

The “Empathosphere” and Compassion’s Light

By [Dr. Michael W. Fox, OneHealth.com](https://www.onehealth.com)

August 2024

Posted on All-Creatures.org: August 2, 2024

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Monkeys playing with Whitey.

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In my book *The Boundless Circle* where I first outlined my initial understanding of the empathosphere, I linked it with the boundless ethic of compassion. This boundlessness is evident in the invisible ripple-effect of good works or some new idea spreading from community to community. Two animals

demonstrated the boundless nature of the empathosphere at the Animal Refuge in the Nilgiris, South India established by my wife Deanna Krantz. Somehow, they knew that the Refuge was a place of security and relief from suffering. How else to explain these two animals coming several miles to where they had never been before? One was a dog who dragged himself after being hit by a vehicle for over a mile to the Refuge with a broken back and with his testicles hanging out. Another was a water buffalo whom staff found one morning waiting at the Refuge gate. Her condition was quickly recognized and treated, which was an infected vagina seething with flesh-eating maggots.

One dog at Deanna's refuge, Bruno, would insist on observing every surgery being performed on an animal and would lie attentively beside them during their recovery. Mania, an adult Bonnet macaque monkey, gently held an infant monkey while being treated for burns after swinging on electrified wires.



Mania the "monkey nurse," dog Bruno caring for just-spayed Vigia. Monkeys playing with Whitey.

The mourning of elephants over the remains of their herd-mates has been well documented, and many witnessed the most recent account of African elephants paying tribute to conservationist Lawrence Anthony. According to *The Ark, Journal of Catholic Concern for Animals*, (No.222, Autumn/Winter 2012), "Two days after he died in March 2012, a herd of wild elephants, led by two matriarchs, arrived at his home, followed by separate wild herds-a total of 20 elephants in all, walking over 12 miles to get to his home. Lawrence's widow, Francoise, was especially touched, knowing that the elephants had not been to his house prior to that day for well over a year. Yet they knew where they were going. They stayed there for two days and two nights."



Deanna with rescued mule from the war in Kashmir (left); (right) the author returns after leave of absence to the refuge, and is greeted by the dogs with Dean, pack leader in his arms.

One of the most celebrated and phenomenal feats of empathic “sixth-sense” finding of a loved one occurred during World War I. It involved an Irish terrier named Prince journeying from England in late September after his master had been sent with his battalion across the sea to Europe that August. Several weeks later Prince found his master in the trenches in Flanders, France. (For details see Neil R. Storey, *Animals in the First World War*, Shire Publications U.K., 20014).

In his memoir *Unspoken Messages: Spiritual lessons I Learned from Horses and Other Earthbound Souls* (Balboa Press, Bloomington, IN. 2015), Army Vietnam veteran and retired Kentucky State Police officer Richard D. Rowland documents how stabled horses at his facility reacted all together at the same time when the veterinarian euthanized a beloved mare, sight unseen from most of the other horses. The five people witnessing this were amazed that the horses all knew. This is affirmation of the existence created by connected consciousnesses of what I call the *empathosphere*. Rowlands describes this event as “Something spiritual, something older than time, some transfer of wisdom or spirit took place through the communication that we witnessed.”

In the U.S. the story of seven-year-old Samoyed-husky mix dog named Zander hit the news media in early October 2012. Somehow she was able to find her beloved master, John Dolan, suffering in the Good Samaritan Hospital in Islip, N.Y., a difficult two miles from her home that included crossing a stream, a highway and tricky navigation through neighborhood streets where she had never been before. Good Morning America reporter Avianne Tan posted the account on Feb 13th, 2015 of Sissy, an 11-year old miniature Schnauzer in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, who ended up at Mercy Medical Center 20 blocks from her

home where her co-owner Nancy Frank was recovering from cancer surgery. A surveillance camera in the hospital lobby caught the dog entering through the automatic doors and wandering around. Husband Dale Franck finally got a call at 5:30 a.m. from a security officer who found his phone number and house address from the dog's collar tag. Dale Franck's daughter got permission to take Sissy up to Nancy Franck for a few minutes, he said. His theory about how Sissy might have gotten 20 blocks to his wife was that Sissy used to ride with him to pick up his wife from work next door to the hospital, but they had never walked that route before.

I have heard from many readers over the years of my syndicated weekly newspaper column *Animal Doctor* who reported that their companion animals show such remote sensing abilities. The most common is the ability to anticipate when a family member is coming home—not on a regular, conditioned basis but at irregular, unexpected times.

