

Alignment of Mind, Body and Soul

by

Barbara Kiao

Alignment of Mind, Body and Soul may appear too ambivalent or ambitious in scope. I suppose I have to credit the years of studying philosophical, psychological and social issues, that let me to a recent epiphany. I believe that psychology and psychiatry have gone needlessly far afield in their search for the causes and cures of psychological pain. I find our scientific approaches have generated seas of data, but little that is conclusive or helpful in my eye. We are taught to focus on pathology, to look at human behaviour, examine childhood event, study genetic influences and chemical imbalances, to no avail. I believe our intellectualisation and earnest investigations have led us away from the basics and obvious. With this paper it is my intent to ask (if not provoke) you the readers to stop judging and think differently.

My intent is for you to think differently as I did after reading Nagel's *Mind and Cosmos and What Does It All Mean*. I began to think that even with the extraordinary success of science, there is no obvious way it could account for things like consciousness, rationality, or moral values. We can disagree with Nagel that those things need to be part of our picture of reality. But I ask, can we keep gesturing to science's great pragmatic value as a way of papering over its incomplete metaphysics? Can we continuously expect something so new (modern science) to prove something so old (cosmic and cosmos)? We are not just mind and body, but a whole human being when in alignment with our mind, body and soul. After all, Nagel does suggest that philosophers, or scientists who wish to provide philosophical insight look at the relationship between mind and nature in a different way. The main message is to shift our old paradigms and start thinking anew to incorporate other methods of explanation into our worldview.

In *What Does It All Mean?* Philosopher writer Thomas Nagel argues that the best way to learn about philosophy is to tackle its problems head-on and he turns to some of the most important questions we can ask ourselves. Do we really have free will? Why should we be moral? What is the relation between our minds and our brains? Is there life after death? How should we feel about death? In a universe so vast billions of light years across can anything we do with our lives really matter? And does it matter if it doesn't matter? He clearly stated his own opinions, nevertheless, he leaves these fundamental questions

open, allowing his readers to entertain other solutions and what I like most, is that he encourages his readers to think for themselves.

Although I think they are all important questions, however, when it comes to the topic of mind and body being one; I somehow think it will be more effective to express my views here by citing Nagel's new book *Mind and Cosmos*. Unlike his previous work, Nagel has been fiercely criticised for his concept in *Mind and Cosmos*. He argues that science alone will never be able to explain a reality that includes human beings. What is needed is a new way of looking at and explaining reality; one which makes mind and value as fundamental as atoms and evolution; and I think he is right to doubt science's ability to explain everything. In a way Nagel is saying that the materialist scientific worldview cannot explain consciousness. He is not alone.

The American essayist Joan Didion had a wonderful quote. She said we tell ourselves stories in order to live and probably the biggest story we have ever told ourselves is the scientific story; and we always think of science as this ultimate truth, but science is just a story.

The Earth is flat. Is that not a scientific "fact" until 1500AD? The Earth is the centre of the universe scientific "fact" until the 4th Century ... our current scientific story is more than three hundred years old, and it primarily describes a very reliable and well-behaved universe. Where separate objects operate according to fixed laws in time and space.

The other part of our scientific story has been written by Charles Darwin, who described a process of competition for survival, and those things together have fashioned our world. We are also told that we operate in a certain way. We realise that we are separate, and for me to do something to anyone else, I have to do something physical to that person. (i.e. I have to punch him, drop him, freeze him, burn him or give him a good swift kick etcetera.) So I suppose, it only makes sense that for hundreds of years, the picture that has emerged from science is that we are basically made out of material stuff and we work in mechanistic ways. If I cannot be measured, manipulated, touched, and tasted, it is not real.

Assuming that I'm a decent mechanic and I know how cars work, I can take my car, which I is running, turn it off and take it apart, spread the pieces all over the driveway, put it back together, turn the switch and it will turn back on. However, if I take my dog and cut him up into pieces and spread him all over the drive way and again, assuming I am a really competent surgeon, and I know exactly how to reattach all those pieces, and I put them all back together, my dog is not going to now, is he?

There is something fundamentally different between machines and life, and we are running our society as if we are pieces of a machine and as if the world is a machine. And what we create from that is a world

based on the notion that we are all separate. And from that, we create education, based on the notion that we are all separate, and so we honour and enforce dysfunctional independence and competition; furthermore, we create our business environment based on the idea of scarcity and competition, and our towns and cities are all based on this idea of separation. And so we fashion our world on the idea of needing to be significant at someone else's expense. Is it any wonder why as a kid most of us learned that it is important to separate our self from the pack, to be number 1, to be "special" and win at all costs?

In the East, they often protest that the Western society in general, view their existence as fundamentally as singular individuals and only secondarily as social beings ... that tends to create separations. With that, it tends to isolate one. It tends to make one passive and apathetic as far as the political system is concerned, and active as a maximiser of consumption. Your job and mine is not to be a good citizen, it is to be a good consumer. Was it not the great mantra after 9/11 go out and shop? Moreover, I think one of the fundamental messages in the American marketing machine is that wealth and happiness are synonyms. You want happiness, you have to have wealth, and you have to buy a whole lot of stuff, to own lots of stuff.

