

BOOK REVIEW

Putting the Soul in the Study of Psyche

The Wounded Researcher: Research with Soul in Mind

By Robert D. Romanyshyn

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Review by

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Robert Romanyshyn's new book, *The Wounded Researcher: Research with Soul in Mind*, describes an imaginal psychological approach to research. But more than that, the book is also a synthesis of his life's work—literally, an integration and fulfillment of all of his former projects, including *Mirror and Metaphor: Images and Stories of Psychological Life* (2001), *Technology as Symptom and Dream* (1989), *The Soul in Grief: Love, Death and Transformation* (1999), and *Ways of the Heart: Essays Toward an Imaginal Psychology* (2002). The text in no way requires that the reader is familiar with Romanyshyn's former writing, but having that background context unquestionably enhances and deepens appreciation for what has been accomplished with this book.

Unlike any other text I have read, Romanyshyn's *The Wounded Researcher* provides a truly innovative and well-informed integration of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and depth psychology which is primarily grounded in a neo-Jungian perspective. Not surprisingly, Romanyshyn's conversation partner is frequently the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, whose work (e.g., Ricoeur, 1977) haunts very similar ground, especially with his book on Freud.

Ricoeur in his early work was deeply influenced by Husserl, and this background in phenomenology culminated initially in a dissertation on human action and agency (Ricoeur, 1966). In this early work, like Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur was struggling to overcome those seminal problems of phenomenology—the subject-object split and the role of the body in this integration of subjectivity and objectivity. Eventually, over the course of his career, Ricoeur put his phenomenological work in dialogue with hermeneu-

tics, psychoanalysis and structuralism (for a review of Ricoeur's work, see for example, Pellauer, 2007). As a student of Ricoeur, Romanyshyn's life work has followed the same trajectory, but with an emphasis on Jungian rather than Freudian depth psychology. In the case of Ricoeur, his questions up to his death continually returned to the problem of the self and personhood, with special attention to the implications of selfhood for human responsibility and social justice (e.g., Ricoeur, 2000). As a psychologist, Romanyshyn is more immediately focused on what is more centrally a crisis in psychology today: the unnatural split in psychology between the natural and the human scientific approaches to inquiry.

Romanyshyn's treatise on research begins with an acknowledgement of a crisis in the science of psychology—a crisis that is epistemological in nature and a crisis which is necessary once the soul of psychology is identified. The soul in this case is the psychoid reality identified by Jung (1960)—a layer of reality that is neither subjective nor objective, but, rather, the gap between them—something akin to what Merleau-Ponty (1969) referred to as a dehiscence of Being that gives rise to the ontological category of flesh described in *The Visible and the Invisible*. As Romanyshyn describes it, the psychoid layer of reality is “the deepest layer of the unconscious, . . . not just the union of psyche and nature. Rather, it is the realm that is neither psyche nor matter, a realm where psyche is nature—psyche matters, we might say—and nature is psyche, as evidenced, for example, by synchronicity” (p. 38).

The psychoid layer of reality is a realm that is, by definition, transcendent of phenomenological description or empirical measurement. In Jungian terms, it is the layer of the psyche which contains the archetypes, the forms by which inner and outer space are configured and given meaning. How can one do research, then, in such a way that pays respect to this psychoid layer which is necessarily presupposed by, and yet which transcends empirical and phenomenological observation and language? For Romanyshyn, such an approach to research must necessarily possess a self-reflexive quality which could be called metaphoric—metaphoric in the sense that a metaphor both is and is not what it purports to be, in the same way that any discourse about the world both is and is not what is represented symbolically in language. A soulful science, therefore, is a science rooted in a metaphorical sensibility (see also Robbins, 2008a, this issue).

The metaphorical approach to research is described by Romanyshyn archetypically through the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. Those who are familiar with Greek mythology will recall that Orpheus attempts to retrieve

Eurydice from the underworld but fails ultimately because he looks back at her in Hades rather than looking forward at the path ahead of him. The lesson of the Orphic myth, for Romanyshyn, is that we cannot drag the underworld into the upper-world of ego-intentions without losing something essential about the underworld. And so all research has the character of mourning the impossibility of fully realizing in consciousness what is, inevitably, transcendent to direct, unmediated knowing. The researcher, however, is faced with developing the maturity that will allow him or her to press onward anyway, knowing that full knowledge of the subject matter is, from the beginning, foreclosed to the investigator. However, the task of re-searching and searching over again the terrain of matter and mind is nevertheless a fruitful enterprise, even if always incomplete. With this appreciation—a process of letting go initially to ego-intentions—the researcher can then genuinely register “the difference between what has been said in the work and the soul of the work that remains unsaid” (p. 80).

