

## The Primacy of Spirit

By

Lonny S. Jarrett

It has been almost a year since I had the privilege of addressing the BAC in London. I've noted that my lectures have generated a lively discussion. Peter Deadman has questioned Chinese medicine's (CM) ability to effectively treat the spirit, or psychological states, and has warned us that we need to be careful when making the claim that it can. The central issues raised by his letter emphasize the importance of recognizing the natural hierarchical relationships between the body, mind, and spirit, between student and teacher, and between practitioner and patient.

### Spirit and Hierarchy

It is not my intention as stated by Mr. Deadman to suggest that the practice of CM is necessarily, in and of itself, a path to enlightenment for practitioner or patient. My point is that Chinese medicine, in the context of a spiritual life, offers those of us who understand the primacy of spirit the opportunity to practice and be treated in a way that is consistent with our core value system. I agree with Mr. Deadman when he warns us that we must be careful about making claims that CM can treat the mind or spirit. Generally we tend to have a very casual notion of what spirit is or of what constitutes a spiritual life and it is best to be humble. Yet those of us who have recognized the primacy of spirit must account for, and speak responsibly about, the simple fact that CM is indeed a profound science of the physiological impediments to the manifestation of spirit through the human vehicle.

The spiritual revelation illuminates the true and right relationship of all things and in it we discover that the body is a vehicle for the evolution of spirit and of consciousness. And in this an obligation is discovered that becomes the foundation of what we might call a spiritual life. Contemplation will reveal that the two questions, "who am I?" and "how shall I live?" are the motivating force of the universe itself. Simply put, the highest purpose of medicine is to illuminate the answers to these questions and to remove all obstacles to their realization. From a spiritual perspective, the only authentic medicine is consciousness awakening to its own self nature. And there is no healing, in the deepest and highest sense, that does not contribute to the journey of the spirit through the flesh and into this world. The focus of my work has been to elucidate our medicine in this regard in a context that is relevant to the time and culture we are living in.

Mr. Deadman defines the spirit as either "the psychological make-up" of a person "or their "spiritual state". I understand a person's "psychological make-up" to be constituted of the personality as it is enmeshed with thoughts, as interpretations of life experience, and feelings. This illusory finite self is deeply conditioned by inherited and cultural factors and is what I would call ego. From a

spiritual perspective is the antithesis of spirit. The false self doesn't meaningfully change and this is alluded to when Mr. Deadman refers to, "the time, sweat and pain required to achieve insight into, and the smallest change in," it. The ego constitutes the very stagnation that the highest medicine endeavors to eliminate. And, the part of ourselves that wants to take time in the process of healing isn't the part that's interested in recognizing the fundamental truth of who we really are now. From my own experience I know for a fact that "long-standing psycho-emotional problems" can resolve in one instant. This can happen by grace (a gift conferred from on high) or, more importantly, by a decision made with conviction.

When I speak of treating the patient at "the spirit level" what do I mean? The *yin* aspect is the deepest part of the best part of ourselves, It is rooted in that unborn ground of being and represents our anchor in that eternal source that lies beyond this world. In CM terms it is *ling* and represents the mysterious power by which something comes from nothing. The *yang* aspect is the extension of that unborn potential into the manifest as the creative impulse itself. This authentic self corresponds to the *shen*. These two spirits are One and represent the deepest and highest line of development along which a human life unfolds. Fulfillment of destiny means becoming One with this absolute axis of positivity in life. And, as the *Shen nong ben cao jing* so aptly states, "The highest class of medicines govern the nourishment of destiny."

From this perspective the spirit is that best part of ourselves that is untouched by life and doesn't need treatment. It doesn't have a problem, is always positive, never references the past or the self, and is always pushing forward into the next moment. It is the motivating force of evolution itself and Chinese medicine is replete with words that describe it as elaborated in my texts. The single pointed nature of spirit is perpetual change so that when we identify ourselves as spirit, and act in accordance with spirit, deep and significant change takes no time at all. Hence, the spiritual practice of medicine does not necessarily involve "healing the spirit" per se, but rather removing all impediments to the spirit's manifestation in our lives as the soul source of healing. It is our conditioning and our delusions that make us crooked and it is the realization of, and striving for, spirit that once again makes us straight (in the sense of *de*, *zhenqi*, and *zhengqi* for example). The highest purpose of medicine is to help purify the vessel to better reflect spirit and every herb, acupuncture point, and clinical interaction holds the potential to further this goal in the hands of the serious practitioner.

