

Chapter Thirty-Five

The Twofold Attitude of Mind and Soul



The following is an extract from a letter sent to me by a reader of my articles in *The Nature Cure Magazine*.

“Sometimes you say we must rely on our own personal efforts and at other times you teach dependence upon a higher power. This, to me, is contradictory and confusing. I cannot understand how, consistently, we can do both at the same time. Which is right? Is it best to rely upon our own power and our personal efforts or upon the ‘Higher Power?’”

Similar inquiries have come from other friends. I shall now endeavor to answer these and other questions.

There is nothing contradictory or incompatible in the teachings of the Nature Cure philosophy concerning the physical and metaphysical methods of treating human ailments. Both the independent and the dependent attitudes of mind and soul are good and true and may be entertained at the same time. It is necessary for us to rely on our own personal efforts in carrying out the dictates of reason and of common sense. But this need not prevent us from praying for and confidently expecting a larger inflow of vital power and intuitional discernment from the Source of all intelligence and power in the innermost parts of our being.¹

This twofold attitude of mind and soul is justified not only by reason and intuition, but also by the anatomical structure of the human organism and its physiological and psychological faculties, capacities and powers.

¹This concept is considered very avant guard thinking today. But it was old hat to Dr. Lindlahr nearly a century ago. He was a man way ahead of his time.

The activities of the human organism are governed by two different systems of nerves, the sympathetic and the motor. The sympathetic nervous system is the conveyor of vital force to the organs and cells of the body. Just what this vital force is and where it ultimately comes from, we do not know. It is a manifestation of that which we call God, Nature, Life, the Higher Power or the Divine Within.

Heart action, the circulation of the blood, respiration, digestion, assimilation of food, elimination and all other involuntary activities and functions of the human organism are controlled by means of the sympathetic nervous system. The nature of the controlling force itself is not known to us. We do know that it is supremely powerful, intelligent and benevolent.

The more we study the anatomy, physiology and psychology of the human organism, the more we wonder at its marvelous complexity and ingenuity of structure and function. Every moment there are enacted in our bodies innumerable mechanical, chemical and psychological miracles. Who, or what, performs these miracles? We do not know. Yet every moment of our lives depends upon the infinite care and wisdom of this unknown intelligence and power.²

Why, then, should we not trust the One so faithful? Why should we not ask aid from One so powerful? Why not seek enlightenment from One who is so wise and so benevolent?

However, not all of the human entity is dependent upon a controlling power, nor are all its functions involuntary. Within the house prepared by the Divine Intelligence, there dwells a sovereign in his own right and by his own might. He is endowed with freedom of desire, of choice and of action. He creates in his brain the nerve centers which control the voluntary activities of the body and from these brain centers he sends his commands through the fibers of the motor nerves to the voluntary muscles and makes them do his bidding; some he commands to walk, others to laugh, to eat, to speak, etc.

This independent principle in man we call the ego,³ the indi-

² Science would love to be able to answer this question but it is really no closer to a satisfactory answer than it was a century ago. God is still God and man is still but man.

³ The term "ego" is used here not in the Freudian (Continued on page 313)

vidual intelligence. It imagines, desires, reasons, plans and works out, by the power of free will and independent choice, its own salvation or destruction, physically, mentally, morally and spiritually. By means of the motor nervous system, this thinker and doer directs and controls from the headquarters in the brain all the voluntary functions, capacities and powers of the human organism. This part of the human entity can evolve and progress only through its own conscious and voluntary personal efforts.

In this, Man differs from the animal creation. The animal is able to take care of itself shortly after birth. It inherits, already fully developed, those brain centers for the control of the bodily functions which the newborn human must develop slowly and laboriously through patient and persistent effort in the course of many years.

Of voluntary capacities and powers the newborn infant possesses little more than the simplest unicellular animalcule, that is, about all it can do is to scent and swallow food. Its cerebral hemispheres are as yet blank slates, to be inscribed gradually by its conscious and voluntary exertions. Before it can think, reason, speak, walk or do anything else, it must first develop in its brain special centers for each and every one of these voluntary faculties and functions.

Through these persistent personal efforts, reason, will and self-control are gradually evolved and developed; while the animal, being hereditarily endowed with the faculties and functions necessary for the maintenance of life, has no occasion for the development of the **higher** faculties and powers and therefore remains an irresponsible automaton, which cannot be held accountable for its actions.⁴

To recapitulate: Freedom of choice and of action distinguish the human from the animal. In the animal kingdom, reasoning

³ (Continued from page 312) sense but in the dictionary sense of "The 'I' or self of any person; a person as thinking, feeling and willing, and distinguishing itself from the selves of others and from objects of its thought."

⁴ Today we like to credit some animals with a little more ability than this and, I feel, with some validation. Most certainly you are going to have a difficult time convincing many pet owners that their little darling cannot develop higher faculties and powers. However, this possibility does not negate the basic contentions of Dr. Lindlahr.

power and freedom of action move in the narrow limits of heredity and instinct, while Man, through his own personal efforts, is capable of unlimited development physically, mentally, morally and spiritually, both here and hereafter. We say physically advisedly, for in the spiritual realms, in the life after death, the physical (spiritual-material) body also is capable of deterioration or of ever greater refinement and beautification.

Through the right use of his voluntary faculties, capacities and powers, Man is enabled to become the master of himself and of his destiny.

Thus we find that the human organism consists of two distinct parts or departments, the one acting independently of the ego and deriving its motive force from an unknown source and the other under the conscious and voluntary control of the ego.

This twofold nature of the human entity justifies the twofold attitude of mind and soul, on the one hand the prayerful and faithful dependence upon that mysterious power which flows into us and controls us through the sympathetic nervous system and on the other hand the conscious and voluntary dominion over the various faculties, capacities and powers with which Nature has endowed us.

It is our privilege and our duty to maintain both attitudes, the dependent as well as the independent. The desire and the will to plan, to choose and to perform are ours, but for the power to execute we are dependent upon a Higher Source.

