

Ray

Dramatizes The Healing Powers Of Imagination

a review

by

Janet K Bloom

Ray, the profoundly beautiful new biographical film covering the first half of Ray Charles' life, is an eye opener. In it, the blind musician ultimately opens his eyes to a living image of his mother and baby brother, both dead. In this healing vision, which came to him as he came off heroin, his mother is still giving him wise, firm, and up to date counsel, as she has done throughout his life, though she died when he was young; while his baby brother appears to free Ray of guilt for his death when they were playing as children.

Though I've been an eidetic (eye-deht'-ic) imaging trainer for over twenty years, *Ray* is the first movie I've seen that is true to the new scientific understanding of how the healing imagination is actively at work within us, reaching out to restore our whole picture of a shattering experience. It shows how powerful inner motion pictures keep coming to Ray; how he backs off from them in fear, letting them haunt him for years; and how they come through for him in the end, freeing him when he faces up to them, bringing him profound healing, clearing the way to a successful future free of drugs.

Ray is so true to the new understanding of the central influence of imagination in our lives that I sense the authors of this screenplay are thoroughly familiar with the new Image Psychology founded by my mentor, Dr. Akhter Ahsen, and based on his discoveries about the distinctly healing dynamics of eidetic images which can clear up haunting problems. These inner motion pictures play in front of our mind's eye while transmitting their energies dramatically throughout our bodies, the instrument they play. I even think the authors of *Ray* may have selected Ray Charles' biography as a perfect vehicle for dramatizing the essence of this new psychology, which fosters a sense of independence as fierce as Ray's and his mother's, and encourages a person to pursue his own spiritual powers. Ray insists on this, saying in rehab, if I recall correctly, "Forget the head shrinking, Doc."

In this film we see not only a lush external portrait of Ray's comings and goings as

a highly popular musician, "the innovator of soul," but an equally dramatic portrait of his inner struggle to maintain his moral fiber, showing us what true grit is made of, and where it comes from. We see the visions that are his traveling companions, the fearful visions of suitcases and hallways and tubs flooded with water with human limbs floating up, and the visions of his strong wise mother fostering his independence. We also sense him envisioning God as we see his fingers reading the word of God.

Because eidetic imaging was coming up when Ray was, Ray did not have the advantage we have now that eidetic research has established both that we don't have to let our bad scenes haunt us and drive us to distraction, drugs and destruction for years; and that we do not have to wait for chance retrieval of images powerful enough to heal us. We can instead, as soon as signs of a problem arise, systematically turn to our inner motion pictures, asking them to show us out of trouble. They will not only show us to the root of our problem. They will, at the same time, as happens for Ray, reveal the solution, taking us through a profoundly enriching and enlightening inner drama on the way, a drama so clear it can spark healing in those we share it with.

Several visions from this movie are currently working their healing powers on me. The one that keeps strengthening me today is Ray's vision of his mother standing stiff necked in the full ferocity of her love as she refuses to bend to her blind child's begging for help and affection. The kindness and firmness of her unwavering refusal to give way to him is something I have long needed to see. This scene is coming through to me so vibrantly not only because the screenplay is giving me a powerful vision of a wisdom I have long needed to experience, but also because the parts of the mother, and child could not be played more compellingly or beautifully, as is also true of the parts of Ray and his wife in the rest of the film.

For me, watching Ray experience the dramatic visions of his mother and brother, and praying to God, was like "hearing the grass as it grows." I could feel the whole truth coming through to him, and Ray's inner strength – what I call soul tone – coming out. The film shows how certain songs arose as direct expressions of his visions, or from filling painful moments with flowing resonances. It makes it seem that it could be as natural for anyone else as it was for Ray to reach out for and be open to the familiar figures in imagination who can see us through the falsity and mean spiritedness we are confronted with all too frequently. Ray's mother emphasizes that these comforting visions are entirely beneficent, not to be confused with the sort of images that get us down, by saying, "I ain't no bad dream; I'm a part of you!"

