

## THE UNIVERSAL SPIRIT OF HEALING

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*Spirit* is the basic power of the universe, a vast energetic web that sustains and interconnects all creation, the inhabitants of this world and many others. *Spirit* refers to the substance of life, a typically unseen energy that permeates and radiates through the universe and everything within. In this form it does not connote a personality, but implies some innate consciousness of a level beyond human comprehension. Glimpses of the workings of spirit are seen through the findings of quantum physics, and energy based healing techniques such as acupuncture and intuitive healing. In many traditions it is the relationship with this spirit or supernatural force that promotes health. Disease is caused when this relationship is disrespected or disturbed.<sup>1</sup> From the shamanic and other perspectives, humans, animals, dead souls, and the elements of nature are all created and composed from the same spiritual substance, forming a web or a holographically related universe that acts as one large organism, each part affecting the others. This is a key concept to many vibrational and energy based healing modalities.

### - Human Interaction with Spirit -

Human interaction with the divine has taken myriad forms over time. For the purpose of discussing that interaction in relationship to healing, two basic categories can be used to describe the way sacred or spiritual energies are engaged for healing human beings. The first category is a simple request to Spirit for healing. This appeal can be very specific or quite general and takes place in a variety of settings. This category could be called "passive healing," as the practitioner essentially submits her request to Spirit without dynamically initiating change. In the second category, the conscious manipulation of energy or "active healing," an individual or a health practitioner uses a technique designed to affect the nature, quality, quantity or flow of a particular type of energy in and around the human body. There are many comprehensive systems of energy healing, some millennia old and some born in recent decades.

### - Shamanic Healing and Animism -

The most ubiquitous of shamanic principles is animism. According to the American Heritage Dictionary animism is the following: 1) The attribution of conscious life to nature. 2) The belief in the existence of spiritual beings that are separate from bodies. 3) The theory that an immaterial force animates the universe.<sup>2</sup> For example, the Cree believe in *manitous* (spirits) that exist everywhere in nature. They also have faith in a "Supreme Being called Manitou or Kitche Manitou, Great Spirit."<sup>3</sup> The Cree manifest the belief in animism, that nature is alive with spirit and that the universe is ordered or guided by a great spiritual presence.

It is upon these three basic ideas that the tenets of shamanic healing have evolved. Shamans deal with the spiritual causes and effects of healing. Their goal is to affect the physical, but they believe the physical world is a manifestation or reflection of the spiritual world. In seeking healing the shaman typically employs the help of a spirit or group of spirits. Part of becoming a shaman is developing relationships with compassionate spirits who are willing to assist in healing. The shaman works with them over time, becoming skilled in enlisting their help and performing rituals to honor them. The shaman's spirit allies are summoned during a healing ceremony. The spirit is the healing agent while the shaman acts as an intermediary on behalf of the patient.

### - Prana -

In the Vedic tradition of the Indian subcontinent, *prana* is the name of this vital spiritual essence. *Prana* is a Sanskrit word meaning "life-force" and is also interpreted as the essence of the breath. Many healing systems originating in this region of the world are based on the cultivation and management of *prana*, including yoga and ayurveda. Another word for pranic energy is *kundalini*. The activation of the kundalini energy, which is symbolized as a serpent coiled at the base of the spine, begins a process of unifying the feminine and masculine energies in the body.

- Ch'i -

The Chinese physician Koai Yu Chu, is said to have written the *Nei Ching*, the world's oldest book on medicine more than 45 centuries ago. He describes the universal spirit as "...an essential, primordial energy that gives birth to all the elements and is integrated into them... energy is only an abstract substance in the sky, whereas on earth it is transformed into a concrete physical substance."<sup>4</sup> This essence is known as *ch'i*. The balanced flow of the *ch'i* energy is critical to health and harmony, whether flowing through a human body, a home, or a city. Fostering the most beneficial flow of *ch'i* is the basis for many Asian philosophies and health regimens as *T'ai Ch'i* and *Qigong*. Acupuncture is also based on the principle that a harmonious flow of *ch'i* is the basis for physical, emotional and spiritual health.

- *Pneuma*, *Dynamis*, and *Orgone* -

Even the Ancient Greeks held a belief in the universal spirit of health. Pythagoras' name for this healing energy was *pneuma*. He believed it was the "central fire in the universe and provided man not only with his vitality but with his immortal soul."<sup>5</sup> Hippocrates also had a name for the universal spirit. He called it "medicatrix naturae."<sup>6</sup>

Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy, called the universal spirit *dynamis*. Hahnemann believed that when this energy is "disturbed" by an imbalance of body, mind or spirit the natural state of health is interrupted and illness results. To re-establish this vital force, Hahnemann prescribed "remedies" derived from nature.

