

Varieties of Healing in Present-Day Japan

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In the 1990's healing has become a keyword in fields as various as religion, medicine, and art. There have been few efforts, however, to elucidate either the social background or common conceptions of this term. In this article healing is understood as an activity of holistic recovery, and an exploration is made of its social background and spread in the youth culture of contemporary Japan. Although healing takes many forms in this subculture, fundamentally it is oriented towards harmony with others and with nature. Broad interest in healing began in the 1970s, increased through the popularization of New Age thought in the late 1980s, and became a fixture in the 1990s. As the social background to this process, on the individual level we can identify a reaction against the separation of body and spirit in modern society and a protest against the attenuation of human relationships. On a wider social level, increased interest in environmental concerns has contributed to the current interest in healing.

IN RECENT YEARS *healing* has come into its own in Japan. Articles on the topic enliven the pages of academic journals, books on it line the shelves of shops, special features on it figure prominently in magazines and on television, and workshops and seminars on it compete for clients. Similar developments have, of course, been seen in the New Age movements of all the advanced nations.

Still, there has yet to emerge any consensus on what exactly "healing" is. How, for example, does it differ from what religion calls "salvation" or medicine calls a "cure"? There are no easy academic definitions of healing, involving as it does a host of issues straddling the disciplines

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of religious studies, psychology, medicine, and anthropology. With this in mind, I will start with a consideration of healing in religion and medicine, the two areas with which it has traditionally been most closely associated; on this basis, I will then examine the extent of interest in healing and healing movements in present-day Japan. In the process we will probe the directions that healing has taken among the nation's "New Agers," particularly the young. At the same time, since a concern with healing is not limited to young people, I will examine the wider social background of the present interest in this subject.

Clarifying the Meaning of Healing

SALVATION: THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF HEALING

Healing, needless to say, is one of the central concerns of religion. In Japan it is commonplace for new religious groups to place a strong emphasis on healing experiences as they build their membership and then, as they become increasingly established, to turn to the intellectual refinement of their teachings and doctrine. Tenrikyō is a case in point. One of the largest of the pre-World War II New Religions, Tenrikyō in its early years attracted new believers primarily through its reputation for curing sickness, but with growing social acceptance it gradually moved this rather unsophisticated element into the background and shifted its interests to the construction of modern hospitals and schools. The same sort of move from a stress on curing sickness to an outlook more in line with secular values can also be seen in such representative postwar New Religions as Sōka Gakkai and Risshō Kōseikai.¹

The tendency in these religious movements has been to avoid the word *healing*, as the term suggests the use of a provisional *hōben* 方便 (expedient means); in most cases the words *sukui* 救い or *kyūsai* 救済, both meaning "salvation," are preferred, even when the curing of sickness is involved. Generally speaking, *salvation* suggests, to a greater extent than *healing* does, that the approach involved is an intellectual one based on doctrinal grounds. For example, when one talks, not of healing a person, but of saving a person through the action of compassion or charity, there is in the statement a certain nuance of doctri-

¹ The same holds true of Christianity in the United States, as in the evangelical and pentecostal movements of the last two centuries. The sects may retain as an article of faith their early belief in the Holy Spirit's gift of divine healing, but as their financial condition improves the emphasis shifts to the doctrines of faith, and compromises with modern medicine are made (HARRELL 1988).

nal profundity. The effects of the cure may be the same, but calling it *healing* suggests a limited, one-time remedy, while calling it *salvation* introduces a universal element that connects it with the existential sufferings shared by all human beings. Thus religions often stress that the provisional cures effected by healing are but the entranceway to the profounder succor offered by true salvation.

If we look deeper, however, we see that such “provisional cures” actually go far beyond the mere treatment of disease. This is because the suffering of the sick is not simply physical but always involves a psychological element, a perceived lack of meaning that expresses itself in such thoughts as, “Why is it me who gets sick?” or “Why now, of all times?” The same can be said of other forms of what might be called “worldly” suffering. Thus the complaint, “I work so hard, why am I still so poor?” does not emerge from actual poverty so much as from a sense that what one is doing lacks meaning.

