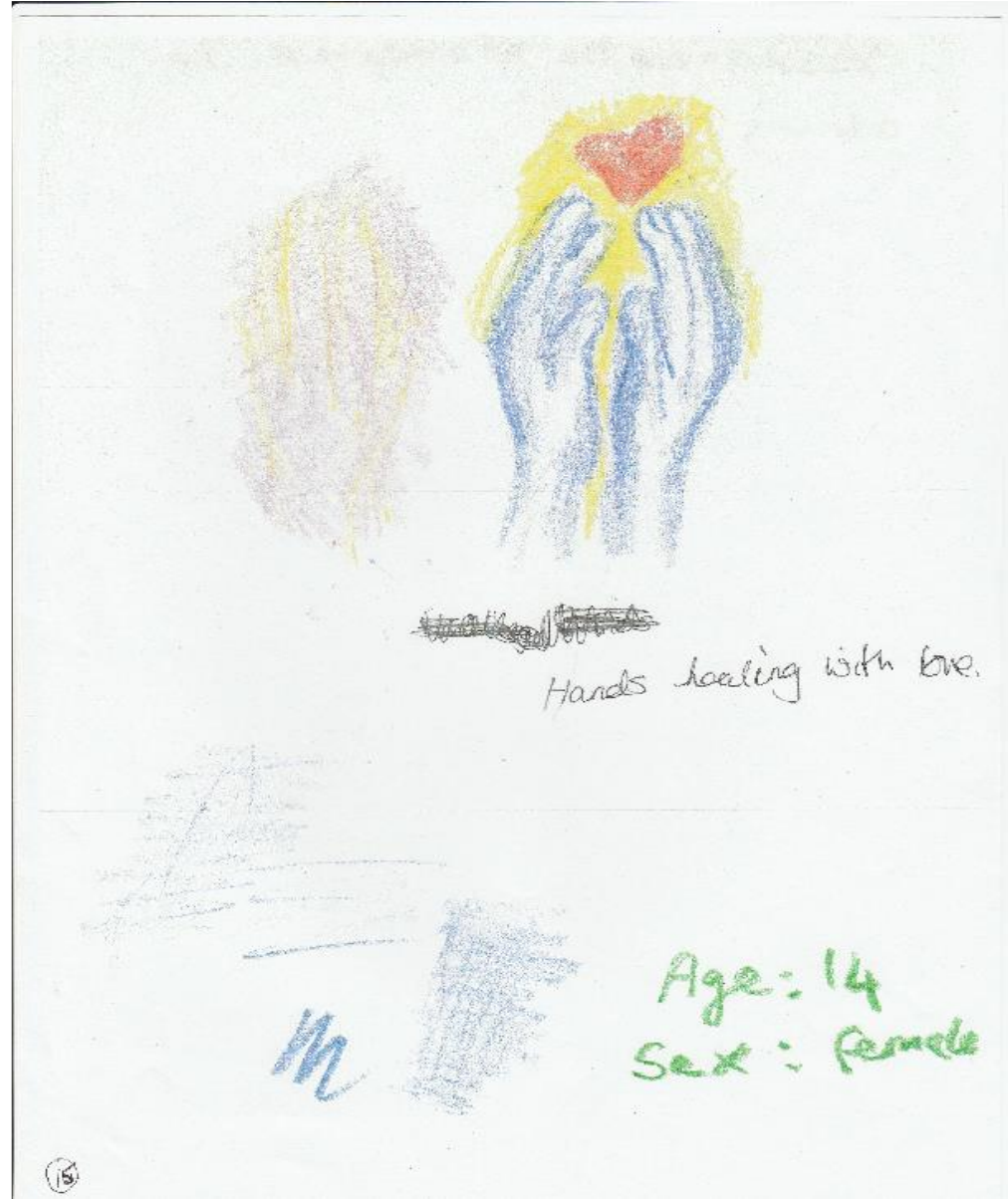
**What does the word 'HEALING' mean to
you?**

We have found that many people find it easier to draw what they think healing is about than to talk or write about it