In a philosophy class many years ago, Plato said that all wars stem from the comforts of the body, and what he meant was we are always trying to avoid unpleasantness. We always want to pat ourselves and cosset ourselves; so we need more stuff, and to get more stuff and to protect that stuff, we have to make war, whether it is an actual war or in effect a war of the rich (have's) against the poor (have not's). The Canadian biologist David Suzuki once said, "I believe the heart of our problems now is the separation of humanity from the natural world, and the sense that the economy is the most important thing in our lives. We never ask the important questions like what is an economy for? How much is enough?"

I think at this juncture, it is important to understand what is consciousness? How do I define it? One of my great teachers once asked: Is humanity ready for a transformation of consciousness, an inner flowering so radical and profound that compared to it the flowering of plants, no matter how beautiful, is only a pale reflection? Can human beings lose the density of their conditioned mind structures and become like crystals or precious stones, so to speak, transparent to the light of consciousness? Can they defy the gravitational pull of materialism and materiality and rise above identification with form that keeps the ego in place and condemns them to imprisonment within their own personality?

I, for one would like to think so because the possibility of such a transformation has been the central message of the great teachings of past messengers: Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, Lao-Tzu, Gurdjieff, Ouspensky, and others that are not known to many.

In *What Does It All Mean*, Nagel has opened our eyes to a side of the world many of us rarely consider and has also awakened us to become philosophers ourselves; after all, we all have opinions about everything and luckily it does not require formal credentials.

In my work, I have long held the intention to help clients to be in alignment with their mind, body and soul. I do not think it is accurate or sufficient to just think we are mind and body, the element of soul exists and I called it consciousness (with a small ‘c’) and the big ‘C’ Consciousness is what I have come to learn and believe to be the collective whole.

It is not well known that in 1871 Darwin wrote his first book about human nature, and he said when you think about how we have evolved as a species, we are not fast, we are not strong, we do not have big fangs, we do not have the muscle mass that our primate relatives have. But what we have is the ability to cooperate and to take care of others. He also said that sympathy is the strongest instinct in human nature. (i.e. volunteers in the disaster zones). It is a pity that historically, the people who popularised Darwin ignored that part. There are really sound reasons, deep survival, reproduction-related reasons for why we have evolved to be good to others. If we do not have some sense of community, then the human race would never have persisted. So, I would like to believe that it is wired in us as well.

Since the 20th Century (although there is contradictory study recently) science finds mirror neurons as an underlying neuroscience reason for why we would be empathetic with other people. The great apes, along with dolphins, and possibly elephants have something called a mirror neuron. And what was discovered was, if a monkey observes a behavior that it itself has performed in the past, the same neuron lights up as if it itself is doing the action. In other words, there is something in the brain that does not distinguish between self and other, kind of a mystical premise in some ways, and also underlies empathic behaviours. When you see somebody suffering, you feel it — that is the mirror neuron.

A good example would be not just Americans but also the world’s population felt the pain of the victims of 9/11 on that fatal day eighteen years ago Emma Seppala PhD in *Psychology Today* wrote, “Research by neurobiologist Jonathan Haidt at the University of Virginia suggests that seeing someone helping another person creates a state of “elevation.” Have you ever been moved to tears by seeing someone’s loving and compassionate behaviour? Haidt’s data suggest that elevation then inspires us to help others — and it may just be the force behind a chain reaction of giving.

Haidt has shown that corporate leaders who engage in self-sacrificing behaviour and elicit “elevation” in their employees, also yield greater influence among their employees — who become more committed and in turn may act with more compassion in the workplace. Indeed, compassion is contagious. Social scientists James Fowler of the University of California, San Diego, and Nicholas Chris Christakis of

Harvard demonstrated that helping is contagious: acts of generosity and kindness beget more generosity in a chain reaction of goodness. You may have seen one of the news reports about chain reactions that occur when someone pays for the toll of the driver behind them at a highway tollbooth. People keep the generous behaviour going for hours; our acts of compassion uplift others and make them happy. We may not know it, but by uplifting others, we are also helping ourselves; research by Fowler and Christakis has shown that happiness spreads and that if the people around us are happy, we, in turn, become happier.”

These are not acts of the ego nor our brain that so many have identified ourselves with, again and again; we are not our thoughts. I define brain as that thing between our ears, the grey matter, and its main job is to produce thoughts and the master controller of the nervous system that sits atop the spine and under our skull. If this paper’s author was Marvin Oka (behavioural modelling expert), he would tell you that we actually have three brains — our head brain, heart brain and gut brain. I also agree with his views and arguments; nonetheless, it is more important for this paper to focus on the “missing element” — soul.

