

Gini Stanley Interviews Bill Wilkie, Brisbane Psychiatrist

*I met Bill Wilkie at a psychotherapy conference that was organised by the Queensland Jungian Society.
Bill was a keynote speaker and his topic was God Intoxication.*

Bill, can you tell me what kind of psychiatrist you are?

I am in private practice and I see all sorts of people. I see kids over 16. I don't see children on their own as children's problems are a result of unresolved difficulties in the family or the behaviour of the parents. I always take the family tree history in the first consultation with the patient.

What are you looking for in the family tree?

There are actually three levels of information you can get out of the family tree. First of all there is the internalisation of judgement from the parent. One of the interesting things I do is that I don't ever get a person to describe themselves until I ask them to describe their mother or their father. Then you'll see the patterns: the father's attitudes, ideas and methods have been internalised, they are part of the person's superego. And the same with the mother. And then there is also a mother/father integration package. Say you get a violent father and a submissive mother and eventually the mother leaves the father. The child usually has a judgement against both – it's clear that he'll never be like his father and he's damn sure he's never going to be like his mother, who gets picked on. Because the parents separated there is no integrative package: the child doesn't ever see the way that Mum and Dad get together. Therefore there are two parts in the self-control mechanism of the child that don't function. That's the first part of the family tree stuff.

The next thing that you find is generations of patterns on the family tree. And the fascinating thing is that it's a bit like mythical or legendary reality where the story is real but the characters change.

There are three realities we are in: the material/psychological reality, the mythical/legendary reality, and the spiritual reality. When you look at the generations you'll find that the story keeps coming down: there is a story and there are different personalities playing different roles. It's as if God has

given us a story to workshop. The story might be: "Who's in charge?" So you might have a man in charge and a submissive woman, or a woman in charge with an easy-going man. There are many different roles to play. There's the role of no-hoper, the role of 'couldn't care less', and then there's 'total control freak'. There are all these complimentary personality types in the family coming down the generations.

There was the case of a woman who had been depressed and antidepressants had no effect. When I asked her to describe her suffering, she said "It's as though I'll never see my family again and I feel like I'm suffocating." It turned out that her brother had died six months before this began as the result of a car accident. He got the steering wheel in his chest and suffocated on the way to hospital. Now it would appear that she was picking up an emotional replay of her brother's last hour. This man had sexually interfered with her when she was a kid. He was eight years older than her and by the time she was old enough to confront him he wasn't there as he had gone into the army. And he could never say sorry. When she apologised to God for his sins on his behalf, she stopped crying.

Was this apology to God on his behalf in the form of a ritual or was it in your office?


She would say prayers. But if you can have a Holy Communion Service, it's really good. I've got many cases where the person was suffering from an incurable illness that didn't respond to any treatment whatsoever.

When you say incurable illness, do you mean psychiatric illness?




Yes. You take the family history and you find that the suffering is quite inappropriate for their life but it is rather appropriate for a lost soul whose passing was somewhat unusual. The characteristic thing is people lost at sea without ever appearing, people missing in action presumed dead. Where there is no

body, there's no funeral. And, you know, there is a need to have one.

Another thing that's very potent for psychopathology is termination, abortion. It's interesting, you can find a woman who has had an abortion who thinks that that's reasonable. When you sit back and listen to the way she disciplines her children, there's an awful lot of "I'll kill you..." – a lot of murderous statements. There are all these threats of violence. It's supposed to be a bit light-hearted, but it's there. Very often, if the next sibling to the aborted one is a girl, she will suffer from anorexia nervosa. They [anorexics] get this deadly perfectionism. They seemed to have picked up this ethos: "If you can't shape up, ship out." And the parent wonders where this deadly perfectionism is coming from. It's been lurking there, just like a little bit of consciousness that's been floating around. And until you find out that they aborted their first child, it's unexplained.



Sometimes children under five can pick up attached souls and more or less speak for them. I believe that their rational mind hasn't developed to the point where they differentiate from things and so there is no differentiation between the conscious mind and the unconscious mind.



What do you do in this situation?

