



Interaction Between the Body and the Mind

By

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The Oneness of Reality

The threshold between the material and spiritual/mental is imaginary – a matter of opinion or point of view. The flow between the two is a dance consciousness creates at every moment blurring the distinction between the two. Consciousness, having given birth to the material world in order to educate us in the art of the dance, is malleable, open to suggestion.

According to the *Tantra of the Wheel of Time*, as described in the lecture notes, the entire universe is produced by karmic winds! Alexander Berzin describes it in his article, **Brief**

Discussion of the Kalachakra Presentation of Cosmology.

The way this karmic shaping of the environment happens is through the action of the winds of shared karma” acting on the space particle that is the origin of the universe into which they will eventually be reborn. Through the influence of these winds of karma, the laws of physics begin to operate: (Berzin, 2011)

In the Lakota tradition, the physical world is viewed as a body. The heart of the body is the Black Hills in South Dakota, the rain forest is the lungs, the coral shields are the liver and

so on. In the lecture notes, Vesna Wallace compares human body parts with nature—the bones being mountains, the flesh as continents. From this point of view, the mind and the body are inexorably one. Their interdependence reflects the unity of the cosmos. The illness or health of one effects the other but just as the material universe accedes to consciousness, the body accedes to the mind. Hence, the mind has the greatest influence and can determine the health or illness of the body. The understanding of the oneness of reality is common to many cultural and spiritual beliefs.

Buddhism describes a state of complete mental health, free from all obscurations of the mind. In this state, transcendence of suffering and illness is possible. This state is nirvāna – where peace and quiescence are impervious to the mental stress that trials and difficulties of this life generally produce. It is estimated that 90% of all doctor's visits are stress related. It is not hard to imagine that a large percentage of disease and illness is psychosomatic. Thus, the healing of the mind has great significance in the healing of the body.

Spiritual ignorance, the inability of the mind to recognize its true nature is at the heart of the problem. It is the primary mental distortion. This is combination with the other three obscurations; duality, mental afflictions, and unskillful actions cover over the true nature of the mind and lead to karmic results. The karma accumulated from previous lives is a contributing factor to the development of disease in this life.

The Causes of Illness

According to Buddhism, there are distant and proximate causes. General distant causes stem from the three poisons and their effects over eons of lifetimes. The fundamental distant

cause is ignorance and self-grasping. By reifying ourselves as an independent, identity, separate from everything else, our ego's manage to invest in intentions and actions that build karmic results leading to illness.

Another cause of illness is caused by a disturbance or imbalance of the three humors—wind, phlegm, and bile. These humors influence mental states as well as the health of the body. Each one influences certain parts of the body and subsequently, the mind. For instance: Bile helps with thirst and hunger, helps to digest food and increases body heat. It also induces courage and intelligence. Throughout Buddhism and its concepts of medicine we see this interlacing of the mind and body.

The lecture notes describe how all physical and mental diseases are classified into three types. 1. Humors from this life, 2. Actions performed in former lives, 3. The combination of these two. It is true that illness can come from a variety of sources both inside and out. For instance, poisoning or an accident are examples of external causes. However, if examined closely each event can be attributed to karmic causes. By healing the mind of its delusions events such as these, if they do arise, can be handled in a spirit of acquiescence and calmness. This goes a long way in finding solutions quickly and speeding healing.

Healing Solutions

Buddhist tantras acknowledge that the power of mantras and medicinal substances arise not from themselves alone but due to the transformation of the mind of the person who empowers them. (Wallace)

Mantras are not practiced in the West as they are in the East. To understand that the mere sound of syllables can produce a healing result is still not an idea readily understood in materialistic cultures. It is a confirmed fact in cultures who use this method, that the recitation of

mantras does have a profound effect on the mind which in turn effects the body. It is for this reason that Buddhist tantras are a major part of Buddhist dharma.

It stands to reason that if the body is negatively affected by negative thinking then the body must also benefit from wholesome, healthy thought. It's as if thoughts are like paint and each thought is a brushstroke on the canvas. Whatever thoughts are chosen will reflect on whether the painting is positive or negative. An important realization is to understand that whatever painting we choose to paint is the painting we end up living in. In other words, if the painting is dark and gloomy with scary themes, this kind of thinking will produce those results in the painter's life. Thinking thoughts of compassion, faith, and loving kindness produces happy results. This brings to mind the fellow stricken with severe cancer who rented a motel room and watched very funny videos for a significant stretch of time. At the end of it, his cancer was gone!

Hakomi Psychotherapy contends that unconscious belief systems contribute to how the body forms and affects every aspect of it—much like how an oyster reacts and grows with a piece of sand inside its shell. An example of a belief, a very common one, is the belief of being unlovable. If the belief was developed due to a lack of nurturance from the mother then the body will be affected so that it looks vulnerable, childlike and needy. The behavior therefore is clingy, never getting enough, helpless. This behavior continues to be a driving force in the person's life until it is resolved. The imperative in Buddhism to become mindful and to dispel ignorance would also transcend all of these levels of obscurations and get to the primary cause which is ignorance. The use of mindfulness is the prime therapeutic tool used in Hakomi and this is probably why it is so effective.

One of the most powerful tools Buddhism offers is meditation. This is a very powerful curative medicine for mental afflictions. This mental training has three goals. 1. To know, 2. To

transform, 3. And to liberate the mind. Through the use of meditation, insight and quiescence are achieved. The mind becomes purified and luminous. This process relieves it of any distortions and as a result, the body's health is influenced. The mere act of developing the daily practice of meditation builds the qualities of faithfulness, discipline, and fortitude. Meditation itself, provides a life-long opportunity of discovery and healing. The insights acquired in meditation pry off delusions like layers of an onion allowing one to experience finer and finer levels of consciousness. This process is a powerful healing modality.

The Four Immeasurables

Loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. These four immeasurables are the sublime expressions of love—pillars of individual happiness, social harmony and peace. Through contemplation and practice of The Four Immeasurables, we engage in the act of transformation thereby healing the afflictions of anger, hatred, loneliness, sorrow, and unhealthy attachments. It is obvious in the world around us that disintegration and disharmony abounds. It is a direct reflection of the ill state of mind of humans. It is difficult to find one united and healthy person let alone a united family, community or country. As this situation manifests itself in unrest, the need for sanity and peace becomes increasingly apparent. It will not come from material success, outward activity, or the driven pursuit of happiness so glorified in today's value system. What is needed is the inward discovery of reality that waits for us so patiently. This reality is beyond words or earthly description. Suffice it to say that when encountered, it speaks the language of the heart—a language that transcends words and syllables. It is where all health comes from, all love, all wisdom and all peace. This is what the world so desperately needs. The Buddha came with a message many years ago from that reality with tools to help us find it. Those tools are needed now more than ever. My prayer is for all sentient beings to discover the way home as I believe we are growing more homesick with each passing day.

Compassion and love are not mere luxuries. As the source both of inner and external peace, they are fundamental to the continued survival of our species.

His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama

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