

Essay

Repatterning Prenatal Limitations and Umbilical Affect

By Karlton Terry *

An account of two meetings between the author and the esteemed professor Quang Lee Hu during his brief visit to the United States

Meeting on Repatterning Prenatal Limitations

“Psychology is formed by physiology,” he urged, banging his fist on the table. “For God sakes, the psyche is created by and flows from the body!” The hot sauce bottle, as he pounded the table, tipped from its base and fell over. “Imagine you were born with a withered arm. A WITHERED ARM!”

“So you already have a fundamental basic experience of the world as asymmetrical. Perfect balance for you, a never ending sequence of learned behavior subsequent to primal adaptations to the dry world outside the womb, is different for you than for a two-handed man. A whole world exists beyond your withered arm, out of reach to you. So your psyche adapts. It closes off possibilities. Part of your psychological envelope collapses. By necessity a corresponding experience occurs on the other side. You do MORE things with your good hand. You adapt. Consciously and unconsciously your whole world orients because of the arm.”

He was eating his burrito with a fork in each hand. The pace at which he ate increased with the enthusiasm of his demeanor, talking and eating faster and faster without losing concentration or spilling a drop.

This was the notable professor Quang Lee Hu from Qinghai Province China, who reached world notoriety after publishing his impressive cellular research in Beijing and was now lecturing and studying on a special visa at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, Department of Cellular Biology. A pioneer in certain aspects of the implanting blastocyst and its molecular ‘cross-talk’ with the epithelial surface of the mother’s uterus, he also considered himself an amateur psychologist.

“It’s not just psychological orientation,” now the hot sauce was drowning his burrito with such excess I could feel the sting of it in my eyes, the whole organism is affected, 100 trillion cells, and the psychology is embedded in each and every one of them just as the organism’s so-called ‘genetic code’ is embedded in each and every one of them. The mind exists throughout the body, not just in the brain, and the mind exists from the beginning, not just at some arbitrary time such as

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after the neonate has exited the mother's body or such as when the myelin sheaths have matured throughout the system. You think a one month premature baby is any more sentient than an 8 month old prenatate? Of course not. But the brain, your brain and the psyche, your psyche, and the mind in each and every cell of your body accommodates the withered arm, accommodates the shrunken psychological envelope on the one side and the expanded envelope on the other. Hundreds of millions of neurons have submitted to the doctrine. Bundles of nerves continue the circumstance, reinforce it, delineate it, capture it for God sakes! This brain is then stuck, the psychology of the withered arm is constellated. You don't look in the direction of the withered arm's shrunken envelope for options or possibilities because your brain and your psyche are both programmed, you've become hardened in one modality which in turn affects all the other modalities. Your brain is programmed, your mind is programmed, your neurology and the electric energy throughout your system, as plastic as it is, is fixated in areas because of your arm!"

We were eating lunch at Chipotle on Colorado Boulevard near the Health Sciences Center during the second of four organized interviews. The first consisted mostly of one tirade after another about travel inconveniences, visa complications, Cino/American relationships, and political intrigue at the medical center.

Some interns, nurses, and students at nearby tables seemed to be feigning conversation while not so subtly eavesdropping. The professor's charming accent was accentuated by his high-pitched voice which blasted from a diminutive creature no larger than a middle-school boy who could seemingly consume his weight in burritos and his IQ in hot sauce. Furthermore, his celebrity status, well established only in this small world of certain esoteric researchers and Nobel prize candidates, was not lost on the professor himself who exuded the stature and presentation of a mega star.

"You will not easily turn right. You will not pick a flower to your right, you will never play the drums, you will not orient into the collapsed part of your envelope because of your poor withered arm my friend, because of your brain, your psyche, and parts of your mind which operate within the body. The arm has frozen impressionable parts of you into a template, not to mention the innumerable affects and adaptations affiliated with the SHAME and self esteem issues you carry because of the arm." By now even the people in line waiting to order were listening. "Now the way you move throughout the world, the choices you make, the possibilities you allow yourself are all colored by your arm. Almost all of this is unconscious and automatic too: you don't think and decide with conscious deliberation each micro moment about how your life is governed by the arm – it JUST IS. And you are hardwired! The neuron bundles of your brain are in agreement, and so are all their friends and neighbors and distant relatives all over the landscape of your brain. Billions of neurons all firing away, billions of connections blasting through established pathways, channels, and superhighways, and unless something changes them, then everything stays just the way it is," slamming his palm against his temple. "This is the example of physiology controlling the psyche and limiting possibilities. But for God sakes the brain remains plastic, believe it or not, and things can change."