### Hierarchy: Practitioners and Patients

Many of us know as patients and practitioners that Chinese medicine can powerfully alter us by bringing consciousness into alignment with spirit. The highest medicine may restore the memory of what has been forgotten by awakening in our experience that best part of ourselves that is never harmed by life. In this, patients may have a higher state experience. It is our responsibility as practitioners to then contextualize our patient's experience and guide them through the process of making the higher *state* they experienced in the treatment

a new *stage* of development. Of course the patient's interest, will, and work is critical to the process as suggested by Mr. Deadman. However it is our obligation to support the patient's efforts by striving to become living examples of what is possible ourselves. Hence there needs to be a natural hierarchy between patient and practitioner where we as practitioners, through our own tireless effort, are striving to move ahead and live up to the highest we have seen. It is perfectly reasonable that a practitioner of integral medicine leading a patient toward wholeness should be further along on the journey. And, evolutionarily at this point in history, that degree of "further along" is quite a leap for many of us! Still, for the sake of our patients it is a leap we must take now.

The importance of our own development is alluded to by Mr. Deadman when he states that he does "not question the ways that the spirit of a practitioner can affect a patient." After 20 years of practice why one patient heals and another does not remains a mystery to me. But I am sure that the most significant contributing factors to healing are grace, the patient's genuine interest in change, and the level of development of the practitioner. And I'm sure that the most substantial part of our development as healers does not lie in the realms of our technical or academic knowledge. What does it mean to take full responsibility for our contribution to our patient's healing? How far can we practitioners go in our development as human beings whose lives are given to spirit? We know of no limits. And how profoundly can our alignment with spirit positively contribute to a patient's healing? Again, we know of no limits. And though we are only in our infancy of even understanding these questions it is clear that the upside potential of pursuing them is infinite.

It is common now to hear talk of "holistic" and "integral" medicine. There are few readers here who would question that Chinese medicine is an evolved holistic science and yet the deeper implications of this might not be obvious.<sup>1</sup> These terms imply more than just a collection of Eastern and Western modalities that a practitioner picks and chooses from. Simply put, the purpose of holistic and integral medicine is to move the patient toward a state of wholeness and unity. That means that there is only One of us and not two. It means that our divided state has been healed and that all fundamental contradictions have been resolved at the root. The integration of *yin* and *yang* back to the one is a foundational principle of Chinese physiology. To say that Chinese medicine does not address the evolution of consciousness and spirit is to say that it is not holistic and does not constitute an important part of integral medicine. I disagree.

### **Heirarchy: Teacher and Student**

Enlightened consciousness has passed down through the ages like a fire from one individual to another. A serious student of any discipline seeks out the best teacher they can find. If one is a student of reality then one seeks out a fully unified teacher, one who has attained liberation and has demonstrated an unshakable conviction in living it. In the presence of such a person we should be brought into an experience of enlightened consciousness fairly quickly. Such an experience lifts the veil off of our own narrow view and opens a window into the

infinite to reveal the true and right relationship of all things. In this, the soul (*hun* and *po*) is straightened as we experience the living possibility of perfection discovered in the absolute (represented physiologically as the heart/kidney axis).

We have made the effort to seek for the teacher and the gift of reality is bestowed by grace. And yes, once we have set our wills with conviction it will take continual work for us to become living examples of that higher reality we have seen. The teacher can not do it for us, and yet, a living example is proof that what we have seen can be made flesh. We must be no less an example to our patients than to be a human who strives to live up to the highest we have seen. For this is the very foundation of the moral authority to hold one's self out as a healer as opposed to a technician. And it is the foundation of developing our own confidence in the fact that changing doesn't have to take time, only will (*zhi*) and interest (*shen*).

When Mr. Deadman states, "I have never heard of a psychotherapist or spiritual teacher (outside a small number of cult-like gurus) who would maintain that one person can 'treat' or substantially change another's spirit in any way." he reveals either his lack of experience, misunderstanding, or cynicism regarding the guru-disciple relationship. As previously stated, the issue is not one treating or changing the spirit of another but of awakening and aligning consciousness to the soul and spirit. Mr. Deadman states that spiritual teachers don't claim that they can rectify a person's spirit and then goes on to subtly denigrate those who say they can by calling them "cult-like gurus". Let's be clear, a real guru is nothing less than a fully unified human being who awakens unity consciousness in others and guides them to live that realization in the world. There is the North star as the heart of heaven, the sun, the emperor, the guru, and the human heart. Each are different physical manifestations of the absolute, that center that never moves from truth. My experience is that a sincere relationship with such a fully unified human being does indeed rectify the spirit's journey into this world.