'Growth and Development'



LOVE



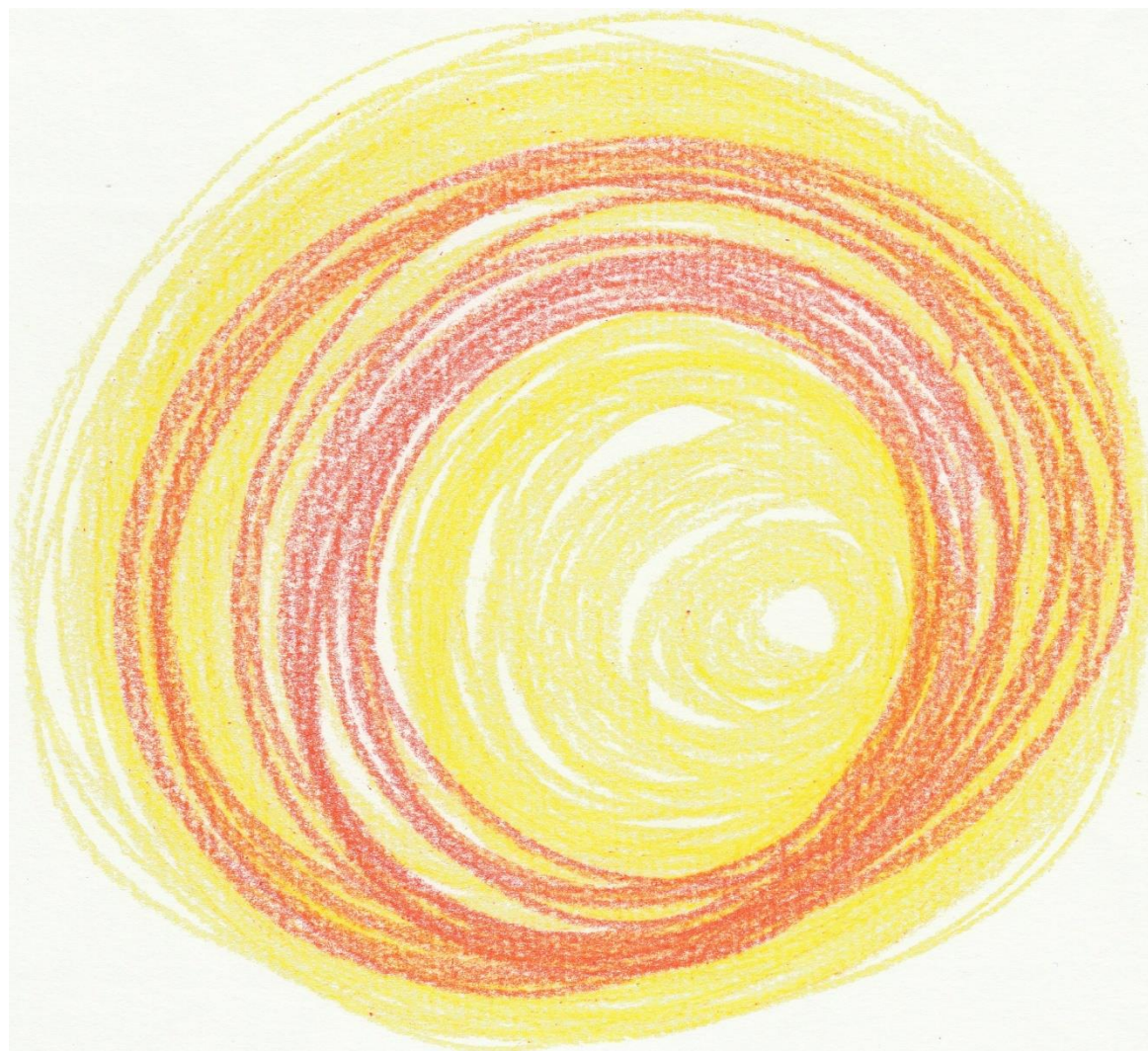
~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
Hands holding with love.