As Max Weber pointed out in the 1920s, religions have always attempted to provide a plausible intellectual rationale for such “meaningless suffering,” one example being the Indian theory of karma. This can be seen as part of their intellectually based soteriological function. But healing cannot be grasped by intellectual means alone. When people experience the fact of healing they often tremble with emotion, weep, or find themselves at a loss for words. The cure manifests itself as a reality possessed of its own significance; healing, in a broad sense, affects the entire being of the one who is cured. If one insists upon distinguishing healing and salvation, one might say that healing involves an experiential, physical comprehension of the meaning of life, while salvation involves an intellect insight into that meaning (though, of course, at the moment of salvation no such artificial distinctions are possible).

Thus religious people speak not only of diseases that are cured through faith but of diseases that, uncured, occasion the realization of the true meaning of life or the perception of erroneous ways of thought. Such experiences may be rooted in any number of beliefs, including those that see all illness as karmic in origin or that preach the grateful acceptance of all that befalls one. Such beliefs change one’s perception of reality, imparting meaning to a pain-filled universe that earlier seemed utterly devoid of unifying significance. It is this new perception that opens the forces of healing. The role of the doctrinal teachings of religion in the formation of such beliefs—and in the concomitant creation of a new meaning system—is too obvious to need mentioning. But this is not all. Salvation occurs precisely because one has experienced a healing that picks up the scattered

fragments of a life and shapes them again into a single story, filling up the void left by meaninglessness.²

HEALING AND MEDICINE

So far we have spoken of healing in the context of religion, but it should be remembered that the establishment of modern medicine deprived a wider range of traditional healing methods of their legitimacy and stigmatized them as forms of quackery. From the late Meiji to the Taishō period, the healing techniques practiced among the Japanese came to be distinguished from modern medicine as “healing arts,” and at times their practice was controlled. These healing arts were influenced by the techniques of homeopathy, chiropractic, and osteopathy developed in the West during the nineteenth-century (IMURA 1984). In both Japan and the United States, orthodox medicine viewed these healing practices as heretical or as, at best, of ancillary importance.

There is no gainsaying the tremendous debt that humanity owes to modern medicine. It has been particularly effective in curing diseases caused by specific pathogens, diseases such as cholera, tuberculosis, and smallpox. These once dreaded sicknesses can now be cured, and in countries like Japan are rarely fatal.³

At the same time, however, there has of late been a call for a second look at the ruling medical orthodoxy. Questions are being raised about the rising costs that have accompanied the advance in medical technology, about the passive acquiescence to treatment required of patients, and even about the underlying philosophy of modern medicine with its mechanistic view of the human organism. Unorthodox healing practices and Eastern medicine, which have so far been relegated to the status of “alternative medicine,” are now being seriously reconsidered.

The leading causes of death have been changing; Japan now resembles the nations of the West in that the three major causes of death are malignant tumors, cardiovascular disease, and cerebral hemorrhage. As Carl BECKER (1993) has pointed out, these diseases are not

² Why should this experience of healing then be accorded a lower position than salvation? The reason is that the experience of healing is something that happens directly in the body and psyche of the individual and is therefore hard to communicate to others. Communication requires a certain intellectual processing. Thus discussions of religious experience focus less on the emotions felt during the experience of healing than on talk of “salvation” in accordance with doctrine. Thus a description of healing experience has, by the time it reaches our ears, become a story of “salvation.” This may explain why healing has been overlooked in comparison with salvation.

³ The 1992 death rate for tuberculosis in Japan is a very low 2.7 per 100,000. Cholera and smallpox rates are also stable (figures taken from KŌSEI TOKU KYŌKAI, 1994).

caused by pathogens like bacteria and viruses, but by the very lifestyle of today's men and women. These illnesses have brought home to us the fact that modern medicine is not omnipotent, and have stimulated the investigation of other medical traditions. The present interest in holistic medicine, with its stress on totality and the healing powers of nature, may also be seen in this context.

