

## CHAPTER ONE

# AN ORIENTATION TO THE HUMAN BODY

## SOME BASIC ANATOMICAL LANGUAGE, AND A GENERAL ORIENTATION

Just as the universe is a gigantic dance of stars and planets, spinning and turning in mysterious space, so the human body is an incredibly beautiful and complex creation, with millions upon millions of cells<sup>3</sup>, functioning in their different ways to make an integrated whole. Groups of similar cells are found joined together to form tissues. Different tissues together form structures with specific functions, called organs. Organs are associated with various tubes and supporting structures in things called systems. These carry out types of work in the body, like the different departments in a company or the various goings on in a community: communication, control, energy input, waste disposal, transport, production and so on.

The body exists in a state of constant change and movement. There is an internal balance, known as **homeostasis**, which is constantly monitored and maintained. This is the Western way of explaining what the Chinese call ‘yin and yang’: the complementary opposites which in life are always moving and dancing together in and out of balance (although in Western physiology, homeostasis relates to physical functions only).

In life there is no stasis - all is continually moving and changing. The chemicals in the body are kept at optimum levels. They move up and down these levels, and by so doing keep our bodies functioning well.

For the purposes of study (and following the Western scientific tradition which loves to separate in order to analyse and classify), we divide the functioning of the body into systems and look at each one individually: the skin; the skeleton; joints and muscles; the heart and circulation; the circulation’s companion: the lymphatic system; the lungs; the gut; the kidney and bladder; the nervous system and the special senses; and the reproductive system.

Remember however that the parts cannot and do not function alone - all are connected together in their intricate dance to maintain homeostasis. Even though each cell has its

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<sup>3</sup> Just thinking about the word ‘cell’ I realised it kind of sums up the separatist, mechanistic approach to life of Newtonian science which gave birth to modern medicine, which is brilliant in its way, yet lacking in connectedness – between the different bits of the body, between the body, mind and spirit, between a person and their environment.

individual life and functions, there is an over-all coherence. The endocrine and nervous systems are key in this, but not the end of the story; there seems to be an intelligence which runs through the body and mind, connecting and somehow orchestrating it all, which goes beyond what is currently understood by science.<sup>4</sup>

## **Connected to each other and to all life...**

We humans also cannot-and do not-function alone. Our modern world allows the illusion of separateness. I can live in my house, go to work in my car, sit at my desk and work, buy food to cook alone or with my small immediate family (at home), with very little contact with other humans. Recent political trends in Britain positively promoted this idea, with the philosophy 'there is no such thing as society; there are only individuals'.

The reality is, we are not independent. We are absolutely and completely dependent on each other (interdependent) for our survival, just as we have been since the beginning of time, and just as our cells are dependent on each other for the survival of our body.

Long ago (about three and a half billion years) our ancestors were still in simple chemical form hanging out in the primordial soup, when they noticed that if they hung out together they were better at surviving. Hence the first creatures formed, who then noticed (about a billion years ago) that getting together with each other created yet more opportunities for multiplying. We still carry within our cells **mitochondria**, which were once smaller cells (**bacteria**) that became part of a bigger cell; were swallowed by it, or invaded it. The partnership<sup>5</sup> was successful for both parties and survived to be the building block of our bodies, the modern **cell**.<sup>6</sup>

When I awake in the morning, an alarm clock made in a factory across the sea wakes me. I get up and dress in clothes made somewhere else. I eat food grown by people of many countries;packed, transported and sold to me. Before I even leave the house in the morning I have been touched by thousands of other lives. It is impossible for a human being to be separate. We are connected to each other and to all life, to the earth we live on, as intimately as our cells are part of us. Likewise in creating this holistic anatomy, physiology and pathology book, I am roaming through body, culture, society, Earth, politics, healing and spirituality.

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<sup>4</sup> Lynne McTaggart *The Field – The Quest For The Secret Force Of The Universe*.

<sup>5</sup> It turns out that bacteria often behave in a way that turns the Darwinian 'survival of the fittest' paradigm on its head. Not only do they not compete with each other, bacteria actively co-operate, exchanging important information about their environment (this is why they so quickly become immune to antibiotics, even those who haven't themselves been exposed to a particular antibiotic). These distant ancestors of ours are masters of adapting to their environment. (Stephen H. Buhner's *The Lost Language of Plants*). Actually, fifty years before Darwin, the man who first put forward the theory of evolution, Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck, emphasized in his presented theory the 'instructive' cooperation between organisms and their environment (Bruce H. Lipton *The Biology of Belief*).

<sup>6</sup> Or so one rather convincing story goes; that of evolution. There are ancient bacteria which do look quite similar to mitochondria – but let's remember that this can only ever remain a theory. We do need to be careful to not just pick the evidence we like to fit the story we like. Rather, the story should form around the unbiased facts, and we should be willing to change the story if necessary. Consider the creationists: they like their story and so only listen to evidence that supports it, and dismiss evidence to the contrary.