Since we are increasingly overwhelmed with barrages of fragmentary, fleeting, fading, flaky, elusive, and haunting images, many of us don't expect to run into images that can pick Humpty Dumpty up and put him together again. I think a

knowledge of Dr. Ahsen's perspective emboldened the makers of *Ray* to follow the drama of this sort of images that we can now deliberately seek out, knowing that their vital task in consciousness is precisely to restore the structural coherence or integrity that otherwise is lost to us. Being uniquely holographic by nature, these eidetic images are the only images that give us the whole picture, the full story, tell us the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Once we have set foot in their realm we are no longer on shaky ground, with ourselves or others.

One of the most attractive aspects of the *Ray* portrayed here is his appeal for honesty. He asks his wife to always tell him the truth, just as his mother did. He knows to put his trust in truth, sensing it is the only thing that can give him a firm footing. It is no wonder then that he would be in rapport with the images whose mission in life is to keep us honest. (Is that why they're banned from consciousness?) Amazingly enough this film dramatizes the ways in which *Ray's* sense of honesty – his attraction to honesty – sees him through thick and thin. In this respect his character conveys the essential impetus and motive operative in eidetic images, whose every move is an honest move toward completion and fulfillment of the whole story. To keep us on balance eidetic images keep us honest every step of the way. The picture makes it clear that *Ray's* greatness and heroism is fueled directly by visions of his mother's honesty with him, so that through these visions heroine and hero become one.

One can feel a spacious sense of our need for honesty more deeply than usual during the scenes where we're given time to grope in the dark along with a man who is always alone in the dark, feeling his way all the way through each moment, whether going down hallways and stairs, frying chicken, or reading the Bible. One of his women and singers tells him, as best as I can recall it, "You're with each note! That's your genius. I want to be part of that." I believe we all want to be part of that genius, for we sense the thrill of full vitality in someone who is completely in touch as eidetic images enable us to be.

Many movies fearfully touch upon flashbacks, dream images, and hearing voices, but then retreat from them. No film that I can recall stays fearlessly in touch with these extraordinarily powerful sensory images as *Ray* does, which furthers my belief that this film is founded upon Ahsen's views. The story centers on following the fragments of a shattering scene that keep reaching out to be reunited with the whole clear picture of which they were originally a part. Eidetic imaging is the only discipline I know of that gives us the reason and courage to follow such images through to their healing conclusion. It does this by showing time and time again that we can rely on imaging to move us from the haunted to the healing realm of imagination. Eidetic images never leave us in pieces. When we let them tell us our whole story, we get a true sense of ourselves that leaves us feeling whole and fulfilled through recognizing ourselves as living members of a larger, beneficent whole picture.

Ray is so powerful dramatically that it gives me the hope that it can shift popular imaginative attention away from the dark, destructive and escapist replays of same old stories that keep dragging out our isolation in blindness, and compelling us to seek quick fixes and fixers. I can see *Ray* having the power to shift our attention to the far more fascinating, fruitfully compelling, illuminating, creative and uplifting adventures that our healing imagination is ready and able to take us on. This would not only improve our health, relieving us of the vacuities that cause substance abuse and scapegoating, among other things. It would reveal our vast capacity for compassionate honesty.

Seen simply as a biographical movie, *Ray* is so well put together that I know my interest would not flag seeing it a third or fourth time. But seen as illustrative of the direct, independent access we all have to the images that want to present us with dramatic solutions to the serious problems of our inner lives, *Ray* seems to me to be a great motion picture, brilliantly showing the way to a whole, profoundly new vein of healing storytelling to come. These untold stories would reveal the vast repertoire of dramatic and divine presences that are standing in the wings of everyone's consciousness, at the ready to appear and come to our rescue in any circumstance, by resolving our secrets, and showing us the healing ways we have within us that we've been keeping in the dark. Often the most profound healing these images bring us comes, as it did for Ray, from discovering the hidden virtues of our parents playing vibrantly before our eyes, showing that they are watching over us even now, with a deep care and wisdom we could not so fully appreciate before.