Well, I get people to name the aborted child. Of course they have no idea whether it's a boy or girl, but plenty of names will do, such as Francis or Ashley. Or you can look at the date of the abortion and use the saint's name for that date. It's important not to use this as a way of making a poor woman feel guilty.

You're saying that the pathology isn't in the woman who had the abortion but in her daughter who is the next sibling?

Sometimes children under five can pick up attached souls and more or less speak for them. I believe that their rational mind hasn't developed to the point where they differentiate from things and so there is no differentiation between the conscious mind and the unconscious mind. I've heard of a child under

five saying, "You murdered my little sister, you flushed her down the toilet."

I believe these are just attached souls who are looking for assistance. When they attach themselves to adults, the adults pick up some of their suffering. Very often it's like the last hour of the person's life going round and round.

I saw a woman who had this feeling of being very depressed. She felt this absolute compulsion to suicide and had no idea of what it was about. She said that she'd seen a couple of doctors and tried antidepressants, which hadn't worked. Then she said "It's because my husband is never home on weekends." And he said that that was because he was a real estate agent and he was home all week. Then she said that it was because her 14 year old was giving her cheek. It didn't explain it. But I took a history: her mother and father were both public servants and when they retired they got their super and retired to Tweed Heads. The mother was a bit bored, so she worked in her brother's furniture shop. One day, after they had closed shop on a Saturday afternoon, people saw this woman leave the shop in a very agitated fashion, wander over to the Tweed River and drown herself. Now the woman who was my patient didn't know why. When she described the state the mother was in, and she described the feelings that she'd had recently, she was talking about identical emotional states. So I asked her if she could go to an Anglican minister to arrange a communion service in memory of her mother. She thought she could and so she did.

When you are doing this healing with the family tree something very strange happens. It is as if the family tree heals itself. When you begin this, often the information pops out of the woodwork: at this service a relative came up and told her what the truth was. The truth was that the brother had been selling stolen furniture and the woman who committed suicide didn't know any of this. The police had cottoned on to him and had been around to interview him and her. They told her that they were going to charge her and were doing all this heavy-handed stuff to get her to do him in. But she actually didn't know anything, so she couldn't do anything. She didn't know what to do, got into a panic, wandered over and killed herself.

Now after the communion service my patient was all right! And I just have case after case after case. There are all these fascinating things and you deal

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with them within the spiritual reality. The Holy Communion Service is the main method of dealing with that – death and rebirth and stuff.

At the Psychotherapy Conference you were talking about God intoxication. Could you talk about that?

There are three realities as I mentioned before: there is a psychological/material reality; there is a mythical/legendary reality where the story is the main thing and the characters change; and then there is a spiritual reality where we are motivated by invisible entities that affect us. Each level has its own logic.

In the material reality, you cannot be yourself and somebody else at the same time. In the legendary reality you can: you can be yourself and playing another role quite easily.

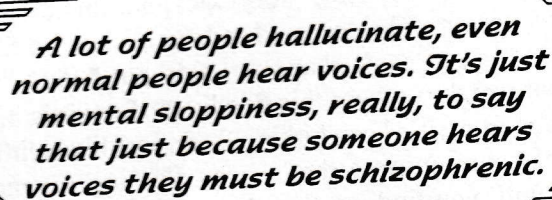
I've seen cases where people suddenly got the 'God bug'. They've seen the Light and they've met God. It was a pretty overwhelming experience. You can look at the biblical accounts, such as St Paul on the way to Damascus encountering the living Christ. There have been many people having similar experiences even now, and it can be pretty powerful stuff.

Now there is a truth in the spiritual reality: we are all made in the image of God. And so a person could say "I am Jesus", and if they are talking with spiritual logic that is OK. In the spiritual reality that isn't wrong. If you try and apply the material reality to that statement, and you get the three realities mixed up, you get into an awful mess.

There was a man in a mental hospital in America and he claimed to be Jesus. Milton Ericson, the famous hypnotherapist, got this bloke to come down to his office and said: "I hear you're a carpenter, sir. Could you put up some shelves for me?" After a while the bloke said, "Sorry, I'm not a carpenter." Ericson said, "I thought you were a carpenter." So the man had to admit that he wasn't the historical Jesus who was a carpenter.