Louise Vajda of St. Louis, MO wrote this about a remarkable dog named Shosty:

“My husband's parents lived in Indiana. My mother-in-law's brother, John, lived with them. He was a diabetic. They had a dog named Shosty (short for Shostakovich, the Russian composer).

The brother John became ill and died. Immediately after the funeral, Shosty disappeared. Several days later a friend of the family found the dog, hungry and haggard, lying on John's grave!

The remarkable and unbelievable part of this story is that the cemetery was many miles outside the city, and Shosty had never been there before. They had no idea how he had been able to find it. I believe dogs have some special abilities of which we humans are unaware.”

After giving a talk in Minnesota about holistic care for companion animals, a woman approached me from the audience to share the amazing saga of the cat she had when she was a student many years ago. She left the beloved feline with her parents and moved seven miles across the city of Los Angeles into an apartment. Soon after, her parents told her the cat was gone, and to her surprise some days later she found the cat waiting for her outside her apartment where the cat had never been before. How the cat survived a journey across that city is a miracle of instinctual prowess. But how the cat knew where to go we may never know. We do know that cats, like other animals, have micro-particles of iron in their brains that can help give them some geomagnetic compass-like directional sense, but whatever emotional sensors they must possess may forever remain part of the great mystery that leads some of us to a deeper faith that others fear or dismiss for lack of any rational explanation. Yet witnessing mystery should move us to revere all life, and celebrate the miracle of sentient life and conscious existence!

These and other remarkable instances of animal empathy and understanding have confirmed for me the reality, complexity, and beauty of the empathosphere. Scientist Rupert Sheldrake has empirical evidence of the existence of the empathosphere, which he calls a morphic field. Animals' resonance with this field enables them, for example, to know when their owners are coming home. Within this realm of being and feeling is awareness that all things are connected. This means that when we humans harm another sentient being, the harm may not be limited to that one being. There is a ripple-effect and others feel and know, just like the ripple-effect of loving concern and compassion in action at the refuge that injured and sick animals, through remote or distance-sensing, could feel and so find their way to the refuge for treatment.

The ripple effects following the harpooning of whales, and the incarceration and suffering of animals in factory farms and research laboratories, may be far more pervasive and no less real than the anguish

caring people feel for all creatures who are treated inhumanely and unjustly by those who are disconnected in heart and mind from others' suffering and joy, and from the sanctity of being.

The empathy-based and bioscience-based ethics that I have proposed in my book *Bringing Life to Ethics* become personally relevant when we realize that when we harm the Earth and other living beings, we also harm ourselves. But as we enter the empathosphere we must not go unprepared. We need an ethical compass, and the courage of the spiritual warrior to take on others' suffering and go beyond success and failure, and blind faith and vain hope, and strive to live more responsibly through right livelihood and active compassion. This path for many leads to helping the poor and the homeless, working for social justice, helping animals in the community, restoring and protecting wild places, becoming vegetarian, and supporting local organic and humane farmers and food retailers.

I feel blessed indeed by the opportunity to be able to help other animals in need. Seeing the look of terror and despair in a dog's eyes melt into trust and gratitude after days of treatment by our devoted staff at our Animal Refuge is one of the greatest rewards. Seeing our resident animals interacting with others in recovery and showing care and concern, gentleness and understanding, provides me with a deeper appreciation of animal awareness and sensitivity. Then to see them play, some for the first time—for the first time not starving, or in pain, or afraid and thus being free to express and experience the joy of being. To see their spirits gain free expression and their personalities blossom in the safe and loving environment of the refuge borders on the miraculous. The nexus of relationships between IPAN's devoted local Indian staff and various resident species—donkeys, horses, ponies, sheep, goats, water buffalo, cattle, calves, dogs and monkeys, are the most vivid examples of the empathosphere that I have ever experienced.

As we become more mindful of the consequences of how we regard and treat other animals, the power of loving concern through compassionate action will be the catalyst for our evolution and transformation into a truly humane species, for the good of all. Empathy brings the light of human compassion into the world that is part of that ineffable light that is transfiguring, transforming, and transcending. As the Buddha advised, the only true religion is *maitri* (loving kindness or benevolence) toward all creatures. He also taught that the end of suffering is in suffering itself—through empathy.