Wilhelm Reich, a psychiatrist and natural scientist, dubbed his version of the universal spirit *orgone* energy. He described it as "a mass-free primordial power that operates throughout the universe as the basic life force." He believed the energy is present in all living things and that its "proper flow" is crucial to maintain health. Reich also postulated that orgone brings us full circle in our analysis of spirit. He asserted that it was "the scientific reality of what most people call God."<sup>7</sup>

- Edgar Cayce - Psychic Diagnostician -

One of the most noted psychic diagnosticians of the modern era was Edgar Cayce. After a session with a hypnotist, Cayce's "clairvoyant ability to make medical diagnoses" manifested. Cayce believed the human body was made up of vibrations, with each organ and element of the body having its own specific vibration necessary for the health of that organ.<sup>8</sup> During one of his sessions Cayce explained the universal spirit this way, "Each individual is, in reality, that manifestation of the individual's conception of the impelling forces from within, whether it be termed or called God, Nature, Universal Forces, natural powers or what not."<sup>9</sup>

- Intuitive Diagnosis and Healing -

Since Edgar Cayce's time the use of intuition or psychic ability to diagnose and treat illness has blossomed. Psychic or energy healing is an active healing method that dynamically engages the energies present in and around a patient. These practitioners agree that the root cause of illness is usually not physical. Disease manifests in the energy or spiritual dimensions of a person's body long before it presents in the physical body. Some, like Dr. Caroline Myss, focus on making intuitive diagnoses and leave treatment to other professionals.

Myss contends that a person's "biography becomes their biology," their every experience, thought, emotion and fantasy affects their physiology.<sup>10</sup> She believes everything that is alive "pulses with energy," and that every human being is surrounded by an energy field containing information about their physical, emotional, and mental states. Different areas of the body vibrate at different frequencies. Myss can scan the body intuitively and detect which areas are "out of tune," resonating at a unsuitable energy vibration. She calls this "vibrational medicine."<sup>11</sup>

Other practitioners work more actively, directly affecting the human energy field to elicit healing. One of the most recognized energy healers of our time is Barbara Brennan. Brennan describes a universal energy field that corresponds to the concept of universal spirit. It "permeates all space, animate and

inanimate objects, and connects all objects to each other; it flows from one object to another; and its density varies inversely with the distance from its source.”<sup>12</sup>

- Prayer -

Prayer is a passive mode of healing. It taps into an unseen energy that transcends time and space and the barrier between the thoughts and intention of one human being and the body and mind of another. The healing effects of prayer have been the subject of a number of recent studies.

At Duke University Medical Center in 1998, the MANTRA project studied the effects of prayer on the recovery rates of patients undergoing angioplasty, a heart catheterization procedure. The thirty patients who received prayers from strangers did fifty to one hundred percent better than those who were not prayed for. The trial project yielded such significantly positive results that a more comprehensive study is being designed involving 1,500 patients at hospitals across the country.<sup>13</sup>

Dr. Elizabeth Targ implemented a similar study where she charted the effects of prayer on AIDS patients. Ten different healers using different healing modalities treated forty patients. All work was done anonymously and at a distance. Targ called this technique “distance healing.” The results were strong: the group who received the distance healing treatments spent less time in hospitals, contracted other AIDS-related illnesses less frequently and showed significant mood improvement.<sup>14</sup>

- Is it God or just the wind? Or are they the same thing? -

Is this universal spirit what we perceive as God, as Reich claims? Is it merely a physical energy, like electricity or wind, that when channeled through the human system ensures a healthy, smoothly functioning bodily machine? This universal life force, flowing through the cosmos as it flows through our bodies, has remarkable power. As we've seen, it is recognized by cultures with radically different philosophies of politics and religion. This vital energy seems to exist just far enough outside our ordinary perception that each group seeks to define it, approaching the same core concept from different angles. In exploring the nature of this force we may need to alter our "Western" beliefs about time and space, health and disease, the sacred and the ordinary, and the possible and the miraculous. According to Dr. C. Norman Shealy, a neurosurgeon and founder of the American Holistic Medical Association, “True forms of healing impel us to embrace the higher aspects of our nature – forgiveness, tolerance, patience, optimism, and love – so that we can open our minds to this sacred dimension of life. Only by reaching beyond our own ‘unfinished emotional business,’ ... can we open the door to genuine healing that lasts.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Åke Hultkrantz, Shamanic Healing and Ritual Drama. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997) 1

<sup>2</sup> American Heritage Dictionary Third Edition, (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company) 1997.

<sup>3</sup> Hultkrantz 25

<sup>4</sup> Mary Coddington, Seekers of the Healing Energy (Rochester, VT: Healing Arts Press, 1978). 16

<sup>5</sup> Coddington 43

<sup>6</sup> Coddington 54

<sup>7</sup> Coddington 106

<sup>8</sup> Coddington 72-73

<sup>9</sup> B. Ernest Frejer, The Edgar Cayce Companion. (Virginia: A.R.E. Press, 1995) 28

<sup>10</sup> Caroline Myss, Anatomy of the Spirit. (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1996) 40

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<sup>11</sup> Myss 36

<sup>12</sup> Barbara Ann Brennan. Hands of Light: A Guide to Healing Through the Human Energy Field. (New York: Bantam 1988) 39-40

<sup>13</sup> "Puja (Prayer) Power – Evidence that Prayer Works." Prayer Flag Newsletter. January – March 1999. n pag. Online. Internet, Conversation with Gregory Grunberg, research associate with MANTRA project, July 16, 1999

<sup>14</sup> Jennifer Barrett, "Going the Distance." Intuition Magazine. No. 28, July 1999. 53-55

<sup>15</sup> Lucielle Hall, "Sacred Life, Sacred Healing: A Conversation with C. Norman Shealy." Intuition Magazine, No. 28, July 1999. 22