

Neuroendocrinology Letters 2000; 21:57-58 pii: NEL210100X01
Reprinted from *Int J. Prenatal and Perinatal Studies* 1990; 2:191-193

FROM TEN YEARS AGO: Health in the 21st century—a change in belief systems.

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Though I have not participated in most of the deliberations of the 9th International Congress on Pre- and Perinatal Psychology and Medicine, I have received the impression that its message is that the nine months of gestation and the following birth process play a major role in the formation of not only our bodies, as was believed previously, but also of our psychological profile and thus in our whole life.

What I would like now is to use this insight as an analogy for the recent developments in western society. I think that we all agree that the most characteristic property of gestation and early infancy from a psychological point of view is the total dependence on the environment and, as far as we know, the inability to change it. This is very similar to the situation of mankind during most of its known history. The environment was all powerful and all man could do was to adapt to it as best he could. This feeling of power and helplessness had a major influence on the development of his belief systems. He developed what is now known as 'victim consciousness' and called for help on supernatural agencies which he approached in a way which is very similar to the way the infant approaches his (for him all powerful and almost supernatural) parents—our Father that is in heaven—the great mother.

All of this seems to have undergone a profound transformation. Within as short a period as 100 years man has conquered both external and internal space. One could almost say that the gestation and early childhood of humanity are over. Man is finally growing up and has become independent or even the master of his environment.

The feelings of powerlessness, the victim's consciousness however, go on and persist and in the absence of real menaces from the environment humanity has created for itself a new set of masters to be subservient to—the body, society and our perception of time—three self-created idols. While the idol called society is (wrongly) believed to be amenable to human control, western man believes to be totally powerless in what concerns his body and his perception of time—hostage of something which was created for him and of which he has no control. If we get sick we feel that our body 'has betrayed us' and aging, which is considered to be the influence of unrelenting time on our bodies, is considered to be an unavoidable process. Our approach to our bodies is similar to our approach to yet another technological device. Somebody or something (external to us) has manufactured our bodies for us the way we produce a TV set or a motor car (remember the stork!). We are still caught in the age old belief system which finds its best formulation in the Bible: 'and the Lord God formed man from the dust of the earth.' Modern man has only exchanged God for nature, evolution and/or pure chance. The principle has not changed! Having been taught over the millennia that the body is noth-

ing but a 'manufactured device,' over which we have no real control, we have finally come to believe that we can only cause it damage or at best slow its so-called 'natural wear and tear.' We are certainly not able to regenerate it. Neither are we allowed to repair it. This has always been the function of the technician/repairman (who was called in the past priest or shaman and nowadays physician or health practitioner). It is to them that we take our bodies in case of mishap as if they were broken down cars which we take to the garage. Having received our bodies the doctor/technician will prescribe an overhaul, a different kind of oil or petrol than the one used previously or replace a part which has become nonfunctioning. One often gets the feeling that many hospital physicians would love to send the patients home and only keep their bodies! It is only the munition industry which uses more money than this repair work which falsely calls itself the 'health industry' though it is completely disease-oriented. This belief system also implies that the better we know and understand this machine called the body, the better we will be able to repair it, a postulate which in the last century seems repeatedly to have proved itself true. Is that really the case? Has modern medicine succeeded in healing anything apart from infectious diseases? Are there today fewer sick people than 100 years ago? I think we all agree that the answers to both questions are negative. We allow ourselves to be misled by statistics and overlook the fact that all the diseases which have been vanquished belonged to the defeated part of our environment, that part of the environment which has become our victim. We have only replaced one set of diseases with another one.

Is wear and tear and its accompanying diseases really unavoidable or is it nothing but part of an accepted belief system? In Hebrew, the original language of the Bible, the words for health and for creation have a common word root—bara. It thus seems that as far back as 3,500 years ago the Bible wanted already to show us that health depends on a constant recreation of ourselves. This fits in well with the discovery of Sir Charles Dobbs who showed that the whole of the protein in the human body is replaced in roughly 160 days and with the findings of the Yale anatomist Harold Burr who showed that this regeneration is regulated by what he called life fields which seem to be controlled in their turn by so-called thought fields. It seems therefore that the key to regeneration and repair as well as to life as a whole is organization based on thought processes and free will. If the means for a constant renewal exist then wear and tear are not an unavoidable pro-

cess anymore but something which depends on our free will. Aging and its accompanying diseases seem thus to be caused by a slowing down of the regeneration process, while health is identical with renewal. Both health and disease are thus dependent on the consistency of the thought field, or in other words on our free will, on the presence or absence of joy and happiness and on the state of our vital energy. These are, however, exactly the qualities which differentiate children from adults. Our urges, emotions and especially our free will are considered as enemies and from childhood on we are taught to control them, which in reality means to suppress them, using up the psychic energy needed for the process of healing—regeneration. So we grow older and slower until all our energy is used up. At that moment everything stops and death ensues.

Can we break out of this vicious circle? I believe the answer to be positive but it all depends on a change in our belief systems. Only after having learned to free himself from his victim consciousness, from his feeling of helplessness, will man finally be able to heal himself: after having learned to accept his emotions and his free will, after having finally understood that it is not the passage of time per se which is causing aging but the misuse of our vital energy over time. How can that be achieved? By realizing that these feelings have been imprinted on our psyche during humanity's long period of gestation and have now become totally inappropriate. By freeing ourselves from our preconceived ideas which hold us in bondage. It is again the Bible which shows us the way by the example of the man Moses. After having left Egypt behind him he finds himself in the 'desert of the sword'—Horev—where he meets with the burning bush, a vision which was contrary to all he had experienced previously. It was however not the bush which was not consumed but Moses who entered a state which we call today an altered state of consciousness. For Moses time had stopped—or did he step out of time? Could it be that at that moment Moses realized that natural processes and the passage of time are but coincidental and dependent on our perception. That the reality we are used to is not the only one there is? We may never know the answer but the Bible shows us very clearly that from that day until his 'death,' which by itself is unclear, Moses did not grow older or, in Biblical language, 'His eyes did not dim and his water did not desert him.'

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