

Whitney

When particles are entangled, the actions of one will always influence the other, no matter how far they are separated."

In thinking about connectivity, collective thought, and the traditional religious uses of the circle, McTaggart discovered a sermon by 19th century British Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon discussing the development of early Christianity and how Luke uses a Greek word *homothumadon* numerous times in Acts to describe how the Apostles should pray. The compound Greek word combines *homou* meaning "in unison" or "together at the same place at the same time" – and *thumous*, translating as "outburst of passion."

McTaggart: "It may be that *homothumadon* is the state of mind necessary for a healing intention circle that is carried out in Christian churches as a practice without a full understanding of its special power. All this suggests that Jesus understood the power of group prayer and was passing the idea of it on to his disciples. Or maybe, as I believe, he was just trying to say that God is within every one of us, but that power gets amplified in a group.... When people are involved in a passionate activity like a healing circle, they transmute from a solitary voice into a thunderous symphony."

Over the last decade, McTaggart set up hundreds of intention circle experiments focusing on everything from specific health issues for "target" subjects to praying for peace in war-torn territories. Some groups were physically present with each other, while others were virtual groups of eight spread all over the world, connected through

technology. Though she set out to discover the science of group prayer by studying the "target," McTaggart discovered something more surprising. Group of Eight participants praying for someone else consistently described an experience of personal bliss, an epiphany-like "holy instant."

It was as if praying *homothumadon* moved human consciousness away from an isolated state of individuality, allowing the individual to bond with others. Participants described it: "It is as if my brain is wired to a bigger network."

McTaggart described a "rebound effect." Not only did she find that participants who prayed for others felt better – they consistently reported improvements in numerous aspects of their own lives – in healing their physical body; healing wounded relationships; financial success; even life-goal success. It was as if obstacles seemed to dissolve to move their lives forward in positive ways because they were praying for others.

McTaggart surmised: "...within the confines of intention groups, it finally becomes safe to give, and giving might ultimately be the entire point of the exercise, the aspect of the intention that proves to be the greatest healer."

Evidently, altruism helps us get out of our own way. When one participant noticed her health and her life improving as a result of praying for another, she observed: "Focusing on the good of others and being of service takes the focus off ourselves in a way that allows movement without noticing the passage of time. Perhaps altruism is the secret way of both consciously and non-consciously not observing so the desired outcome can occur."

Focusing on someone else heals the healer.

What's more, research

suggests that focused attention improves the brain, heightens perceptual awareness, increases attention to the outer life and brings mindfulness to the inner life as the two sides of the brain begin to operate more synergistically.

McTaggart: "All this research was leading me toward a heretical thought. Maybe the endpoint of the 'I want, I get' good-life scenario is that it ultimately kills you.... All that focus on the self could ultimately be terrible for your health, and highly unnecessary. The quickest route to rewriting your own life's script was simply reaching out to someone else."

It did not matter what someone believed, or even if they were trained in meditation or prayer. "... there had been no mantras, no fasting, or self-denial, no sweat lodge, no yoga or prostrations, no speaking in tongues, no icons. ... In fact, there'd been no real effort at all; the experience had been mostly out of their control. They didn't turn it on – their involvement in the group intention just made it happen..."

"There was no other conclusion I could draw. Sending altruistic thoughts of healing in a group was a fast track to the miraculous."

Could we create miracles by caring for each other?

Teilhard de Chardin observed just how revolutionary positive collective thought could be: "The day will come when, after harnessing space, winds, the tide and gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And on that day, for the second time in the history of the world (humanity) will have discovered fire."

Quincy Whitney is a career journalist, biographer and poet. Contact her at quincysquill@nashuatelegraph.com or [quincy@quincywhitney.com](https://www.quincywhitney.com).