



Dr. Schnabel, plague doctor 1656, by Paul Fürst

## Doctors, Nurses & Other Callings

How do we see these professions, and how do they see themselves?

*“Let me congratulate you on the choice of calling which offers you the choice of intellectual and moral interests found in no other profession.”*

— Sir William Osler, MD

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### Doctors

Who is a good doctor? Doctor Dolittle and Doctor Livingston, I presume. Why are they good? Because they provide service. Who is a bad doctor? Doctor Jekyll and Doctor Frankenstein. Why? Because they worked for themselves.



Gene Wilder with the monster, in the movie *Young Frankenstein*, 1974.

This seems to be how we judge doctors, as evidenced by literature, the mouthpiece of culture. Given the role doctors are now playing, we might reconsider this.

The lesson of Doctors Jekyll and Frankenstein is that doctors make bad scientists. Is this true? Is the problem with the doctors or the scientists, or what you get when you combine them?

These villainous doctors were using their skills to go beyond health and, in doing so, created violations of humanity. Their creations, Mr. Hyde and Frankenstein's monster, were reflections of themselves. They were their dark sides to which they were blind, in the case of Mr. Hyde, or over devoted.

Doctors Livingston and Dolittle lived in the service of their patients. They improved lives and built communities. They did not create new biological inventions, and they did not unleash dark energies. Livingston and Dolittle are heroes; Jekyll and Frankenstein are villains.



## Nurses

One can hardly imagine nurses labouring over bubbling retorts and Erlenmeyer flasks in castles on the hill. Before it became a profession, nursing was likely to attract grifters and undertakers. Literature has given us few characters to compare. This is partly because, before there were doctors, there weren't nurses. Providing comfort and support was a charity or family obligation.

Jenny Fields, a nurse and leading character in John Irving's 1978 novel, *The World According to Garp*, reflected both archaic and modern attitudes about nursing. As nursing emerged as a more respected profession, women emerged as a more respected class. *The World According to Garp* confounded nursing, motherhood, gender, and equality.

Florence Nightingale reformed nursing in the early 19-century. Nightingale was on a spiritual crusade, not a program of professional reform, although that's what she accomplished.

While she wasn't the sole voice of reform, it's largely due to her that the number of nursing schools grew from 3 in 1873 to almost 600 by the beginning of the 20th century. She's now recognized as much for her work for patient rights, hygiene, and the use of statistics, all of which play a role in modern nursing.

Doctor John Campbell is a modern nurse. The nursing profession is no longer limited to women, and Doctor Campbell's doctorate is in nursing. Campbell came to public prominence with the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 as a daily, trusted voice teaching, clarifying, and analyzing health care facts, mandates, and statistics.

Campbell continues to post daily broadcasts on his YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCF9IOB2TEyg3QIBupFtBDxg>, but he's now taking a more activist role. He's concluded that we're not being given the full story, and that some government mandates are contrary to the facts. Where his role as a nurse began supporting people and policies, he now declares that some policies are not supported by evidence, and, in true nursing fashion, he is supporting the evidence over the policies where he sees them conflict.

Campbell has been reformed by poor practice along lines reminiscent of Nightingale. However, unlike

Nightingale, policy makers are not accepting Campbell's illuminations. We would like to believe we're more medically enlightened than we were 200 hundred years ago. In some areas we certainly are. But in the area of policy that's consistent with the evidence, we're not.

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## **Therapists, are they Doctors or Nurses?**

Therapy has its own lineage, and therapists are increasingly differentiating themselves from both doctors and nurses. The heritage of therapy is as complicated as our understand of illness.

Before scientific medicine, there was no clear separation between mind and body. Therapy was some combination of faiths, reasons, and practical arrangements. Guidance and planning weren't divided between the mental and the physical.

Doctors dealt with acute illness and injury. Nutrition didn't exist. Faith healing, a combination of first and last resorts, was the province of priests and conjurers, not doctors. Longevity was sold by politicians.

The earliest doctors, before they were called doctors, were priests at the Temple of Asclepius. And they were priests with their own gods, temples, and ceremonies. Their caduceus, the staff of the winding snake, is now used to label doctors. These practitioners had more in common with shamans than scientists.

The closest thing to today's doctors were yesterday's herbalists, traditional healers who did not dabble in the newfangled "science" of alchemy. These healers did a combination of doctoring, nursing, and healthcare in times before pharmacy, nutrition, and hygiene.

Probably because of the confusion between mental and physical illness, and the need for someone to supervise the asylums, medical doctors were assigned high rank in mental hospitals. Given the outrageous, capricious, and unsuccessful mental health practices of the 19th and early 20th centuries,

it's no wonder that psychotherapy got a poor reputation.

Psychology's complicated birth, as it emerged from medicine, was a gradual evolution into a variety of less controlled, less respected, and politically less powerful fields that now include social work, coaching, counseling, therapy, and nursing, among others (Wright & Cummings, 2001).

The emergence of modern psychology was a combination of reductionism, materialism, reasonable and outrageous experiments, selective evidence, poor statistics, weak controls, implausible theories, political privilege, money, elitism, sexism, and narrow cultural perspectives. Psychology is still very much in its infancy.

As a discipline, psychology moves forward like a host of 4-wheel drive vehicles bouncing through the velt. It's absurd to call it a science, though its practitioners puff out their chests with scientific pride. That posturing is inappropriate because psychology is still exploring new phenomena. As it has no theories and makes no predictions, the methods of science are too restraining.

Today we find ourselves with psychiatrists, who are not trained in science, psychology, neurology, or spirituality, but are trained in somatic medicine and pharmaceuticals. These psychiatrists often have control over patients with conditions of psychological, neurological, and spiritual dysregulation. These patients are experiencing non-reductive, mental situations, and they're being managed by people trained to treat reductive, somatic conditions.