So what happens with God intoxication is that people start to behave in a way that is not quite appropriate for the material reality. When somebody gets the God bug they get so bothersome they start driving people nuts. They want to take over things and they create all kinds of boundary issues. Eventually they end up in the psych. unit, where they usually get the diagnosis of mania; or if

they've claimed God has been talking to them: schizophrenia or schizo-affective. They usually settle in fairly quickly when they get into hospital because they're not really suffering from mania. They get on well with the nursing staff, they go home after a couple of weeks and the reason for their admission has not been dealt with at any time during their stay. So the first after-care therapist has got to try and work out how they ended up in a mad-house when they've got no previous psychiatric history and it seems that their life was perfectly ordinary until they suddenly got the God bug.



A lot of people hallucinate, even normal people hear voices. It's just mental sloppiness, really, to say that just because someone hears voices they must be schizophrenic.

What do you say to them in that situation?

You go back to the history and you look at these different realities. I don't mind if a schizophrenic person says they are Christ. They are actually reporting on a sort of infantile omnipotence and an awareness of their divine nature. But I'll help them get that into a spiritual perspective rather than a material perspective.

Do you think that true schizophrenia exists, that is: an illness that you need to treat with drugs?

Yes. The illness of schizophrenia affects the brain's ability to focus. When you sit and watch a mini TV set in a room, when you first look at it you are very much aware of everything around it but as soon as you start to concentrate on the screen, all the peripheral vision starts to disappear and the thing in the centre of your vision starts to expand. That's the part of the brain that doesn't work with schizophrenia.

What is that part of the brain called?

The reticular activating system and it's been instructed by the frontal lobe to identify certain inputs and enhance them, and also to reduce the other activities of the brain. That malfunctions in schizophrenia and when people with schizophrenia are stimulated, the whole brain is over-stimulated. Previous sub-vocal stuff that you say to yourself, such as "Watch that puddle", as you walk along, or "Where are those keys?", when you get out of the

car, will be heard as a running commentary because your brain is over-stimulated. There is a definite mental illness called schizophrenia and if you've got it virtually all the anti-psychotic drugs will help you to some extent.

A lot of people hallucinate, even normal people hear voices. It's just mental sloppiness, really, to say that just because someone hears voices they must be schizophrenic. The voices of schizophrenia are a running commentary more than anything else.

There is a theory that says that this running commentary is attached spirits or possession. What do you think of that?

That's a different kind of running commentary. It's an accusation like: "You are bloody hopeless. Why don't you drown yourself?" or you see the bus coming and it says: "Why don't you throw yourself under the bus?" That sort of thing.

Are you saying that that is possession?

Yes, that's possession. It can even be an attached spirit. Possession is where you are possessed by a non-human spirit which is one of those fallen angels. Now, we have something that we call the possession syndrome, which is an attached human spirit. People hear those things talking. You have to be fairly sensitive to hear attached spirits but there are people who are – clairaudient people. Usually when it's an attached human spirit it shouldn't be there. It's got a problem and it probably needs a bit of help.

What would you do then?

Well you get a clue as to what the problem is and you apologise to God for whatever it is.

The patient does or you do?

Well it doesn't really matter. I've actually been to a couple of little services where the person wasn't even there and had no idea. There was a mass that took place in Brisbane concerning a little girl in Geelong, Victoria and she suddenly recovered when this mass was being said. She was adopted from Chile and had no living parents. Her mother had been mentally ill and had suicided and her father was taken away by the military and killed. So both her parents died in tragic and unhappy circumstances. So it's not necessarily what you do, it's when you form the intention to help that attached spirit. That seems to be the main thing.

S.O.S.

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The Chrysalis

*After feeding on many fruits
(some bitter)
and exploring with many hands
the time has come
for the mechanism of the cocoon*

*Old life retreats
to the underworld
leaving a cold and barren orb
for a change state*

*The chrysalis protects
blood from disease
pupa from predator
as the moon stands watch, loyal*

*Earth's pulse dims and fades
a thin line of silk
connects the forming
to the tree of life*

*One senses beauty
across the cold time
and wonders...*

*What golden form awaits
to breach
and take flight
in the warm radiance of a star.*

Jason Dean, 2000.