For example, it is said that adult illnesses like hypertension, diabetes, and cirrhosis, as well as contemporary adolescent psychological maladies like the refusal to attend school and the three "no's" (no energy, no interest, no responsibility), are symptomatic of a rift between understanding and sensation, and of a lowering of our awareness of and response to the signals that the body gives off in order to maintain a healthful balance. IKEMI (1986) calls this "the loss-of-bodily-sensation syndrome." Illnesses provoked by this separation of body and mind require not only physical treatment but long-term spiritual care as well. Thus the treatment of diabetes requires not only insulin shots, dietary control, and lowered stress, but also an improved attitude towards work, family, and life itself. In short, what is being called for is a shift away from a purely mechanistic view of the human person towards a holistic view of our physical and psychological aspects.

Interest in this holistic view of the human goes hand in hand with the "rehabilitation" of healing. As the etymological connections between the words *healing*, *health*, *holiness*, and *hale* suggest, there is a connection between health and the spiritual. But again, the spiritual aspect alone is not enough: *healing* is cognate with *whole*, both deriving from *holos* (as ALTENBERG points out, *holistic* can be written *wholistic* [1992]), suggesting that the religious cure of illness must be augmented by a holistic treatment of the entire human individual. The Japanese Holistic Medicine Association takes a broad view of healing in its explanation of holistic medicine, stressing that it is based on the healing power of nature, with the patient basically curing him- or herself and the therapist playing an auxiliary role only. Ikemi's "total health" and Noguchi's "total life"⁴ both point to this radical restoration of the human that includes the totality of body and mind.

THE DIVERSITY OF HEALING

So far I have discussed healing in terms of its differences with salvation and cure, something that, I hope, has brought the outlines of

⁴ NOGUCHI Haruchika, founder of the Seitai Association, which promotes *ki* energy therapy, says that the concept of "total life" implies a perfection of life (1976). One can discern in his outlook a certain holistic way of thinking, stressing as it does the healing power of nature, the harmony of body and mind, and the response of the soul to *ki* energy.

healing into a bit clearer relief. To the extent that healing refers to the treatment of the individual as a whole, it embraces both salvation and cure. More narrowly defined, however, healing and salvation can be differentiated: healing addresses the problem of meaninglessness in a direct and concrete way so that the individual actually *feels* the significance of life, whereas salvation addresses the same problem from a more intellectual standpoint. Moreover, healing implies a more holistic approach than that of modern medicine's "cure." In summary, we might say that salvation addresses the intellectual-spiritual side and curing addresses the physical side; while healing, with its view of the human individual as a single whole, appeals to body and spirit alike.

Naturally, the orientation of healing to wholeness is not something that can be achieved at the level of the individual alone. Andrew Weil speaks of a continual movement to maintain balance even in outer space and the natural environment, a movement that he refers to as a form of healing in the sense that it restores totality.⁵ Similarly, religious groups work to preserve harmony in society and the environment, compensating for the contradictions and shortcomings of the existing social system and the devastation of the natural world, and thereby attempt to restore society and nature to their rightful, original form. Robert KISALA speaks of this as a "social healing" (1995). To take humanity as a whole is to include the whole of the social environment that envelops us; the healing of humanity thus involves the harmony of society and nature.

Healing in Youth Culture

THE MANY FACES OF THE HEALING FAD

In Japan, interest in the practices and ideas associated with healing dates back to the late 1970s. Still, the term *healing* (in Japanese, *iyashi* 癒し) remained relatively unknown outside of religious and New Age movements until the collapse of the "bubble economy" in the early 1990s.⁶ I will return to the relevance of this later, but suffice it to note here that concern with healing has grown steadily until it has now become a subject of everyday discourse. This is particularly noticeable in the case of youth culture.

