

Anthroposophical Therapy

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The Late Dr. Rudolf Steiner of Donarh, who is well known upon the Continent of Europe as thinker of eminence within his own field of research, which was that of mystical philosophy, and as a scholar of great erudition generally, elaborated during the last thirty years a theory of Medicine which can no longer be ignored. The doctrines elaborated by him have already borne fruit. Two or three clinics (in Switzerland, Germany and Holland), a pharmaceutical institute, and a research laboratory, all staffed by orthodox medical men and women, bear witness to the practical enthusiasm awakened by his system of medical philosophy. It is proposed to bring the outlines of this system before the profession in the following paragraphs, which do not claim to be more than a transcript of notes of two lectures recently delivered in Harley Street to semi-private audience of medical men and women, of whom the present writer was one.

Dr, Steiner bristled with reservations, due to an evident understanding of the opposition with which scientific conservatism would meet at least some of conditions of research that underlie his conclusions. Had his theory not been demanded of him, he would have preferred to pave the way for it by demonstration of the practical proofs already available. An investigation into the functions of the spleen, for instance, based on his theory, had found in the organ the restorer of the digestive rhythm continually disturbed by man's unavoidably arrhythmical methods feeding. Other experiments had shown that certain active substances, antimony for example, in dilutions as high as one in a trillion, have their effect on the growth of germinating grains of wheat, which confirms the investigations of Gunn and Feltharn (British Medical Journal, Vol. I., 1911, page 134) showing that solutions of sodium arsenite at least as dilute as one in one hundred thousand exert a distinct protection of the red blood-cells against haemolysis by sodium

glycocholate. Certainly the guiding line for Dr. Steiner's investigations have been found in an unorthodox manner, but the investigations themselves have been entirely orthodox.

He suggest that in the perception of the relationships between observed processes within the human organism and corresponding process in external nature lies the future of the therapeutics. He rebels against academic petrification of thought. Histology, both normal and morbid, has advance in the understanding of those processes which accompany the introduction of extraneous substances into the human organism, nor of their relationship to the human organic processes whose activities they influence, nor of the human organic processes themselves. Neither is there any real comprehension of the relationship existing between a substance in external nature.

In regard to human organic processes, after thirty years of investigation Dr. Steiner tells us that he is able to divide these into three systems, differing from one another, distinct, and yet interpenetrating, the ramification of each being traceable at every point of the body.

These systems are: --

1. The processes carried on within the sense organs and in the nervous systems. As these are centralised in the head chiefly, their totality may be called the head system.
2. The processes carried on in all the rhythmic systems, including among the letter the cycle of sleep and waking. These are centralised chiefly in the thorax, and their totality may be called the chest system.
3. The processes carried on in the metabolic system and in the system of movements, centralised in the region of the abdomen and in the members, and referred to the collectively as the movement-metabolic system.

For the sake of brevity and convenience, these three process-systems may also be specified respectively as the upper, the middle and the lower man.

With each is connected one aspect of man's mental life, which Dr. Steiner differentiates into three phases : the conceptual or thought-life connected with the head system, the life of being or emotional life connected with the chest system, and the volitional or will-life connected with the movement-metabolic system.

Many writes on psychology who believe themselves to be describing man's entire mental life are in reality, according to Dr. Steiner, describing only one phase of it, the life of thought ; others, whose works are so to speak physiologically flavoured, recognise the three-fold nature of the mentality, but connect all three phases with the brain. In Dr. Steiner's opinion such location is a serious obstacle to the true understanding of the human constitution. He holds the thought-life alone to be connected with the head system neural processes forming the direct physical basis for ideation. Assimilatory and muscular processes provide the basis for volition, while feeling is based on the rhythmical processes of breathing and the circulation of the blood. Ideas or mental presentation of these two phases of physical activity, feeling and willing, are conditioned by neural processes as all ideation is conditioned. Hence it follows that even as mediators are required between the brain and the sense-organs that we may build our impressions of the external world into concepts, so mediators are required between the rhythmic system and the nervous system to enable us to form concepts of our emotions. The emotions (as far as the writer is able to follow Dr. Steiner) stand in a similar relationship to the rhythmic system as do sound and light to the ear and eye. They are not generated in the brain the immaterial part of man. The effect they produce in the rhythmic system is built up into a mental presentation in the brain as is the effect produced by light upon the retina. The same considerations hold good for the will, which works from the psyche into the movement-metabolic system.

