

Part 3: The Changing Horizons of Health and Healing and the Need for an Expanded Understanding of Mind/Consciousness

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B. Lifestyle

People today are also consciously making efforts to break bad, unhealthy habits and adopt a healthier lifestyle. They are giving up smoking and drinking, exercising more, and attempting to include more natural foods in their diets. People are increasingly relying on herbs and botanical medicinals in contrast to over-the-counter drugs, as a more natural way of keeping the body healthy. Herbal teas are very popular. Relations with friends, exercise, sleep, reduction or avoidance of stress, inspirational reading, and diet, as well as techniques promoting a balance between the mind and body, are all being recognized as significant elements of a healthy lifestyle.

C. The Roles of the Autonomous Spirit and of Heteronymous Spirits

The New Age thinking about health recognizes the importance of one's mind, and especially of one's spirit, in maintaining one's health. By cultivating our spirit, and by keeping our self at peace and in unity with the universe, and in balance with other people, we can keep ourselves in a better state of health and have stronger immune systems. Our spirit works autonomously, affecting our spirituality, and its nurture is largely under our own control.

Whereas much of the new thinking about health is correct, and certainly helpful in thinking about healing, one factor that is often overlooked, even today, is the influence of forces beyond my autonomous "self" and my autonomous "control," forces which may at this point simply be called a heteronymous spiritual influence. Whereas my own spirit has an autonomous function, since it is my spirit, and is more or less under my control, a heteronymous spiritual influence is one that acts upon me from beyond myself. I can make efforts to keep my emotions and thoughts centered in positive things and autonomously discipline my inner life, but a heteronymous spiritual influence is one which acts independently from my autonomous control. Larry Dossey has already touched on this kind of influence when he speaks about Era III medicine as including a nonlocal mind (but there is a need to go even beyond that to an Era IV medicine). According to Dossey "Current evidence suggests strongly that the intentional mental efforts of one person can exert significant physiological changes on another distant person." (16) He describes this mental activity in Era III:

Mind is a factor in healing both within and between persons. The mind is not completely localized to points in space (brains or bodies) or time (present moment or single lifetimes). Mind is unbounded in space and time and thus ultimately unitary or one. Healing at a distance is possible. It is not describable by classical concepts of space-time or matter-energy. (17)

My focus so far has been on beneficial or positive influences, such as when someone prays for a person's well-being from a distance, or sends kind thoughts their way when thinking lovingly about them. But this influence is not always directed to us by someone merely from across the country, for example, and it is not necessarily always beneficial. In certain cases this influence can come to us from beyond a lifetime, that is to say, from the invisible spirit world, and such influence can be quite injurious to one's health. I believe that these two ideas are rather new, even though they have

been popularized by such movies as the cult classic *Exorcist*, and more modern movies such as *What Dreams May Come* (with Robin Williams and Demi Moore), *Ghost* (with Patrick Swazey and Demi Moore), or *The Sixth Sense* (with Bruce Willis). Furthermore, these ideas must seem absolutely revolutionary in the context of modern, materialistically-oriented Western medicine. Nevertheless, the implications for health and healing of such heteronymous influences, should they be real, are very far reaching. In places such as Africa, of course, such ideas have held court, but the Western medical establishment has never, to my knowledge, taken African medical practices too seriously. I can just see the disdain on the faces of Western doctors to even consider such notions. Nevertheless, I believe the Western medical perspective has come to the point where it must expand its horizons to consider such ideas as the influence from an invisible world of spirit. Judith Fiore, a clinical psychologist relates in her book *Unquiet Dead* (18) that she speaks to her patients *as if* there are discarnate entities afflicting them, and she finds that the mental stability of her patients improves. Thus, such new ideas as spiritual influences for better and for worse deserve new consideration. We need to be in possession of a more comprehensive philosophical context in order to fully understand such phenomena, which are apparently a real part of the experience of some people. Let us consider in more detail the concept of a heteronymous spiritual influence in the area of health, that is, diseases originating from the spirit world.

The Concept of Heteronymous Spiritual Influence

A. The Reality of the Spirit World

Unification Thought refers to the spirit world, and to our spiritual senses, but does not elaborate at length on this reality. (19) Many traditional cultures accepted the reality of the spirit world, but our modern, scientific age has, until recently, tended to neglect this reality due to the dominance of materialistic science. Certainly Dossey's Era I medicine would reject such a notion as an invisible spirit world. The spirit world is intangible and even though it cannot be perceived by our five physical senses, so important in the scientific enterprise, that does not mean that it does not exist. It cannot be proved to exist, but neither can it be disproved. It is an invisible substantial world, and is a realm which science should begin to take into account. As was noted above, when there are phenomena which cannot be accounted for by the current perspective, it is time to modify that perspective so that such phenomena can be reasonably explained. That is the scientific method and this is well-argued by Thomas Kuhn in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. (20)

The neglect by our modern, scientifically-oriented society needs to be corrected since the considerable influence upon us from the spirit world or, more correctly, from heteronymous spiritual forces' action upon us from the spirit world, plays such an important role in influencing our behavior and, more importantly for this essay, affecting our health. Whether our worldview allows us to accept its existence or not, these spiritual influences will continue to affect us. Thus, it is important for modern people to come to realize the reality of the invisible world. To understand the spirit world, we must consider first the purpose of our life on earth, and the relationship between the physical world and the spirit world.