There is a wonderful story of a Buddhist monk who did not become enlightened until he put compassion into action. Geshe Kelsang Gyatso writes:

Asanga, a Great Buddhist Master who lived in India in the fifth century AD, meditated in an isolated mountain cave to gain a vision of Buddha Maitreya. After twelve years he still had not succeeded and, feeling discouraged, abandoned his retreat. On his way down the mountain, he came across an old dog lying in the middle of the path. Its body was covered in maggot-infested sores, and it seemed close to death. This sight induced within Asanga an overwhelming feeling of compassion for all living beings trapped within samsara. As he was painstakingly removing the maggots from the dying dog, it suddenly transformed into Buddha Maitreya himself. Maitreya explained that he had been with Asanga since the beginning of his retreat, but, due to the impurities in Asanga's mind, Asanga had not been able to see him. It was Asanga's extraordinary compassion that had finally purified the karmic obstructions preventing him from seeing Maitreya.

Light, enlightenment, wisdom, and compassion are interwoven phenomena and concepts evident in the world's major religions that are linked with divine revelation and presence. In the *Taittiriya Upanishad*,

for example, it is written:“ May the light of sacred knowledge illumine us, and may we attain the glory of wisdom.” (1.3)

But there is also the light of love and compassion, as implied in the *Chandogya Upanishad*:“ There is a Light that shines beyond all things on earth, beyond us all, beyond the heavens, beyond the highest, the very highest heavens. This is the Light that shines in our hearts.” (3:13.7)

The three central themes of the *Bhagavad Gita* are *jnana*, *bhakti* and *karma* (Light, Love and Life). In Buddhism we also find reference to the Light as a reflection of Buddha-nature, and in Christianity, the haloes of Saints represent the radiance of divine nature.

The 13th-century Sufi poet Jalalu'l-Din Rumi advised, “If you keep your gaze fixed upon the Light, you will be delivered from dualism and the plurality of the finite body.” In more recent times, Martin Luther King wrote, “Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or the darkness of destructive selfishness.”

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As a scientist, I have always had a healthy skepticism and curiosity about the phenomenology of “The Light”. Reported studies of auras, Kirlian photography, and other approaches taken by the material sciences to quantify what others believe to be non-material, spiritual or purely subjective, do little to prove, disprove or enhance our understanding of the Light.

A few years before I was witness to the Light in India in association with animals, I was sent a photograph of a Tibetan Buddhist monk blessing the animals. Along with this photograph came the following explanation:

In July 1985 the first Phowa course by the Ven. K.C. Ayang Rinpoche was held in Tokyo, Japan. After the course Rinpoche made a short visit to holy places in Kyoto and Nara, the ancient capitals of Japan. On the 26th July a photo was taken of Rinpoche with some deer in Nara Park. When the photo was developed a clear rainbow appeared on the print. Many people have asked about the photo and this is the background to it. On that day many photos were taken in the park but I clearly remember taking this one as Rinpoche went and sat with the deer and said, “Take a photo now.” This was the only time that he had asked for a photo to be taken.

After the photo was developed I asked Rinpoche why he thought the rainbow had appeared and what it could mean. He told me that while he was sitting with the deer he had been strongly wishing that they could all go directly to the Buddha Amitabha Pure Land after this life and that the Buddha Amitabha would make contact with them from that moment. It is his belief that the Buddha Amitabha made contact with the deer at the time the picture was taken and that the power of His blessing appeared in rainbow form (see photo below). At the time the photo was taken no rainbow was visible and there was no rain. It was a clear, sunny afternoon and none of the other photos had any rainbows or light effects although all were taken under the same light conditions within a short space of time.

It is also interesting that the place where the photo was taken, Nara Park, is considered to be sacred ground and the meeting point of several “lay lines” (lines of energy in the earth that seem

to be linked with the location of major holy sites and buildings). This park contains three of Japan's most revered shrines and temples, including Todaiji, an important Buddhist temple famous for its huge statue of the Buddha Vairocana.

Rinpoche believes the real presence of the Buddha Amitabha is with this photo and has said, "I am praying that whoever keeps this photo with strong confidence and devotion will become inseparable with the Buddha Amitabha's mercy and compassion." (Jackie Young, The Rainbow Photograph of the Ven. K.C. Ayang Rinpoche)



Ven. K.C. Ayang Rinpoche blessing the deer at Nara Park July 26, 1985

With no intent to emulate, though I was deeply moved by the vision of the rainbow that is the spectral vision of the Buddha-light of divine presence, I was no less touched by some of the photographs of my humble self, enjoying the blessings of communion with a water buffalo, the emissaries from a herd of donkeys, and a Billy goat. These, and a total of some 200 animal souls, enjoyed the sanctuary of my wife Deanna Krantz's Animal Refuge in the Nilgiris, Southern India. This peaceable kingdom was a creation of loving compassion and years of dedicated hard work under inconceivably difficult circumstances. The light of India does not shine very bright for most animals. In these photographs I saw what I felt at the time: a golden light, sometimes with a whitish haze, almost dazzling, yet tender, around the animals. I recalled seeing at times the entire Animal Refuge and staff suffused in this light that was omnipresent and intensified just before dusk, when alpha dog Dean would have me meditate.