Then he became quiet and intense, still eating with both hands, but talking in a rapid-fire whisper. I couldn't figure out how he could swallow and breathe

while sustaining his insect-like chatter. “Now here’s what you can do with yourself. Here’s what I could do with you. This will change your life forever. It will change you in every possible way. I would repattern your whole psyche. Your psyche is currently fixated with a withered arm, and all that goes with it, but when you re-pattern you will grow without losing the positive things you have. Your compensatory development and adaptations are excellent skills and great friends to you. Your left arm will stay strong, your current ways of going through the world in order to be healthy, happy, successful and normal do not disappear. You get to keep them! Only now you change everything that is negative. Your negative psyche. Your negative mind. Who you would consider asking out on a date. How you feel about yourself. What you wear. You change yourself holographically including your internal image and experience of yourself. Here’s what you need to do. Are you going to eat that?” He was pointing at my burrito which I hardly had touched. I slid it across to him believing in the moment that if he kept eating he would keep talking. Our last meeting had ended abruptly when we both finished our burritos.

After distributing a glistening blanket of hot sauce, he got both of his forks going again. He started eating on the end I had eaten, and as an intern in a lab coat contracted slightly watching this, he continued, “Here’s what you do. You **REPATTERN!** You repattern everything. I’m going to take you and put you in front of a drum kit. I will take duct tape and tape your good left arm to your side. Then I’m going to take the tape and tape a drumstick to the withered hand of your withered arm and tell you **PLAY**. And you will play and play and **PLAY!** Do you see? Do you get this my boy? You will own that withered arm. You will swing your shoulders and get that drumstick flinging through the air until it hits the skin of a drum head. And the first time that sound bangs out you will feel something: new pathways of neurons will be talking in your brain. Just as though a little gossamer thread has grown out of itself recruiting nerve cell neighbors to assemble an emergent neurologic network like spider-web silk. You’ve found your withered arm and you’ve made contact with something. The sound of that drum will slap its way into your cranium and a **NEW** neurologic pathway will flash through your brain, and a new neuron bundle will bud with possibilities. You understand? The possibility! You see? And you’ll bend once again, lean a little, trust your balance, swing your shoulders, and **WHAM!** You’ve done it again. And that pathway is a little thicker, more competent, and it’s connected up a little better. Every time you try it now you can hit the drum. And you have that feeling like when you’re learning something new and you realize you can do it. Now you’ve got the whole somatic piece too, your whole body is getting it. And you love it man, and new neurons are getting recruited, and sleepy systems are waking up with possibility, and you play. You see your arm, and you see the drum, and you see the stick flying through the air, and so your whole visual cortex is changing too. It is seeing something brand new – and it is a part of you. You are a different you. Everything is changing. Now you learn to hit another drum, the snare; then the big tom; then the ride cymbal; then the crash cymbal. And next you get your whole body going so you’re playing in rhythm. You’re playing the drums with your withered arm, and your body is swaying and writhing and pumping up and down, and that withered arm is flying around like a lasso, and everything has changed.”

His arms and forks were whipping through the air like a symphony conductor. I must say that this wild little man amazed me with his relationship to food, for throughout all this peripatetic activity and turbo-charged lecturing he never spilled a drop of sauce or a grain of rice. There was no mess anywhere, not a pinto bean on the table, not a shred of cheese on his tie. It all went in. And never did a droplet of anything come flying out of his mouth as he bellowed and chattered.

“You see my boy,” I don’t know why he called me my boy as I was nearly twice his size and at least five years older. “You see? Everything has changed. Your options have expanded. Your confidence is increased. Your self-image may be absurd in the moment you are playing your drums, but your envelope is bigger. Your unconscious choices will be different. Your psyche has expanded!” He finished eating, and after a quick sideways glance at an unfinished burrito at the next table, he stood up to go.

