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MIND OF HEAD AND OF HEART

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*Some people carry their heart in their head and some carry their head in their heart.
The trick is to keep them apart yet working together.*

– David Hare

Introduction



In wholistic conceptualizations, our primary consciousness resides in spirit and is expressed through body, mind and relationships. The logo of the IJHC includes an icon that represents the interlinking of mind in head and in heart, and that is the focus of this discussion. The mind of relationships, wherein we participate as individuals in a collective consciousness, is a topic that is largely for separate discussion but will be considered here as it relates to the mind of head and of heart. Spirit connects with all.

Mind is often perceived in Western society as being the product of neuronal activity in the head, or, more precisely, in the brain. A parallel with computer functions is generally accepted as the way the mind comes into being, where the brain is seen as the hardware and mind as the software. Confirmation for this belief is found in brain injuries to specific parts of the brain, which produce specific deficits in mental functions. For instance, if your brain suffers the major trauma of a concussion, you may lose consciousness. When you regain consciousness, some of your memories may be lost. If your left cerebral hemisphere is damaged, you may lose your ability to read; if your prefrontal lobes are damaged, you may lose much of your ability to appreciate or experience emotions. Such symptoms are explained as the loss of functions of mind due to damage to neurons that create those mental awarenesses.

An alternative theory of consciousness is that it exists in spirit, with the brain being a radio or TV receiver that transmits the awarenesses of spirit into conscious awareness. This is equally consistent with the evidence from brain injuries. If a particular set of wires in a radio is destroyed, then certain frequencies may not be received or certain sounds may be impossible to play – although the radio transmission may still be intact.

Coming from the opposite orientation, a Sufi parable observes that those who are not awakened to connect with spirit will look at the finger of the teacher who is pointing to the heavens, while those who are awakened will look at the heavens.

This editorial will consider the world as matter and the world as spirit, and the implications of each for understanding mind – and for living our lives.

The world as matter

If the world is nothing more than matter, then the theory of mind being the product of the physical brain is a logical deduction, and one with far-reaching implications.

Mind, in this framework, is the on-board computer that guides the organism through life. Mind is connected to:

Sensory organs of sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and kinesthesia (sensing the position of the body);

Internal neural, chemical, hormonal and antibody sensors and responders; and

Muscle sensors and activators.

Thoughts are generated by complex nerve impulse interactions, much as computers perform various functions according to the programming in their wiring. The nervous system functions on the basis of genetically shaped nervous system structures (the hardware), programmed in response to life experiences (the software).

Ethics and moral behaviors are to a large extent individual and collective decisions, based on social structures that evolve and change through time. These are influenced by individuals and groups, through processes of reasoning and social power relationships.

Emotions are the product of nervous system responses to these various inputs, shaped by genetic endowments, habits of life experiences, and choice.

One of the most important deductions in a materialistic world is that if the mind is solely the product of matter, and if the brain is the source of our consciousness, then when we die that is the end of our personal existence. This belief shapes our world in personal and collective ways with far-reaching consequences. If the chips in the game of life we are given can be used only during this one physical lifetime, there is a strong incentive to maximize the social and material gains achievable during this lifetime.

Spirit informing body, emotions, mind, relationships with other people and with Gaia

If we assume that Spirit is the primary source of our consciousness, the world becomes a very different place. Within this belief system, each of us is a pixel in the All. Spirit invites us to choose our paths through life, leaving us the choices of how we invest the gifts and energies we are given and how we respond to the challenges with which we are faced.

Many are satisfied through the intuitive awareness of heart and head that they are connected via their higher selves to a spirit and soul. The inner 'knowing' (word I use for intuitive awareness) of the rightness of their intuition is sufficient for these people who trust their intuition to affirm their connection with the All. Others may seek cognitive confirmation they can receive through their outer senses to validate the intuitive information about the world, to convince them of the reality of their transpersonal selves.

My personal experience has been on multiple levels. From childhood I had an inner sense of the rightness and wrongness of things about the world. It was simply a part of my awareness and it is only in retrospect that I identify this now as my intuition. My education in psychology, medicine, psychiatry and research all distanced me from intuition (my own and that of other people I

knew), as I could not *prove* its validity. I could not see how to differentiate intuition from fantasy, wishful thinking and dreams. Gradually, I was able to convince myself of the existence of intuition through reading about meticulous, replicated research in parapsychology, validated to confidence levels that are astronomically beyond chance. (See Radin, 2006 for a discussion of this research; reviewed in the Book Review section of this issue of IJHC). On top of that, it took several years of exploring spiritual healing reports of healers and healees before I was ready to explore my own healing gifts. As these gifts developed, and as I integrated them in my life in general and in my work as a psychotherapist in particular, I then came to a place of inner knowing of the rightness and validity of my intuition.

...what is actually being healed by all human beings incarnate is the restriction or limitation of consciousness imposed when that consciousness must express through dense physical matter.

– Norwood

Having traveled that path – away from my innate intuition, through skepticism, and then back to cognitive and inner knowing of its validity – I have a lot of energy and understanding to help others to reconnect with their intuition. Because I started out a crass skeptic, I had to validate for myself through conventional research that what people were reporting about their intuition was real, and not just mystical beliefs. Over the years, I have gathered the best of the research literature on spiritual awareness, now published in *Healing Research, Volume III – Personal Spirituality: Science, Spirit and the Eternal Soul*. In this volume, I review and discuss substantial bodies of evidence from a spectrum of research explorations presents a coherent picture of spiritual dimensions.