The investigation led Dr. Steiner to a revolutionary conclusion, because he sees in every nerve a mediator for the formation of concepts, and, if that is so, every nerve must carry impulses into the central nervous system. If every nerve carries afferent impulses, there can be no division of nerves into afferent and efferent, Dr. Steiner says in effect that in spite of anatomical and histological metamorphoses, there is only one kind of nerve.

Not only does he disagree with the established division of nerves into afferent and efferent, but he is unable to see the function of the heart as it is conceived of by the physiologist. He does not find the motive power behind the circulation in the activities of a mechanical pump, but in certain forces within that immaterial complex known to medicine as the psyche. These psychic forces cause the blood to circulate ; they drive it forward, and the heart beats because it is set in motion by the blood. The accepted view of the heart as a motor extinguishes all idea of a connection between physical and organic activities, definitely closing the door to insight into all that lies behind the material. At the present stage of our evolution, man is unable voluntarily to influence his cardiac action, because he has no power over the effect produced upon his body by his feelings.

When he is afraid, he cannot control the effect of that feeling upon his blood, nor the effect of the more rapidly moving blood upon his heart. But the day will come when of his own volition he will cause his blood circulate and his heart to beat. That forward step in his evolution is fore-shadowed by the cross-striation of the cardiac muscle.

In the light of Dr. Steiner's physiology the heart must be regarded as an organ resulting from the equilibrium maintained by the rhythmic system between the activities of the nervous system on the one hand, and of the movement-metabolic processes on the other. These processes are antithetical, representing polar opposites ; rhythmic processes strike a balance between them. This holds good for the entire organism. In the genesis of the circulation the nervous pole is represented by the activities connected with inspiration for although respiration belongs of course to the rhythmic system, yet the actual indrawing of air is conditioned by the processes of the nerves and senses. The opposite pole is represented by metabolic activities connected with digestion, by which ponderable materials are incorporated into the organism. The inspired air meets the nutritive juices prepared by metabolism, causing an interaction of nervous and metabolic activities, an interplay of airy and of liquid currents. The heart is set in motion by that interplay of currents; it does not like a pump, produce them.

Nervous and metabolic activities in all their aspects are continually so balanced by rhythmic activities the unity of the human organism being a condition achieved, not once and for all, but all the time, by a maintenance of equilibrium between ideation, volition and feeling, and currently between the three sets of organic processes on which these mental activities are based. The outcome of a perfect balance is health, illness results from an excessive activity and development of one process-system above the other.

With reference to his dictum that the processes of the nervous system and those of the metabolic-movement system are antithetical, Dr. Steiner sees neural substance as a matter generated not by assimilative but by dissimilative forces, owing its existence to a katabolic activity. If we consider that process which within the nervous system is representative of metabolism we will find, according to Dr. Steiner, that it differs from metabolic processes elsewhere.

When an extraneous substance is introduced into the digestive tract, the inherent laws by which that substance is governed, its own tendencies to follow the external laws of chemical change, arouse activities in the human organism akin to volition, whereby the intruding tendencies are conquered and the substance is as if it were annexed. At a certain point these will-like metabolic activities step in, and at that point arises the impulse to excretion. In the nervous system, the cessation of will-like metabolic activities is likewise followed by the impulse to excretion, but that excretion is not as elsewhere; it takes place inwardly. Then certain forces take hold of these internal excretory products and mould them, building the neural substances. When Dr. Steiner tells us that the building force is that force which in external nature manifest as an artistic activity, he is leading us beyond the scope of the article into the realm of mystical philosophy. Paracelsus described an invisible body of man, in no wise constituted like the visible body, and not submitted to the physician; Dr. Steiner sees man, that is the Ego, the 'I' of man, enveloped in three bodies, one visible and two invisible. It is through the first of these invisible sheaths, the etheric body, that the building force gains access. Generated primarily by katabolic activities, neural substance strives continually to return to the

mineral kingdom, the goal of all human, plant and animal substances alike, when their power of regeneration, the moulding force which flows into them from without is withdrawn from them. Such a devolutionary step, continually attempted by the tissues of nervous system, is already achieved by substance of the bones, which has passed from the organic well-nigh into the inorganic world. The processes of the nerves and senses underlying waking consciousness, sense-perception and ideation, abstract from nervous tissues, it is still the recipient. While that force is allowed to flow, the mineralizing tendency inherent in neural substance is held in check. But when man by his waking thought-activities abstracts it, his cerebral tissues must disintegrate. Since to quote the philosopher Henry More, there is no Quies in Nature, all that does not evolve must devolute. Hence the brain is compelled to suffer a continual destruction in order that its owner may have the faculty of thought. It is forever subjected to a partial death, by which it permits the entrance into the physical organism of a non physical activity. That entering activity exerts a destructive energy, knocking holes, to put it very crudely, into the physical matter which served it as a resistance to push against. It graves its tracks upon the brain as a cart graves ruts upon a road, and even as it might conceivably be possible for an observer entirely unaware of the existence of carts to arrive at some idea of their nature from the road and the ruts, so the task of the materialist who sets out to explain thought from the brain alone, that is from tracks left by thought, is not so entirely hopeless as in Dr. Steiner's opinion it deserves to be.