The year 1994 saw a number of magazines devoting special issues to

⁵ WEIL (1983) views as a form of healing the centuries-long process of mountain surfaces recovering from human development, and the ongoing cycle of stars exploding, matter being scattered through space, tranquility and balance being restored, and new matter being created through fusion.

⁶ The bubble economy was the overheated Japanese economy of 1986 to 1990, characterized by wildly inflated real estate and stock prices.

the topic of healing. For instance, in November of that year *SPA!*, a magazine popular among young businessmen and known for promoting counter-cultural topics, put together an issue that introduced such things as “dolphin-healing” (therapeutic swimming with dolphins), music healing, healing goods, and paranormal powers. The idea behind the special issue was to clarify, in a rather critical fashion, what it called “the mysterious rise in the number of young people seeking an easy way to ‘save their souls’.” Another example was the October 1994 issue of the literary monthly *Hato yo!* (a journal targeting people in their twenties and thirties). The issue was given over to “Healing the Heart” and discussed “Seven Ways to Health”: dolphins, palmistry, *seitai* 整体 therapy, yoga, karaoke, sex, and books.

We may also mention the 22 April 1994 issue of the woman’s magazine *anan*, which targets female university students and pink-collar workers. Entitled “More about Those Wonderful Powers and Phenomena Everybody Is Talking About,” it dealt with such topics as séances, channeling, former-life readings, *ki* energy, spells, and “hand power.” The 3 September issue of the women’s fashion magazine *Olive* was a special titled “The Unseen World: An Introduction to Mysterious Powers” that pursued the issue of “invisible powers” in articles on Sai Baba, *ki* energy, meditation, spiritual therapy, and so on.

This same trend is seen in the bookshops. A browse around the psychology and religion/spirituality sections of the large bookstores reveals a large amount of material on healing.⁷ In April 1994, Seibu Libro, one of Tokyo’s leading book stores, set up a special display called “Self-Healing,” which featured not only published materials on the subject but special healing crystals and relaxation tapes and CDs. The invariable inclusion of “dolphin healing” in this context is of particular interest.⁸ Bookstores catering to the young now provide a sec-

⁷ The same trend is seen in recent novels. All three parts of Nobel Prize winner Ōe Kenzaburō’s most recent novel, *Moeagaru midori no ki* 燃えあがる緑の木 [The burning bush], focus on healing. And in his acceptance speech in December 1994 he concluded by taking upon himself mankind’s ghastly deeds during the twentieth century and reiterating his hope, and conviction, for the possibility of healing and reconciliation for the entire human race. Again, the best-selling novelist Yoshimoto Banana, who enjoys great popularity among the younger generation, deals in her novel *Amyta* with the mystical experience of a young girl who loses her memory. Yoshimoto’s own experiences in channeling and meditating in an isolation tank have been reported on in a women’s magazine.

⁸ The stimulus for the “dolphin boom” in Japan was the 1992 release of Luc Besson’s film *Grande Bleu*, the story of Jacques Mayol, world-record holder for diving without equipment and a pioneer in communicating with dolphins. Mayol himself has often visited Japan, where he is active on the speech and symposium circuit. John C. Lilly and Horace Dobbs, whose research on communication between dolphins and humans has been translated into Japanese, took part in an international congress on dolphins and whales held at Enoshima, Japan, that was attended by five hundred people.

tion on dolphins with photo collections and accounts of healings achieved through communication with dolphins. Dolphins are also much in evidence in healing music, workshops, and healing goods.

Interest in healing extends beyond the written word. New Age music and healing music have established themselves as new genres. Healing music, generally Western in nature, includes arrangements of Gregorian chant as well as recordings of dolphin voices, of children at play, and of the sound of ocean waves. The music of Ōe Hikaru, eldest son of the Nobel Prize-winning novelist, is one of the relatively few applications of traditional Japanese music to healing. All of these musical forms have been widely used to create a meditative and relaxing mood in stressful environments like offices and hospitals.