“Do you understand why I’m telling you this? It’s because we all have a withered arm. Don’t you see? None of us are symmetrical. At some point in our prenatal life, during our deepest moments of vulnerability and development, we suffered a crisis, a mishap, an accident, even perhaps a threat to our life. Our mother slipped and fell, or she regretted being pregnant and had fantasies about abortion, or she caught the flu, had a fight with your dad, or ate too much hot sauce. And this little tragedy occurred while you were vulnerably in the midst of one of your biological milestones my boy, for the first trimester of the pre-natal period is nothing but one on-going biological milestone after another. So don’t you see?” He looked around the room making eye contact with some of the lunch customers as if he were at the podium of his own lecture hall. “We ALL have a withered arm,” he shouted magnanimously, “it could be your right adrenal gland, it could be the cornea in your left eye, it could be a valve in your heart, but our withered arm, wherever it is, has shaped our fundamental psychology, has created the very foundation of who we are.”

He looked poignantly at me and winked Find your withered arm my boy, and repattern!

He left the restaurant and bounded across Colorado Boulevard. I watched him jauntily moving along the sidewalk toward his lab. His left arm was pinned to his side and his right arm was scribbling through the air like a dazzling rubber garden hose.

Meeting on Umbilical Affect

Despite the stature implied by his white hospital coat upon which, embroidered lavishly on his breast pocket, were both the Chinese and American spellings of his name, my new friend, the little Chinese genius, looks something like a refugee or a fast-food delivery boy. He asked me to call him “Qwli,” a childhood nickname which, when pronounced clumsily in my Western way, feels like saying “kwlee” with a twig in the mouth. I found him in Chipotle sitting alone at the same table that had been the scene of our last two interviews. He had always preceded me there apparently to stake out some pretty hefty personal space, but emanated a polite, enthusiastic demeanor, tolerating and appreciating me. Perhaps his relationship to personal space represented a cultural expression of possessiveness,

given Chinese population and the intense pressure upon individual territory in certain cities.

As I sat down he smiled widely and said, "Same table. My Table." Before I could say hello he hollered from his belly, "I have implanted here, my place." Two nurses sitting at a nearby table gave me sharp and resentful looks, evoking the idea, without any nurse-like patience, that some unpleasantness had preceded my arrival. By association with Qwli, I was now implicated and apparently an accomplice. "They move for me," Qwli said, without looking at them. I answered the nurses with a smile and a sheepish shrug to apologize for whatever his extravagance might have been, but neither of them were anything but hostile. I wanted to explain whom they were dealing with or return their unfriendliness, but I tried to ignore them as I was anticipating an experience with Qwli that would feed me, and ratify my purpose for being there.

Then, after taking count, I noticed that Qwli had seven burritos stacked on a plate in front of him. A substantial collection of food, he had managed to pile them two above three above two so that they held together in something of a big tube rather than a pyramid. "Take a look," he said, gesturing for me to peer under the table. His feet were dangling six inches from the floor as he was sitting atop three phone books. The effect was something like a custom made high chair such that his navel was directly across from the center of the stack of burritos aimed at him. Unimpressed with his shenanigans, the nurses were still sending plenty of resentful energy in our direction, and clearly talking darkly about us. I began to wonder what kind of perversions they suspected me a part of, but Qwli was completely unfazed.

"They will die eating their own unhappiness," he explained, "while I have decided to live because I know I have something important to do. This is why I allowed my prenatal twin brother to die, or you might just say perhaps that I am responsible for his death as I knew how to take in all the food I needed, and there was hardly enough for one. Are you hungry?"

"What are you talking about?"

"We all live out the patterns set up in our prenatal lives. I'm talking about implantation, umbilical affect, and twin loss. I have examined and remembered much of my prenatal life, and being a human being, I cannot escape the creative staying power of certain powerful prenatal patterns, so I prefer to live them out consciously, sometimes even ritualistically, which is what I am doing today. I have implanted in this restaurant which is most similar to my mother's womb. I am floating here in front of an umbilical cord that is full of food most similar to what my mother ate. And I have invited you as my twin brother, because you are intelligent, open-minded, vulnerable, and needing, I think, a little good advice for your own personal development. The circumstances we live through prenatally shape every square inch of our psyche and create the basis of our personality long before we are born. Are you hungry?"

"Not right now, I just want to understand."

"Fine, where do you want to start, with implantation, umbilical affect, or twin loss?"

I realized I had unconsciously been rubbing my belly at the navel, "Umbilical affect, I guess."

“Excellent choice,” he said in a congratulatory voice, patting his stack of burritos.

“Imagine your belly is hooked up to three hoses. One of them enters your body passing all sorts of things through blood, shared blood, across your liver and into your heart. The other two leave your body from deep in your inner thighs and you can send all sorts of things back out through them.”

