

Article 4. **Embracing Both Sisters: Spirituality and Science**
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Doing vs Being: The Great Debate

Do you think or feel your way through life? Which of your personal resources is dominant: your brain, your heart, your soul? Do you rely more on rational thought or intuitive feeling? Where do you place your emphasis, on doing or being? Do you always require proof or do you have faith? Whose will dominates your life: your own or that of a Higher Power?

Disagreements over the "right" way of living have been dividing human beings for centuries. The two opposing world views or belief systems in this great debate are the think-will-do proponents and their scientific model versus the feel-submit-be supporters and their spiritual model. Now an integrated approach to living I call wholism may finally put an end to this ongoing conflict. Before discussing wholism let's first look at our two world models.

The scientific approach relies on a well-developed intellect and the application of personal will. Feelings are used to motivate actions but are otherwise considered unreliable. Our relationship with a Divine Force, if we could prove that such a force exists, is to try and intellectually understand it. The ultimate aim of the scientific think-will-do approach is to constantly expand our knowledge of the material universe and successfully develop new technologies and products through the active use of intellect and will. The scientific model promotes intellectual curiosity, goal-orientation, experimental proof, and external focus.

The spiritual approach relies on a compassionate heart and a will aligned with a Higher Power. The use of the intellect is restricted to daily material concerns while our soul is encouraged to grow through feelings of love, acts of kindness, and an ongoing relationship with our Creator. Developing compassionate relationships with all living things is the ultimate goal of the feel-submit-be approach to life. The spiritual model is relationship-driven, internally focused, reliant on faith, and based on sensitized inner feelings.

This past century has clearly been dominated by the think-will-do approach. Modern societies rely on and actively promote the scientific model. Many of us, whether we are conscious of it or not, have accepted this model and have chosen to think and will our way through life. This collective decision has had enormous consequences. Our emphasis on mental skills and personal will is producing great scientific and technological achievements, made at the expense of our ability to experience harmonious relationships with all living things.

While we can thank our increasingly clever brains for the existence of harnessed electricity, motorized vehicles, computers, the Internet, lasers, etc. we may need to acknowledge that something's gone wrong! Our total reliance on thinking without the supervision of compassionate feeling has resulted in centuries of wars, gender and ethnic conflicts, social injustice, ecological destruction, materialistic and competitive lifestyles and values, etc.

The Wholistic Approach

So what is wholism's contribution to this great debate on how to live? Rely less on intellect and science and more on feeling and spirituality? Perhaps, but there's a lot more to it than that!

The Wholistic model recognizes the existence of both a spiritual and a material reality. It encourages us to integrate the actions of body, mind, and spirit in order to create a balanced and harmonious life. The foundation of the wholistic approach is the understanding that both realities and every part of our being have equally important roles to play in our life. Therefore it is not a question of which resource should dominate but rather how to use each of our resources at the appropriate time and in the appropriate life area in which they were designed to function. Here are some examples:

When working in the material world, thinking is totally appropriate. When facing an immediate physical threat, the body's physical senses, reflexes, and instincts should be activated. When dealing intimately with people, compassionate feelings must guide our actions. When seeking meaning and purpose in our life, spiritual guidance can be asked for. Each part of our being takes a leadership role in certain areas and a supporting one in others. The Wholistic model implicitly cautions us to be aware of the consequences of habitually relying on just one of our resources in responding to a variety of life situations. This warning has not been heeded in recent human history.

One of the critical human problems that now exists is the unbalanced relationship between our dominant use of thinking and will and our declining ability to experience and manifest our compassionate feelings and spiritual guidance. As modern, information-age, city-dwelling men and women we tend to react to every situation by "thinking about it". The wholistic model suggests that thinking is appropriate in some situations, but not all! Thinking and willful actions must be balanced with sensing, feeling, acts of submission, the use of conscience and spiritual receiving. Until this correct balance is achieved, it will continue to be extremely difficult for many of us to experience a state of balance and harmony, both in our personal lives and in our collective social, political, or economic interactions.

The appearance and growing presence of wholism in the world today is no coincidence. Wholistic practices create healing relationships that help transfer energy to weakened or ailing systems. Perhaps we can all agree that both our natural environment (the Earth) and its guardians (us) are ailing in many areas at the moment.

Wholistic Practices and Approaches are Spreading

Wholism points the way to the integration of science and spirituality, thinking and feeling, being and doing. It declares that all resources and approaches are equally valuable aspects of one Universal Truth. Spiritually inspired teachings have been describing this Truth for thousands of years. Now science, through the use of increasingly sophisticated research instruments and methods, is confirming and validating these teachings. Now the shaman or mystic can state "We are all brothers and sisters of the Creator and must live together in peace" and the scientist can agree by replying "Yes, the universe is a created and unified system of interconnected energetic actions that seeks to establish and maintain a state of dynamic equilibrium".

The integration of different knowledge and belief systems is already happening in many fields of human endeavour. In the fields of Biology and Psychology, the body-mind connection is being recognized and explored through such new fields as psychoneuroimmunology, biological psychology, etc.

The Environmental Sciences acknowledge the interconnected "web of life" that links the actions of different species and natural systems. In Education there is a growing emphasis on the development of a student as a whole person. Moral values, social skills, physical well-being, are receiving more balanced emphasis along with intellectual development. In Business, the concepts of ethical trading and environmental sustainability are helping businessmen and women express their compassionate side and see a bigger picture of life.

In Health Care and Medicine, alternative therapies are a growing response to health systems that treat separate parts and symptoms instead of the whole person. Many wholistic practices integrate techniques found in Psychotherapy, Massage/Bodywork, Subtle Energy Transfer, etc so that all parts of our being can participate in and benefit from the healing process.

So wholism answers the question of how best to move through our life by encouraging us to make full use of all our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual resources: each one used appropriately at the right time and in the right area of life. In today's world, learning to balance the actions of these different parts of our being and bringing a spiritual presence into the body-mind-spirit connection are the two greatest personal challenges we now face. I believe a growing number of us can and will meet this challenge.

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