The loveliest moment of the film for me is the scene where Ray asks his wife-to-be if she can hear the hummingbird that the movie audience sees hovering over a flower outside the window of the cafe they're sitting in. At first she can't hear it. But she tries. And in a little while she can. She smiles. And then she shows how deeply delighted and thrilled she is by hearing the fluttering of wings through the hum that ordinarily obliterates this delicately urgent flutter. He asks, as I recall: "Did you hear that?" She looks inquiringly. He says, "His heart skipped a beat." Now that's script writing! We can hear a poet's soul beating.

The film presents Ray as bonded with his wife primarily through her being honest with him, as he asked her to be, and her ability to hear the hummingbird. I don't recall ever before seeing a movie clearly portray the deep and lasting ingredients – the spiritual ingredients – of a love bond. Why? Because these ingredients do not show up in the lenses of cameras which have only an external focus. *Ray* lets us see that our external motion pictures can live up to and do justice by the precision of proximities represented in our inner motion pictures, showing how they shed light and energy so deeply throughout our being. This scene especially gives me hope that we will now use our cameras to clear up our inner dramas, and reveal

our loving relation to our sources
in creation.

This film's portrayal of the savoring grasp of sensuality is particularly welcome since it has been out of sight in current movies. A man told me that watching Ray Charles feel up a woman's wrist "in order to see her" was a particularly sensual experience for him. The delicacy of the hummingbird vision of love is also most welcome, showing that we love most deeply and gently those who can grasp the hummingbirds we hear with equally deep delight.

In *Ray* we can enjoy seeing the dreadful mysteries of life clear out of the way and the sweet mysteries rise before newly open eyes. How true this portrait of the man will seem to those who knew Ray I cannot say, but it is a true portrait of how a man can pursue the truth sufficiently to grow strong and gentle on it.

If even a fraction of the stories we tell ourselves, and see at the movies, were stories highlighting the transformational pathways of courage and greatness and gentleness that are at the ready to shine out of the heart of dark brutishness that our current fictions have us tied up in, many of us could be setting foot on the sure ground of inner light, discovering that it is far more solid and supportive than the ground we are currently walking on, and that our understanding of it can be far more universal than we have thought or dreamt.

In my teaching of eidetic imaging, I have found that Dr. Ahsen's scientific and dramatic ways of exploring consciousness, as set forth in his imaging instructions, free us to see the light functionally, at any age, in any circumstance, whether we're in third grade, at the office, in the house, on the playing field, or in the stroke ward or prison. Practicing imaging lets us see the light directly, straight, on our own, fearlessly. We can see our way clear of spiritual turf wars, and of the distancing, fragmenting, ineffectual, iffy and shadowy views of imagination that currently mire our self-healing powers of imagination in obscurity. We can see for ourselves.

I am hoping that *Ray* inspires many to start reaching directly for the self-illuminating and healing powers of their own imaginations.

Were you in any way stirred in that direction by the film?

I would be interested to hear. **Email me at: Image Grove <alcyon@mindspring.com>, putting *Ray* in the subject line.**

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Author's Bio

JANET K BLOOM, M.F.A., C.E.I.T., Master of Fine Arts, is a poet, dancer and Certified Eidetic Imaging Trainer. She was honored with a Congressionally funded teaching Fellowship from the CETA Artists Project, and Fellowships at Mac Dowell, Cummington and Ossabaw artist colonies. Her poems and articles have appeared in *The American Poetry Review*, *New York Quarterly*, *Parnassus Poetry in Review* and *Arts*. She was an editor at *Holiday*, *Architectural Record* and *Architectural Forum*. She has taught eidetic imaging in schools, libraries, churches, spas, hospitals and prison, and in senior and environmental and art centers, and homes. Her first book, *SOUL PROGRESSIONS In Ahsen's Image Psychology, Harmoniously Releasing Ourselves From What Got Into Us*, is nearing publication.