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The Body and the Spirit

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People actively seek for a connection to a spiritual realm. They sometimes feel as if they could enfold all things within their arms, they feel it with their body, with a shiver or an expansion of the heart. Prayer also is a bodily matter particularly concerned with the body, as in song, through the expressive vocal chords. What is interesting is that neuroscience has now discovered that the human fleshly brain has always been sufficiently complex and interconnected within itself to be aware of its own physical presence within the mind. We note that almost everywhere on the planet there is a term for this sense such as “the soul.”

Wandering freely through all of its interconnectedness, the brain is unbelievably capable of encompassing “spirit” itself, of holding and containing it, to the fullest extent of its greatest physical capacity. Now this is a mystery, including the mysticism of sex. Also, the body may dwell in the love of the entire material universe. This is “heaven.” It is mysticism.

This bodily and spiritual union also occurs in spiritual healing, and there are countless examples where we may trace it. It has become a moment of shimmering clarity, clear as daylight, suddenly, as it did to Arjuna, Nanak, Mahomet, Paul at Damascus, Black Elk, the Apache shamanic singers of Arizona, Billy Graham, Louis Pasteur the renowned biologist with his great personal revelation of God, the Zen Buddhists with their sudden Samadhi, and many of the other the luminaries of the old religions, now including the anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro of the Amazonian forest in his 1998 lectures on perspectivism, telling how he lived with the foresters, “being” them in empathy, to bring into focus their full existence. All these visionaries recognize there is no separation between the spirit and the body. In other words we can indeed approach the objective truth of our being here, all of us. Nature works beside us with an unflinching energy. It has its own means of going about it. Its positive energy reminds us of the Chinese *chi*, the energy of life, and the heat of one’s hands when healing. Around these studies exist a whole fields of awareness and experience, based on knowledge and a delight in religions and their rituals--objects of empathy throughout spirituality. We see where help comes to us in liminal situations, as the Hebrews found when they were able to escape from Egypt because of the blessing of their doorways—which became a tense emotional story. The blood of their holy sacrifice helped them. People are conscious of that kind of help. Their helping angel knew their peril.

Anthropology is discovering that, before the times of the theologies, before civilizations, the function of what we call "angel" was fulfilled by an animal or human shamanic being, helping us across a threshold.

Look up inside the Sistine Chapel in Rome and see the creator with his finger outstretched to the inert human form of Adam, who is appealing for that finger. The painter Leonardo da Vinci had his 15th century (1508 and 1512) vision at that time. That Sistine touch--the touch of that finger--with a splendid irrationality, had switched on the multitudes of self-energizing elements in nature. Similarly that finger had sought that other era and had released the children of Israel from Egypt. Today the finger raises specialized companies which will "vet" and draw together inquiries to focus on false and evil-intending corporations. We all know of other checks and balances.

Humanity is part of a *communitas*, the *social*, the interdependent spirit and body, constituting an overall totality, able to share soul and bodily feelings. Humans are permeable and malleable. Humanity is more alive than ever, in 2013. We are conscious of the planet's spiritual life in Asia and Africa and the Americas. Many Christians have become aware of new spirit worlds with new clean air. The touch of that finger is recognizable.

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