Workshops on healing are now common in Japan. The workshops reported on in New Age magazines like *FILI* and *Tama* tend to employ a combination of breathing techniques and bodywork, but others offer yoga, hypnosis therapy, Qigong, *reiki*, and aroma therapy. Healing workshops have also been sponsored by the organizations that run self-development seminars.⁹ The travel industry, too, has gotten involved. Special healing tours are now available to Tenkawa, Kumano, and Yakushima (reputed to be areas of high spiritual energy), to Hawaii and the Bahamas for swimming with wild dolphins, and to the ashram of Sai Baba.

No consideration of the healing fad would be complete without reference to the “healing goods” (crystals, moonstones, lapis lazuli, etc.) referred to in passing above. We turn to these next.

THINGS INFUSED WITH HEALING POWERS

Goods believed to be specially empowered for healing are available in the New Age shops that have cropped up all over Japan in recent years. Formerly these shops were known, not without a touch of scorn, as “occult shops,” but as goods related to healing have taken over they have in many cases come to be called “healing shops.”

For example, Rhodanthe, a shop in the Koganei area of Tokyo famous in New Age circles, sells crystals, stones, incense, oils, herbs, meditation CDs, and books on divination, magic, paranormal powers, and the occult, with the claim that its wares promote “meditation, environmental purification, relaxation, healing, and the fulfillment of one’s desires.” There is on the precincts a six-foot pyramid with a bed inside for resting. A chain of eight shops by the name Triangle, centered in the Fukuoka area, offers similar goods and provides a resident tarot-card reader in the back. A twelve-shop chain known as The

⁹ On self-development seminars see the article by Haga Minoru in this issue, pp. 283-99.

Nature Company supplies trinkets with plant and animal motifs, T-shirts, stones, model dinosaurs, petrified wood, and the like. It also carries outdoor goods like telescopes, army knives, related books and videos, and imported healing-music CDs. Though the orientation to nature is strong, a sign in the store makes it clear that no wildlife products are sold: no mounted animals, furs, butterfly specimens, or seashells. The text reads: "We sincerely hope that the goods we sell, and the creative powers and experiences that grow from them, will awaken your curiosity in things unknown, enrich your spirit, and increase your sense of empathy with the earth on which we live."

The Rhodanthe shop in Tokyo is a New Age shop, while the Triangle chain characterizes itself as a dealer in magic goods and divination. What first strikes one about these shops, and the Nature Company outlets as well, are the crystals and other stones. Considerable space is devoted to displaying a variety of pendants with giant crystals and unpolished stones, plus leather pouches containing stones. Prices range from a few hundred to over one million yen. Cosmo-Space, a store located in Tokyo's Harajuku that specializes in stones, sold some 330,000 pieces in 1992 alone via mail order and department store sales. Purchasers are mainly schoolgirls and women in their twenties. According to the shop's president, the crystal fad began with grapevine reports on "the mysterious powers of the crystal," mainly among junior high school girls interested in divination and charms (*Asahi shinbun*, 23 January 1993, evening edition).

Those who buy the stones claim that having a stone that suits one—for not all stones do—brings a feeling of composure, energizes the body, helps fulfill dreams, and unleashes subliminal powers. Belief in crystals is particularly strong in New Age circles, where it is felt that keeping a crystal on one's person will bring happiness, that holding one during sleep will excite the creative powers of the unconscious, that setting one in the house will promote family harmony, and that burying one in the ground will give plants new life.

Several years ago foreign books expounding the healing powers of crystals were introduced to Japan, and knowledge spread about the use of crystals in conjunction with the chakra (sometimes using different types of crystals with each chakra). Many of those who use these stones claim that the aim is for peace of mind and body, though, they say, some attempt to use them for magical purposes.

THE POWER OF CHARMS

Stones, and particularly crystals, have gained a rather wide popularity among women, including primary and secondary school girls. Among

teenagers of about fifteen the healing goods referred to above are known as “*omajinai* goods” and are quite widely owned. The Japanese term *omajinai* carries a connotation of charms, magic, the occult, exorcism, spells, and so forth. The popularity of these goods is related not only to present-day developments in New Age thought but also to traditions of Japanese popular religiosity and religious magic dating back to ancient times.