“Like an umbilicus?” I asked.

“Exactly. Now lets just say you are only two millimeters tall from top to bottom and your umbilical cord is like a grand canal one millimeter wide: the largest organ in your tiny, forming body.”

“Like an early prenatate, say in the first trimester?”

“Exactly. Now lets just say that your mother, besides sending you proteins and carbohydrates and sugars, and whatever toxins she was exposed to that day, let’s just say that she is in complete distress. She is not at all ready psychologically, emotionally or financially to become the recipient of the greatest possible obligation there is in life: growing a child. Therefore she is consciously, or unconsciously looking down on you with enormous disdain as if you were the greatest possible perversion in the world, supplanting her right to exist as a carefree unchallenged individual.”

“Like those nurses?” I asked.

“Exactly!” Happy I was able to follow his prenatal theories I began to realize how accurate his reconstruction was. The nurses invaded us with what I experienced as disdainful maternal energy. I recognized in my body a familiar shame which I connected to an existential humiliation I had often suffered at the hands of my own mother during the many times I displeased her as a child. A surging impulse to flee flamed up in me, but I knew I was stuck there, at least for the time being. I had the fantasy to run to the pristine air of remote mountains, bury my face and head in a clean racing stream, then lay in a grassy meadow and stare so deeply into a deepening blue sky that I could be absorbed into the perfection of a benevolent spirit world.

The walls of Chipotle are covered with bizarre tin and wood depictions of Mayan faces and I saw in them the distinct Asian/Mongol features which were the same as certain ancestral traces emerging, now more clearly, in the countenance of my amazing host who was floating there in front of his “umbilical cord” within his mothers’ “womb.”

“So what do you do? What can you do? What is possible for you to do?” he questioned, banging his fist on the table, threatening to topple the stack of burritos. “By the way, are you hungry?”

“Not at all.”

“Then, what do you do? Imagine the stress of the poor, unprepared mother. Neuropeptides carrying the molecular expression of her angst and regret are flooding through to you at the end of your feeding tube from which you can not escape. You are being inundated with her chaos and anxiety. Mountains of her feelings are flowing into you. And you, poor chap, say perhaps your adrenal glands are in the process of formation. All of her stress neuropeptides, adrenaline and corticosteroids are flooding with enough power to disorient, confuse and fatigue her. The blood saturation of the chemicals of her anxiety is too much for a grown

woman, let alone a vulnerable little creature the size of a cricket who is trying to create and regulate his own body! Your own stress responses, your adrenal glands themselves and how they will propel you into a response and even therefore a way of thinking are being programmed during their very own formation by your poor mothers' stress. Say she then turns to a calming drug, an alcoholic drink, or a chain of cigarettes to self-medicate her distress. Then what do you, a helpless prenaté, do? Are you hungry?"

By now my head was spinning. I felt clammy, cold, and my veins were shivering deep inside me. My kidneys were aching, my legs were shaking, and I had to pee. I looked imploringly at one of the nurses and imagined for a moment that beneath her icy veneer might reside a modicum of life-saving concern. If she had been my own young mother, and I her prenaté, I would have begged her to let me live, to bless me and want to meet me. I wanted to be a wanted baby, to be loved, to breast feed, to soil my diapers.

"You're missing the point," Qwli said. "I have overwhelmed you with information which, when processed by your brain and experienced in your own body, resembles a familiar crisis. Though you are sitting here with me in an environment that is relatively safe and benign you may be feeling as though you are in the midst of a life-threatening challenge. This is a result of your unresolved prenatal shock, which indeed could have been life threatening. Are you hungry? What would you do?"

"I would collapse," I answered. "You have been talking about me, haven't you?"

"You, and others of us," he answered. "As tiny little prenates we have all been through the overwhelm of umbilical affect. It's what we do with it that counts. It's how soon we realize, how soon we recover."