I knew the light I was witnessing was for real. I had seen it go out after Deanna and some ninety animals were forced out from a defunct animal shelter that she had been invited to restore—but the community did not expect her to confront the endemic animal suffering, cruelty, corruption, and wildlife decimation in the surrounding jungle. Of course, she did confront all these issues, and got into much trouble for her good labors.

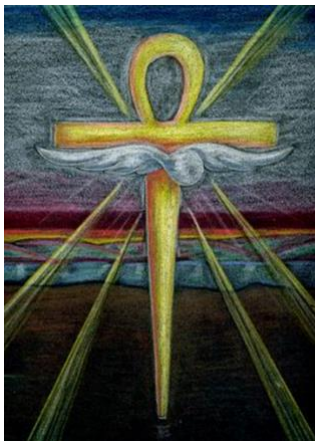
I realized that the Light had gone when I went back to the defunct sanctuary to pick up a few remaining items after Deanna and most of the animals had been forced out. I was so surprised that I got out of the jeep to look. The sky was clear and sunny, but all the vegetation, the earth, and the buildings had turned almost gray; everything seemed flat, tired, lacking in radiance and vitality. Most of the birds had already left to relocate to her new refuge just across the little river no more than 300 yards away, where there was food, water, and sanctuary for all.

I remembered, as I stood there in disbelief in this dispirited place, that I had seen the same loss of light in the captive elephants in American zoos and circuses, and at a nearby elephant camp. Compared to those in the wild who roamed nearby, it was quite apparent that these poor elephants had lost their radiance and vitality. Clearly my senses had revealed to me a phenomenon about which I had had no prior intimation as either part of my education or culture. The consequences of compassionate care are indeed profound, teaching me another way of seeing, if not another dimension of life. I will be forever grateful for the happy and secure creatures at Deanna's refuge who embraced me in the Light, and of course to Deanna.

One of the most vivid accounts (included in my book *Cat Body, Cat Mind*) was from a couple who both saw their deceased cat enter their living room in a halo of light after previously filling the artists' studio with an indescribably sublime fragrance. I have had personal accounts of people dying and giving off that kind of fragrance; and even a major newspaper reporter seeing the ephemeral shape of his beloved dog arise from his canine companion during the chemical-injection initiated euthanasia process.

How are these kinds of visionary experiences properly interpreted? Are they hallucinations, self-comforting imaginative creations, conditioned associative memories awakened by grief and remorse, or glimpses of the quantum field of love (the empathosphere) and life after life? I envision this as part of the boundless connectivity of a creative life-force from which the code of life, genetically and ethically manifested in our consciousness, we express as the light of compassionate action, loving kindness (*maitri*) and obedience to the Golden Rule.

Sometimes a camera will catch the images which our rational minds of such experiences would deny, like the rainbow that appeared when a Tibetan monk was blessing some deer in a park in Japan. My rendition of a vision that I experienced in the ancient St. Oran's Chapel near the abbey on the Isle of Iona on the west coast of Scotland invokes a sense of the numinous for some, an affirmation that this world is but one reality of which there are many dimensions, including the manifestations of our loved ones—human and non-human—after their mortal existence has come to its end. So soon will ours.



Vision on the Isle of Iona in St. Oran's Chapel, July 1958

These kinds of phenomena, and the visionary experiences described over the ages by people of various religious traditions and beliefs as well as secular non-believers who have had transcendental, metaphysical/spiritual experiences in times of grief and other emotional crises, during prayer and meditation, or ecstatic communion, often in Nature beside a waterfall, ancient tree or upon seeing a wild

creature—integral and culturally accepted elements of the Vision Quest of Native Americans—cannot be denied. However, denial is taking place by the instrumental rationalism of the dominant culture of materialism/mammonism that is destroying the soul of the Earth and all our sacred connections to the life and beauty within us and around us.

I feel that these metaphysical/mystical dimensions are significant in these difficult times of escalating religious and political conflict, ecological desecration, and suffering, not as an escape but as an affirmation that we are part of one stupendous whole and that there is a deeper, spiritual dimension to all our lives which we must not abandon and allow to go extinct by losing our humanity, or succumb to chauvinism and materialism. Instead, we would benefit all by evolving spiritually and ethically as a more empathic and enlightened species.