The popularity of charms was given a boost by monthly magazines like *My Birthday*, a teen-market fortune-telling journal which, picking up on the reader interest in charms, popularized and promoted these objects. In the process it started giving away free *omajinai* goods to its readers, and eventually opened a speciality shop called The House of Little Witches in the basement of its editorial offices. According to a sales source, one of the shop’s best sellers is a small bottle filled with lapis lazuli powder that changes color as water is added, bringing, it is said, good luck. Other popular items are tarot cards, objects with a Star-of-David pattern, and pendants inscribed with the letters TRAPS, from a magic square used in Europe.

The shop, frequented by primary and junior high school girls, prices its goods reasonably, from several hundred to several thousand yen. The girls’ interests are focused for the main part on human relations, like romance and friendship. We see this, for example, in *The Definitive Book on Charms* by Mark Yazaki (a researcher on charms who plays an advisory role for *My Birthday*). The book devotes fourteen of its twenty-six chapters to romance and four more to friendship, family, and human relationships. Two sections each are given to charms for succeeding in study, examinations, and sports; for attaining good fortune and happiness; and for increasing beauty and health. One section deals with increasing one’s enjoyment of work, and another with self-improvement.

THE ORIENTATION TO HARMONY

The New Age customers of shops like Rhodanthe appear to have little interest in using *omajinai* goods for the realization of their personal desires. Their concern seems to lie, rather, in achieving intimacy with and absorption into the natural world through the medium of the various goods sold. Thus we see that the same objects—crystals for example—are used for quite different purposes by different people. Some see them as a means to influence destiny and the course of human relationships, while others see them as a means to approach nature. Yet even in the latter case we should remember that the version of “nature” being approached is largely an artificial human construct.

As any number of commentators have pointed out, there is a fundamental gap between animals and human beings: animals instinctively conform with nature, while humans, utilizing culture, attempt to reshape nature. Yet this effort, once initiated, has no end: no artificial environment, however developed, can ever match the provident embrace of nature, and no man-made surroundings, no matter how pleasurable, will ever truly satisfy the demands of human desire. A longing is thus born for the state prior to our confrontation with nature, a state of repose in Mother Nature's bosom. When nature touches the human person, there is a feeling of restfulness beyond the power of words to tell. As soon as we return to everyday life, however, we realize how hopelessly distant we are from this experience. Just as animals cannot retrace their steps on the evolutionary path, human beings, once possessed of culture, cannot return to a state of unity with nature. In such conditions, all human beings can do is utilize the culture they have acquired to forge an artificial "nature" and there make a comfortable place for themselves. Goods sold at New Age shops aim at just this. What CDs, videos, and trinkets displaying plants and animals produce is not, of course, nature. And yet somehow through them people are able to *feel* nature.

Just why do people seek out nature like this? Simply put, the reason lies in a desire for the peace that comes with harmony. As isolated as we may have become from the world of nature, there is not one of us who does not seek a state of natural harmony. Put the other way around, as comfortable as our human environment may be, we cannot accept the tension and pressure that go with it. Goods in New Age shops in the shape of plants and animals provide a quick and easy natural ambience. The same can be said of interest in dolphins. Even though dolphins are animals, there is a belief in—and a desire for—their ability to communicate with us. Stories of human communication with dolphins go back to Mediterranean myths, and often appear in movies, novels, and animated cartoons. Dolphins are seen as a connector between the human world and the world of nature, and a medium for achieving a state of restfulness.

Similarly, it is undoubtedly the association of crystals and other stones with the earth that gave rise to the belief in their ability to create peace of mind. They are seen as a harmonizing force, and thus as a way to attain a sense of relaxation and togetherness. In the case of other charms as well, what the young girls who use them are most interested in are human relationships—what they seek is true harmony with friends, parents, and boyfriends, and the peace that this brings in the form of companionship, understanding, and love. These are

things that nature alone cannot provide. The girls seem to be seeking an escape not only from the competitive pressures of school examinations and job-seeking but from the indifference to others that marks the modern world.