While Romanyshyn identifies primarily with neo-Jungian and phenomenological orientations to research, he is not wedded to any particular methodology. In fact, he is critical of Amedeo Giorgi (1970) and other phenomenological psychologists who over-identify phenomenology or depth psychology with a particular, circumscribed methodology. As he writes:

Although it is true that phenomenology has won a place within the science of psychology, that place has largely been for its qualitative methodologies. Nearly forty years ago now, Amedeo Giorgi published his groundbreaking book, *Psychology as a Human Science*, which laid the foundation for phenomenologically-based research methods, and over the years he, as well as the psychology department at Duquesne University, have honed those methods. However, as valuable as these contributions have been for bringing phenomenology into psychological research, they sacrifice the broader scope of phenomenology and thus mute its impact for a psychological science. Thus, it is not this path of phenomenology as method that I am following here. Rather, I am concerned with how, as Merleau-Ponty says in the Preface to his seminal work, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, phenomenology is first a style of thinking and being, before it is a system of philosophy or, we might add, a methodology. (p. 88)

This statement is remarkable coming from a graduate of Duquesne University's doctoral program, who entered the program in the early days when Giorgi and other Duquesne faculty were only just beginning the quiet revolution in qualitative methodology, which is only recently gaining some recognition within the mainstream of psychology. But Romanyshyn is right I think to clearly distinguish phenomenology from a particular methodology such as Giorgi's, because it is much more than that—a sentiment that Giorgi himself would probably endorse. Romanyshyn's imaginal approach to research is just as applicable to the natural sciences, such as physics and biology, as the human sciences. Examples of an imaginal natural science can be witnessed, for example, in quantum physics and Goethean approaches to studying the natural world, just to give a few examples (See the special issue of *Janus Head* on Goethe's delicate empiricism, guest edited by Craig Holdrege and Bill Bywater, 2005).

What quantum physics and Goethean science share with Romanyshyn's imaginal approach to research is an appreciation for the participatory nature of all sciences and, more broadly, all investigatory behavior accomplished by human beings. This is to say that every researcher who is called or claimed to study something is inevitably motivated by some as yet undisclosed reason—there is, in other words, an unconscious system of complexes guiding the vocation of the scientist. And the scientist who denies this complex web of relations between his life and his work does so only at his own peril. The responsible scientist is one who has the humility, one might say, to own up to the vocational dimensions of his or her research projects. The researcher can do this by recognizing and reflecting upon the transference field that tethers him or her to the work he or she is doing—which is to discover, in essence, the emotional foundation of his rational activity. Or, as Romanyshyn puts it, this process is a process of discovering the often disowned and defended against “tender-minded” elements of the “tough-minded” process of scientific work.

What's in it for the investigator? At least one danger of ignoring the “tender-minded” aspects of scientific work is the tendency for method to become a form of idolatory—a methodolatry, so to speak. Strict adherence to a particular method and the foreclosure to other possible avenues of investigation can be seen, in effect, as potentially harmful defensive postures against the undetermined nature of scientific work. There is, implicit in Romanyshyn's work, a recognition that a phenomenological hermeneutics is, basically, a foundation for a methodological pluralism, and I agree, as I

have argued elsewhere (e.g., Robbins, 2008b). The imaginal approach, far from constricting science to a narrow range of methods, opens science to a variety of equally legitimate, yet not all-inclusive approaches to investigation—a sensibility, again, which has its basis in a metaphoric sensibility, which, as Romanyshyn writes, “is necessary because it holds the tension between concrete and symbolic modes of thinking” (p. 213). As such, it allows psychology, for example, to claim the fact that dreams *are* happenings in the brain, without reducing dreams to *nothing but* happenings in the brain, because dreams are so much more than that too.

Romanyshyn’s extension of philosophical hermeneutics, with an emphasis on a Jungian analytic framework, is called by him an “alchemical hermeneutics.” For example, instead of the metaphor of the hermeneutic circle, he emphasizes the notion of a “hermeneutic spiral,” a figure that symbolizes the movement toward the depths of the unconscious. In his version of hermeneutics, the interpreting act lingers at the moment when the interpreter is being questioned by the text, in order to create a space to be claimed by the text. There is also, as would be expected, an emphasis on the Jungian notion of the transcendent function, in which the interpretive process is aiming toward a symbolic system that maintains the tension among opposites. There are other extensions of the hermeneutic process, but these are some of the main ones.

The most impressive portion of the book, in my opinion, is Romanyshyn’s bold and convincing critique of Dilthey’s distinction between the natural and human sciences—a distinction which has been maintained by many human science researchers today. Romanyshyn identifies three problems with this distinction, the most obvious of which is that the distinction between explanation and understanding relies upon and perpetuates a subject-object dualism which needs to be surpassed in science. I could not agree more, as I have also argued elsewhere (Robbins, 2006). Second, as already mentioned, Romanyshyn’s hermeneutics is a multi-method approach, not a form of methodalry. And finally, again, there is the emphasis on the unconscious which is a repeated theme in the book. These are fundamental criticisms of the “human science” paradigm war with mainstream “natural science” psychology which has perhaps outlived its rhetorical purpose.

In conclusion, Romanyshyn’s book is a watershed moment for phenomenological psychology, especially for its uniquely Jungian slant on the research process. This text also proves to be Romanyshyn’s *magnum opus*, and as the culmination of his life’s work, probably the text that he will come to be remembered by, and that’s saying something, because he has an

outstanding body of work already. The book is highly recommended to any and all researchers with a humble regard for the unconscious dynamics of the research process. You will find nothing else quite like it out there.

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