The well known psychiatrist and neurophysiologist Jerry Lettvin, from who I learned a few things, often said that he had no idea what was going on with his patients. Neurologists Oliver Sacks (1973) and Allan Ropper (2019) are famous for their stories about how little we understand.

We have the cannot-make-this-stuff-up-if-you-tired stories about carbogen (Stoller, 2019, p. 59; Wikipedia, 2022) and L-dopa (Sacks, 1973) that awaken patients out of locked-in states of coma and insanity. Treatments so startlingly effective and unexplainable that they are forbidden.

These unscientific mixtures of chaos and control shed some light on why the Brazilian Spiritist tradition has greater success in treating schizophrenics than Western medicine, and no one in the West can understand why. If you want to know more about Brazilian Spiritism, read Emma Bragdon (2012).

We're told that psychedelics have the newly discovered and astounding ability to relieve treatment resistant depression, post traumatic stress, and substance addiction. Who are we turning to to authorize these mysterious new cures? Our authorities, naturally. The same authorities who come from a culture that has no experience or understanding of them.



*Protectors against witchcraft, from town of Lassa, Nigeria.*

## **Witches and Shamans**

These old labels are not understood in Western culture. Their practice predates science and lays outside Western philosophy. It's typical that the victorious rewrite history and dispose of the vanquished. You may say you don't condone murder, but you don't have to. The civilized way to eliminate rival knowledge is to assimilate vanquished cultures. We talk about reconciliation, not restoration.

Killing the vanquished is the way of animals—the new pack leaders eat the older leaders' children—but for humans, victory is more subtle. We see the violence of the victorious in literature—Shakespeare's plays are full of slaughter—but today we don't cut off people's heads, we fill them with ideology. It's a form of epigenetic engineering in which new ideas, properly planted, perpetuate themselves. We create a new, positive story.

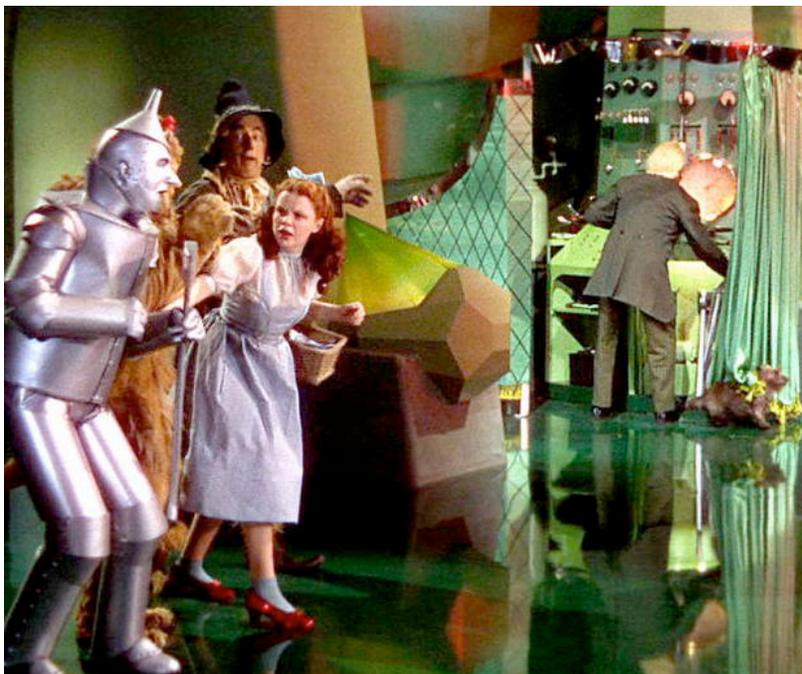
Politicians are full of talk about compromise and rapprochement; they're "healing the rift." We disenfranchise the opposition. And while we congratulate ourselves on our humanity, it was not long ago that we murdered witches, and there's no talk about reconciliation with them. Yet here we are, playing with the same tools.

Our new shamans control the wind and create money out of thin air. They're called engineering scientists and investment bankers. Our culture struggles to keep these new priests and priestesses clear of the reputation of villainy our literature could apply to them.

We preserve the integrity of our clerics—the scientists and bankers—through the actions of politicians and corporations. The scientists invent and—once the cat's out of the bag—the corporations apply. The bankers conjure and politicians spend. It's a shell game. We have used glorious progress to justify monstrous means.

No one elects a scientist or a banker because we know reason can't be trusted. That's the moral of *Doctors Jekyll and Frankenstein*. Reason only works in realms where it's worked before, while progress is all about going somewhere new. Scientists and bankers don't play Monopoly like the rest of

us or, if they do, they play with our money.



*"Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain." From The Wizard of Oz, 1939.*

## **Take Me To Your Leader**

The psychedelic medicine space is a hall of mirrors. Leading the charge toward these new therapies are doctors, nurses, scientists, bankers, politicians, and corporations. Most are looking not to use psychedelics, but to make use of them. It's feeling like a circus.

The "new sanity" of psychedelics could be all for the better. It's about time that we healed the dark sides of our nature. Can we help Jekyll control Hyde and find Frankenstein's monster a home?

Shamans and witches were priests and priestesses experimenting with psychedelics. What are we doing today? Maybe it's time to reconsider our rejection of shamans and witches (Müller-Ebeling et al., 2003). To do this, we'd have to empower them. What would that look like!

We all have dark sides that we've repressed, imprisoned, or forgotten. These natural aspects of us could become strengths if they were given support and understanding. Our 21st century personalities continue to lock our dark sides in 19th century asylums.

If you're ready to reclaim your power and the lost pieces of your soul, tell me. I'm happy to offer a 15-minute discovery call. Click this button, pick at date and time, and I'll be in touch.

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