Thus, whether it be plant and animal trinkets or crystals and other charms, the belief is that such things bring the peace of mind associated with a state of harmony. The “healing shops” that have sprung up of late cater to this need for a place that offers relaxation, good feeling, and good humor. Earlier we spoke of healing as related to the human person as a whole, body and spirit together, and we stressed the necessity of this for attaining harmony with society and nature. The healing being sought in youth culture also seems to be characterized as a harmony with nature, a harmony with others, and the peace of mind that comes with such harmony.

The Spread of Healing and Its Background

THE SPREAD OF HEALING

The orientation to healing is not restricted to youth culture—the concept is also becoming a byword in the fields of medicine, economics, and the arts. A number of hospitals, though they are still few, have begun to use *ki* energy and Eastern medicine, and there are reports of success in treating terminal cancer and chronic disorders. There are also facilities advertising healing with dolphins, health foods, and meditation.

For example, the Hodaka Health Park, a kind of holistic health center in Hodaka-chō, Nagano Prefecture, was founded in 1986 by the acupuncturist Fukuda Shunsaku, who practiced yoga in India and underwent Shugendō training at Ōmine-san in Japan. Here the patient’s natural healing powers are increased through yoga, hot-spring therapy, a healthy diet centered on brown rice and vegetables, and suitable exercise like hiking. The Akame Health Center was founded in 1985 in Nabari-shi, Mie Prefecture, by Fukuoka Takaya, a researcher in diabetes and Chinese herbal medicine. Diet and exercise therapy are practiced, and facilities are available for farming, raising livestock, and producing art and pottery. The normal stay is one month, and the total number of patients, mainly afflicted with autonomic ataxia, diabetes, and depression, is between fifty and seventy a year. The basis of life in the center is a balanced diet of natural foods free of all additives. Walks in the mountains are also encouraged.

But healing is not restricted to the infirm. Business enterprises have begun to offer healing training, led by organizations set up for this

specific purpose. There are also entrepreneurs specializing in the short-term rental of pets to lighten the mood of the workplace (for which Japanese have coined the English phrase, “companion animals”). In all of these cases, healing is needed to harmonize human relationships in work environments prone to stress.

As mentioned above, the subject of healing first attracted attention in the 1970s, but did not become widely known, as far as I have been able to determine, until the 1990s. The spread of knowledge about healing was stimulated by three things. First, the 1973 oil shock undermined Japan’s faith in economic progress and opened the possibility for lifestyles other than those devoted to mass production and consumerism. Slogans such as “Let’s take it easy, you and I,” and “A good life rather than a frenetic one” captured the mood in the late 1970s. Despite their counter-cultural flavor, such things as folk medicine and chemical-free farming began to attract attention from about this time.

The second step, I believe, was the spread of New Age thought in Japan that started with the 1986 Japanese translation of Shirley MacLaine’s *Out on a Limb*. This was fostered by the prevailing mood during the bubble economy of the late 1980s, a time of unprecedented prosperity, but one during which people first started discussing shorter hours, greater elbowroom, and death by overwork, reflecting the need for physical and mental peace. Then the bubble burst, leading to an immediate rise of concern with healing. More people stopped name-brand buying sprees abroad and started to reorient themselves to spiritual rather than material goods, to inner rather than outer wealth. All of this was expressed in the single word *healing*. In this sense, the collapse of the bubble economy represents the third factor in the spread of the techniques and ideas of healing.¹⁰

THE BACKGROUND TO THE HEALING FAD

So far we have characterized the nature of healing in terms of harmony and totality and had a look at its spread. But the question remains as to why healing is receiving so much attention today. In reply, and by way of conclusion, I would like to consider three aspects of this question: the individual, the interpersonal, and the social.