It has been said that loss of health must be regarded as loss of balance between nervous and metabolic activities. From the ultimate results of this want equilibrium, that is from the symptoms of disease, the physician must recognise which of the two antithetical process systems has gained the upper hand. Then, if his remedies are to be drawn from the plant kingdom, he must relate the forces of that kingdom to the human organism. Three elements can be distinguished in the fully developed plant. One, which forms the root, is subject to the terrestrial influence of gravity ; it absorbs liquids wherein to dissolve the food of the plant ; it has a tendency to store up salts, a tendency to mineralization. A similar mineralizing tendency, it has been said, exist in the human

nervous system, hence plants in which the root nature predominates have an affinity for the upper man.

The second plant element, which forms the flower and the organs of fertilisation, strives upwards towards the Cosmos, withdrawing itself from terrestrial influence ; it absorbs light warmth as nourishment, and secretes combustible, aromatic substances in the flower. It is related to the lower man, that is the metabolic movement system which provides the basis secretion, excretion and sex activity. Hence the vital processes of such plants as specialise the flower and fruit have an affinity for the human processes of metabolism and movement.

The third plant element, manifesting in the leaves is the maintainer of balance between the earth-influenced root-element and with the human rhythmic system, the maintainer of equilibrium in man, who is the 'inverted plant,' his head system, with its mineralizing tendencies pointing up, his organs of generating pointing down ; he has turned from the plant position through two right angles.

Behind the physical manifestations of the mineral kingdom likewise three elements can be distinguished, two of which are polar opposites whose antithetical activities are balanced by the third. One of these two opposites manifests as sulphurous and phosphorous substances, which enter into a close combination with light and warmth ; the other is represented by the salts, whose formation is accompanied by the casting out of light and warmth : between them lies the balancing element, manifesting as metallic substances, not united so closely with the imponderables as are sulphur and phosphorus, yet not liberating them so completely as do the salts. When the mineral activities are related to man, it is found, broadly speaking, that the phosphorus substances tend to unite the physical human element more strongly with the physical ; substances of salt-like nature tend to check excess of physical over physical activities : while metallic substances are capable of adjusting the psyche-physical balance.

Coming now to the consideration of specific instances where the recognition of affinities existing between human and plant processes has been used as a foundation for practical therapeutics, let us examine in this light the treatment of Catarrhus Aestivus or Hay Fever by active substances obtained from plants of the order of Pomaceae and Rutaceae. It is claimed that these substance, which in this case is to be employed as the remedial agent. The introduction of the substance, the vehicle, into the human organism is said to set that potential activity free as a kinetic energy capable of influencing similar or related human energies.

In order to understand the genesis of Catarrhus Aestivus, it is necessary to consider the inter-relationship of the three process-systems in the child, which differs from their relationship in the adult. In the child the nervous activities work much more intensely into the two other systems than they do in later life. The entire child is as it were a sense organ ; these activities which in the adult take place at the periphery only are carried on everywhere throughout the body of the child, connecting it much more directly and intimately with external nature. Because of its exaggerated nervous activities, bound up as they are with external environment, the child is very openly exposed to the influence of natural processes taking place around it. The processes of its metabolic system, tending inwards away from the external environment and least influenced by it, increase in activity with the approach of puberty, and as they augment, the nervous activities diminish. Synchronously with this adjustment of balance the influence of external natural processes on the entire organism lessens ; this change is manifested physically by the disappearance of the exudative diatheses common to childhood. But in later life the immature condition may re-appear ; that is to say, we may find in the adult an over development of nervous activities such as is normal to the child, accompanied by a correspondingly over sensitivity Catarrhus Aestivus is the physical manifestation, the ultimate.