Spiritual teacher Eckart Tolle teaches the importance of knowing the main aspects of the ego and how they operate in the individual as well as in the collective. He said it is important because of two reasons: 1) Unless we know the basic mechanics behind the workings of the ego, we won’t recognise it, and it will trick us into identifying with it again and again. What he meant is that the ego will take us over, like an imposter pretending to be us. 2) The act of recognising the ego is one of the ways in which awakening happens. When we recognise the unconsciousness in us, that which makes the recognition possible is the arising consciousness, is awakening. He also said that it is not to fight against the ego and win, just as we cannot fight against darkness (shadows). The light of consciousness is all that is necessary because ... he said “You are the light.”

In recent years, we see an influx of ancient Eastern wisdom teachings, and a continuous growing number of followers of traditional religion who are able to let go of identification with form, dogma, and rigid belief systems and discover the original depth that is hidden within their own spiritual tradition at the same time as they discover the depth within themselves.

Tolle wrote, “... They realize that how “spiritual” you are has nothing to do with what you believe but everything to do with your state of consciousness. This in turn, determines how you act in the world and interact with others.” “Those unable to look beyond form become even more deeply entrenched in their beliefs, that is to say, in their mind. We are witnessing not only an unprecedented influx of consciousness at this time but also an entrenchment and intensification of the ego. Some religious institutions will be open to the new consciousness (soul); others will harden their doctrinal positions and be part of all those other man-made structures throughout which the collective ego will defend itself and “fight back.”

I could see that Nagel's conclusion in *Mind and Cosmos* is in a vein similar to the German philosophers of the late 18th and early 19th century: the nature of reality is such that there is a natural progression towards consciousness. This conclusion is not that far-fetched (as Nagel's critics would like to believe).

I am not saying or remotely suggesting we ought to abandon science or discredit what science and research have achieved. I am merely agreeing with what Elliott Sober, in the *Boston Review*, wrote "[Nagel] argues that evolutionary biology is fundamentally flawed and that physics also needs to be rethought — that we need a new way to do science." I am also not saying that our soul consciousness is more important than our mind and body whilst we are having human experience on earth.

It is best for me to sum up my view and conclude this paper by citing Gary Zukav's work: *The Soul is*. It has no beginning and no end but flows toward wholeness. The personality emerges as a natural force from the soul. It is an energy tool that the soul adapts to function within the physical world. Each personality is unique because the configuration of energy of the soul that formed it is unique. It is the persona of the soul, so to speak, that interacts with physical matter. It is a product that is formed from the vibrational aspect of your name, the vibrational aspect of your relationship to planets at the time of your incarnation, and vibrational aspects of your energy environment, as well as from the splintered aspects of your soul that need to interact in physical matter in order to be brought into wholeness.

The personality does not operate independently from the soul. To the extent that a person is in touch with spiritual depths, the personality is soothed because the energy of consciousness is focused on its energy core and not on its artificial facade, which is the personality.

The personality sometimes appears as a force running rampant in the world with no attachment to the energy of its soul. This situation can be the origin of what we call an evil human being. It is the result of the personality being unable to find its reference point, or connection, to its mothership, which is its soul. The conflicts of a human's life are directly proportional to the distance at which an energy of personality exists separately from the soul, and, therefore, as we shall see, in an irresponsible position of creation. When a personality is in full balance, you cannot see where it ends and the soul begins. “

That is a whole human being fully in alignment with their mind, body and soul.

References

Choi, C.Q. (2008), *Spooky Physics: Signals Seem to Travel Faster Than Light*. Live Science Contributor. Retrieved August 13, 2008, from <https://www.livescience.com/2785-spooky-physics-signals-travel-faster-light.html>

Documentary Reality and the Extended Mind Ep. 1 & 2. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RrKVQVr3p04>

Ekman, P. (2010), Darwin's Compassionate View of Human Nature. JAMA. 2010;303(6):557-558 (doi:10.1001/jama.2010.101)

Kahn, D.M. (2013). Rationality and Belief in Human Evolution. Yale University Library Working Paper No. 5: 25 Sep 2016

Nagel, T. (2012), Mind & Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False, Oxford University Press; New York, N.Y., U.S.A.

Nagel, T. (2004), What Does It All Mean, Oxford Univ Pr; New edition, New York, N.Y. , U.S.A.

Radin, D. (2013). Psychophysical Interactions with a Double-Slit Interference Pattern. Physics Essays 26, 4 (2013). Retrieved from September 24, 2013, from <http://deanradin.com/evidence/RadinPhysics2013.pdf>

Seppala, E. (2013), The Unexpected Benefits of Compassion for Business, Retrieved from April 22, 2013, <http://psychologytoday.com/us/blog/feeling-it/201304/the-unexpected-benefits-compassion-business>

Strickland, E. (2008). Entangled Particles Seem to Communicate Instantly — and Befuddle Scientists. Discover Magazine [Blog post]. Retrieved August 13, 2008, from <http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/80beats/2008/08/13/entangled-particles-seem-to-communicate-instantly-and-befuddle-scientists/>

Tolle, E. (2006), A New Earth Awakening to Your Life's Purpose. Penguin Books Ltd. LONDON, England

Zukav, G. (1990). The Seat of The Soul. Random House UK Ltd, London, U.K.