B. Life on Earth and Life in the Spirit World

One's physical life on earth is continuous with one's life in the spirit world. Whereas we live on earth for perhaps 100 years, our life in the eternal spirit world is for eternity. According to *Unification Thought*, the purpose of our life on earth is to perfect our love, especially through establishing an ideal family. To establish an ideal family requires a husband and wife to bear and raise children of goodness, and to practice true love, or living for the sake of others. In the family we grow through the experiences of love as a son or daughter, brother or sister, husband or wife, and father or mother. Beyond the realm of the immediate family, we engage in interpersonal relationships with other people on a daily basis. It is important to maintain good relationships with other people.

It is ethics that provides the guidelines for the practice of love. Since the coming ethical society is concerned not only with this physical world but also with the spirit world, the norms presented by the new theory of ethics must be able to solve not only the confusion of this earthly world, but also the confusion of the spirit world. Thus, an eternal ethical society will be realized, where the earthly world and the spirit world will be united. (21)

It is wise to take great care in nurturing harmonious relationships with others and not to say or do things which may cause trouble or resentment in other people. In Korea there is a saying

that “you will meet your enemy on a narrow bridge one day.” If our words or actions are a source of resentment in the heart and mind of other people, such a circumstance may return sometime in the future to cause us trouble. Thus, care in interpersonal relationships is an important aspect of human life.

When fraternal love among brothers and sisters is applied to society, nation, and world, it becomes love for associates, neighbors, compatriots, and people in general, in which one can actualize such horizontal values (virtues) as reconciliation, tolerance, obligation, fidelity, courtesy, modesty, compassion, cooperation, service, and sympathy. (22)

Once we have perfected our love, it comes time to leave our physical body behind (this is our physical death) and we pass to the spirit world where we exist eternally as a spirit being.

The reality of life, however, is that we often experience tension in our relationships with other people. Anger, resentment, dislike, and other feelings occur if we are not careful. Often such feelings are harbored for long periods of time while we try to decide how to “take revenge” in some way. Probably the vast majority of people on earth today harbors such strong feelings as these.

C. The Way of Spiritual Growth

The spirit grows on the basis of our physical life and those actions which we do during our earthly life.

The function of the spirit mind is to pursue a life of truth, goodness, and beauty, and love—in other words, a life of values. Love is the foundation for truth, goodness, and beauty. Therefore, a life of value is a life of truth, goodness, and beauty, centered on love. To be sure, a life of values includes the aspect of pursuing one’s own joy by seeking spiritual values for oneself; nevertheless, a more essential aspect of a life of values is the effort to please others through realizing values...In contrast, the function of the physical mind is to pursue the life of food, clothing, shelter, and sex—that is, material life. The physical mind has the function of keeping the physical self alive. Material life is life centered on the individual person. (23)

Ideally, as we grow physically older and larger, we simultaneously grow in spirit (more internal qualities such as the ability for love and compassion, altruism and unselfishness) until we are mature both physically and spiritually, empowered with the capacity, ability, and techniques of true love.

In the original order, the spirit mind and the physical mind are in the relationship of subject and object. The physical mind should obey the spirit mind...

In order to actualize such a relationship between the spirit mind and the physical mind, human beings should have grown in accordance with God’s word. (24)

As people grew up, nurtured by love, they become united with God in Heart and “when human beings come to inherit God’s Heart, they feel a strong desire to love everyone and everything.” (25) Resentment, hatred, hurt feelings, and other such phenomena were never meant to be a part of our spiritual makeup. These phenomena are a result of the human fall. “In an environment filled with peace, happiness and love, people’s hearts are at peace, so it is impossible for people to get sick.” (26) Please take note of that last statement: “It is impossible for people to get sick.” We have seen how important the mind is in health. Even more so, if our spirit is healthy, it is virtually impossible to get sick. Medical practitioners should sit up and take notice at such a claim. The reality, however, is that most of us get sick, some of us quite often. We need to understand that behind most sicknesses is some spiritual malady. Let us consider this further.

(To Be Continued)