M
Age: 14
Sex: female

'ENERGY'



WHOLENESS



Both spirituality and healing defy definition within our reductionist, scientific and materialistic ways of thinking, because

They are EXPERIENTIAL issues

**You can only understand Spirituality or Healing
if you experience them**

**But our science tells us that such experiences
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They are like LOVE – and can take many forms

My spiritual 'awakening'

- I was 'lucky' enough to have a major life event which disrupted everything and allowed me to move forward
- During and for a long period after a crisis (five months as a hostage in Iraq) I had awakening experiences which I could no longer ignore

This allowed me to move (eventually) from biomedical research to research on placebo (just about acceptable and fundable), and then healers and healing (completely unacceptable for an academic doctor and almost unfundable)

Funding for healing research

THANK YOU:

- The University of Exeter
- The Bial Foundation (Portugal)
- The Nova Institute of Health (USA)
- NIHR (I was allowed to do whatever research I wanted with a senior investigator award)

Healers and healing in the UK

There are probably more than 30,000 people working as healers in the UK

They usually self-identify as either:

- An energy healer
- A spiritual healer
- A Reiki practitioner
- A crystal healer
- A shaman

Or some mixture of the above, or just 'a healer'

I have had the privilege of working with and
interviewing many such people

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BUT EXPERIENCE TRUMPS KNOWLEDGE

You have to experience it to understand

MY KNEE

MY KNEE

There is plenty of evidence that healing of this sort works, including high quality RCTs and meta-analyses

e.g. Roe et al. Explore 2015

But experience trumps knowledge!

Spirituality and healing within modern medical practice

1) Spirituality

My medical education included NOTHING about any spiritual dimension to humanity. I was taught that we are body and mind, but nothing else, and that those two elements were somehow not connected. I was taught to be a body mechanic, rather like a car mechanic

The 'car/body mechanic' problem

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- Scientific medicine sees the body as a set of components (like the car brakes or carburettor), which can go wrong, and deals with each item separately
- In addition it likes to think that there is **A** single cause for the fault in the item and **A** single fix (cure)
- But life is complex (*not only complicated but also COMPLEX – i.e. unpredictable*) – and we ignore complexity theory, as well as spirituality. And, of course, we are all different: one size does not fit all

Arguably many CAM practitioners are as bad or worse in this regard (*'my approach is the best thing for all people and all types of illness'*)

BUT

Spirituality is alive, well and flourishing in many CAM and medical practices, such as palliative care

2) Healing and/in Medicine

Interviews and focus groups with doctors and nurses, research in Lourdes, exhibitions about healing in hospitals and at medical meetings, and (of course) my own experiences

(as described in my book)

I think scientific medicine is literally
'schizophrenic' about healing
(split; in two minds)

- The hierarchy, the leaders, the medical body politic will have nothing to do with healing ('woo-woo New Age Nonsense' etc. etc.)
- But lots of doctors and nurses understand the importance of healing, and know how to facilitate it for their patients' benefit

**What happens when I talk about
healing at scientific medical
meetings**

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BUT PRIVATELY/WHEN ANONYMOUS

Generations
Relationship Mapping Making Distancing
Heart Connections Beliefs release
vulnerable Evidence Freedom comfort
Surrender Patience
Feeling birds Removal
and soul
Relaxation Dance Liberation
Presence Relaxation Drooping
Peace Balance Nature family
peace Unifying with
Connection Willing Cacti
embrace
Hear Warmth
Empowerment Gratitude power
adults nurturing Harmony Whispering
Showing explaining focusing

Is healing medicine's 'dirty little secret'?

How do medics facilitate healing?

- By preparing themselves properly before seeing a person who needs their help
- By listening with undivided attention
- By having the best of intention for the person they are with
- By 'doing the little things' (Schenck)

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- **THROUGH LOVE**

Is healing:

LOVE IN ACTION?

Two final thoughts

1) 'We thought we could cure everything, but it turns out that we can only cure a small amount of human suffering. The rest needs healing'

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2) 'Tain't what you do, it's the way that you do it'

(Ella Fitzgerald)

THANK YOU

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