Out of Body Experiences (OBEs) are reported by 17 to 27 percent of people who have been surveyed. These people report they experience themselves as ghost-like bodies, able to move about through intent, passing through walls and visiting distant places at will. The most interesting of these are reports from people who were blind from birth, yet were able to perceive visually while in the OBE.

We may sometimes return from death's doors, as witnessed by numerous people who have had Near-Death Experiences (NDEs). Those who have NDEs are forever transformed. They no longer fear dying; they know they have lived before and will live again; and they have a sense of spiritual purpose in life.

Research on children and adults reveals validated memories of past lives. Many of these people report specific details of single previous lives that researches confirm were not learned through ordinary means – particularly in reports from rural parts of countries where media exposure was virtually non-existent. These people do not demonstrate other psychic abilities, so these reincarnation memories are not explainable as telepathic or clairvoyant perceptions.

Research on apparition (ghost) sightings shows that multiple observers may report similar observations. Likewise, mediumistic (channeled) experiences facilitate communications with people who have passed over to spirit realms, and research has confirmed the accuracy of information conveyed by spirits about the physical world they left behind.

Reviewing this research helped me come to accept the validity of intuition and of life beyond death – which I had also considered for many years to be wishful thinking and denial of the finality of the end of physical life. I fully understand that others have not take the troubles I did to clarify these questions, and hope that these summaries in *Personal Spirituality* will be a help to them as well.

Gnowing with mind of heart vs with mind of head

Head gives us linear information through our right brain hemisphere, and gestaltic, patterned information through our left brain, and lends its functions to reasoned, logical analyses. Evidence for the value of this approach is commonly presented in the material benefits we have reaped from scientific advances that create an affluent lifestyle – certainly by world standards. In the Western world we have become so used to focusing on this mode of relating to the world, and it has been reinforced so thoroughly through our educational system and lifestyles, that for many it appears to be ‘the way things are.’ From this perspective, intuitive gnowing is difficult to comprehend and to explain.

Heart gives us a patterned sense of the world, in which we sense intuitive and energetic relationships and interactions with other people and the environment. Heart responds with compassion and healing. This approach does not negate linear knowing, but accepts that that is only one aspect of the world and one of many ways of connecting with animate and inanimate parts of our cosmos.

In the linear world, values are choices we make based on recommendations of family traditions, societal norms, and respected teachers. The ten commandments are logical suggestions for ways in which we can get along better with each other and with the God of the Bible. Conventional wisdom suggests that these values have supported the social structure for many generations and withstood the test of time - and therefore are deserving of our credence and loyalty.

In the intuitive world, values are based on the inner gnowing of the rightness and wrongness of our relationships with people and the world at large. “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you” is not a rule; it is a known truth because the other is a part of you and me and everyone else. Compassion and healing are natural parts of this worldview.

*Never give up
no matter what is going on.
Never give up.
Develop the heart.
Too much energy in your country
is spent developing the mind instead of the heart.
Develop the heart.
Be compassionate.
Not just to your friends, but to everyone.
Be compassionate.
Work for peace in your heart and in the world.
Work for peace, and I say again,
Never give up, no matter what is happening.
No matter what is going on around you.
Never give up!*

– HH The Dalai Lama

The down side of the logical, linear ways of living in the world is that we have selfishly benefited from exploitation of natural resources and have not been responsible stewards to these resources. Industrial society has made the world safer and more secure – for those who are in the developed world. However, we have done so with incredible short-sightedness, self-centeredness and irresponsibility. We have squandered our resources to provide unsupportable high standards of living for a select few and have failed to conserve limited global resources.

The developed world lives at the expense of the undeveloped world, exploiting human and environmental resources.

The down side of a knowing way of relating to the world is that there is no guarantee that inner knowing is not tinged, tainted or grossly distorted by false beliefs which we misperceive to be valid. That is, we may project our beliefs, wishes or fears onto the world without realizing we are doing so. We may feel we are right in advocating for particular religious beliefs or actions based on our inner knowing that turn out to be not for the highest good of all. The best safeguard against this danger is to always consider choices and actions in the light of what would be for the highest good of all and to make decisions collectively, including decision-makers from diverse backgrounds in the governing councils.

Broader implications of intuitive knowing

The heart knows its connections with the All – including:

- All of mankind in our collective consciousness (Frazer; Jung);
- All of the other living organisms – including every animal (Sheldrake) and plant (Wright) on our planet;
- *Gaia*, our ecobiological system that has amazing homeostatic feedback mechanisms that maintain the temperature, atmosphere, waters and chemical balances on our planet within ranges that are conducive to life as we know it (Lovelock); and
- The realms of Spirit beyond physical reality (Beard; Myers).

Once we become aware of our connection with the All, we can sense each of us is a part of the whole. If we harm any other part of the whole we are hurting a part of ourselves. Ecological thinking becomes a natural way of relating to the world.

Great hearts steadily send forth the secret forces that incessantly draw great events.
– Ralph Waldo Emerson

Conversely, everything that happens anywhere is a reflection of a part of ourselves. The vast world becomes a wonderful, living feedback mechanism, teaching us wonderful lessons if we but attend to what it is telling us.

If your heart were sincere and upright, every creature would be unto you a looking-glass of life and a book of holy doctrine.

– Thomas à Kempis (14th Century)

It is in the hope of awakening more of this heart awareness of our collective presence on this planet that I have worked for over 20 years to bring out Volume 3 of Healing Research, and continue to work produce the IJHC, the Wholistic Healing Research website, and the monthly eZine of both.

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