

BE OF ONE MIND...

“Be of one mind, and live in peace.”

This may sound like a statement from Sydney Banks. but it isn't. It is etched into a glass door from the burial place of the unknown soldier and other dead from World War II at Westminster Abbey in London, England.

“...although symptomatic improvement resulting from placebo and medication treatment may be similar, the two treatments are not physiologically equivalent ...”

This may sound like an idea postulated by a Principles practitioner, but it isn't. It is a statement from an article published in January, 2002, in *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, in which researchers reported that positive changes in the brain function of patients treated with placebo appeared to be innate and different from compensatory changes in patients treated with medications, although both affect the same areas of the brain.

*“An important question to ask is: why do we not find evidence for the placebo effect working all the time? ... The answer probably is that it **is** working at a basal level all the time... Its expression probably also differs among individuals, and the strength of one's beliefs may also exert a profound impact on the heightened expression of these proactive innate protective responses ...”*

This may sound like speculation by a person researching the Principles, but it isn't. It is one of the conclusions of a study of neural processes and their coupling to constitutive nitric oxide (essential to healthy immune functioning) conducted by scientists at the Neuroscience Research Institute at the State University of New York, and published in 2001 in *Brain Research Reviews* (35, 1-19).

“An insightful way of conceiving of the human soul, viewed in the light of our psychosomatic unity, is to regard it as the immensely complex, information-bearing pattern carried by the body.”

This may sound like a discussion of the principle of the Principle of Consciousness, but it isn't. It is a statement by Sir John Polkinghorne, a highly respected mathematical physicist and Anglican priest, winner of the 2002 Templeton Prize, in an article published in *Research in Science and Theology*, Vol. 2, No. 8, April, 2002.

“Neurologically speaking, then, the mind cannot exist without the brain, and the brain cannot exist without striving to create the mind. The relationship of mind and brain is so

intimately linked, in fact, that it seems most reasonable to consider the terms as two different aspects of the very same thing.”

This may sound like a note from an Principles seminar, but it isn't. It is a passage from the book *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief*, written by Andrew Newberg, M.D., Eugene D'Aquili, M.D., Ph.D. and Vince Rause, and published in 2001 by Ballantine Books, New York. It is a detailed account of neuroscientific research into meditative states and the brain activity and chemistry that is present when people “know” the peace and beauty of spiritual connectedness.

“An important thing to realize is that Universal Mind and personal mind are not two minds thinking differently, but two ways of using the same mind.” ... As we start to regain the true relationship between our personal intelligence and the spiritual wisdom that lies within, we develop a high degree of intelligence and common sense. This, in turn, clears up our misguided lives.”

These excerpted statements are from *The Missing Link*, by Sydney Banks (1998. Lone Pine Publishing. Renton, WA.)

How are these ideas connected? Each is a facet of the extensive, age-old human search to understand how we can live at peace, in well-being. What do they suggest? They suggest that the search, from many different starting points, often illuminates the direction towards something universal, innate and therefore always accessible.

The word “innate” and the idea of something natural and available from within (placebo effect) emerge consistently in scientific and philosophical discussion, both as inevitable conclusions of logical observation, and as inexplicable phenomena. Innate qualities can be discovered, but they cannot be explained. We have discovered, for example, the capacities and functions of blood moving through the circulatory system. But it would be impossible to explain how and why the whole system was designed as it was. We are now able to watch the placebo effect at work within the brain through imaging techniques. But it would be impossible to explain how it came to be available to us and why it is set up to work the way it does.

If there are innate chemical processes that seem to ebb and flow positively and negatively to influence the physical immune system, and if these processes appear to be immediately sensitive to activity in the brain which differs qualitatively and measurably in different states of mind, then the state of mind in which people generally spend their time really does matter to physical well-being. The next step would be to study how more health-giving and positive chemical responses can be generated through an understanding of how people find and sustain a more peaceful state of mind in everyday life.

If, as has been reported most notably in two recent studies of depression in the *Journal of the American Psychiatric Association*, the placebo response is usually as effective as medication and yet appears to do its work in the brain in an entirely different physiological way, then there is a suggestion that a psychological immune system at least as helpful as drugs is innate to people. The next step would be to study how that psychological immune system is aroused or awakened and sustained.

Many researchers, from many disciplines, are seeking a deeper understanding of how these innate processes communicate and to what music they dance together to express higher levels of well-being and quality of life. This is gratifying to people who have had faith and found hope in innate health from experience and observation. And this is equally gratifying to people who have had scientific curiosity about some mysterious and unexplained phenomena, such as the placebo effect, spontaneous remissions, and simple good cheer and resiliency in the face of circumstances that are believed inevitably to cause suffering or psychological damage.

Over the past few years, many people have sent me articles related to research in what they perceive is the work of The Sydney Banks Institute for Innate Health. I have found myself sorting them into two categories. One is the category I call “thinking about the problems” and the other is the category I call “looking for answers.”

“Thinking about the problems” is the much larger pile. It is a towering collection of studies of stress, dysfunction and distress, which break down those experiences in a myriad of ways – by gender, by age, by type of work, by educational level, by industry, by economic status, by ethnicity, etc., etc. These studies describe, in detail, the ways in which human problems manifest and the losses they cause in happiness, productivity, family unity, spiritual practice, social capital, technical progress, etc., etc.

“Looking for answers” is a much smaller pile. But the work reflected in that pile focuses on explorations of the mystery of “no problems”, looking for explanations of harmony, resiliency, health, immunity, positivity, recovery rates, happiness, family unity, productivity, etc. These studies tend to be more interdisciplinary, both among the sciences and between the sciences and other disciplines such as philosophy and the humanities.

Both types of study come from the same original idea -- a common human desire to understand and resolve suffering. I cannot help but observe, though, that the original idea often fragments into discouragement and hopelessness in the face of overwhelming data when it turns to “thinking about the problems.” And the original idea often approaches resolution and hopefulness when it turns to “looking for answers.”

This all came together for me when I saw that inscription at Westminster Abbey, “*Be of one mind, and live in peace.*” When we are of one mind that we share the capacity to see

beyond the details of our problems and look for answers in mystery and the unknown, we may see how to live in peace.

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