

NO QUESTION SHOULD GO UNANSWERED - II

This is the second in a series of Reflections dedicated to answering questions raised about the work of Sydney Banks and of organizations that base their work on the Principles of Mind, Consciousness and Thought. The first essay addressed two questions: (1) Why does this differ from other work that links thought to reality and experience? (2) Why is finding respect, rapport and deeper human feelings within oneself central to all interactions, regardless of the subject-matter or of the circumstances?

This essay will explore only one additional question:

3. How can you possibly use the term “innate health” in a medical setting where people are suffering and dying from disease every day? Aren’t you giving false hope to people? And, worse yet, aren’t you implying that people are somehow responsible for their own suffering and death unless they somehow “get in touch” with this elusive “innate health”?

The term “innate health” is justifiably confusing in a health-care environment in which knowledge of disease is derived from the biology, chemistry and anatomy of the physical body and in which the first thing that comes to mind when “health” is mentioned is the degree of physical robustness a person has or has lost. Common language without common meaning can support misunderstanding unless terms are clearly defined. We could and should do a much better job defining our terms.

What we mean by innate health is this: It is intrinsic to all people to be able to access a sense of well-being, regardless of any circumstances in life, including pain, physical limitations and dying. Everyone’s experience of life varies, according to how each person is thinking. Each person sees his own life circumstances differently from moment-to-moment, as his state of mind changes.

Innate health does not refer to the maintenance of a consistent and constant state of uninterrupted good feelings. It is not a “place” to get to, or an ideal objective. Innate health refers to the realization of the truth that good feelings come and go depending on our own thinking, and that no one thought has power over us indefinitely because thinking is a dynamic, ever-changing process. It refers to the general sense of well-being that arises from understanding the role of our thinking in creating and changing our experience. It refers to the peace of mind that arises from knowing that the source of our perspective on experience is internal, that we are the thinkers of the ever-variable thoughts that continually paint the picture of our personal world.

Twenty years ago, a friend of mine suffered what most observers would call a miserable death from cancer. By the time his cancer was discovered in his stomach, it had

metastasized throughout his system. He had surgery that resulted in the removal of one large tumor and the recognition that nothing more could be done about the spread of the cancer. His doctors advised him that he could have chemotherapy and radiation therapy, but his condition was incurable. He could extend his life by a matter of months, but he had to understand this as a quality of life decision. His wife was in her first trimester of pregnancy at the time. He wanted to see his baby. He was told he would have tremendous pain and need to be heavily medicated and that, by the time the baby was born, he might not be in any condition to know about it. But he was told that he would have to make that decision for himself, too, as he could “endure” the pain with as little medication as he could stand. He took a week to reflect on his options.

This is not a story about a miraculous cure. He died. This is not a story about freedom from pain. He felt a lot of pain. This is not a story about physical health. His physical condition steadily and rapidly deteriorated. But this *is* a story about innate health. He decided to live as long as he and the doctors could keep his body going so that he could be a companion to his wife during her pregnancy and have the joy of seeing his baby. He undertook every treatment that could be offered, without complaint, and with as little pain medication as possible. He and his wife talked long hours about the baby and how the baby would grow up, and what would be important for that baby to know about the father who would be gone before he could be remembered. They gathered friends together often to listen to favorite music and tell stories and share laughter. During those times, we all forgot how sick he was. I remember once someone grabbing his hand and trying to pull him up to dance with everyone. Suddenly realizing he was too weak to stand, she was momentarily embarrassed and apologetic. He just laughed. “I’m dancing in my heart,” he said. “I’m glad you could feel that.”

Within his own mind, even as his body was ravaged, he was free to enjoy life and love and friendship and beauty. He savored his last spring, and through his descriptions of what he was seeing, we all came to appreciate the season more deeply. He died in early summer shortly after the baby was born, at home, in his wife’s arms. His last words were, “Don’t be sad. I’ve enjoyed all of this life. Now on to the next.”

Consider Stephen Hawking. Consider Christopher Reeves. Consider people attended to every day in hospitals and medical facilities who move gracefully through their moments of discouragement and fear and continually return to a beautiful state of mind, inspiring to those around them, despite physical conditions others might call horrible or unendurable. Consider the intangible that medical professionals call “the will to live” or the “spirit” of a person that seems to play a larger role in the ability to heal comfortably or to die gracefully than the ministrations of medical science.

The question central to our work is: What do those who enjoy non-contingent contentment, heal comfortably and die gracefully understand that others do not? Is that understanding generalizable and accessible to all people – *i.e.*, universal? If it is

universal, then it must be common to all because of discoverable universal truths, or principles, that operate the same way for all.

If it is universal, then it is a source of hope for all people that they do not have to live at the mercy of any life circumstances, but can be free, within their own minds, to experience any circumstances from a vantage point of internal peace and confidence. If it is not universal, then some people are lucky and some are not, and we all must live at the mercy of external forces.

If we look at observable phenomena, it would be hard to take the latter position, though. If the power to direct our lives were in the external forces, then what would explain the extraordinary variation in people's experiences of exactly the same circumstances? Wouldn't, for example, a terminal illness create the same fear, distress and misery in all people that it seems to in some people? Why is it excruciating and depressing for some people to endure a minor procedure, while others can handle years of difficult treatments and sustain their enthusiasm and optimism? Some might say the answers to those questions lie in the past experiences of the people. But, if so, by what power do those past experiences enter the present and come to life for them?

Looking at the meaning of "innate health" requires at least willingness to consider that the physical realm is not all there is to life, that the physical realm is one form life takes in a cosmos that includes both the infinity of formlessness (possibilities) and an infinitude of forms (experiences). It requires taking a step beyond the sciences of the physical into the sciences of physics. It requires inquiry into the energy of life as well as the matter. It requires inquiry into the deeper logic that defines the movement between the two.

What is innate, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, "belongs to the original or essential constitution" of something (as opposed to *acquired*); is "inborn, native, natural"; is related to "qualities or principles." We come into life as human beings, with an inborn, recognizably common operating system. We are thinking continually as long as we are alive. Thinking is essential to the experience of being a living human. But as we go through life, we express the potential in the principles uniquely and we acquire different lives. We all think different thoughts.

Innate health is the universal lawfulness of principles, before we express them into our individual experiences of life.

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