On the individual level we have the problem of mind and body. Given, on the one hand, modern medicine’s view of the body as a

¹⁰ NISHIYAMA Shigeru (1988) notes the swell of interest in mysticism and magic that followed the Meiji government’s policy of “increased production through industry—national wealth and military strength” and the postwar government’s drive for rapid economic growth. Nishiyama’s ideas are supported by the increased interest in healing after the collapse of the bubble economy, if one includes healing in the realm of magic and mysticism.

machine, and, on the other, modern education's utter lack of attention to physical concerns, people today find a dualistic view of body and mind being forced upon them. The body is severed and tossed aside. The senses that vitalize the physical being are deprived. In reaction to this "shutting out" of the body, things that stress the bonds between mind and body—yoga, meditation, and the martial arts—are attracting attention. As this tendency grows stronger, it in turn provides a context for a heightening of concern with healing methods that stress harmony within oneself, with others, and with nature.

The impact of this on the world of religion is that attention has shifted away from intellectual salvation based on doctrine, towards a salvation grounded in a bodily "feeling" or "sensing" of the meaning of life. This strong desire for bodily sensation supports the trend towards healing. Many of the New Religions that have experienced expansion since the 1970s have stressed what is "felt" in the course of direct communication and dealing with spirits, whether this is by the "contact with the spirit" (*sesshin* 接心) of Shinnyoen or the laying on of hands in the Mahikari groups. Such elements cannot be discounted when considering the background of the present fascination with such things as charms and dolphin communication.

The interpersonal level is no less important here. As society grows ever more competitive and information-intensive, human relations get weaker and weaker. The freedom gained by breaking away from close-knit human relationships is accompanied by a chronic sense of loneliness. Individualism is never without the danger of fostering selfishness and indifference to others. The breakup of local communities has long been deplored, but now people are also concerned with the breakup of the family, as reflected in terms like "family violence" and "in-house divorce" (in which husband and wife continue to live under the same roof but are for all intents and purposes separated). The core of the crisis of community is now being located in the disruption of domestic unity. In this context healing is often spoken of in terms of reconciliation. As the popularity of charms confirms, healing is linked to harmony and the resulting sense of peace. Thus healing workshops often promote an attitude of forgiveness and acceptance through the use of psychotherapy. In terms of the interpersonal, then, healing serves as a protest against the dilution of human relations.

In healing workshops much is made of "awareness" and "sharing." Through body work and meditation, one becomes aware of one's patterns of thought and behavior, and recognizes the fact that one belongs to a reality bigger than oneself. By putting this awareness into practice and transmitting it to others it gradually becomes a common

possession through which reconciliation can be sought. The self that was divided and withered is set loose to find freedom through an organic interconnectedness with others.

The individual and interpersonal dimensions do not yet complete the movement toward healing, however, but open it up to a third level. As we noted earlier, the effort to return society and nature to their original condition is also part of healing. Healing what is human is inseparable from achieving harmony with society and nature. Thus goods for sale in New Age shops are intended to enhance people's sense of nature, while initiatives to protect the environment, which first gained momentum during the 1970s, have now developed into widespread grassroots movements throughout Japan. Issues like acid rain and the destruction of the ozone layer have become major topics, spurring a broadening of attention from local problems to global environmental concerns. The Earth is now seen more as a single living organism (the Gaia hypothesis). The problem of healing can be explained as part of this rising interest in ecology.

Another related phenomenon is the serious effort being directed to stopping the unexpected explosion of ethnic conflict that has followed the end of the Cold War. This too may be seen as a form of social healing. In this vein, the theme of the sixth meeting of the World Conference on Religion and Peace held in Italy in November 1994 was "Healing the World: Religions for Peace."

Considered in these terms, the objects of healing are both far-reaching and important, making it hard to pin down the nature of healing with any clarity. This is all the more so given the nature of healing as a form of salvation that works in the here and now, something that makes it both highly individualistic and highly pluralistic. But despite this ambiguity, as long as there are problems that need healing the interest in this subject can only increase.

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