The existing cause of Hay Fever is generally considered to be the presence upon the effected mucosa of the pollen of certain plants, the Graminaceae in particular, although the pollen of rye, wheat, and even shrubs is also held capable of setting up the

paraxysms. Dr. Steiner does not find the genesis of this disease in the presence of pollen upon the mucosa, but in over-sensitivity of the human organism to cosmic activities underlying fructification in certain orders of plants. No human being, even when in perfect health is uninfluenced by the universal forces behind such natural processes, but when an individual by undue pre-dominance of nervous activities at the periphery of his organism is brought too directly and intimately into touch with them exudative diatheses are occasioned as the are in childhood.

In order to cure the disease, Dr. Steiner tells us that the exaggerated response of the microcosm to microcosmic energies must be counteracted> In the Gramineae the process behind fructification may be described as taking place outwardly, nakedly as it were, in contradiction to its method of operation in such plants as bear hard-shelled fruits, where it is centripetal, working inwards to the centre of the fruit. If the centripetal fructifying process manifested in hard-shell fruits can as it were be captured, if it can be brought to rest stored within substances prepared from fruit-bearing plants of this nature, and if by vaccination with such substances it can be set free again within the human organism, then it will there be capable of counteracting over-sensitivity to the centrifugal process underlying the flowering of the grasses. In this manner the remedy advocated by Dr. Steiner for Hay Fever has been arrived at. His aetiology and treatment are entirely new to the writer, but his medical followers claim that the application of his remedy has met with uniform success.

Another preparation for which success is claimed is the *Remedium contra hemicranium*, obtained from the plant *Equisitum Arvense*, the horse-tail or jointed rush by a special process involving the introduction of iron. The horse-tails are remarkable for the amount of silicic acid they contain, which is often half the total weight of the ash. It is interesting to note the silicia (silicic acid, the oxide of silicon) was first recognized as a medicine by Paracelsus, who used it in the treatment of certain silica is to the stalk of grain in the field it is to the human mind. When Dr. Steiner tells us emphatically that not the substance of the plant *Equisitum Arvense*, but an animalized modification of process talking place with that plant, will hold in check the human organic process whose

excessive activity ultimates as migraine. One is reminded of Professor Kent's dictum : Of we have material ideas of disease , we will have material idease of cure. Dr. Steiner again and again stresses the necessity of getting rid of material ideas of disease, and his ideas of cure are so immaterial that if they are judged before they are understood they are in danger of appearing fantastic.

Migraine results when metabolic activities preponderate where nervous and rhythmical activities should be most in evidence. It is possible to perceive in external nature the existence of a process which may be called a corresponding opposite to what takes place in the causation of migraine. The stiff way in which the plant *Equisitum Arvense* grows, and the manner in which it refrains from that blossoming process which is an expression of the second plant element and is related to the lower man, is a manifestation of the interaction of silicic acid and sulphates taking place within it. If a third factor is brought to play in that interaction by the introduction of iron, the process underlying the causation of migraine. In the laboratory a remedy is prepared from iron, silica and sulphur, which holds within itself as a potential energy the natural process dynamically active in the *Equisitum Arvense*, animalized by the introduction of iron and thus made available to man. In the plan an interaction between silicic acid and sulphate results in repression of metabolic and sex activities ; when that interaction is imitated, animalized, and released with the human organism, it produces a similar repression, and the migraine which was the ultimate of excessive metabolic activities disappears with their abatement.

It has been said that a correct perception of the ultimate evolved from disturbed organic processes can be arrived at only when these processes are correctly understood. They must, so to speak, be rendered transparent, and when seen through must be rightly related to cosmic processes which have likewise been seen through, and have been found capable of checking or supplementing their disturbed activity, or of replacing it until normal functioning is restored.

The disease of Typhus Abdominalis, for example, is an ultimate of unbalanced metabolic processes. In the lower man, that is within the central metabolic system as considered apart from its ramification into the other systems, these processes should not be carried beyond a certain definite point. If they go further, they transform themselves into processes which should take place within the nervous system only, processes normally representative of metabolism in that locality. Typhoid fever must be regarded as the manifestation of an organic activity carried a step beyond the norm, and taking by that morbid extension a character improper to its situation, albeit proper elsewhere. When the pathogenetic activity has been thus perceived, the next step is to discover a cosmic activity related to it, which can be used as an agent of repression.

If in the investigation the mineral ores are considered from other than purely material standpoints, it will be found that in their true and essential nature, they may be crudely described as prisoners of universal processes. An ore is a cosmic process entangled and held fast in matter. The particular cosmic activity manifesting on the physical plane as the ore of antimony mirror is formed, the cosmic process is carried a step further, and by that artificial extension forces are approached which are related to the forces that in typhoid fever push the human metabolic activities beyond the norm. The macrocosmic force is capable of counteracting its microcosmic fellow and so of checking metabolic activity at that definite point beyond which it takes on a character ununited to the lower man.