I fantasized that I could be a prenaté with a conscious mom, seeking connection with me – and I could somehow signal to her that she would be alright, that we would be alright, and could she please eat some pickles and peanut butter so it would trickle down to me. I looked for a connection with the nurse, but she and her friend had vanished, their table wiped clean. I felt completely alone. Then I saw Qwli, laughing and devouring one of his burritos. Talking to me through his frenzy of eating, "Yes my boy, I was talking about you, to you, and I see it hit home. You, like me, were the oldest weren't you? First child. The one who turned your mom from a carefree girl into a tired, overworked, insecure MOTHER with dark circles under her eyes, trying to comfort you in your endless crying. You would shrivel and disappear if you could. You would leave for a better place if you could, but you can't. You are you and you are stuck in your circumstance. But here is what you can do . . . you can squeeze off, flatten out, defend against that which does not serve your higher interests . . . that is, you can do this as soon as you realize you have a "higher interest," and as soon as you realize you are being polluted. You can eliminate, and send back and cycle through anything that is wrong as soon as you realize it is wrong. You have two hoses leading away from you and you can open them up to free yourself from every contaminant. Send back the poisons and infernal feelings and seek, with a microscope if you must, that which serves you in times of chaos and pain. Accept only what you need and refuse the rest. If your mothers' dread comes into you, pass it through, send it back, taking in only what is good for you and asking for more, more of the nectar, more of the peace,

more peanut butter and pickles if that's what you need. But when the toxic flood comes, repel it, contract if you must even while you are growing."

Rubbing my forehead with closed eyes, I examined his advice on the personal level it was intended, as if to his own twin brother who had died, unable to function as Qwli had in the times of prenatal turmoil. I looked up to express my thanks and saw him standing with the phone books in his arms, smiling intimately, exactly half of one burrito gone, leaving six and a half.

"Don't be afraid of too much information," he implored. "You will digest it all sooner or later, and at the right time it will improve you. For my part, little brother, I must intensify my work with you, for I am leaving sooner than expected. Soon I will be gone, and you will never see me again. You still do not understand, on a scholastic or personal level, what you must know about implantation and twin loss, both of which you need in order to grow in the way you want to, and to be able to understand the true meaning of my work."

He handed the phone books to the manager, who thanked him warmly as if they had a personal connection, and was gone. I found myself marinating emotionally in something like a tidal wave swelling in an enclosed space. But as I raced out of doors, I found an unexpected peace, and a great desire to see my friend again as soon as possible.

"When will you learn not to be afraid or cold?" I asked myself realizing that perhaps my own dear mother had been under great duress at some important time in my early life. I discovered I was now walking in bright light amidst the predictable chaos of a busy street in a big city and as I ambled along I imagined myself in a dialogue with my learned "big brother."

"Say those nurses represent the hostile, unloving part of the mother, even if it's in her unconscious, even if she thinks she's giving you everything you could possibly need," he said in my head. "What do you feel when you look over at them and take them in?"

"Sick to my stomach."

"So then why don't you block them out? Look over here my boy, you trust me don't you little brother? What have you got to gain by looking back at them? Do you think they are going to change into benevolent angels for you? Do you think they have anything enriching to send to you? No? So don't look. Don't take in their pain."

I imagined looking over at them and experienced a knot form itself in my stomach.

"You see? Let it go. I know it attracts you and pulls on you, but resist the urge to take in more. Stay closed and wait, wait for something that nurtures you. This is what we poor bastards could not do as prenatates. We were over-exposed, like giant windows, flung wide open, gaping in the midst of a terrible storm."

I flattered myself that I had not only his accent but also his wisdom flowing easily now in my brain as if he were still right there with me. "Shut it out. Shut it out. This is repatterning. You remember about repatterning don't you?"

I began feeling a little more relaxed, and less tempted to look at the nurses, or anyone else who didn't feed me.

"You see, whatever comes into the prenatate, the baby that is, if it's intense, hostile, toxic, or wonderful, the baby absorbs it deeply, thoroughly into many of the

cells of the body-whole regions: organs. If the mother is reluctant, experiencing chaos or fear, wishing she were not pregnant, or even fantasizing about the relief a miscarriage would bring, then floods of neuropeptides invade deep, deep, deep into the baby. And all this happens while we are creating ourselves, our very bones, our flesh, and our organs. As we are growing and forming, our cells and the body parts that, in the moment, happen to be the most vulnerable, can absorb and retain our mothers' anxieties. Your kidneys can hold your mothers' fearful stress, your lungs her sorrow. That's how you've been programmed, affected by what has come through the umbilical cord, and your behavior, your impulses, your personality is the 'affect.' So, as an adult you must detect, hold out, keep away and defend that which is not good for you. Toxins, foods that aren't right, preservatives, or other peoples' bad feelings . . . protect yourself from them, you don't need them, and they will never be good for you. Move ahead seeking and inviting that which feeds you."