## Conclusion

Evidence based studies have their place in an evolved integral medicine. But the only rational perspective on what questions to ask, on the interpretation of data, or application of outcomes can come from a core value system that recognizes the primacy of spirit. Clearly at this point in history we have ample evidence that scientific achievement divorced from a spiritual core value system leads consistently to less than desirable consequences. And I will be the first to acknowledge that "spirituality" divorced from rationality results in superstition and is no less dangerous. However, at this late date, the rational perspective reveals that spirit is primary and is the foundation upon which any science that can serve humanity must be built.

If our reference point is spirit, we are in the fortunate position of being able to let in the whole clinical picture and embrace all relevant physiological findings in practice. This is because we recognize the natural hierarchical relationships between that which we designate as body, mind, and spirit. A materialistic perspective, however, will never be able to embrace the foundational role of

spirit, of consciousness, in driving the development of the material universe. Therefore, research or a clinical practice oriented to such a perspective will always be based on irrational conclusions and be blind to the highest potential our medicine offers.

How something came from nothing remains forever a mystery. How consciousness or the soul evolves through the physical body is also a mystery. And, how putting needles in a human being can empower the evolution of the spirit and consciousness is a mystery as well. Demanding evidence of the spirit and its relevance to medicine is a denial of who and what we already are. The body/mind duality is alive and well and I'm no more inclined to wait for it to be resolved before acting or speaking about the spiritual practice of medicine than I am to study global warming for the next 100 years before advocating for a sane environmental policy here and now. After all, how much time do we think we really have?

It's imperative that those who recognize the primacy of spirit stand up for the emergence of a licensing structure in the UK that recognizes Chinese medicine, first and foremost, as a science of spirit. That means honoring diversity and putting in the effort to understand what integral medicine means and what its deepest and highest implications are. A structure is needed that allows the non-TCM traditions to fully flower on their own terms without infringement from those who seek to materialize and scientize (sanitize) the medicine.

It is not a question of whether or not the practice of Chinese medicine can alter a human being's relationship to, and experience of, spirit. It is only a question of whether we as practitioners have the integrity of interest in such matters to pursue them seriously in our own lives. As patients we do not doubt the degree to which our souls have been touched by our medicine. And as practitioners we do not deny the degree to which our own patient's souls have been touched by the medicine through our hands. That is why we echo the *Lingshu* in saying that Chinese medicine, above and beyond all else, is rooted in spirit.

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### Definition of terms

Body-The physical vehicle through which the spirit and consciousness evolve.

Mind- An emergent facility of the nervous system that allows us to orient in time and in space. In general, the mind is so conditioned by thought and feeling that our interpretations of, and reactions to, life become mechanical and devoid of

humanity. Meditation reveals that who we are in our deepest and highest selves is always prior to thought, feeling, and the mind.

Spirit- The absolute and impersonal axis of human development having a *yin* aspect corresponding to *ling*, and a *yang* aspect corresponding to *shen*. Physiologically we recognize this as the heart/kidney axis. In the highest sense it may be considered to be synonymous with consciousness.

Soul: The personal soul constituted of the *hun* and *po*. The development of the soul must follow the spirit. For the most part, the materialistic perspective of post-modern consciousness is dead to the soul.

Consciousness: In the highest sense synonymous with spirit. That which initiated, sustains, and drives the development of the material universe. That which is looking through the vehicle. Often, consciousness is so enmeshed with the mind that the only experience of self is through thought and feeling. Self reflective consciousness offers humans the ability to experience consciousness on its own terms independent of the mind (time and space), thoughts and feelings. Perceiving consciousness in this way is the very perspective of the spiritual experience itself.

Ling: Potential; The mysterious ability of nothing to manifest something. The *yin* aspect of spirit.

Shen: Consciousness; interest. The *yang* aspect of spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> I laid out the theoretical foundations of Chinese Medicine as a holiistic medicine in my first published paper in this field 20 years ago. See, Jarrett, LS: The holographic paradigm and acupuncture, The Journal of Traditional Acupuncture, Volume VIII, Number 2, pp. 36-41, 1985