Even as typhoid fever results when metabolic processes by being carried a step far become metamorphosed into activities pathogenetic in the metabolic system, so when the reverse occurs and metabolic activities, normal to the lower man, function in an unmodified and therefore abnormal manner in the nervous system, they manifest themselves as a misplaced tendency to the formation of nervous structures and of sense organs, the ultimate of which is the production of the morbid growth called carcinoma. That tendency can be checked by leading the disturbed metabolic process back into its proper channel. Dr. Steiner has been able to trace its relationship to the activities present in the juice of the mistletoe, the *Viscum Album*, but unfortunately his investigation,

pointing as they do the necessity of cooperation between the two science, material and spiritual, the science of the without and that of within, can be understood only by those who have some knowledge of his system of occult philosophy. He takes us back to a period of the worlds history undreamed of by geologists, when what we know as rocks were represented by solidifications of a fluidic plant-like substance that constituted the lowest natural kingdom and provided the general medium of growth for the 'plant-animals' there were stragglers who lagged behind in their evolution, and therefore could not survive except in degenerate form, obliged to abide by the habits acquired in the past. For this reason they even to this day require a plant-like medium to grow up, and have become the parasites of the earth, *Viscum Album* subsists not upon the soil but upon the bark of trees because it represents the decadent remains of the old plant-animal. Although geologists regard the soil as a substance capable of existing por se, Dr. Steiner tells us that it can no more do so than can a skeleton, because all mineral substance has been left behind by a spiritual activity. The woody substance of a tree-trunk corresponds to an earlier condition of the whole earth before, in the normal course of evolution, it became minaralised ; the mistletoe growing upon it is an atavism, casting one's thoughts back to a period infinitely remote, though comparatively recent if one pass in review the entire evolution of man and of his planet, realizing the amplitude of time. Such considerations, however, are unsuited to the present article, where no more can be said than the following: Dr. Steiner tells us that at the period in our planet's history when the lowest natural kingdom was represented by a semi-fluidic material, plant-like in constitution, evolving man developed the rudiments of his sense-organs and of his nervous system. In that development he cast out from himself such forces as were inimical to his purpose ; these worked upon the plastic matter then existent and produced plant-forms, or, more accurately, forms representative of a kingdom lying midway between the plant and the animal, which retained within themselves the forces which would have prevented the formation of sense-organs had they remained within evolving man. The only plant-animal of this period surviving in our present evolution is the mistletoe. Since Dr. Steiner perceives the process under-lying the production of carcinoma as misplaced tendency to the formation of sense organs, and finds in the juice of *Viscum Album* a force inimical to the evolution of such structures, his advocacy of mistletoe preparations as a remedy for

cancer is obvious. At the present moment his *Remedium contra Cancrom* is being worked out and tested in the Arlesheim Clinical and Therapeutical Institute, and elsewhere. In order to counteract the radical changes which the plant juice undergoes when introduced into the human organism, it is first necessary to subjected in to the centrifugal activity specially constructed machine, whose complicated mechanism has not yet been perfected. The doctors of the Arlesheim Institute report that they are not in the midst of working out this preparation and while fully convinced of its remedial value, are not yet in a position to arrive at final conclusions.

Along the lines described very inadequately in this article, Dr. Steiner has up to the present arrived at two or three hundred remedies, all of which are being scientifically tested by medical men and women who feel that a true understanding of man in health and disease cannot be gained from the investigation of material phenomena alone. In a report of Dr. Steiner's medical course at Dornach in Switzerland, Dr. E. Kilisko says: Where modern medicine fails almost entirely, name in the case of morbid and more especially of cancerous growths, and in mental and physical disease, one was led to hope after listening to Rudolf Steiner's explanations, that results undreamed of before might be attained by a development of therapeutics in the direction indicated.

In conclusion, the writer would like to define her own position with regard to Dr. Steiner's medical philosophy. In the one hand the extraordinary erudition and deep original thought behind his general philosophical teachings take it impossible to regard his excursion into any field of research with indifference: on the other, it cannot be denied that while surgery rests on an unassailable foundation there is no theory behind the practice of medicine except that enunciated by Hahnemann and elaborated by Kent. These considerations brought the writer to Dr. Steiner's medical lectures, and while much that was there (and is here translated and transcribed, it is appeared correctly) appears both unsupported and revolutionary, yet are we, who must often apply our art without science at all, and whose practice, as Kent said, must therefore be largely relegated to the domain of empiricism of position to ignore it?