

THE ORIGINS OF MINDFULNESS?

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When, over evolutionary time, have human beings stopped doing their usual daily tasks, been overwhelmed by a wondrous, beautiful and irresistible change in the environment that affects all the senses, and paused long enough to contemplate both our smallness and our universal connectedness? Could an experience like this, repeated almost every day over millennia, have an effect that becomes deeply embedded in our natural processes of health and well-being?

Although there has not been a specific scientific study to examine the question of the impact of watching a sunset, it is an idea that resonates with both logic and intuition. It resonates with the argument that most things that are good for us have been happening for a long time. Things have to happen for a long time for them to become embedded in our biology. This is simply how evolution works – processes that are beneficial for survival are preserved through long term procreative selection. Those things that are not beneficial for survival are either eliminated or resistant, resolving mechanisms are established to counteract the “contamination” and return the organism to health, wellbeing and procreative capacity.

If that is true, then it can be argued that all therapeutic processes, whether they are immunological, psychotherapeutic, genetic, or whatever, have and are already present qualities and quantities within the human complex biological system. Our curiosity, and the development of a reflective, observant and differentiating quality of brain functioning, has enabled various people to notice what seems to be good for us. They have been able to differentiate that element from the system and explore it, discover its

unknown possibilities and potential, and even create ways and means to activate the process in a unique and beneficial way.

In this context, I suggest that the source of all therapies from talk therapies to medicines have originated not solely in the brain of the “inventor” but in their observation of what already exists within us all. We fall “ill” when our natural system(s) become dysfunctional, overwhelmed, limited, restricted and/or dis-integrated. Applying the appropriate “therapy” can work to overcome these interferences to our natural systems and enable positive re-integration. I suggest that, when given the appropriate conditions, our natural system is inclined to move us toward health, well-being and both procreative health and ongoing social connection (which is beneficial for group/tribe survival).

There are many others who have expressed variations on these views over a long timeframe – Hippocrates’ description of equilibrium (circa 400BC); Galen’s *That the Best Physician Is Also a Philosopher* (circa 200AD); Henry Thoreau’s *Walden* (1874); Henry Lindlahr’s *Philosophy of Natural Therapeutics* (1975) – and I appreciate that many reading this may have also arrived at similar conclusions, but isn’t it wonderful to look at these images and feel their effects, regardless of the cognitive description I have put forward in words. We have a “knowing” and the extraordinary ability to “know we know”. We are not just *Homo Sapiens*, but *Homo Sapien Sapiens*. I wonder what marvels we are yet to discover and explore that lie within us, waiting to be observed and enriched and utilised for our better health and well-being?